



Equestrian portrait of Charles II with a prospect of London in the background

DIEPENBEECK, Abraham van.

Charles le Second: Roy de la Grande Bretagne.

London, 1743. Coloured. 380 x 500mm.

£700

A fine portrait of Charles II on horseback, engraved by Cornelis van Caucerken after a painting by Abraham van Diepenbeeck, published in 'A General System of Horsemanship,' by William Cavendish, Duke of Newcastle. Cavendish, a Royalist commander during the English Civil War, followed Prince Charles into exile in the Low Countries. He was passionate about horses, establishing a riding school in Antwerp and publishing a revolutionary and influential work on equestrian training techniques, 'La Methode et Invention nouvelle de Dresser les Chevaux' in 1657, in which this plate first appeared. This example comes from the second edition (the first in English), published 1743. Most of Diepenbeeck's illustrations show Cavendish training horses at his Antwerp school but this plate shows the uncrowned king in armour astride a warhorse, with Cupid bringing his helmet. Above, angels and cherubs carry royal insignia, led by Athena holding a crown over the king's head; on a lower slope to left, Mercury looking up to Charles and gesturing to a battle, headed by Mars lunging at a three-headed dragon. The allegory not-too-subtly shows Charles's determination to win back his crown and his capital city, seen in the distance. His wish was granted: Oliver Cromwell died the following year, after which the Commonwealth ran out of steam and invited Charles to return.



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Stock ID :18480