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THREE PIGEONS

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SNAKES BY ALBERTUS SEBA (1665-1736)

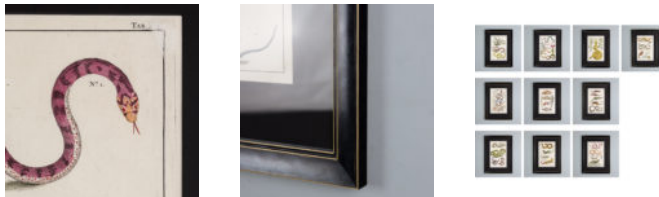
Early 18th century-copper engravings with original colour.

Published to illustrate Seba's 'cabinet of curiosities' Framed

DIMENSIONS: 65cm (25^{1/2}") High, 48cm (19") Wide, 2cm (0^{3/4}") Deep

PRICE: £540 each

STOCK CODE: P01103 J



HISTORY

Born in Etzel near Friedeburg, Seba moved to Amsterdam as an apprentice where later he opened a pharmacy near the harbour. Taking advantage of the location he asked sailors and ship surgeons to bring exotic plants and animal products which he could use for preparing drugs. At the same time, he also started to collect snakes, birds, insects, shells and lizards in his house. From 1711 he delivered drugs to the Russian court in Saint promoting his collection with the head-physician, Robert Erskine and in 1716 Peter the Great bought the complete collection. During the following years, Seba managed to amass another collection of natural specimens, which grew more extensive than the first. This enormous 'cabinet of curiosities' became internationally famous as one of the Amsterdam's essential sights and included some fakes such as a seven-headed hydra, to attract attention and interest. This second collection was illustrated and described in a set of engraved-plate volumes. Seba recruited artists, including Pierre Tanje, a Dutch engraver, to illustrate his thesaurus of animals and wrote most of the text for the first two volumes that accompanied the engravings. The last two of the four volumes were published after his death under the title of, 'Locupletissimi Rerum Naturalium Thesauri Accurata Descriptio et Iconibus Artificiosissimis Expressio, Per Universam Physices Historiam'.