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# WILLIAM HOGARTH, MARRIAGE A-LA-MODE

William Hogarth, Marriage A-La-Mode

Set of six prints published c1825. Old Hand-colour. Framed

DIMENSIONS: 38.1cm (15") High, 45.72cm (18") Wide

STOCK CODE: P00211

## HISTORY

This moralistic warning shows the disastrous results of an ill-considered marriage for money.

- In the first of the series, he shows an arranged marriage between the son of bankrupt Earl Squanderfield and the daughter of a wealthy but miserly city merchant. The son looks indifferent while the merchant's daughter is distraught and has to be consoled by the lawyer Silvertongue.
- In the second, there are signs that the marriage has already begun to break down. The husband and wife appear uninterested in one another, amidst evidence of their separate overindulgences the night before.
- The third in the series shows the Viscount visiting a quack with a young prostitute. The viscount, unhappy with the mercury pills meant to cure his syphilis, demands a refund while the young prostitute next to him dabs an open sore on her mouth, an early sign of syphilis.
- In the fourth, the old Earl has died and the son is now the new Earl and his wife, the Countess. As was the very height of fashion at the time, the Countess is holding a "Toilette", or reception, in her bedroom. The lawyer Silvertongue from the first painting is reclining next to the Countess, suggesting the existence of an affair. This point is furthered by the child in front of the pair, pointing to the horns on the statue of Actaeon a symbol of cuckoldry. Paintings in the background include the biblical story of Lot and his daughters, Jupiter and Io, and the rape of Ganymede

- Next, the new Earl catches his wife in a bagnio with her lover, the lawyer, and is fatally wounded by the lawyer. As she begs forgiveness from the stricken man, the murderer in his nightshirt makes a hasty exit through the window. A picture of a woman with a squirrel on her hand hanging behind the countess contains lewd undertones.
- Finally the Countess poisons herself in her grief and poverty-stricken widowhood, after her lover is hanged at Tyburn for murdering her husband. An old woman carrying her baby allows the child to give her a kiss, but the mark on her cheek and the caliper on her leg suggest that disease has been passed onto the next generation.