



Barry Lawrence Ruderman Antique Maps Inc.

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Planisphere Terrestre Suivant les nouvelle Observations des Astronomes Dressee et presente Roy Tres Chretien par Mr. Cassini le Fils . . .

Stock#: 70057
Map Maker: van der Aa
Date: 1713
Place: Leiden
Color: Hand Colored
Condition: VG+
Size: 26 x 21 inches
Price: \$ 4,800.00



Description:

A Distinctive World Map on a Distinctive Projection

Fine example of Van der Aa's planisphere, which is based on Cassini's famed, massive 8-meter, astronomically-rendered world map, originally constructed on the floor of the Paris Observatory at the end of the 17th Century.

The map radiates from the North Pole, stretching the South Pole to infinity. The projection also emphasizes how clustered the world's landmasses are in north, as there is no southern continent included.

While the chimera of a vast, temperate southern continent is not shown here, there are other mythical coastlines in several places. California is shown as an island, as it often was in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Greenland is speculatively connected across the North Pole to *Iesso*, a common feature on maps of this period (see below). However, this northern land is not connected to North America—there is still space for the much-desired Northwest Passage via the Strait of Anian (see below).

Australia, which is also labeled as New Holland after the initial Dutch encounters with the western shores, stretches far into the eastern Pacific. New Zealand and New Guinea also have hypothetical extensions, as their true extent was then unknown to Europeans.



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This map is notable not only for its geography, but for its corner vignettes representing the seasons. In the upper left is a garlanded young god writing the title cartouche in French and representing spring. His summer counterpart, slightly older, is in the upper right, with the title cartouche in Latin. Below, the deity now has a beard and is holding the scales of Libra surrounded by the fruits of autumn. In the lower right are cold cherubs warming themselves with a fire in winter, with an old man Atlas in the foreground.

Cassini's planisphere

The distinctive part of this map are the asterisks scattered across the map in 43 places. A cherub at the left explains that these are astronomically-derived geographic coordinates. This is a reduction of, and closely follows the geography of, the vaunted Cassini-Nolin map of 1696. The asterisks mark locations where latitude and longitude observations were made, making them anchor points for this innovative map.

At the turn of the eighteenth century, latitude could be derived, with some adjustments, by observing the altitude of the sun. There were several instruments that could help to accurately read this measurement, including the quadrant. Longitude can be derived from observing the satellites of Jupiter, but these observations could only be accurately measured while on land. Finding longitude at sea was still an enigma, with many suggestions as to how to derive it with no concrete solutions—this would be the great scientific project of the eighteenth century.

The renowned cartographer Giovanni Domenico Cassini was concerned with the longitude problem, but also with trying to compile the most accurate map possible based on astronomical readings. To do so, he collected coordinate readings from correspondents of the *Académie des Sciences*, trusted scientific minds from around the world, and built his map up from that base. These included Edmond Halley's observations at the Cape of Good Hope, as well as others at Quebec, Goa, Peking, and elsewhere.

The map itself, on an equidistant azimuthal projection, was laid out on the floor of one of the towers in the Paris Observatory. It was eight meters in diameter, a massive monument to astronomy and cartography—the first map to be derived from such an accurate and widespread set of astronomical data.

That grand map is lost to us, but a reduced version was drawn by Cassini's son, Jacques, then a budding astronomer himself. The map was published by J. B. Nolin in 1696. Two states of the Nolin-Cassini map are known, each surviving in only a few examples.

This is the most decorative obtainable example of the Cassini planisphere.



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Detailed Condition: