

Octavo (140 by 90mm), pictorial title in full original colour, 72 pages text, plus 53 plates in full original colour (including 43 double page and 7 single page celestial diagrams and 3 portraits) and 6 pages of tables, contemporary full calf, worn, bookplate of “Musselburgh” pasted down, discreet owner’s signature applied to margin of title, wear to guards of early pages, some points of minor discolouration, overall very good.

THE FIRST POCKET CELESTIAL ATLAS AND THE FIRST CELESTIAL ATLAS PUBLISHED IN ENGLAND

Atlas Caelestis, containing the Systems and Theoryes of the Planets, the Constellations of the Starrs, and other Phenomina’s of the Heavens, with Nessesary Tables relateing thereto.

Author
[SELLER, John]

Publication date
[c.1708].

Publisher
Benjamin Bragg,

Publication place
London,

Physical description
Octavo (140 by 90mm), pictorial title in full original colour, 72 pages text, plus 53 plates in full original colour (including 43 double page and 7 single page celestial diagrams and 3 portraits) and 6 pages of tables, contemporary full calf, worn, bookplate of “Musselburgh” pasted down, discreet owner’s signature applied to margin of title, wear to guards of early pages, some points of minor

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Dimensions

Notes
A fine example of Seller's miniature celestial atlas, with illustrations in especially magnificent full original colour.

This is a true gem of celestial cartography; an example of Seller's 'Atlas Coelestis' with especially fine full original hand-colour. The work begins with an allegorical title page, followed by depictions of the universe as envisioned by Ptolemy, Copernicus, Tycho Brahe, René Descartes and Johannes Kepler. Also present are images of lunar and solar eclipses, the orbits of various planets, and the earth's hemispheres as viewed from space. The twelve signs of the zodiac follow, succeeded by nineteen of the most important celestial constellations.

John Seller was a towering figure of English cartography, and a key pioneer of modern mapmaking in a variety of disciplines. In the early 1670s, he set about to break the near-monopoly enjoyed by the Dutch in sea chart publication. His production of the first parts of the 'English Pilot' (1675), including the charts of the Northern and Southern navigation, marked a watershed moment in the development of hydrography in Britain. Financial constraints prevented him from completing the project, and the endeavour was subsequently taken up by John Thornton, and later the firm of Mount & Page. In 1670, Seller produced the first edition of the 'Atlas Minimus', the terrestrial counterpart to the present work.

Seller first issued the 'Atlas Coelestis' in 1677, with subsequent editions published over the coming years. Following Seller's death in 1697, the London printer Benjamin Bragg acquired his celestial plates and issued the present edition around 1708. While Bragg is not particularly well-known, he produced high quality work, notably an issue of Edmund Hickeringill's 'Jamaica Viewed' (1705).

Bibliography
cf. Shirley, British Library C.SELL-1a; cf. Wing S2463.

Provenance
Provenance:
The Collection of Mr. Glen McLaughlin, California, U.S.A.

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