



Octavo. Contemporary speckled calf, gilt.

WITH THE ARMS OF THE SUN KING

Description et explication des globes qui sont places dans les Pavillions du Chateaux de Marly.

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Physical description

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Dimensions

Notes

In 1678 the Cardinal d'Estrées commissioned Vincenzo Coronelli to make an enormous pair of globes as an unparalleled gift for Louis XIV: the celestial globe depicts the constellations as they would have been on the evening of Louis XIV's birth. This monumental pair – a terrestrial and a celestial globe – was constructed in Paris between 1681 and 1683, eventually measuring four metres in diameter, supported on bronze stands. To this day these globes remain unequalled in both beauty

and technical prowess.

The giant globes were originally intended for display at the equally opulent Palace of Versailles, but they were transferred to the King's Marly "retreat" in 1703. Completely hidden in a thick forested valley, Marly took more than five years to complete. Louis XIV first visited in November 1683, but only stayed there for the first time in 1686. In the centre of the grounds was a large pavilion for the King, surrounded by twelve smaller pavilions for guests, like the planets circling the sun. Next to the Royal pavilion were four service pavilions, and in 1688, baths for the guests were added, and in 1703 two further pavilions on either side of the central pool were refurbished to house Coronelli's magnificent globes. There they stayed until they were moved to the Royal Library in 1722, where a room of globes was installed in 1731. Afterwards, they were displayed in the Grand Palais, but are now on permanent display in the Bibliothèque nationale de France.

Once installed at Marly, two permanent curators were appointed to care for the globes: Robert Crosnier for the celestial; and François Lelarge for the terrestrial. Lelarge transcribed the inscriptions and described the figures which ornamented the terrestrial globe. Philippe de la Hire (1640-1719), the Astronomer of Paris, was commanded by the King to write the current treatise on the use of the globes. A large paper example, bound in red morocco, also emblazoned with the Royal arms, and described as being printed for the Sun King's "own use", was offered by Sotheby's in 1859, as part of the 'Choicer portion of the magnificent library, formed by M. Guglielmo Libri'. It is likely that Louis had a number of examples of the book bound for presentation, including this one.

La Hire was the son of Laurent de la Hire, a renowned painter and engraver. An early interest in geometry led to surveying work, particularly with Jean Picard on his map of France, and diverting the Eure to the grounds of Versailles. His earliest major work was 'Nouvelle method de Geometrie pour les sections de superficie coniques et cylindriques qui ont pour base des cercles ou des paraboles, des ellipses ou des hyperboles' (1673), but he published numerous treatises on various scientific subjects, and became a member of the Academie Royale des Sciences in 1678.

Rare: only one other example offered in available records, the Macclesfield copy, Sotheby's 2005

Bibliography

Provenance

Provenance: 1. With the supra-libros of the Sun King, Louis XIV of France (1638-1715), on each cover; 2. Armorial bookplate of a Viscomte on front paste-down

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