

# KARL&FABER

## Rembrandt Harmensz. van Rijn Lot 322

The French Bed ('Het Ledikantje')



Low estimate :

EUR 120,000.00

High estimate :

EUR 150,000.00

Buyers premium incl. VAT :

27 %

**Artist**

Rembrandt Harmensz. van Rijn

**Additional description**

Etching and drypoint on laid paper, watermark Foolscape with Five-pointed Collar (Hinterding K-a-b). (1646). 12.7 x 22.4 cm (sheet).

**Period**

(1606 Leiden - Amsterdam 1669)

**Technique**

Druckgrafik

**Provenance**

Adam Gottlieb Thiermann (?–Berlin 1859), verso with the collector's stamp (Lugt 2434); Kupferstichkabinett der Staatlichen Museen Berlin, with the collection and the duplicate stamp (Lugt 1633; 2482); C. G. Boerner, Leipzig, Auction 189, 26 November 1935, lot 133; Artemis Fine Arts, New York, December 1993, no. 13.

A very fine impression of this rare subject, printing with good burr on the figures and on the bed curtains. Nowell-Eusticke classifies this etching as 'RRRR - Practically unobtainable'. Only a limited number of impressions are known to be held in museum collections, suggesting firstly that the edition was small, and secondly that many prints may have been destroyed due to the sensitive nature of the subject matter. The printing plate was lost early on. Trimmed to the image. Erotic subjects have been an integral part of European printmaking since its earliest days in the early 16th century. As Ger Luijten points out in his analysis of this etching (Hinterding, 2000, pp. 218–220), the range of such imagery extends from subtle allusions to overtly explicit depictions, as exemplified by Marcantonio Raimondi's notorious series *I Modi* (1524). Often, erotic content was disguised in scenes from classical mythology, cautionary tales such as the story of the Prodigal Son, or as allegories of sin. Despite the ever-present risk of censorship, prohibition, or even legal prosecution, there remained a modest but persistent demand for such imagery. Compared to painting, the medium of printmaking offered greater discretion: small editions, privately collected and circulated only among trusted circles. Particularly rare examples include the miniature engravings by the Beham brothers. Rembrandt was undoubtedly familiar with these visual precedents. In his own works, he adopts established motifs of amorous behaviour – such as the canopied bed, the plumed hat or the glass of wine. Yet true to Rembrandt's subtle, deeply human and often gently humorous character, he makes no attempt to legitimise the subject through mythological reference or moral framing. His portrayal is neither vulgar nor didactic; rather, it conveys a quiet wit and a disarming naturalness – simply two young people enjoying an intimate moment together. The popular Dutch

title of this rare print, *Ledikant*, refers to the unusually opulent bed at the centre of the scene. In prosperous Dutch households of Rembrandt's time, sleeping quarters were typically built into the wall in the form of box beds. A free-standing, canopied 'French' bed like the one depicted here would have suggested wealth – and, perhaps, a certain degree of licentiousness. A small brown spot on the lower right edge. Verso evenly time-stained and with isolated, tiny brown spots. Smoothed horizontal crease marks verso, a small paper thinning to the left of the canopy. Remnants of a former mounting along the edges verso, otherwise in very good condition. Extremely rare!