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Fine Art & Antiques



Jean I Barraband or Jean II Barraband

'The Audience of the Emperor' - A Berlin Chinoiserie Tapestry Depicting

Circa: Germany, Early 18th Century

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311 x 536 cm (122 1/4 x 211 inches)

Tapestry

After Designs By Guy-Louis Vernansal, Jean-Baptiste Belin de Fontenay and Jean-Baptiste Monnoyer

A Berlin Chinoiserie Tapestry Depicting 'The Audience of the Emperor' By Jean Barraband or Jean II Barraband, Early 18th Century. After Designs By Guy-Louis Vernansal, Jean-Baptiste Belin de Fontenay and Jean-Baptiste Monnoyer

Woven in wools and silks, from the Berlin Grossmogulenfolge series, depicting the 'Grossmogul' seated to the center on a throne flanked by courtiers and an elephant to the right, beneath an extensive baldachin and with kneeling courtiers before him, to the right with the Empress on a chariot with assistants, and to the left with a peacock, fruit-filled baskets and blue-and-white porcelain, within a frame border elaborately ornamented with strapwork, figures, porcelain tea services exotic birds and foliage.

Germany, Early 18th Century.

THE ORIGIN OF THE BEAUVAIS 'EMPEROR OF CHINA SERIES'

The Audience of the Emperor is one of a series of tapestries depicting scenes from the life of the Chinese Emperor, believed to be Shunzhi (reigned 1644 - 1661) and KangXi (reigned 1661 - 1721).

The series traditionally included The Emperor on a Journey, The Emperor Sailing, The Empress Sailing, Gathering Pineapples, The Astronomers, The Return from the Hunt, The Empress' Tea, The Collation, The Gathering of Tea (as yet unidentified) and the most celebrated of all The Audience of the Emperor.

This series was originally designed by Guy-Louis Vernansal (d. 1729), Jean-Baptiste Belin de Fontenay (d. 1715) and Jean-Baptiste Monnoyer (d. 1699) for the Royal Beauvais Tapestry Manufactory between 1685 and 1690. A source of inspiration for the images was Johan Nieuhof's travel narrative which detailed the visit by a delegation of the Dutch East India Company to China from 1656 (*Legatio Batavica ad magnum Tartariae Chamum Sungteium, modernum Sinae imperatorem, 1665*).

The success of the series was undoubtedly due to the increased interest in China at the end of the 17th Century, which was already manifested with the importation of enormous quantities of goods from the Far East to France by the *Compagnie des Indes Orientales*. The enthusiasm was further heightened by Louis XIV's glamorous reception for the ambassadors of Siam in 1664 and the publication in the same year in the *Mercure Galant* of a long description of the travels of father Couplet to China.

Artist description:

Jean I Barraband was born around 1650 in Nègrepelisse in Languedoc and grew up in Aubusson, training with his father at the tapestry workshop he ran with his cousin Jean Mercier. Barraband then trained as a painter in Paris, and received an apprenticeship to the still life painter François Garnier arranged by the painter Claude Vignon, whose brother lived as a Protestant pastor in Aubusson. With the Edict of Fontainebleau in 1685 Barraband fled with many other tapestry artists from Aubusson and settled in Berlin, and upon receipt of a patent from Frederick William, Great Elector of Brandenburg established a tapestry workshop with his brother-in-law Pierre I Mercier called 'Mercier and Barraband'.

After his death in 1709, his son Jean II Barraband succeeded to the partnership with Mercier and expanded the manufactory. The first Berlin. The first recorded delivery of the Emperor of China or *Grossmogulenfolge* series in 1713 coincides with Jean II Barraband assuming ownership although it can be speculated that an earlier set might have been made for Queen Charlotte.