



PROANTIC
LE PLUS BEAU CATALOGUE D'ANTIQUITES

18th Century Old Master Drawing By Abraham Meertens (middelburg 1747-1823) Birds On A Branch



1 250 EUR

Period : 18th century

Condition : Bon état

Material : Paper

Description

Abraham Meertens (Middelburg 1747 - 1823 Middelburg) A Kingfisher and an Oriole on a Branch Pencil and watercolour, pencil framing lines, watermark Strasbourg lily, 324 x 242 mm (12.8 x 9.5 inch) Inscribed 'No. 2' (pencil, verso) Provenance Private collection, The Netherlands *** Abraham Meertens was born in February 1747 in Middelburg.¹ He may have been a pupil of the Dordrecht artist Aert Schouman (1710-1792), and certainly studied his works, as is known from signed copies by him after Schouman. By 1777 he was established as an independent master in Middelburg, where he co-founded the town's 'Tekenenacademie', or drawing academy, of which he also became a director. Meertens supplied 'behangsels', large-scale decorative wall painting, to the elite of

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Middelburg. In 1809 he was asked to supply a sixth decorative painting with birds to an existing scheme of five such works by Schouman.² In addition to being an accomplished draughtsman, Meertens also produced designs for interior schemes. A large group of such designs is preserved in the Rijksprentenkabinet of the Rijksmuseum - an example is a design for a wall elevation with two variants of a Neoclassical wall design (fig.).³ It is thought that Meertens made drawings after examples of taxidermy, but also from life, as was also done by Schouman.

Menageries were fashionable during the period, such as the richly maintained collections of the Stadtholder William V in The Hague and at Het Loo, near Apeldoorn. The present sheet is particularly fresh and is one of Meertens's most accomplished sheets - indeed, if the Made in Holland stamp had not been present, this work might have been mistaken for a drawing by Schouman. Our drawing can for instance be compared to Meertens's sheet Six South American Birds in the Metropolitan Museum in New York (fig.).⁴ This delicately executed drawing represents a Kingfisher (*Alcedo atthis*) and an Oriole (*Oriolus oriolus*), both perching on a branch and is a good example of Meertens's draftsmanship. As is well known, the eighteenth century witnessed a great growing interest in the observation of the natural world, evidenced for instance by the emergence of encyclopedias and collections of drawings such as the present one, valued possessions of lovers of art, but also of amateur naturalists. 1. For the artist, see R. Harmanni, 'Zeeuwse vogelbehangsels in de tweede helft van de achttiende eeuw en het werk van Abraham Meertens (1747-1823)', *iZeeland* 3 (1994), pp. 53-62 and C.W. Fock, 'Abraham Meertens, een eigenzinnig ontwerper', in : K. Heyning en G. van Herwijnen (red.), 'Om een prijs en plaats'. De Middelburgse Teeken Akademie 1778-2003, Middelburg 2004, p.34. 2. Dumas and Te Rijdt, op. cit., p. 118. 3. Pen and ink, watercolour, goldleaf, 204 x 412 mm, inv.

no. RP-T-1913-129.4. Watercolour, 372 x 272
mm, inv. no. 2005.6; Dumas and Te Rijdt, op.
cit., Addenda no. 20.