

The verifying letter: And it does turn ... Ketterer Kunst to auction rare letter documenting the first circumnavigation of the globe

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Hamburg, 25 September 2008, (kk) - For € 80 000 it could be yours: the first empirical proof that the earth is round. The extremely rare original edition of a letter from Maximilianus Transsylvanus, secretary to the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V, is to go under the hammer at the Ketterer Kunst auction of Rare Books - Manuscripts - Autographs - Decorative Prints in Hamburg on 17/18 November. In it, the secretary reports to the Cardinal-Archbishop of Salzburg on the first circumnavigation of the globe by Ferdinand Magellan.

With a fleet of five ships and a crew of 234 men, Ferdinand Magellan left Spain in September 1519 for the strategically and economically important Moluccas, the Spice Islands, via the westward sea route. About a year later he discovered the westward passage at the tip of the South American continent, named the Strait of Magellan after him. Magellan was killed in a

battle with indigenous inhabitants of the Philippines and only one ship, carrying 18 survivors, returned to Spain via Timor and the Cape of Good Hope in September 1522. Thus one of the “most glorious undertakings in the history of exploration” (Henze) came to an end. One of the four editions published of “De Moluccis insulis ...” was sold by Ketterer Kunst in 2004, achieving € 94 300 (hammer price: € 82 000).

Fourteen musclemen represent the acme of illustration in “De humani corporis fabrica ...”, the groundbreaking work by Andreas Vesalius. The woodcuts with standing figures, on which the muscular system is explained with the muscles removed layer by layer, are not only superlative Venetian woodcuts but also set the standard for anatomical illustration, indeed for book illustration in general. Published in 1555, the book carries an estimate of € 25 000.

A work that has not been on the rare books market since 1945 is Carel Allard’s “Orbis habitabilis oppida et vestitus ...”. One copy each of the sole edition of this extremely rare book of cities can be traced in the online catalogues of three great libraries. The book shows views of more than 40 places (including Algiers, Tripolis, Vienna and the island of Barbados) and the native dress worn in some of those countries. The estimate is € 18 000.

A book of views by Johan Conrad Greive deals exclusively with the island of Java. Greive executed the colour lithographs after drawings by the painter Abram Salm. The first edition of this rare and complete book of plates with views of volcanoes, rivers and bays carries an estimate of € 10 000.

That is also the estimate for a magnificent manuscript on parchment in very good condition. The “Carta executoria”, dating from 1792, is lavishly illustrated to an exceptional standard with five full-page miniatures in colour as well as 64 miniatures in colour in the text. This Spanish letter patent attesting that a member of the Camara family has been raised to the peerage contains the Camara coat of arms, a dedication with the royal coat of arms as well as numerous illuminated initials.

Karl Marx’s Streitschrift, written in London in 1860, is an excoriating polemic of the natural scientist and political writer Carl Vogt. As rumour had it, Vogt had been denounced as an “agent in the pay of Napoleon III” and, writing in his own defence, unjustly accused Karl Marx of supporting the slander. The rare first edition of the Marx work is also entering the lists at € 10 000.

In 1797 Johann Wolfgang von Goethe went for the third time to Switzerland. In order to acquire passports for himself and his family, he wrote to Friedrich von Koppenfels, then chancellor in Weimar. Written in Goethe’s own hand and endorsed with his signature, the letter is to be called at € 6000 .

An extremely rare item is an 1820 “Catéchisme” in raised type-face, an incunabulum of writings published for the blind. Valentin Haiÿ was the pioneering inventor of an embossed type-face on thick paper, enabling the blind to read with their fingers. Not until 1829 was this method replaced by the Braille system of cells containing dots.

From the estate of Antonio Tusa, a Swiss cellist and Haydn scholar, comes a collection of music-related items including 6 batons that once belonged to such celebrated conductors as Arturo Toscanini, Wilhelm Furtwängler and Herbert von Karajan. In addition, this lot, estimated at € 3000, also comprises some 160 original photographs and postcards of famous musicians and composers, some bearing autographs in the form of dedications and signatures.

Pre-sale viewings have been scheduled for the following dates and times at Meßberg 1, Hamburg:

5-7 November from 11 am-5 pm

10-14 November from 11 am-5 pm

16 November by appointment

The auction of Rare Books - Manuscripts - Autographs - Decorative Prints will take place on the following dates at the times listed below at Meßberg 1 in Hamburg:

Main auction: 17/18 November from 10:30 am

Evening auction: 17 November from 5 pm

Since it was founded in 1954, Ketterer Kunst has been firmly established in the front ranks of auction houses dealing in art and rare books with headquarters in the Prinz Alfons Palais in Munich and a branch in Hamburg. Gallery rooms in Berlin as well as representatives in Heidelberg, Krefeld and New York have contributed substantially to the company's success. Ketterer

Kunst has further rounded off its portfolio by acquiring the prestigious Ernest Rathenau Verlag, New York/Munich.

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