

Oblong folio (320 by 473mm). 199 engraved vues d’optique (including 5 duplicates), with fine original hand-colour, several prints marked with the collector’s mark of a capital ‘G’ (unidentified) in ink stencil, the first few subjects with a little staining at sheet edges, three sheets trimmed into platemark, rebacked in half calf over original marbled paper boards.

Together with:

Zograscope, turned mahogany, mirror and lens.

THE GRAND TOUR IN EIGHTEENTH CENTURY VIRTUAL REALITY!

[Zograscope together with an album of 199 vues d’optique].

Author
[Publishers BASSET, André; DAUMONT, Jean-Francois; HUQUIER, Jacques-Gabriel; MAILLET, Nicolas Langlois; MONDARE, Louis Joseph, and others].

Publication date
[c.1740].

Publisher

Publication place
Paris,

Physical description
Oblong folio (320 by 473mm). 199 engraved vues d’optique (including 5 duplicates), with fine original hand-colour, several prints marked with the collector’s mark of a capital ‘G’ (unidentified) in ink stencil, the first few subjects with a little staining at sheet edges, three sheets trimmed into platemark, rebacked in half calf over original marbled paper boards.

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Dimensions

Notes
A fine collection of vues d'optique, together with their viewing machine, or zograscope.

Vues d'optiques, or perspective view prints, were a fashionable entertainment in the elite drawing rooms of the eighteenth century, and also a popular street entertainment at fairs and markets. Publishing houses in London, Paris, Augsburg, and Bassano competed in their production. In total about 5,000 vues d'optiques were produced.

Vues d'optiques, while conventionally called by the French term, are sometimes referred to in English as 'perspective views', although this term can cause confusion since it also refers to other types of images. Guckkastenblätter or Guckkastenbilder is the German name. They are mostly hand-coloured etchings or engravings designed to be viewed through a convex lens, often mounted with a mirror, so that the viewer saw what appeared to be a three-dimensional image. The viewing machines used to look at vues d'optiques included zograscopes (a turned wood stand holding a lens and a mirror, such as the present example), or enclosed perspective boxes.

Vues d'optiques are always horizontal in format. They generally range between 22 and 28cm in height, and between 36 to 42cm in width. They predominantly depict city views with a strong central perspective, like a canal or street stretching towards the horizon, and coloured in bright, simple colours. Underneath the image is a description in one or more languages, and above the image a title is often found printed reversed in French.

London was the first city in which vues d'optiques were produced, and the total output from English publishing houses amounted to about 1300 during the years between 1734 and around 1800. The main publishers were Henry Overton, John Bowles, Robert Sayer, Henry Overton II, Carington Bowles, and Laurie and Whittle. It was in Paris, however, that the pastime reached its apex, and a number of publishers produced a total of about 2000 different vues d'optiques during the years between 1740 and 1836. The main publishers in Paris were Balleue, André Basset, Nicolas Beauvais, Carcano, Chapouland, Jacques Chéreau, Jean Baptiste Crépy, Jean-Francois Daumont, Esnauts et Rapilly, Hocquart, Jacques-Gabriel Huquier, Laurent Pierre Lachaussée, Nicolas Langlois, Maillet, Louis Joseph Mondhare and Poilly. About 1200 different vues d'optiques were produced in Augsburg between 1766 and 1828, followed far beyond by about 350 prints produced by the Italian publishing house of Remondini in Bassano between 1764 and 1817. All European publishing houses were in constant competition, but they also cooperated in certain fields. The Augsburg publishers, for example, jointly engaged a painter to travel to various European cities in order to draw the current views. In general, however, vues d'optiques publishers did not hesitate to copy images from many sources, either other vue d'optique publishers or artists who had made images deemed suitable.

Chinese subjects in vues d'optiques are uncommon. They were only produced in publishing houses in Augsburg and Paris, and then only in small numbers, even though chinoiseries were highly fashionable at the time. Only 36 subjects in total are known. Niklas Leverenz identifies nine different images published in Paris. It is worth noting, therefore, that the present collection includes some 7 or those 9 subjects.

The contents may be summarized as follows: Austria (6); Canada (1); China (7); Cuba (1); Denmark (1); France (84); Georgia (1); Germany (8); Guyana (1); India (3); Indonesia (1); Italy (34); Mexico

(1); Morocco (1); the Netherlands (6); Peru (1); Poland (2); Russia (4); Spain (8); Switzerland (1); Turkey (3); UK (16); Vietnam (1); Allegorical (1); Maritime (6).

Bibliography

Leverenz, Niklas, 'Vues d'optique with Chinese Subjects', in Print Quarterly, Vol. 31, No. 1, March 2014, pp20-44.

Provenance

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