

First issue. Double-page engraved map of the world, with superb contemporary hand-colour in full, heightened in gold, Latin text to verso.

THE BLAEU FAMILY THOROUGHLY UPDATES THEIR WORLD MAP

Nova et Accuratissima Totius Terrarum Orbis Tabula. Auctore Ioanne Blaeu.

Author
BLAEU, Johannes

Publication date
1663.

Publisher
Johannes and Willem Blaeu,

Publication place
Amsterdam,

Physical description
First issue. Double-page engraved map of the world, with superb contemporary hand-colour in full, heightened in gold, Latin text to verso.

Dimensions
410 by 547mm (16.25 by 21.5 inches).

Notes
A magnificent example of the Blaeu family's new world map, depicting it in two hemispheres, was first published by Johannes Blaeu for his new 11-volume 'Atlas Maior' of 1662, replacing their map on a rectangular projection that they had been issuing since 1630. This map would also remain in

circulation for decades. Evidently the original engraved copperplate survived the fire that destroyed the Blaeu printing works in 1672, and was subsequently acquired by the Van Keulen dynasty of mapmakers, being included in some of their atlases between 1681 and 1685.

Mostly, the map is a great improvement, cartographically, on the previous one: Australia and New Zealand are shown with their post-Tasman coastlines, gone is the mythical great south land, “Terra Australis”; “Nova Albion”, “Pt. Sr. Franco Draco”, and part of “Anian” are apparent; however, letting the side down a bit, California still appears as an island…

In the firmament, the sun and planets are personified, with the sun firmly in the middle of a concentric orbiting system. Possibly the first representation of Copernicus’s heliocentric system of the universe to appear on a map.

“As with all productions of the firm of Blaeu, the engraving and layout and elegance of decoration are all of the highest standard. The map is invariably printed on thick paper of quality and often superbly hand-coloured. Outside the twin hemispheres at the top are celestial figures seated amid clouds: below are representations of the four seasons with each allegorical figure seated in an appropriate chariot quaintly drawn by pairs of beasts and birds” (Shirley).

The mapmaker
Willem Janszoon Blaeu (1571-1638) was the founder of a cartographic dynasty: the finest mapmakers of the Golden Age of Dutch cartography. His sons joined him in the firm, with the eldest Joan (1596–1673) quickly taking control. Joan went to university in Leiden, studying mathematics and astronomy. After returning to work for his father, they produced their first atlas together in 1630, the ‘Atlas Appendix’. The title was deliberately chosen to position is as a supplement to the well-respected atlases of Abraham Ortelius and Gerard Mercator, and it mostly contained maps from their stock of plates. Five years later, they produced their ‘Atlas Novus’ with more than twice the number of maps in the ‘Appendix’, which was published in four languages. After Willem died, Joan expanded the ‘Atlas Novus’ into the ‘Atlas Maior’, the largest and grandest atlas of its time. Any issue had between nine and twelve volumes, beautifully engraved and coloured, and cost as much as a house in Amsterdam. He also issued a wall-map in 20 sheets in 1648, ‘Nova totius terrarium orbs tabula’. He continued to issue his father’s globes, only modifying the largest.

Bibliography
Literature: Clancy, ‘The Mapping of Terra Australis’, 1.3; Shirley, ‘The mapping of the world: early printed world maps, 1472-1700’, 428.

Provenance

Price:

Inventory reference: 23071

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