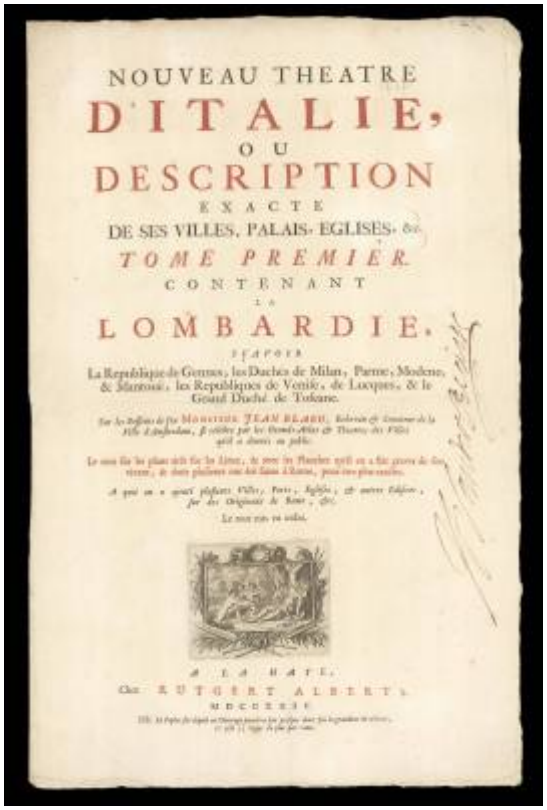

NOUVEAU THEATRE
D'ITALIE,
OU
DESCRIPTION
EXACTE
DE SES VILLES, PALAIS, EGLISES, &c.
TOME PREMIER.
CONTENANT
LA
LOMBARDIE.
A LA HAYE,
Chez RUTGERT ALBERTS.

Folio. Letterpress title-page in red and black with printer's device, four leaves of black text with one woodcut initial, contemporary manuscript signature, two contemporary ink stains to verso, minor nicks to edges, unbound.

RARE PROSPECTUS FOR BLAEU'S ITALIAN ATLAS

Nouveau theatre D'Italie, ou description exacte de ses villes, palais, eglises, &c. Tome premier. Contenant la Lombardie, sçavoir La Republique de Gennes, les Duchés de Milan, Parme, Moene & Mantoue, les Republiques de Venise, de Lucques, & le Grand Duché de Toscane.

Author
BLAEU, Johannes

Publication date
1724

Publisher
Rutgert Alberts,

Publication place
The Hague,

Physical description
Folio. Letterpress title-page in red and black with printer's device, four leaves of black text with one woodcut initial, contemporary manuscript signature, two contemporary ink stains to verso, minor nicks to edges, unbound.

Dimensions

412 by 261mm. (16.25 by 10.25 inches).

Notes
The French prospectus for Alberts's 1724 editions of Blaeu's Italian atlas, to be published in French, Latin and Dutch.

By the time the Blaeu company had published its famous 'Atlas Maior' in all eleven volumes in 1662, plans were well underway for a second multi-volume atlas showing the cities, towns and monuments of Italy. Entitled the 'Theatrum civitatum et admirandorum Italiae', the work would exploit the phenomenon of the Grand Tour – the ceremonial journey throughout central Europe taken by young men of the upper classes – by offering a glimpse into the country's most appealing sights and locations.

Having travelled extensively through Italy as a young man himself, Blaeu was equipped with reliable sources that could provide the information he required to compile the atlas, and in 1660, he sent his son to consolidate these connections. The Tuscan philosopher, Carlo-Emauele Vizzani, for example, is credited with supplying much of the material used to accompany Blaeu's maps, while Moorman also stresses the importance of local inhabitants for providing information about the towns and cities depicted. Blaeu also drew on earlier cartographical sources, such as Braun & Hogenberg's Civitates Orbis Terrarum, for the city plans and urban views.

The original plan was to publish two five-volume parts, the first dedicated to the Italian cities, and the second to Rome's monuments. During his lifetime, however, Blaeu managed to publish only three volumes, mainly focused on Rome, Naples and Sicily, but 15 years after his death, his heirs added two further volumes dedicated to the towns of Savoy and Piedmont. In 1704 and 1705, the Amsterdam publisher Pieter Mortier expanded the atlas with additional maps, as well as reprinting Blaeu's own, for which he had obtained the original copper plates. Mortier's atlas was available in Latin and French, as well as Dutch, and was formed of four volumes:

1. Lombardy
2. The Vatican State
3. Naples and Sicily
4. Monuments of Rome

Four hundred copper plates were used for the atlas, and these were eventually bought by Rutgert Christoffel Alberts, a bookseller in The Hague. In 1724 and 1725, Alberts published an almost identical edition, supplemented with the town atlas of Savoy and Piedmont compiled by Blaeu's heirs. The present prospectus invites readers to subscribe to this edition between 27 March to 15 May 1724, explaining that its four volumes would contain a total of two hundred and seventy-five double-page plates, most copies printed on standard paper, at the cost of 50 guilders, but one hundred and ten examples would be on superior paper, for 10 guilders more.

The front page, with its engraved vignette of three naked nymphs fleeing an oncoming army while a river god sleeps by the reeds, imitates an atlas title page to such an extent that there is a note at the foot of the page to remind the reader that the actual atlas will, in fact, be much larger than this prospectus. Alberts goes on to offer a detailed breakdown of the payment scheme, which involves depositing an initial instalment in advance, and settling the final bill upon receipt of the last volume. A short excerpt from the 'Description of Venice' is designed to further entice his audience, and finally on the last page, the reader is directed to a wide selection of booksellers, from London to Venice. A name, perhaps "G A van der Leeuw", is written by hand in large script along the fore-edge margin of the title page, suggesting that the publisher had specific clients in mind for his atlas.

The present prospectus is extremely rare, since the nature of the item easily lends to its loss, disposal or careless damage. There appears to be only one other copy, located at the Bibliothèque Mazarine in Paris. It is therefore an invaluable source of information, not only about the ‘Theatrum civitatum et admirandorum Italiae’, but also about the eighteenth century international book trade in general.

Bibliography

Provenance

Price:

Inventory reference: 14894

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