Rob Zanger Rare Books

RARE BOOKS, FINE ART, PHOTOGRAPHS



Catalogue Number 21 – October 2026

As election season reaches its fever pitch, it's worth remembering that political theater, conspiracy, and the struggle for power are nothing new. This month's selection of books and works on paper takes us from royal beheadings and failed plots to satirical caricatures, revolutionary schemes, and the darker side of political ambition. There are tyrants in disguise, leaders brought down to size, and more than a few monsters lurking behind respectable façades. With Halloween around the corner, the question practically asks itself: in politics, who's playing tricks, who's wearing a mask, and who will be left holding the bag?

Rob, Flavia, & Shawna

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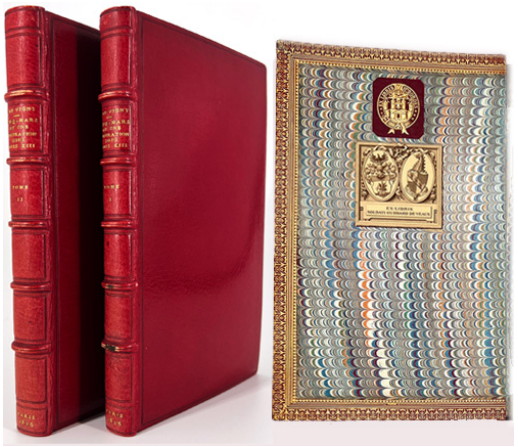


Vigny, Alfred de

Cinq-Mars; ou une conjuration sous Louis XIII, 1826

A rare first edition of Alfred de Vigny's pioneering French historical novel, set amid the political intrigues of Louis XIII's court and the conspiracy against Cardinal Richelieu. Inspired by Sir Walter Scott, Cinq-Mars helped establish the historical novel in France and later earned Victor Hugo's admiration. This handsome, finely bound set, in elegant red morocco by Lortic, is an exceptional example of French Romantic-era publishing. From the library of prominent bibliophile and book collector Soldati-Hubbard de-Veaux.

$ 3,500 >

European School, 19th century

Portrait of Fingal, or Finn MacCool, 1833

Depicting Fingal, or Finn McCool, the legendary warrior king of Gaelic mythology popularized by James Macpherson and later James Joyce, this portrait captures the heroic grandeur of a titan from Celtic folklore. The artwork may be influenced by the 1819 portrait that William Blake sketched from his active imagination during a late-night seance with astrologer John Varley. Though celebrated in epic literature, Fingal's historical existence remains debated; he is widely considered a mythical amalgamation rather than a single documented king, rooted in ancient 3rd-century Irish traditions of the Fianna war bands. Nonetheless, Macpherson presented him as an authentic historical monarch of Caledonia, immortalizing his warlike nobility in romantic European lore.

$ 600 >





Strutt, Joseph

The Regal and Ecclesiastical Antiquities of England; From Edward the Confessor to Henry the Eighth; Together with Many of the Great Persons that were eminent under their several Reigns; on Sixty Copper Plates, Engraved by the Author. The Whole Carefully Collected from Ancient Illuminated Manuscripts, 1793

A handsome and important visual history of English monarchy and ecclesiastical power, spanning Edward the Confessor to Henry VIII. Joseph Strutt drew his engravings directly from medieval and Renaissance manuscripts, creating an invaluable record of royal figures, clergy, courtiers, costumes, ceremonies, and the changing visual language of authority. This expanded first printing includes 72 sepia plates, including 12 added plates and a 24-page supplement. From the library of distinguished dress and textile historian John Lea Nevinson, later in the collection of Donald and Monique King.

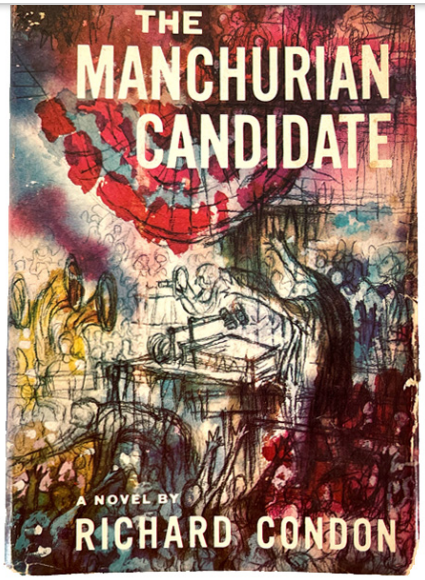
$ 1,000 >

Condon, Richard

The Manchurian Candidate, 1959

A rare first edition in the original dust jacket of Richard Condon's Cold War classic, a chilling satire of anti-Communist hysteria, political manipulation, and conspiracy in 1950s America. The story follows an American soldier subjected to brainwashing during the Korean War, whose conditioning is exploited as part of a plot reaching into the highest levels of government. Condon's paranoid vision of political power, manufactured loyalty, and the manipulation of public figures remains one of the era's most memorable political thrillers. The novel became the basis for John Frankenheimer's celebrated 1962 film starring Frank Sinatra, Laurence Harvey, Janet Leigh, and Angela Lansbury.

$ 1,575 >





Merian, Matthäus

The Beheading of the King of England, 1649

This image captures the brutal execution of King Charles I outside the Banqueting House on January 30, 1649. Atop the scaffold, the executioner holds high the King's severed head beside the fallen body, while Bishop Juxon holds the royal robes. The artwork immortalizes a dark turning point in history that marked the end of Divine Right and a shift towards Constitutional Monarchy.

$ 500 >



Epistolae Apollonii Tyanei, Anacharsidis, Euripidis, Theanus & Epistolae Hippocratis, Democriti, Heracliti, Diogenis, Cratetis; aliorumque ad eosdem, nunc primum editae Graece simul ac Latine, 1601

A fascinating first edition bringing together the supposed letters of some of antiquity's most celebrated thinkers, from Hippocrates, Democritus, Heraclitus, and Diogenes to Euripides, Anacharsis, and Apollonius of Tyana. Edited by the polymath Eilhard Lubin and printed in parallel Greek and Latin, these two rare epistolary anthologies offer a remarkable window onto the Renaissance fascination with classical philosophy and intellectual exchange. Particularly appealing to American collectors: a copy of the same 1601 edition was in Thomas Jefferson's personal library at Monticello.

$ 1,600 >

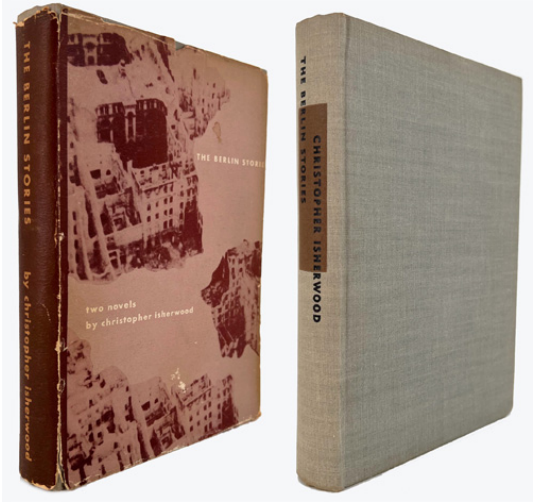
Cruikshank, George

Radical Parliament; "Plan to Assassinate Her Magestie's Ministers.", 1835



Arthur Thistlewood's Spencean Philanthropists are shown conspiring in their Cato Street hideout amid post-Napoleonic economic hardship and social unrest. Driven by poverty and political discontent, the radicals plotted to assassinate Prime Minister Lord Liverpool and his entire cabinet. Betrayed before they could act, the conspirators were arrested and executed for treason.

$ 275 >



Isherwood, Christopher

The Berlin Stories; Two novels: The Last of Mr. Norris and Goodbye Berlin, 1945

Isherwood's two celebrated portraits of Weimar-era Berlin, capturing a society marked by political instability, social transformation, and the gathering shadow of Nazism. The Last of Mr. Norris and Goodbye Berlin offer an intimate view of a city on the brink of profound change, populated by characters navigating the tensions of class, sexuality, politics, and survival. This first combined American edition, in its original photomontage dust jacket, is from the estate of noted literary scholar Robert Cecil Bald.

$ 300 >

English School, 19th century

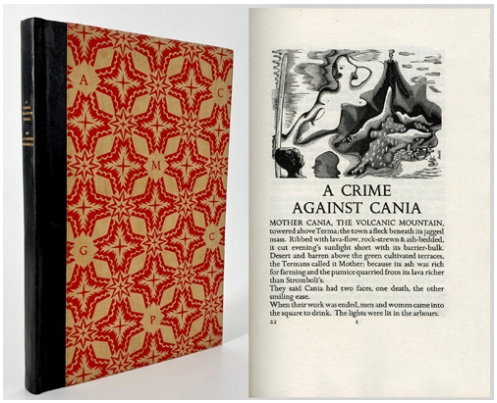
Don-Key, 1830



disguise a true jackass. Featuring a donkey sporting the official Lord Mayor gown, ceremonial chain, court dress, and oversized shoulder bows, the print playfully mocks Sir John Key, a prominent wholesale stationer and Whig politician. Key served as Sheriff of the City of London in 1824 before becoming Lord Mayor from 1830 to 1832. Labeled "DON-KEY," the satirical artwork brilliantly pairs sharp political bite with a clever visual pun on his surname. While Sir John Key held prestigious civic power, the artist made sure history remembered him as a braying leader draped in pomp, luxury, and absurdly oversized bowties.

$ 1,200 >





Calder-Marshall, Arthur / Golden Cockerel Press

A Crime Against Cania, 1934

A beautifully produced Golden Cockerel Press edition of Calder-Marshall's satirical novel, signed by the author and illustrated with four striking wood-engravings by Blair Hughes-Stanton. A fine example of the press's celebrated collaboration with contemporary writers and artists, combining elegant typography, fine printing, and Hughes-Stanton's bold graphic vision.

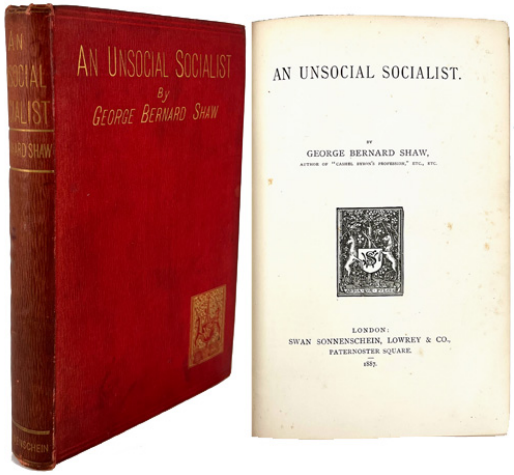
$ 250 >



The Battle of the Amazons (Bellum Amazonum), 1543

Pulsing with the movement characteristic of 16th-century printmaking, this composition forms part of Enea Vico's broader exploration of classical mythology. The oval image captures a violent clash of warrior women in furious combat. Though Amazons were long dismissed as purely mythical, archaeological discoveries in Central Asia and Europe, unearthing weapons buried in female graves, confirm real historical origins behind these legendary figures.

$ 1,200 >



Shaw, George Bernard

An Unsocial Socialist, 1887

A scarce first issue of Shaw's first published novel, and an unusually compelling association copy, inscribed by Mary Crane, wife of the celebrated Arts and Crafts artist Walter Crane. Shaw's early socialist convictions animate this witty and unconventional tale of revolution, romance, disguise, and class warfare, written as he was becoming deeply involved with the Fabian Society. The book's provenance places it squarely within the intellectual and artistic circles of 1880s London.

$ 4,000 >

BROWSE BOOKS

English School, early 19th century

The Cats Let Out of the Bag, or the Rats in Dismay, 1811

This Georgian era satirical artwork illustrates the Prince Regent trapping political figures, depicted as human-headed rats, with cats leaping to scatter them. Beyond serving as a striking allegory, the print reflects the sensationalist legacy of The Satirist, or



multiple libel charges and imprisonment for exposing London scandals.

$ 1,500 >



Italian School, 18th century

The Dethroning, circa 1800

Tension flares as soldiers in 18th-century attire clash, one drawing his blade in defiance, a lady by his side. Nearby, another stands resolute at the foot of an empty throne. Reimagining historical defiance through a modern lens, this artwork captures the legend of King Richard and his brave refusal of deference to the Holy Roman Empire.

$ 350 >

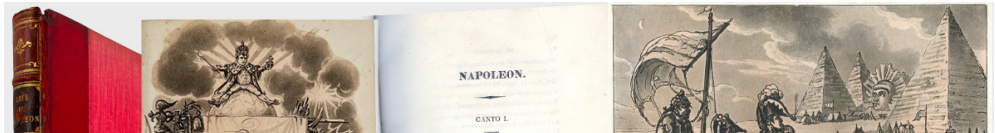
Le Sueur, Nicolas (after Federico Zuccari)

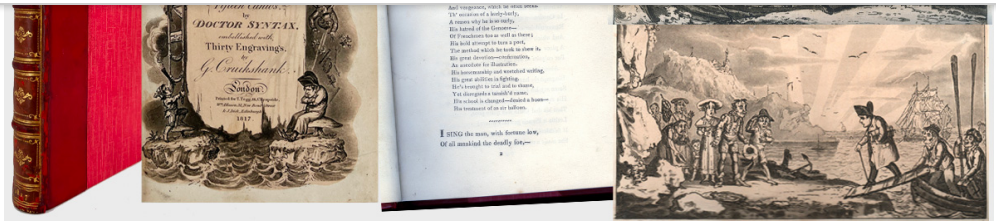
L'Empereur Henri IV aux pieds du Pape Grégoire VII, 1731

This engraving vividly captures a decisive moment of the Investiture Controversy in 1077, illustrating the dramatic shift in power between church and state. At Canossa Castle, Holy Roman Emperor Henry IV is shown bowing humbly before Pope Gregory VII. Stripped of his imperial majesty, the emperor kneels in desperation, offering his total submission to seek absolution and lift his excommunication. Pope Gregory VII sits exalted and enthroned under draped curtains, raising two fingers in a gesture of absolute authority and benediction. Surrounded by solemn onlookers and clergy, this striking composition symbolizes a historic victory of papal authority over secular rule, immortalizing the famous event where the world's most powerful monarch was brought low by spiritual power.

$ 2,000 >







Combe, William & George Cruikshank

The Life of Napoleon; A Hudibrastic Poem in Fifteen Cantos, 1817

A brilliant piece of post-Waterloo political satire, sending up Napoleon as the fallen master of “Plunder, Bloodshed, and Murder.” William Combe’s Hudibrastic verse is matched by 30 vivid sepia aquatints by George Cruikshank, transforming the emperor’s rise, excesses, downfall, and exile into a biting visual spectacle. A handsome example of Regency-era caricature and anti-Napoleonic propaganda.

$ 1,000 >

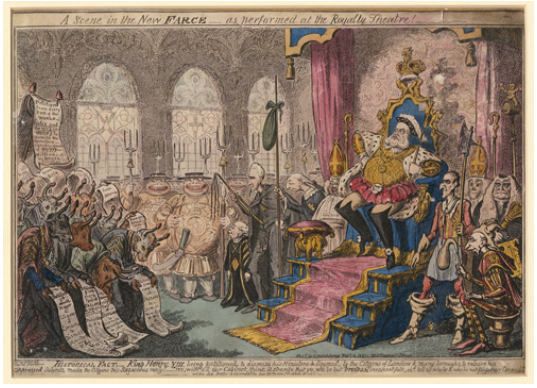


Boughton, George Henry (after)

The Smokers' Rebellion, circa 1880

When Governor Willem Kieft banned tobacco in 17th-century New Amsterdam, he expected obedience. Instead, he triggered a rebellion. Defiant residents gathered directly outside his doorstep, calmly puffing on their pipes until dense clouds of smoke filled the air. Overwhelmed by this clever act of playful resistance, the irritated governor was forced to rescind, and the ban became nothing but a bit of "dottle."

$ 175 >

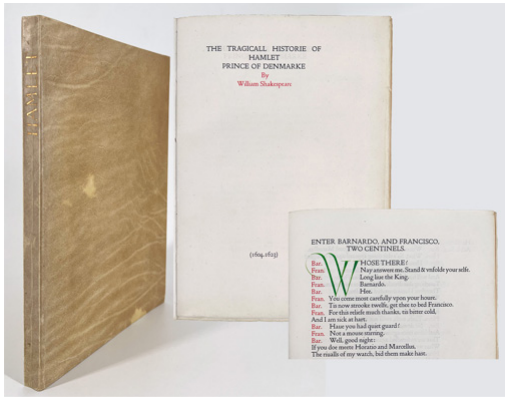


A Scene in the New Farce — as performed at the Royalty Theater, 1821

This razor-sharp caricature mocks George IV as a tyrannical Henry VIII receiving a petition to dismiss his grotesque ministers. His subjects become docile oxen, wearing liberty caps on their horns while greedy beefeaters eye them like meat. From decanter-marked stained glass to cuckold-referencing antlers, every detail exposes royal pride, excess, and corruption.

$ 1,800 >

BROWSE FINE ART & PRINTS



Doves Press / Shakespeare, William

The Tragicall Historie of Hamlet Prince of Denmarke, 1909

A superb Doves Press Shakespeare, the first of four Shakespeare plays printed by T. J. Cobden-Sanderson, this finely produced Hamlet explores surveillance, political legitimacy, corruption, revenge, and the instability of power. Printed in black and red with Edward Johnston's celebrated green calligraphic initial, this is one of only 250 copies and a quintessential Doves Press production.

$ 8,500 >

Tasso, Torquato

La Gerusalemme Liberata… Figurata da Bernardo Castello, 1617

One of the great illustrated editions of Tasso's Jerusalem Delivered, an epic of war, faith, power, and conquest whose subject had immediate political resonance in seventeenth-century Europe. Tasso's fictionalized account of the First Crusade appeared at a time when the Ottoman Empire was advancing through Eastern Europe.
This sumptuous 1617 folio is illustrated with 20



depicting battles, city views, warriors, rulers, and scenes of intrigue, each framed by elaborate architectural ornament. The title page features Mars, god of war, and Athena, goddess of wisdom and strategy. A remarkable synthesis of literature, art, politics, and the visual culture of power.

$ 4,500 >





Topham, Edward

The Union - Whom --- Has Join'd, Let No Man put Asunder!, 1783

The devil himself officiates this unlikely political marriage between Tory Lord North and Charles James Fox, two longtime adversaries united by a common goal: ousting Prime Minister Lord Shelburne. This 1783 satire lampoons the short-lived Fox–North coalition, proving that in politics, even the strangest bedfellows can make a deal.

$ 1,200 >

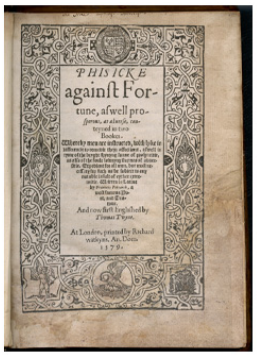
Petrarch (Francesco Petrarca)

Phisicke against Fortune [History of Gain and Fortune], 1579

A rare first English edition of Petrarch's influential guide to navigating prosperity and adversity, translated by Elizabethan physician Thomas Twyne. Composed of 254 dialogues on fortune, power, pleasure, suffering, and human conduct, this early humanist work offers surprisingly timeless reflections on how individuals—and societies—respond to changing circumstances.

$ 7,500 >







Kollwitz, Käthe

Zwei schwatzende Frauen mit zwei Kindern, 1930

This emotional image by the trailblazing German artist (and the first woman elected to the Prussian Academy of Arts) illustrates her dedication to portraying working-class struggles. While famous cycles like The



knew intimately after losing a son and grandson across two World Wars, this tender artwork turns toward hope. Grounded in her socialist leanings, the composition moves away from raw grief to embrace solidarity and the domestic bond. The older women lovingly anchor the younger figures, visually affirming the unbreakable continuity of life and human resilience despite surrounding hardship. Through expressive line work, Kollwitz immortalizes maternal protection as an enduring shield against sorrow.

$ 1,200 >

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