

Double-page engraved map, with contemporary hand colour in full, heightened in gold, and with the addition of repaired crack to plate at lower left, and waves and cloud swirls in manuscript.

“WHO CAN CONSIDER HUMAN AFFAIRS TO BE GREAT, WHEN HE COMPREHENDS THE ETERNITY AND VASTNESS OF THE ENTIRE WORLD?” (CICERO, LEGEND IN THE BORDER)

Typus Orbis Terrarum.

Author
ORTELIUS, Abraham

Publication date
1571].

Publisher
Gielis Coppens van Diest,

Publication place
[Antwerp,

Physical description
Double-page engraved map, with contemporary hand colour in full, heightened in gold, and with the addition of repaired crack to plate at lower left, and waves and cloud swirls in manuscript.

Dimensions
335 by 490mm (13.25 by 19.25 inches).

Notes

A beautiful example of Ortelius's first world map, created for his atlas 'Theatrum Orbis Terrarum', and therefore the first world map created for a uniform atlas. Printed from the first copper plate, of three, first published in 1570, it features a border of clouds running around the oval of the map, is signed by the engraver "Franciscus Hogenberg", a bulge appears in the west coast of South America.

A number of legends appear in the vast southern continent, "Terra Australis Nondum Cognita", including: "Hanc continentem Australem, nonnulli Magellanicam regionem ab eius inuentore nuncupant", which explains that this Southern continent is also known as Magellanica, after its discoverer; and "Noua Guinea nuper inuentaquæ an sit insulaan pars continentis Australis incertû est", questions whether New Guinea is part of the Southern continent or an island.

The mapmaker
Abraham Ortelius (1527-1598) took an active interest in cartography from an early age. He began his career as a "kaarten afzetter" (illuminator of maps) purchasing single (generally wall) maps from booksellers and colouring them for re-sale. He travelled extensively in his search for new material and was a well-known face at the Frankfurt bookfairs. It was whilst travelling that Ortelius built up his unrivalled web of contacts, which included many of the leading historians, scientists, and cartographer's of the day.

These contacts would prove invaluable in the compiling and completion of his 'Theatrum orbis Terrarum' first published in 1570. The work was "the first true atlas" (van der Broecke): all the maps were of a uniform size and style, with an engraved title, accompanying text, and – hitherto unheard of in cartographic publications – a list of the source material. With its comprehensive scope, the atlas was a huge step forward compared with the contemporary "Lafreri" atlases, which were bound up to order and so reflected the whims of the customer. Even though it was the most expensive work published at the time, it proved an instant success with four versions of the first edition being printed in 1570 alone. The work would go on to be published for 42 years, with some 31 editions being produced.

Bibliography
Literature: Clancy, 'The Mapping of Terra Australis', 5.9; Shirley, 'The mapping of the world: early printed world maps, 1472-1700', 122; Van der Broecke, 'Oertlius Atlas Maps',157L1.

Provenance

Price: £15000

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