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Blaeu's famous carte à figure map of America

BLAEU, Willem Janszoon.
Americae nova Tabula.

Amsterdam: Johannes Blaeu, c.1650, Latin text edition. Original colour. 415 x 560mm.

£5,000

A very fine example of one of the most famous maps of the Americas, a 'carte-a-figures' with 10 costume vignettes down the sides and nine city prospects along the top. This map was originally published separately in 1617, with an extremely rare first state that did not show Cape Horn. Within a year Jacob le Maire returned from his trip around the Cape and his new information was added to the plate. A second change was implemented in 1621 when Willem Janszoon added the 'Blaeu' to his name to distance himself from his arch-rival Jan Janszoon, so his new name was added under the title. Two more states, both just minor embellishments, appeared in the 1640s, before the plate was destroyed in the fire at the Blaeu printing works in 1672. Johannes Blaeu seems to have continued using this dated plate out of respect for his father. It still depicts California in a peninsular form when Blaeu's globes showed an island; the mythical island of Frisland appears on the map and in the inset of Greenland; and Sir Walter Raleigh's 'El Dorado' appears in South America.

BURDEN: 189.

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Stock ID :22579