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Omai a Native of Ulaietea, Brought into England in the Year 1774, by Tobias Furneaux Esqr. Commander of his Majesty's Sloop Adventure; Humbly Inscribed to the Right Honble. John Earl of Sandwich.

Stock#: 89167
Map Maker: Bartolozzi
Date: 1774
Place: London
Color: Uncolored
Condition: VG
Size: 13 x 20.5 inches
Price: \$ 6,500.00



Description:

Rare Bartolozzi Stipple Engraving of Omai

The "Noble Savage" in the Eyes of the Europeans.

A fine and famous portrait of Omai by Francesco Bartolozzi, a virtuoso of the stipple engraving technique. This portrait is based on a well-known painting by Nathaniel Dance, who also painted Captain Cook. Omai came to England in 1774, staying for two years, entrancing London society wherever he went. Joseph



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Banks and Dr. Solander cared for him during his stay, and it was Banks who commissioned Bartolozzi to do the present engraving.

Omai is shown wearing a feathered diadem or circlet, and is draped in flowing tapa cloth. His tattooed hands, here depicted in a subtle manner, reflect the allure of the "noble savage" ideal embodied by the inhabitants of the recently discovered Pacific Islands. In fact this fine engraving was among the earliest separately issued visual works intended to satisfy European anthropological interest in the native inhabitants of the Pacific. The depiction of the famous Tahitian is exceedingly romantic - he is shown barefooted, in native dress, with flowing long hair. Omai holds a wooden stool which is now in the Musée de Tahiti et des Îles in Puna'auia, Tahiti.

The practice of taking "exotic" natives back to Europe came into its own during the latter part of the 18th century - quite famously with Bougainville and Cook. Though instances occurred earlier, such as when William Dampier kidnapped Giolo, the "Painted Prince," a richly tattooed man from the Philippines, and brought him back to England around 1690.

The four-line inscription in the lower part of the engraving mentions both Furneaux and Lord Sandwich - the latter one of Omai's protectors during his stay in England.

Detailed Condition:

Stipple engraving and etching. Nice, wide margins. Torn in the bottom slightly into image, expertly repaired on verso.