

WD6013258

Basilus Besler Print of Melanthium Hispa (Nigella)

£2,200.00

W: 54 cm (21 1/4")
H: 52.5 cm (20 11/16")
D: 0.5 cm (0 3/16")

Basilus Besler (1561-1629) changed the world of botanical art overnight. He was a prominent botanist and apothecarist in Nuremberg, and was given the privileged task of curating the garden of Johann Konrad von Gemmingen- a Prince Bishop of Eichstaedt in Bavaria.

The Prince Bishop commissioned Besler to produce a codex of all the plants growing in his garden, which was no small feat. It took Besler 16 years to complete the task, and von Gemmingen passed away shortly before it was published.

The result, however, was magnificent. Previously, botanical art had involved rather crude depictions of mostly medicinal and culinary herbs. The Hortus Eystettensis was something else entirely, comprising 367 life-sized copper engravings, which depicted 1084 different plants which represented 667 species. The layout was artistic, aesthetic and quite modern in many ways.

The work loosely reflects the four seasons, from flowering through to fruiting stages, with the Spring and Summer sections naturally more weighty. Accompanying Latin descriptions demonstrate the extraordinary understanding of botany behind the work. Besler worked with a team of experts, including the famous Wolfgang Kilian of Augsburg.

The Hortus Eystettensis was first published in 1613, and the first edition sold 300 copies over four years. Two versions were produced, the more expensive and luxurious with hand-colouring and the other in black and white.

Copies of these prints have become more and more rare, as desire for these highly aesthetic pieces increases.

Condition: Excellent
Period: 18th Cent and Earlier

