



**National Library
of Sweden**

H E R R I C K

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**The Royal Library of Sweden Announces Recovery of
Rare 415-Year-Old Atlas Stolen 10 Years Ago**

“Wytfliet Atlas” is the First of More Than 50 Stolen Books Sought by Royal Library in Ongoing
Worldwide Recovery Investigation

New York - June 27, 2012 - The Royal Library of Sweden announced today that, with the assistance of the United States Government and Herrick, Feinstein, LLP, it has recovered a 415-year-old atlas which had been stolen along with dozens of other rare volumes ten years ago. Created by Cornelius van Wytfliet and known as the “Wytfliet Atlas,” the book had been part of the Royal Library collection for over 300 years prior to its theft. The successful return of the atlas is the result of an ongoing investigation and recovery effort launched by the Royal Library in cooperation with U.S. officials in hopes of locating all of the stolen books. The recovered book was presented by representatives of the Royal Library at a press conference held today at Herrick’s offices.

Gunilla Herdenberg, National Librarian at the Royal Library, stated: “We could not be more pleased to know that this national treasure is finally making its way home.” She also expressed her warm appreciation “to all those who assisted in recovering the Wytfliet Atlas,” describing it as “an irreplaceable piece of the Library’s collection and Sweden’s cultural heritage.” According to the Royal Library’s map librarian, Greger Bergvall, the Wytfliet Atlas is the first printed atlas solely devoted to depicting maps of North and South America. It contains nineteen rare maps, including the first printed map of California.

The theft of the rare books and its aftermath stunned the nation of Sweden at the time it was disclosed. The thief turned out to be the chief of the Royal Library’s Manuscript Department, Anders Burius. After he learned that the Library was going to conduct a special inventory of its collection when suspicions of inside thefts had arisen, he confessed to having stolen over 50 rare books from the Library over the almost ten years of his employment there. He was arrested, but upon his temporary release from custody, he committed suicide by cutting his wrists and severing the gas line to his kitchen stove, which then ignited and caused a major explosion in the center of Stockholm.

In June 2011, after the Wytfliet Atlas had been missing for nearly a decade, the Royal Library discovered that the atlas was being offered for sale at Arader Galleries in New York. The Library promptly contacted Arader, which returned it to Sotheby’s in London, the auction house from which it had purchased the atlas.

The Royal Library then retained the Art Law Group at New York-based Herrick, Feinstein, which specializes in, among other things, representing governments and individuals seeking to recover cultural property. The Library engaged Herrick to assist in securing the return of the Wytfliet Atlas and launching the search and recovery effort for all the books stolen from the Library by Mr. Burius located in the U.S. The Library and Herrick then contacted Sharon Cohen Levin, the chief of the Asset Forfeiture Unit at the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of New York for further assistance, and with the Office's support commenced the ongoing investigation.

Sotheby's in London, which had possession of the atlas, returned it to the Library. Representatives of the Library stated, "The Library is pleased that after discussions with Sotheby's it has achieved the return of the Wytfliet Atlas."

Jerker Rydén, Senior Legal Advisor to the Royal Library, explained, "The Library has assembled a team of lawyers in the U.S. and Europe with extensive experience recovering historically significant cultural objects." The Library is receiving advice and assistance from counsel in various countries in its efforts, including RAUE LLP in Germany and Farrer & Co LLP in London.

Steven D. Feldman, a partner at Herrick, emphasized that the "Royal Library of Sweden is actively working to locate and facilitate the return of all the rare volumes stolen by Burius currently located in the United States and elsewhere. We welcome any information concerning the whereabouts of these stolen books," a list of which is available at www.wytflietatlas.com.

For images of several pages from the Wytfliet Atlas, please visit <http://www.wytflietatlas.com>.

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