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REMONDINI BINDING PAPERS

[32] [Arte Povera?]

Author

REMONDINI PRESS

Publication date

c.1700-1800].

Publisher

Publication place

[Bassano del Grappa,

Physical description

A collection of 110 binding papers printed using various processes including copper engraving, woodcut, stencil, and gilding, many printed in colours, a few insignificant nicks and tears.

Dimensions

Notes

A remarkable survival of over 110 unused binding papers from a single source: the Remondini press in Bassano del Grappa, Italy.

Giovanni Antonio Remondini (1634-1711) was born in Padua. In 1657, in his early twenties, he opened a shop the main square of Bassano de Grappa selling drapes, wool, silk and iron tools. In

order to meet the demand from local farmers' for icons to protect their homes, he soon branched-out into selling woodcuts of saints and popular subjects. Remondini bought his wares from as far afield as Verona, Treviso and Padua, and soon became frustrated by inconsistent supply and loss of profit. His solution to this was to start his own printing business using an old wine press.

The brightly coloured prints, papers, games and toys suited the tastes of the common man and soon became immensely popular. Giovanni Antonio was clever in setting up an efficient distribution network using the peasants of the Tesino valleys and the Slovenians of the Veneto (called "Schiavoni") as door-to-door salespeople. He organized the two ethnic groups into companies, each lead by a "capocompagnia", and gave them franchises for disposal of prints. Soon the Remondini name spread throughout Europe.

In 1711, Giovanni Antonio died and the business was inherited his son Joseph (1700-1769), who continued to expand the business with the purchase of several paper mills. A factory was opened in Oliero in 1725 and, soon after, another in Vas, near Treviso, and a third in Cogollo, Vicenza. Joseph, conscious of his place in history, set up an archive to preserve examples of every paper and print manufactured by the company.

Joseph was also an adept politician. In 1738, he somehow obtained the exclusive and tax-free privilege for the marketing of religious prints all over the country. In 1750 he opened a bookshop in Venice, entering into direct competition with the most famous booksellers on earth. Remondini, however, enjoyed a vertical monopoly with his stranglehold over the raw materials and the supply chain, and soon came to dominate the market. Production increased to reach a global level and the old system of door-to-door sellers morphed into an efficient network of distributors using the same ethnic division as adopted by the father: the Tesini travelling from Germany and Scandinavia, and then west to the Americas; the Schiavoni, were granted all points east up to the Pacific Ocean.

Napoleon's invasion at the beginning of the nineteenth century signalled the beginning of the decline for the Remondini presses. In 1800 there were 18 Remondini woodcut presses, 24 for printing from copper, equipment for printing special cards and wallpapers, four paper mills and a type foundry employing over 1,000 workers. However, the Remondini family was slow to recognise a change in tastes and sluggish to adapt to new print processes. In 1860, the company closed its doors.

The remarkable archive of some 8522 papers and prints started by brothers Joseph and Anthony, and continued by Francis, son of Joseph, however, remains and can now be seen at the Museum of Bassano del Grappa.

Bibliography

Wolfe, Richard, 'Marbled Paper: its History, Techniques, and Patterns: with Special Reference to the Relationship of Marbling to Bookbinding in Europe and the Western World', University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990

Tanya Schmoller, Tanya, 'Remondini and Rizzi: a chapter in Italian decorated paper history', Oak Knoll Books, 1990.

Provenance

Price:

Inventory reference: 3086

