



Four etched views, trimmed to platemark.

THE STRASBOURG VIEWS

Ver [and] Aestas [and] Autumnus [and] Hyems

Author

HOLLAR, W[enceslaus]

Publication date

[1628-1629].

Publisher

Jac[ob] vander Heyden,

Publication place

Strasbourg,

Physical description

Four etched views, trimmed to platemark.

Dimensions

105 by 245mm. (4.25 by 9.75 inches).

Notes

Wenceslaus Hollar's oeuvre contains multiple views of Strasbourg, where he lived for a time as a young man. Around 1628, he produced a series of four etchings for the publisher Jacob van der Heyden, showing the city during the different seasons.

Hollar's scene of a spring day in Strasbourg takes place at the shooting range outside of the city, which can just be seen through the trees on the left. A huge number of people are gathered in open fields, mainly gathered on the left as on the right targets are lined up. The figures are depicted wandering, sitting or standing, a few engaged in more active pursuits such as riding, playing a ball game, and of course shooting. Surprisingly for a spring scene most of these figures seem to be wearing cloaks. At the centre is an enclosure containing multiple buildings, a well and several seating areas

including a canopied bench wrapped around a tree.

Representing summer is one of Hollar's most dynamic views of Strasbourg, showing crowds of people swimming in the river, jumping from balconies and rowing in small groups. A covered bridge extends along the left-hand side, from which one figure is depicted mid-jump. The skyline is filled with buildings of various sizes and styles, the tallest being the steeple of a church. Trees and embankments bring a sense of nature to the urban background.

Featuring prominently in Hollar's autumnal view of Strasbourg is Ancienne Douane, the old customs house, which was built on the Grand Île at the centre of the city in 1358. During the seventeenth century it was used as a depot for wine, the making and trading of which played an important role in the city; in fact, the Strasbourg Hospice which offered food and shelter to the poor and to travellers was funded by the profits of its famous cellars, which were established in 1395 and still exist today. Workers on the quay are shown unloading a great number of barrels from long barges on the Rhine. Situated in front of the larger customs house is a building with two conical roofs and from which two cranes appear to be operated. In the background the Romanesque Strasbourg Cathedral looms above the many other rooftops that form the urban centre; following the destruction of the spire of St. Mary's Church in Stralsund in a fire two decades later, the Cathedral would become the world's tallest building and remain so for the subsequent 227 years.

The final wintery scene is complete with procession of sleighs crossing the large square and forming a circle in the middle. Children are playing and spectators enjoying the scene. The square is surrounded by buildings of various heights, the largest being a tall tower beside a grand church on the far side.

Bibliography

NHG Hollar 62 I, 63, 64 I, 65; Pennington 622-625.

Provenance

Price: £4000

Inventory reference: 18438