



*Nova et Acurata Totius Americae Tabula au G. [B.].*

["A New and Accurate map of all of America" by G. Blaeu].

Willem Blaeu, Amsterdam, circa 1608 (Pietro Todeschi, Bologna, circa 1673).

Size: 104 x 142 cm.

Antwerp, which had been the center of such prolific mapmakers as Abraham Ortelius, was sacked by the Spanish in 1576 and eventually fell to them in 1585 after a 14-month siege. In retaliation the Dutch blocked sea access to Antwerp via the Scheldt River, strangling the city's commerce. The tactic inevitably wreaked havoc not only for the Spanish, but for Dutch interests in Antwerp as well. A prime beneficiary was one of Antwerp's rival Netherlands cities, Amsterdam.

By the turn of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, cartographers in Amsterdam had secured preeminence in the publishing of maps, including the production of spectacular large works intended to adorn the walls of wealthy patrons. Willem Blaeu, from early in his career, had staked much of his commercial success on these works. His wall maps became highly prized and as a result were plagiarized by other makers. The present map is a copy of Blaeu's wall map of America, originally published in Amsterdam circa 1608. Although no copy of the 1608 issue is known to survive, the map was periodically resurrected by other makers during the century and is here copied by the Bologna publisher Pietro Todeschi circa 1673. Despite its Italian provenance, this work epitomizes Dutch cartography at its zenith.

Dutch and Flemish map-making, the pre-eminence of which began about 1570 with the introduction of Ortelius' *Theatrum* and lasted through the close of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, was closely integrated with Dutch art in general and coincided with the lives of



many of the great Dutch artists. Indeed, many mapmakers were influenced by their artist compatriots, just as some artists incorporated the map as art object into their canvases. Most familiar among these was Jan Vermeer, whose *Lady with a Lute* and *Artist in His Studio*, among others, contain hanging maps as compositional elements, demonstrating the popularity of the wall map as fashionable adornment for the walls of the affluent.



Wall maps were envied well before the Dutch period, however. The use of such maps to dress-up the dwellings of the privileged can be traced back to at least the later Middle Ages, when magnificent and quasi-encyclopediaic *mappaemundi* were created for the rich, the State, and the Church. With the advent of printing, the woodcut medium was used to produce large city-views as early as 1500, and elaborate, monumental maps of the world at least as early as 1507. The wall map's transition to the superior copperplate medium occurred at the hands of the Italian school in the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

Geographically, this map utilized the finest data available to Blaeu in the first decade of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. But by the time Todeschi issued this copy in the third quarter of the century, much of it was dated. Even the map's depiction of California, correctly shown as a peninsula while virtually all contemporary maps adhered to the island theory then in vogue, should fairly be judged as an anachronism rather than as a virtue. The only obvious benefit Todeschi reaped from the intervening years appears in the inset of the south polar region, where the discoveries of Abel Tasman in 1642 are recorded (mistakenly inscribed *detecta 1667*). But because the discovery of Australia in 1612 is not shown, Todeschi's Tasmania lies among the remnants of *Boach Provincia* (a mis-charting of Marco Polo's Southeast Asia) and other vestiges of the defunct *Southern Continent*. The discovery by Le Maire of a route around Tierra del Fuego in 1615-16 is noted both on the inset and on the map proper but Blaeu's pre-Le Maire geography has

been left essentially intact.

Just as Todeschi plagiarized Blaeu's map, the illustrative panels used by Blaeu were themselves pirated from other works. The panels along the left and right sides, illustrating the customs and dress of the various peoples of America, are derived from the *Voyages* of Theodore de Bry. Of these, six along the left border pertain to North America. The second from the top shows the manner in which the women of *Dasemonquepeuc* (Virginia) carry their children, a young woman of *Secota* (Virginia), and chief lady of *Secota*; third from the top shows a chief lady of *Potneiooc* (Virginia) carrying a gourd containing "some kind of pleasant liquor," and an old man of *Porneiooc* in winter clothes; fourth from the bottom shows a religious man of *Secota*, a conjurer or magician, and a prince set for battle; fifth down depicts a chief and warriors of Florida; sixth down, also Florida, is a king and his first wife out for an evening stroll in the forest, assisted by an attendant; the next depicts sovereigns of Hispaniola; and the second from the bottom shows a king, queen, and attendants in *Nova Albion*, Drake's landing on the West Coast generally believed to be California. Some of the town views flanking the bottom are taken from the Portuguese cartographer Baptista Boazio.

Like globes, wall maps suffered the ravages of time and the elements to a far greater degree than did maps bound into atlases or other books, and few have survived. Compounding their vulnerability, they were often coated with varnish which yellowed and cracked with age. Vermeer's painting testifies to the rapidity with which such decay began; a degree of deterioration can be noted even on the Visscher wall map of the Netherlands hanging in Vermeer's *Artist in His Studio*, frozen in time by Vermeer as it fared in about 1667.









The “golden age” of Dutch cartography coincided with a peak period in the country’s art. Beautiful evidence of this is provided by the magnificently fashioned maps that left the famous Amsterdam printing-houses at the time. Big wall maps were a favorite means of decorating libraries, private houses, and business premises. Only a few of these masterpieces of cartography and works of art are still in existence, unfortunately. Among the rarest and most sought-after are the maps of the continents produced by the publishing house of Guilielmus Janszoon Blaeuw. According to Wieder (*Monumenta cartographica*), their four wall maps of the continents then known first appeared in 1608.

These were certainly most presentable works; they were decorated in both side margins with pictures of natives and in the bottom margin with views of towns, the top edge, at least in the case of the three copies of the America map which were examined, (i.e., Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Munich, formerly Bayerisches Nationalmuseum, Munich, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., and a private collection) have been trimmed off. The narrow border which finishes off the other three sides of the map is missing. The title *Nova et acurata Americae Tabula* is on a separate strip of paper. The name of the publisher also varies. (*Blaeu* in the case of the map in question, *auct. G* on the one in American ownership.)

The proper, and original, title is to be found in a cartouche in the lower right corner, flanked by two figures representing Christopher Columbus and Amerigo Vespucci. The Latin inscription mentions Ferdinand Magellan (Magallhaes) as well as these two. His picture can be seen together with those of Francis Drake, Thomas Candisch (properly Cavendish), and Oliuerius van der Noort at the foot of the cartouche.

Neither the place nor the date of publication is mentioned on the map. The place of publication can be fixed as Amsterdam with reference to the name *Blaeu*, and two dates provide important clues for establishing the year. These are in a small marginal map in the lower left corner. Marked in the *Terra. australis incognita* is *Ant(oni)us van Diemen lant*. Abel Janszoon Tasman landed here on 23<sup>rd</sup> November 1642 and named the region he had discovered after the man who had commissioned his voyage. (Nowadays: Tasmania.) In the Munich copy, this entry is missing. On the same marginal map is marked *Ollandia Nova dedecta 1644*. This entry is also missing on the copy in Munich, while on the one in the Library of Congress the date is given as 1667. This map cannot have left the Blaeu publishing house before 1644. It stands in time between the other two, but whether it belongs to the edition that, according to Wieder, left the printers in 1665, we are not in a position to determine.

It has already been mentioned that only a few copies are still in existence. Some of them, moreover, are in a more or less poor condition. For the lover of old maps who can appreciate in particular their artistic value, to come across a well-preserved item, in which baroque creativeness turns the western hemisphere, thanks to the rich scenery, into a *Theatrum Mundi*, a miniature theatre of the world, is thus an aesthetic pleasure.







A set of four large and exceptionally rare engraved wall maps, each float-mounted and framed (each sheet size ca 47 x 67 inches; framed size: 54 x 74 inches), each map is made up of four sheets joined, each surrounded by a broad and elaborate decorative borders of vignettes of peoples of the world, birds-eye views, and explanatory letterpress, all printed on separate sheets and joined (expertly and discreetly repaired with some text and images supplied in manuscript facsimile).

This set of wall maps represents an unparalleled masterpiece by the legendary Dutch cartographer William Janszoon Blaeu who was a pupil of the great Danish astronomer Tycho Brahe, from whom he learned a very scientific approach to the field of cartography, which served to enhance his reputation. His early work concentrated on globe making, but by the early 17<sup>th</sup> century he began producing separately issued maps. Blaeu founded his publishing firm in 1596, and with the collaboration of his sons, Cornelius (1616-1648) and Joan (1596-1673), it was the most productive cartographic establishment in the Netherlands until it was destroyed by the Great Fire of 1672. Appointed mapmaker to the Dutch East India Company in 1633-1634, Blaeu had access to fresh geographical information that was not available to any of his contemporaries. He published his first world atlas, the *Atlantis Appendix*, with 60 maps in 1630, and continued to produce new maps at such a rate that by 1634, he abandoned the single volume format and announced his intention to publish a new world atlas, entitled the *Theatrum*, which eventually grew into the monumental 11-volume *Atlas Maior*, completed by his son Joan in 1662.

This set of Blaeu's continents, however, surpasses even that achievement in terms of rarity and importance. Aside from their high level of geographical accuracy, these maps, embellished in the Baroque style, rank among the most beautiful ever made. Blaeu's maps are immediately recognizable by their distinctive ornamentation. Whereas most 16<sup>th</sup> century publishers had decorated their maps with strapwork designs in black and white, Blaeu embellished his maps with decorative swags, symbols, coats of arms, city views and large pictorial cartouches. Each of these maps boasts Blaeu's most recognizable decorative flourishes, with sixteen side panels containing costume vignettes and portraits of indigenous peoples, and twelve city views lining the lower margin. The oceans are heavily ornamented with fleets of ships and various sea creatures. Blaeu's maps are further acclaimed for their extremely high production standards. The quality of the engraving, the paper, and coloring are of the highest order, and placed Blaeu's work at the forefront of 17<sup>th</sup> century cartography.

The mere fact of the survival of this set of wall maps is highly notable. Most maps produced during this period were printed on one or two sheets, and bound into atlases or other books. A very limited number of large wall maps, involving numerous plates to print a certain area, were produced by major cartographic houses for ostentatious public display. The surviving number of these maps is exceedingly scarce. As opposed to their smaller, bound brethren, these maps were mounted on canvas and exposed to light, dirt, and other environmental factors. That not only one individual wall map, but indeed an entire set of four, has survived from this period is partially due to the steady esteem in which they -- and Blaeu himself -- have been held since the time of their production, and partly due to sheer good fortune. This particular set was published by Pietro Todeschi in Bologna, Italy in 1673. Todeschi translated the textual margins into Italian but left Blaeu's masterful cartographic delineations of the continents untouched. Though little is known of the living conditions or career of Todeschi, who



was “a noted engraver of perspective views”, he is known to have re-engraved several maps of Dutch cartographers, among these Blaeu’s four wall maps of the continents.

While the four central map sheets are uniform in their appearance across the variants of Blaeu’s originals, the presence and arrangement of the surrounding panels and registers reveal distinctions between them. This is due to the likelihood that, as luxury items made to custom order, the side panels would have been added or excluded due to client preference. All of the maps of the 1646 set include the pictorial side panels and lower register, but do not include an upper register featuring the title. While other editions of Blaeu’s wall maps, produced in both Amsterdam and Italy, maintain the same arrangement, the recorded variant most closely relating to the present set is to be found at the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich. All aspects of the map sheets and side panels are identical, save for the fact that the Greenwich maps each include an upper title register. Curiously, in each case, these title registers show signs of being hastily executed in a fashion dissonant from the careful engraving of the general composition. It seems as if the title register was an afterthought, perhaps never added to the maps of the 1646 set. In addition to the hastily executed title registers, the overall condition of the 1646 set is inferior to the 1673 set currently at the map dealer Arader, including sporadic vertical splitting on all maps, a horizontal split on Asia map, minor points of surface loss and browning to map surface and side panels, lower register of all maps damp-stained with some of loss, and small area of facsimile *en grisaille* to lower register of Europe map.



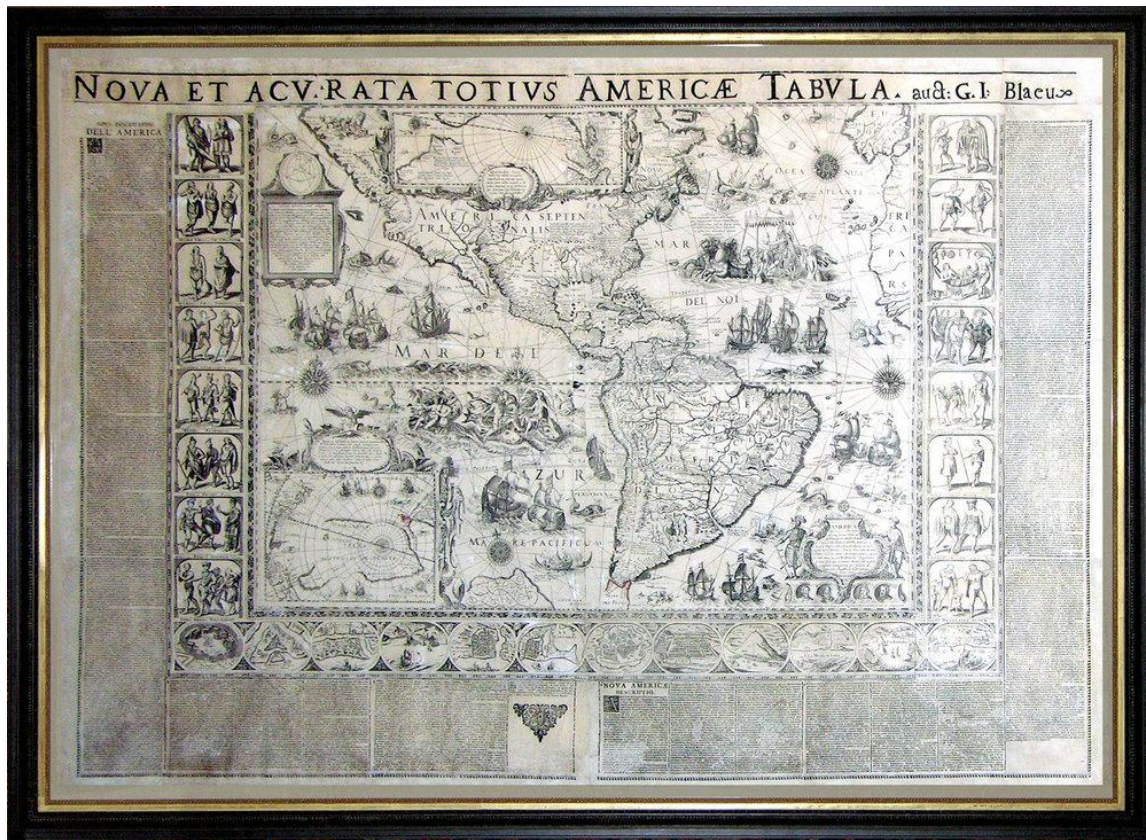
*Nova Acvrata Totivs Evropae Tabula*



Blaeu's map of Europe is especially magnificent in design, and its advanced geography is indicative of Blaeu's sourcing of manuscript pilot maps drafted by the North Holland School of Hydrographers. The large cartouche resting in the Atlantic features Gerritsz's brilliantly executed double-hemispheric map, surmounted by the Arms of the City of Amsterdam, a reference to Blaeu's official privileges.

The side panels are adorned with vignettes of Europeans in local costume including English, Irish, French, Belgian, Norwegian, Lithuanian, Polish, Bohemia, Germany, Portugal, Cantabrian, Castilian, Tuscan, Venetian, Greek, Hungarian, and Swiss peoples. Gerritsz's precise models are not known, but stylistic similarities are evident by comparison to engravings from Han Weigel's *Habitus praeciporum popularum* (Nuremberg, 1577) and Sebastian Vrancx's *Diversarum gentium* (Venice, 1558).

The lower register contains twelve birds-eye views of cities, including London, Paris, Lisbon, Toledo, Rome, Venice, Amsterdam, Nuremburg, Prague, Vilnius, Moscow, Constantinople (Istanbul). All the views are taken from Braun & Hogenberg, with the exception of Prague, which was adapted from Johan Willenbergs 1601 engraving, and Amsterdam which is sensibly based on a first-hand account.



*Nova Acvrata Totivs Americae Tabvla*

Referred to by Burdon as "...one of the most influential maps of America ever made", this map is as geographically accurate as possible for the period. While the largely unexplored Pacific coast of North America extends to too far to the west, the overall proportions of the continent are well assured for the time. Nova Scotia has taken shape based on the voyages of Samuel de Champlain and Pierre Gua de Monts from 1604. New England is less defined indicating that intelligence of the English

reconnaissance of the region in 1602 had not yet reached Amsterdam, while the depiction of the southeast is considerably advanced. The width of South America is overly attenuated, consistent with all maps of a period in which the determination of longitude was an inexact science. The Blaeu-Hondius 1624 third state was likely the model, as it depicts Jacob Le Maire's discovery of the passage around Cape Horn, and Streso Lemaire during his voyage of 1615-7. The two cartographic insets respectively depict the Northwest Passage and the South Pole.

In the lower right is another title cartouche headed *AMERICA* depicts the discoverers of the New World, Christopher Columbus and Amerigo Vespucci. Below are four roundels containing the portraits of the four circumnavigators, Ferdinand Magellan, Sir Francis Drake, Sir Thomas Cavendish and Olivier Van Noort. The Atlantic features a splendid depiction of the King of Spain riding a sea chariot, supposedly on a figurative visit to his New World possessions. Among the sea nymphs and battleships.

The side panels are adorned with vignettes of the indigenous peoples of the Americas including the inhabitants of Greenland, Virginia, Florida, New England, Hispaniola, Mexico, Peru, Brazil, Chile, and Patagonia. Gerritsz's sources were Theodore de Bry's engravings of John White's original watercolors made during his voyage to Virginia and Carolina in 1585, as well as Jacques Le Moyne's travels in Florida. The map itself is profusely decorated with ships and sea monsters, king Neptune, mermaids and compass roses. The map was first published in 1608 but there is no known surviving copy. It was re-issued in 1612, 1624 by Henricus Hondius, and before 1652 by C. V. Visscher.

The lower register features birds eye views of New World cities and settlements, including the Virginia native village of Pomeiooc, from De Bry and White; Port Royal, Carolina from Le Moyne; St. Augustine, Florida, Santo Domingo, Cartagena from Batista Boazios 1588 engravings celebrating Francis Drake's pirate raids on these towns; Mexico City and Cuzco from Braun & Hogenberg; Mocha, Chile and Rio de Janeiro by Van Noort; and Havana and Potosi (Bolivia) from unknown sources.





*Nova & Acvrata Totivs Africae Tabula*

It is of little surprise that this early map of Africa was originally produced in the Netherlands, where Antwerp and Amsterdam were centers of world trade, and particularly of commerce with Africa during the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. Blaeu derived his cartography of north and northwest Africa from Ortelius and Dutch sources were used to draw the coastal regions south of Sierra Leone. The geography of South Africa was also based on Dutch sources, but was added after Blaeu's state one of the map. The place names reflect Dutch colonization of the region after 1652. Denuce surmised that the maps made by the Portuguese Lopes and published by Pigafetta in Rome in 1591, were the source the much of Blaeu's representation of the rest of Africa. In addition, he concluded that the "wall map of Africa seems to have been an original work, independent of the maps in [Blaeu's] atlas."

In West Africa, Blaeu depicted territorial divisions similar to Gastaldi and Ortelius, labeling both *Barbaria* and *Libya Interior*. The Niger and Senegal Rivers combine to flow into the Atlantic as one great system, with an apocryphal Lake Niger being the source for the latter. The great entrepot of *Tombotu* (Timbukto) is shown and the Gold Coast is based a map by Luis de Texiera, which found its way to Amsterdam in 1602. Central Africa is derived from Ortelius and Pigafetta, and South Africa is updated by the inclusion of Dutch nomenclature, such as *Mossel baij*, from the reconnaissance of Cornelis De Houtman, 1595-97. The southern interior is based on Portuguese sources, with the frontier fort *Cast[ellum] Portugal* labeled on the map. The source of the heart of the continent, entirely unknown, is derived from the ancient maps of Ptolemy, which show both the sources of Nile and Zambezi Rivers as being lakes on other side of the



mythical *Mountains of the Moon*. *Abyssinia* is taken from Ortelius' imaginative maps of the legendary Christian kingdom of Prester John.

The map is lavishly decorated with four cartouches, sea monsters, elephants, rhinoceros, camels and ostriches. The side panels each feature vignettes depicting the peoples of different regions in what was thought to be their local costume, including the inhabitants of Senegal, Guinea, Gabon, the Congo, Madagascar, the Cape of Good Hope, Morocco, Malta, Tripoli, Algiers Ethiopia, Egypt, Abyssinia, Mozambique, as well as a scene of pilgrims traveling to Mecca for the Hajj. Gerritsz derived his artistic inspiration from various sources including Theodore De Bry, Pigafetta, and the Italian mannerist draughtsman Enea Vico.

The lower register features twelve birds eye views of towns taken from the early volumes Braun & Hogenberg's *Civitas Orbis Terrarum* (1572-1618), and depicts Tangiers, Ceuta, Algiers, Tunis, Alexandria, Cairo, *Quiloa* [Mozambique], Mozambique town, Sofala, Fort St. George of El Mina; the Canary Islands, and *Safi* [Morocco]. Scolari's faithfulness to Blaeus original is such that the original engravers name appears in the lower left, as *I. vanden Ende sculp.* As with the maps of Europe and Asia, Blaeu's name is printed in Italian as *Autor Guglielmo Blaeu* inside the cartouche to the lower right.

In the 17<sup>th</sup> century Dutch and English ships were present in respectable numbers, so cartography of the area was no longer derived solely from Portuguese and Spanish sources. The Dutch were a powerful presence; in 1602 the Dutch East India Company (the VOC) was established, and geographical information funneled back to Amsterdam's cartographers.





*Nova & Accurata Totius Asiae Tabula*

Willem Blaeu, who would later be appointed the official hydrographer to the VOC, had access to the unrivaled map collection of Petrus Plancius, who in addition to Dutch sources also, by way of espionage, in 1592-94 acquired manuscripts from Bartholommeo de Lasso in Lisbon. Blaeu first employed these sources on his 1605 folio map of Asia. Ceylon and the Maldives are derived from Linschoten and Java and Bali show advanced information from Willem Lodewijksz's map during his recent voyage with De Houtman. The enigmatic nature of eastern Borneo and the Celebes is betrayed by their delineation with dotted lines and the spice island of Banda features Dutch nomenclature. New Guinea shows the most advanced depiction of the period, and Honshu, Japan is derived from Ortelius's 1595 map. The mythical *Strait of Anian*, the gateway to the Northwest Passage, appears in the northeast. In homage to the imagination, China features *Cambalu* a capital city with an immense 28-mile perimeter, governed by the *Great Cham*. In the Arctic, the recent attempts by Willem Barents to navigate a Northeast Passage are indicated by the appearance of the island of *Novaya Zemlya*. The Aral Sea is notably absent, and the Caspian maintains the egg-shape prevalent until the 1730s. A diagram accompanied by text on the left side of the Asia map explains how with a compass the user would be able to calculate the distance between two points on the map, demonstrating both its practical use as well as decorative value.

The side panels depict the peoples of various Asian civilizations in local costume, including Syrians, Arabs, Armenians, Persians, Gujaratis, Burmese, Sumatrans, Javans, Moluccans, Japanese, Chinese, Tatars, and Russians. Gerritsz was influenced by various sources including De Bry, Linschoten and Enea Vico. The lower register features birds-eye views from Braun & Hogenberg and Linschoten including Rhodes, Farmagusta, Damascus, Jerusalem, Aden, Hormuz, Goa, Calicut, Candy, Bantam, *Gammalamme* [Moluccas], and Macao.

**References:**

\*Ristow, Walter W., "America and Africa: Two Seventeenth-Century Wall Maps", *A la Carte, Selected Papers on Maps and Atlases*, 1972, pp. 62-75.

\*Suarez, T. *Shedding the Veil*, pp. 112-113, Plate XVI

\*illustrated