



AN 18TH CENTURY POLITICAL SATIRE WITH A HOT AIR BALLOON

£1,600.00

The Aerostatick Stage Balloon. Setts out from Swan with two Necks
Lad Lane every Monday Mor.g.

Cartographer	NIXON, John?
Date	1783
Catalogue	Catalogue 25: The Stuff of Nightmares
Stock #:	25840
Publication:	London: William Wells, 1783. Coloured etching. Sheet 370 x 255mm.
Condition:	Trimmed into image on left, replaced with mss.

DESCRIPTION:

A rare political satire, signed 'Hanibal Scratch del', possibly the pseudonym of John Colley Nixon. It shows a hot air balloon tethered to the ground by a tub marked 'vanity' and 'froth', with a man about to cut the ropes. Behind is the skyline of the City of London. Aboard, on three tiers of seats, are various celebrities with dubious reputations.

On the upper tier are three women, all known for their scandalous love-lives: Grace Elliott or Eliot, known as 'Dally the tall': actor Perdita (Mary Robinson); and Lady Seymour Dorothy Worsley.

On the middle tier are four ex-ministers: the Duke of Portland, Lord North, Charles James Fox & Edmund Burke (dressed as a Jesuit).

The lowest tier has 'Vestina' and quack doctor James Graham, proponents of the infamous Celestial Bed; Jeffery Dunstan, wig-seller and Mayor of Garratt; publican Sam House; and Prussian conjurer Gustavus Katterfelto, also a quack.

'The Swan with Two Necks' was a major coaching inn in the City of London serving the north, the name being a corruption of the 'two nicks' that marked a bird as belonging to the Vintner's Company. Lad Street was amalgamated into Gresham Street in 1845, although the inn did not close until 1860, killed off by the railways.