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Seutter Map of America

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Seutter Map of America

Abstract

The map featured in our show, *Novus Orbis sive America*, was printed in 1730. The engraving measures 50 x 58 centimeters and is a 1:19,000,000 scale.¹ The map was donated by John H.W. and Mary G. Stuckenberg. It shows the “New World,” North and South America; the copy Special Collections owns features hand-colored continents. Different states or regions are colored in yellow, pink, orange, and green. On either side of each continent are islands with trade routes highlighted across the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. Also present are two text boxes, both in Latin, one in the upper left-hand corner and another in the lower left-hand corner. The map is covered in detail and regions appear to be somewhat accurately labeled for what was known at the time.

[*excerpt*]

Keywords

John H. W. Stuckenberg, Mary G. Stuckenberg, maps, North America, South america, Mattaus Seutter

Disciplines

Ancient, Medieval, Renaissance and Baroque Art and Architecture | Fine Arts | History of Science, Technology, and Medicine | Industrial and Product Design | Intellectual History

Comments

Produced as part of a collaboration between Kay Etheridge's course FYS-188: Exploration of the Marvelous: Art and Science in the Renaissance, and Felicia Else's course ARTH 284: Wonders of Nature and Artifice: The Renaissance Quest for Knowledge.

Original version online at <http://wonder-cabinet.sites.gettysburg.edu/2017/cabinet/seutter-map-of-america/>

Seutter Map of America

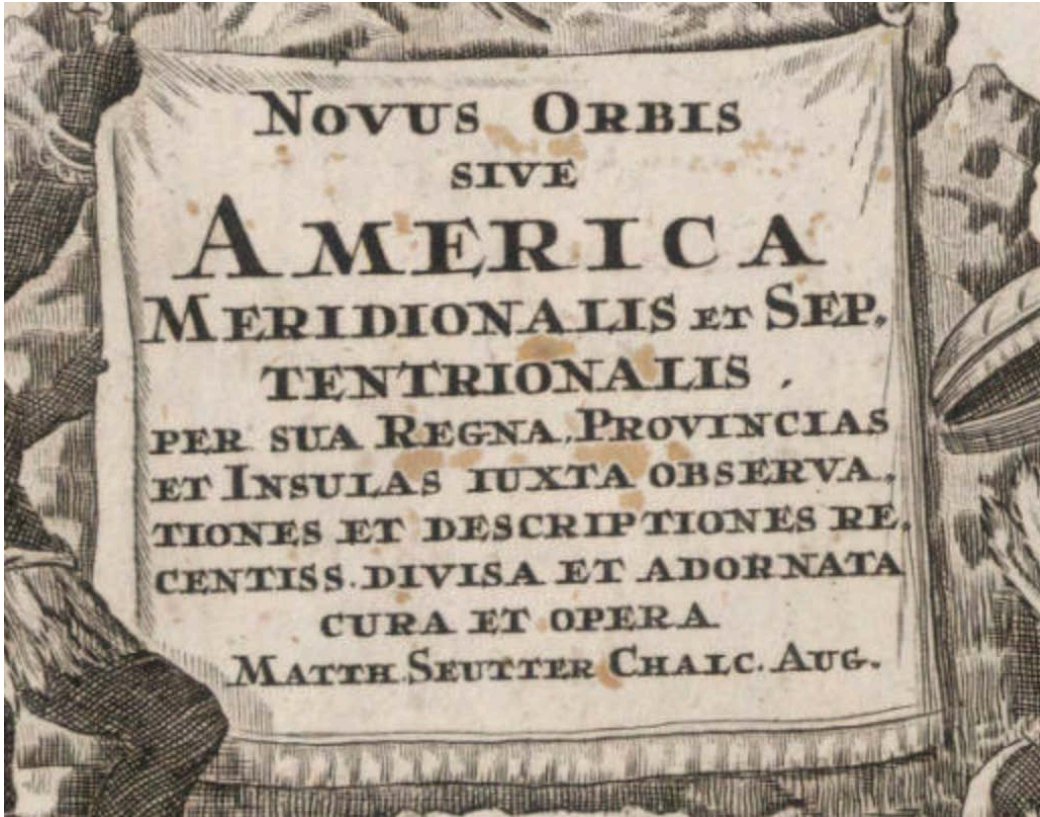
By Meredith Denise Staats



Matthaeus Seutter, *Novus Orbis Sive America Meridionalis Et Septentrionalis*, Augsburg, Germany, 1730, Engraving, 50 x 58 cm, Gift of John H.W. and Mary G. Stuckenberg, Special Collections and College Archives, Gettysburg College – Photo by Meredith Staats

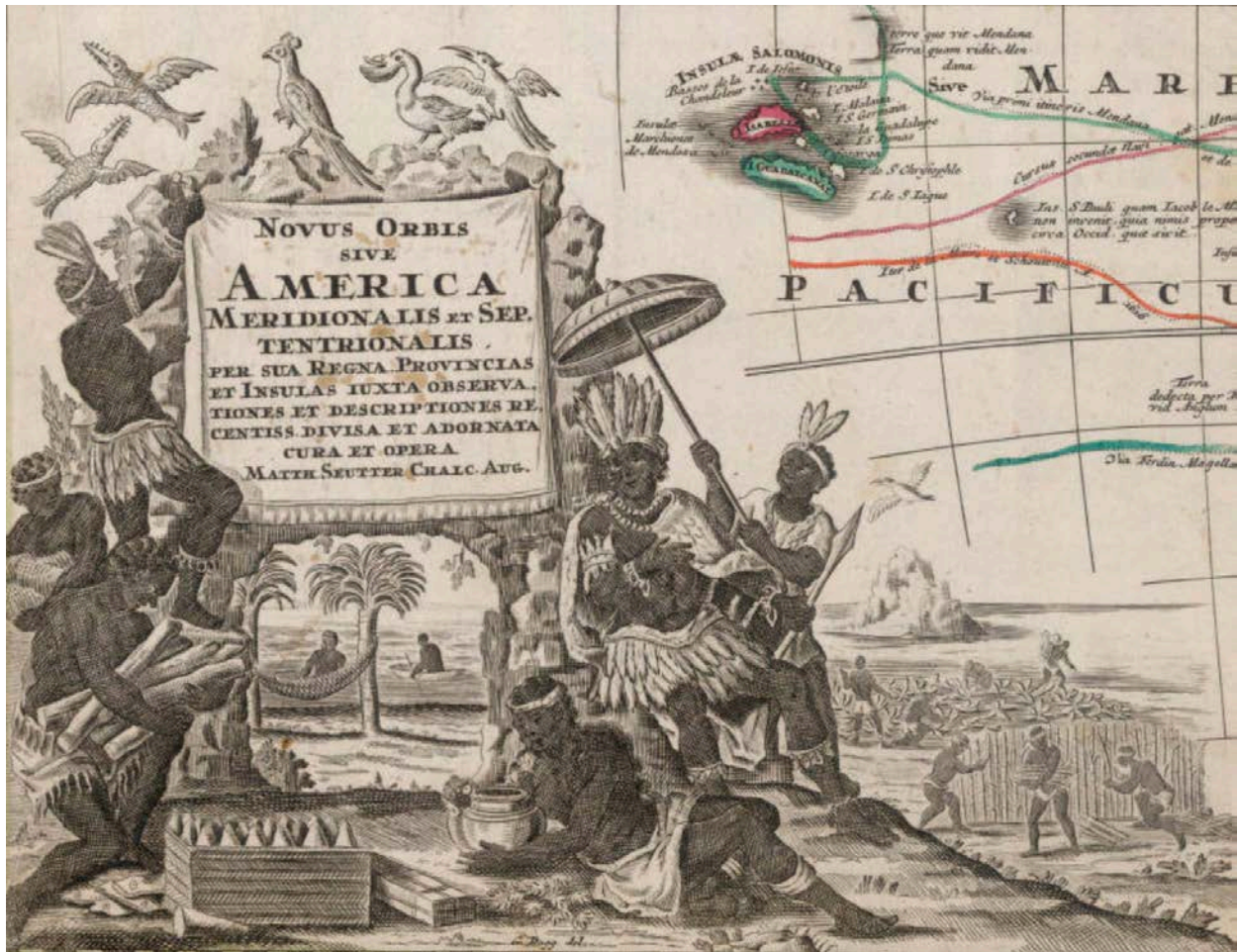
Novus Orbis Sive America Meridionalis Et Septentrionalis

The map featured in our show, *Novus Orbis sive America*, was printed in 1730. The engraving measures 50 x 58 centimeters and is a 1:19,000,000 scale.¹ The map was donated by John H.W. and Mary G. Stuckenberg. It shows the “New World,” North and South America; the copy Special Collections owns features hand-colored continents. Different states or regions are colored in yellow, pink, orange, and green. On either side of each continent are islands with trade routes highlighted across the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. Also present are two text boxes, both in Latin, one in the upper left-hand corner and another in the lower left-hand corner. The map is covered in detail and regions appear to be somewhat accurately labeled for what was known at the time.



Scan courtesy of Special Collections, Gettysburg College

This title box describes the map: The New World both South and North America in the realm of the provinces and islands, according to recent observations and descriptions divided, carried care, and attention by Mattäus Seutter. Around the text box, the portrayal of the native peoples carry explicit racial connotations.



Scan courtesy of Special Collections, Gettysburg College

It can be presumed that these individuals are enslaved peoples of either African or Caribbean descent. They are portrayed in little amounts of clothing, in an effort to make them look primitive. Others are wearing, feathered crowns, arm bands, and loin cloths. The native peoples in the background are seen farming cane sugar, a new product from the Americas, and now a staple in the European's diet. While the majority are pictured laboring, there is a figure underneath the text box lounging in a hammock while another sails in a canoe. The person that sticks out the most is the figure to the right of the sign, draped in a cape, wearing a more elaborate headdress, jewelry, holding a pike and is being covered by an umbrella. While this is most likely an improbable scene, this figure may be a caricature or a play on native peoples' chiefs or leaders. Flying just above the enslaved peoples are birds that look made-up. There are two scaled birds that appear to be carrying nails in their mouth, almost as if they are helping in the hanging of the text banner. One of the other birds appears to be a dodo bird, which would have been extinct by the time this map was printed. Exotic animals were a key feature to curiosity cabinets and the wonder of new species makes these birds' place on the map very fitting.



Scan courtesy of Special Collections, Gettysburg College

Around the description on the upper left-hand corner, there are three main scenes being portrayed. First, on the far left, we see a group of wealthy Europeans feasting, with a note above them “Inventis facilè est addere,” which could mean “It is easy to add having found.” Although Latin does not translate well literally, Seutter was probably referencing Europe’s discovery of new land and their colonization of the Native’s lands. Moving right, is a larger-than-life Virgin Mary shown holding a cross, luminary, and open book. While the banner of text next to her is bent in a fashion that all the words cannot be made out, the words “In Occidente lux...orta.” may mean “light has arisen in the west.” This may mean the spread of western religions will enlighten the native peoples who they often referred to as “savages.” Religious symbolism plays a large role in the New World, as spreading Christianity goes hand in hand with colonization. The last scene depicts two native peoples in feathered crowns, arm bands, and loin cloths in awe of the altar in which Jesus is depicted on the crucifix in between what appears to be a chalice of communal wine, the “blood,” and broken bread, the “body.” The last banner says, “Æternas anhelat opes,” or “Eternal bliss of wealth.” If the “savages” accept Christianity into their lives, they will live eternally in Heaven.



Scan courtesy of Special Collections, Gettysburg College

When thinking of curiosity cabinets, maps are not typically the first objects that come to mind, however, they played a larger role than one may think. Maps like this showing the New World would have been especially eye-catching to the viewer who has never left the western hemisphere.

1. Matthäus Seutter, "Novus Orbis Sive America Meridionalis et Septentrionalis, 1730, (GettDigital : John H.W. Stuckenberg Map Collection, Special Collections / Musselman Library, Gettysburg College, Gettysburg, Pennsylvania), Accessed October 13, 2017.