



**Barry Lawrence Ruderman
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(16th Century Drake Portrait) Sr. Frauncis Drake knight [Engraved portrait of Sir Francis Drake, with globe, navigational instruments, armillary sphere and a compass]

Stock#: 87606
Map Maker: Boissard
Date: 1596 circa
Place: n.p. (London)
Color: Uncolored
Condition: VG
Size: 5 x 5.25 inches
Price: \$ 9,500.00



Description:

Extremely Rare 16th Century Engraved Portrait of Francis Drake

The Man Who Singed the King of Spain's Beard Displays His Own

This rare engraved half-length portrait of Francis Drake is a remarkable and handsome likeness of the great English naval hero and explorer.

Drake is shown here turned slightly to his left with his right hand draped over a globe and his finger pointing to the Iberian Peninsula - a bow to his role in "singeing the King of Spain's beard," when in 1587 he burned several Spanish ships and supplies at Cadiz, delaying the Spanish Armada. Drake himself here sports a perfectly intact and neatly shaped beard and moustache. He wears an embroidered doublet with a sash over his shoulder, a lace collar over his gorget, one hand leaning on a globe and the other holding his



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baton of command, a parapet to the right with navigational instruments including an armillary sphere and a compass, an angelic flying genius with a laurel wreath flying above, ships in sail on the sea beyond, a sun beam to the left. The inclusion of the allegorical flying genius figure behind Drake is significant, as it is a symbol of the power of the imagination and the ability to transcend the limitations of the physical world.

Drake was the first Englishman to complete a circumnavigation of the world in a single expedition. While sailing in the Pacific Ocean he laid claim to modern-day California and picked a fight with the Spanish on the American coastline. For all his exploits Queen Elizabeth awarded Drake a knighthood in 1581.

Drake was Spain's greatest early nemesis - the Spanish considered Drake a pirate, calling him "El Draque." Philip II purportedly offered a massive reward for his capture or death. His raid on Cádiz in 1587 was an important moment in maritime history, buying time for Britain to protect its coastline by delaying the Spanish Armada for a year.

A rare and iconographic portrait, this engraving provides a characteristic glimpse of Drake as one of England's greatest heroes and navigators. A pictorial artifact of prime interest for collectors and historians of exploration and naval warfare.

Robert Boissard

Though unsigned, the portrait has been ascribed to the French-born engraver Robert Boissard, who did a series of portraits of English navigators. The other portraits were of Christopher Carleill, Thomas Cavendish, Martin Frobisher, Humphrey Gilbert, and John Hawkins.

The poem below the portrait caption "Sr. Frauncis Drake knight," reads:

*Our ages Tiphys; valours noble mirror
Englishmen's glory; and the Spaniards terrour:
The Saylers starre; Sea-taming Sailwing'd Drake,
Whose fame, though he be dead lines fresh awake,
Wch with his corps, whole Oceans cannot dround
But shall endure so long as world is round
Wch he encompass: one whose Like I feare
England will never see againe but Here*



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Arthur Hind dates this work to no earlier than 1590, but circa 1596-1603 is probably more reasonable, as the poem refers to Drake posthumously (he died in 1596) and no Boissard works have been found to post-date 1603. Our example conforms to Hind's state 2, a slightly modified version of the unobtainable first state (Hind stated that the only impression he had seen of state 1 was in the Folger Library).

Rarity

This engraving is extremely rare. There is an example, mentioned by Hind, in the British Museum, as well as a reverse copy by Robert Vaughan in the Bodleian. Not in Kraus, *Drake Pictorial Biography* catalogue.

Detailed Condition:

Engraving with etching on laid paper. Trimmed just inside the platemark to the image on all sides. Window-mounted on modern paper mat with verso visible. Small repaired loss just about "Frauncis". Remnants of previous mounting on blue paper in the corners on the verso. Early ink inventory number at the bottom on verso, partially covered by mat.