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Ortelius's Map of the World and Homann's Ship Model Map

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Abstract

Abraham Ortelius and Johann Baptist Homann were very successful cartographers who benefitted from the rising trend in curiosity cabinets during the Renaissance. Ortelius lived from 1527-1598 and was born in Antwerp, Belgium, and Homann became famous in Nuremberg, Germany during his life from 1663-1724. *[excerpt]*

Keywords

Abraham Ortelius, Johann Baptist Homann, cartography, world map, wonder cabinet

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/ming-blue-and-white-plate/>

Audio guides on Ortelius's World Map and Homann's Ship Model Map included.

Ortelius's Map of the World and Homann's Ship Model Map

By Jane Corin Fitzpatrick



Johann Baptist Homann, Ship Model Map (Neue tafel, yor alle liebhabers, und seefahrende perfonen) engraved and hand colored, Gift of John H.W. and Mary G. Stuckenberg, Special Collections and College Archives, Gettysburg College



Abraham Ortelius, Typvs Orbis Terrarvm. engraved and hand colored, On loan from of Bruce R. Stefany, class of 1971, and Betsy A. Stefany

Abraham Ortelius and Johann Baptist Homann were very successful cartographers who benefitted from the rising trend in curiosity cabinets during the Renaissance. Ortelius lived from 1527-1598 and was born in Antwerp, Belgium, and Homann became famous in Nuremberg, Germany during his life from 1663-1724. ¹



Abraham Ortelius

Abraham Ortelius is well known for having created the first modern Atlas: *Theatrum orbis terrarum* (“Theatre of the World”) in 1570. The world map presented in this exhibit was featured in his atlas. If you would like to explore Ortelius’s famous *Theatrum orbis terrarum*, click [here](#). Ortelius did not have a stellar academic background, but nonetheless, he was highly regarded by European scholars. His work with maps began after his father died, and Ortelius would buy, color, and sell maps in order to support his widowed mother, his sisters, and himself. His best customer became Aegidius Hooftman of Antwerp, a merchant who spent quite a large sum of time and money studying the sea, wind, and ocean tides. His goal was to be able to determine the best times and routes for sending out his ships. Hooftman was notorious for buying any map he could get his hands on, and this, of course, is how Hooftman met Ortelius. Hooftman was a driving force for Ortelius to create his modern world Atlas which became very successful indeed. ^{2 3}



Johann Baptist Homann

Homann came from a family of mapmakers and publishers in Nuremberg. He was a self-taught copper engraver who founded his own cartographic and publishing establishment in 1702. Tooley’s Dictionary describes the Homann’s in a profound way: “The most important and prolific map-makers in Germany in the 18th century was the Homann family (1702-1813). The family, located in Nuremberg, was known a Homann Heirs”. [1] In 1715, Homann was hired as a geographer to the Holy Roman Emperor and later became a member of the Prussian Royal Academy of Sciences. The ship model in the exhibit is from some editions of his atlas which also included city plans from various cartographers, astronomical plates by Johann Gabriel Doppelmayr and maps of several parts of the world. ⁴

The best way to learn the shape of a land was to voyage there. Exploration is both a cause and a result of wealthy Europeans wanting to become collectors of wonders. Explorers would bring back exotic items, people would want more, and so they sent them out again. This was such a large movement, in fact, that the explorations planned to find easier routes to destinations lead them to discover brand new land that had never been known to them before. For example, the

Americas were discovered when Europe was looking for a different route to what they called the West Indies, or modern day Asia. New geographic landmasses meant new plants, new animals, and new cultures to study. In other words, it meant wonders to collect.

Sea travel opened the door to globalization. Collectors may have meant to simply improve their status at home, but they made an incredible contribution to our global society by connecting with each other through letters and trade. If it hadn't been for the rising trend in collecting wonders, it would have taken the world much longer to connect with one another. They spread their ideas, theories, and discoveries with each other along with physical items for sharing in their

research. This is what globalization is all about!



Wonder Cabinet, REMPS, Domenico. Scarabattolo, oil on canvas, late 1600s. Museo dell'Opificio delle Pietre Dure, Florence, Italy.

Wonder cabinets represented the diversity and complexity of the world. To create their prized microcosm, many collectors would hire a crew of a merchant ship to gather specific objects and transport them. This was not a simple process. First, the collector would have to either send an explorer to collect the specific things that the collector wanted or, if they had the right connections, they could correspond with another

collector through letters to establish a trade of

items. Shipping and handling

was not as careful and it is nowadays, unfortunately. Canons were often placed on merchant ships to protect their goods from thievery, but no one could protect them from the unruly sailors onboard. Items were often damaged from not being handled with care, and some sailors would even drink the alcohol used to preserve specimens in jars! It may not sound very appetizing, but the men at sea were desperate for a taste. It's a sailor's life!

The Wonders of Nature and Artifice Exhibition features a world map by Abraham Ortelius and a ship model map by Johann Baptist Homann. Both of these items represent the journey that exotic wonders would have taken during the Renaissance period to be displayed in the homes of noblemen and women. These maps are also wonders themselves.



Ortelius, ship detail

Typvs orbis terrarvm by Abraham Ortelius is on loan to the Gettysburg College by Trustee Emeritus Bruce Stefany and his wife, Betsy. It is an image depicting what cartographers of the Renaissance thought the world looked like, and this particular model was used from 1570 to 1584. There were approximately 3250 copies printed.⁵ This piece is engraved and hand colored to create images of clouds around the border, giving it a heavenly air, but a very interesting detail of this map is its tiny decorations within the areas designated as oceans. There are three sea creatures and one ship drawn on this map. The text is in Latin: the title means “Map of the world,” and the text on the bottom land mass means “not yet being known, the southern land.”



Ortelius, Map of the World Detail

Decoration on maps were very important during this time period.⁶ “The evolution of...graphic depiction on charts should be seen as one of the most striking features of Renaissance cartography,” (Wallis, the Role of the Painter)⁷. Tiny ships were of particular interest to mapmakers. They became a standard on maps, and there were even pattern books of ship illustrations shared among mapmakers. This is why it is so common to

find the same ships on several different maps designed during this time. In fact, ships were the leading ornamentation in Renaissance maps. Even as other types of illustrations decreased in popularity, the ship remained constant and even grew superior to all other illustrative decorations. It became a standard for all world maps to have them and was a mark of quality. “If indeed the illustrators were professionals whose task it was to represent the world in an engaging manner then even more the sheer entertainment value of the ships and other objects would have been central to their inclusion.”⁸ Just as all art was taking on the quality of naturalism during this time period, these mini art details were evolving as well. It was very important that the images be as accurate and true to life as possible.



Detail of map by Willem Blaeu

Art evolved during the Renaissance, and so did the art of mapmaking. Methods for accurately sketching the shapes of landmasses was constantly improving despite the fact that on this world map, for example, South America is far from accurate. Australia is also nonexistent here!

Neue tafel, yor alle liebhabers, und seefahrende personen is an engraving printed in Nuremberg in 1725, a year after Johann Baptist Homann's death. The text is in German, it is hand colored, and it's based on his original design. This piece is from the John H. W. Stuckenberg Map Collection kept in the Special Collections at Gettysburg College. The title means "A new plate presented to all seafaring people," and it includes 17 vignettes of the ribbing and planking, dry docks, and several nautical tools. The text at the bottom is a legend or key to the points placed on the central image of the ship. This map was in a few editions of Homann's 'Neuer Atlas...über die Gantze Welt' issued between 1712 and around 1730.² This particular ship is a naval ship, though it is placed in our exhibit because it resembles the merchant ships that were used to carry marvelous wonders across the world. Ships were quite literally the conduits of trade.



Detail of Map by Abraham Ortelius, South America

Maps are wonders. "Maps became the standard fare of room decoration for public and private spaces with whole programmes of maps generated to illustrate the compilation of human knowledge or the scope of activity of the patron who decided on the interior"¹⁰.

Just like all of the scientific wonders featured in a wonder cabinet, maps were symbols of knowledge and worldliness. It is important to note that maps are works of art because we can appreciate the craftsmanship involved in their creation processes, the beauty of the shapes and images, and the majesty of our natural world which each map represents. Maps are tools for teaching and art for displaying all in one. A collector should know where his or her objects are from and how they got to their cabinets. Even if he or she wasn't able to travel to the original homes of the object's, they could have some knowledge of where it was and what it looked like there. Maps were symbols of a status in a way because it gave the impression that the owner played an interested in the global community. Having respectable connections around the world was an important part of being a good collector.

Art evolved during the Renaissance, and so too did art of mapmaking. Methods for accurately sketching the shapes of landmasses was constantly improving despite the fact that on this world map, for example, South America is far from accurate, and Australia is lumped into "not yet being known, the southern land."

Wonder cabinets inspired people to develop better knowledge of the world we live in. Abraham Ortelius and Johann Baptist Homann were just two marvelous examples of the many mapmakers who contributed to spreading knowledge about the world and its beauty. *Typvs orbis terrarvm* and *Neue tafel, yor alle liebhabers, und seefahrende personen* (Ship map) represent how the wonders crossed the globe for science and discovery.

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