

*FLAMING PAGES*  
**The Illuminated Books of William Blake**

A Study Guide

by Lanier Graham

WORLD ART PRESS  
for the University Art Gallery, CSU East Bay

2006

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

WELCOME TO “FLAMING PAGES”

by Lanier Graham

WHAT IS AN ILLUMINATED BOOK?

WHAT IS A FACSIMILE?

by Lanier Graham

INTRODUCTION

by David Bindman

(reproduced from The Complete Illuminated Books)

CHRONOLOGY

by David Bindman

(reproduced from The Complete Illuminated Books)

FAMOUS BLAKE QUOTATIONS

(on the Information Wall)

.....  
CHECKLIST OF THE EXHIBITION

with WALL LABELS

by Lanier Graham

EARLY YEARS

MIDDLE YEARS

LATER YEARS

Text copyright 2006 by Lanier Graham

# WELCOME TO “FLAMING PAGES”

*“My fingers emit sparks of fire...” -- William Blake*

William Blake (1757-1827) was a poet, a painter, and a printmaker. His best known art is book art in which he invented remarkable ways to weave words and images into dynamic harmonies. Nothing like these visual-verbal compositions had been seen since the hand painted “illuminated manuscripts” of the Middle Ages, and nothing like his printed “Illuminated Books” (as Blake called them) would ever be seen again.

He lived modestly in London for most of his life with his beloved wife and partner, Catherine Sophia Boucher, who bound his books and colored some of the plates. After a seven-year apprenticeship under James Basire, ending in 1779, he earned a meager living as a commercial engraver. But his heart was in the books he wrote, printed, and published himself. Although little appreciated during his lifetime, he is now seen as one of the most creative artists of the Romantic era, and the only person in history to be regarded as both a great poet and a great artist.

Some of his books are simple enough for children. Others are as dense as Dante or Milton. All along, he thundered against the excesses of mechanical reasoning and materialism and argued passionately for the balance of heart and mind, of reason and imagination. He cried out for liberty, justice, and joy. He called on every nation to see their shortcomings and move beyond them. He believed in Christ, the Prophets, and Angels, but he felt the Christian Church had moved too far from the true spirit of Divine Love. He dreamed of a purified world which he thought of as a new Jerusalem.

His figures developed from the muscularity of Michelangelo and Raimondi, and the expressive elongations of medieval sculpture. In Durer’s prints, Blake loved the bursts of Divine Light. Sometimes Blake stressed corporeality. Sometimes flesh dematerializes into a spiritualized physicality. Many figures look quite androgynous. In words and images Blake celebrated the mythic image of androgyny, the spiritual ideal of male-female balance, as in the traditions of Alchemy, Kabbalah, and Hinduism all of which he seems to have known. Exactly how he printed his words and images is still being debated. How he was able to fuse words and images into such profoundly moving combinations, page after page, in waves of glowing color, is an even greater mystery.

His epic paragraphs are filled with mythic symbols which require serious study to comprehend. With each successive level of understanding, appreciation for the layered modes of expression grows. Each line of free verse, written in his own hand, is an undulating series of subtle visual pulsations. In the process, he carved the structure of each verbal phrase into units of measure that evoke in almost musical rhythms the inner meaning of the words, and simultaneously reverberate with the images. His figurative lines can be as fluid as water over flower petals or as intense as screams. Very often his pages are flaming visions with the temperature of the flame reflecting the emotional condition of the subject. Taking little credit for his luminous productions, he was a mystic who understood self-transcendence and attributed authorship to Higher Powers.

His dynamic linearity and explosively spontaneous words have inspired many artists and poets over the last 200 years from Rossetti, Yeats, and the Art Nouveau masters of the late 19th century, to Allen Ginsberg and the Beat Poets, and multimedia artists of our own time. The depth of Blake’s humanity and spirituality continues to inspire millions. Some of his most moving words, set to music as a hymn, are still sung in many churches.

This exhibition developed from a wish to present a comprehensive selection of Blake’s primary books as the 4th exhibition in our continuing series on The Art of the Book. With loans of the famous Blake Trust editions by Trianon Press from the Special Collections of the CSUEB Library, that dream has come true. Every one of Blake’s Illuminated Books (the ones he wrote and printed himself) is represented in this historical survey of how facsimile editions have made Blake’s extremely rare original editions available to a wider audience. Until recent developments in the art of printing, Blake’s Illuminated Books could only be seen separately in many different locations. Few if any facsimiles have been crafted more carefully than these modern Blake editions. They do lack the richly engraved texture of the original editions, of course, and the mysterious luminosity that seems to radiate up from underneath each page. However, they have played a major role in making known that Blake the artist is as important as Blake the poet.

It is a special privilege to be able to present in one gallery, for the first time, the full development of Blake’s Illuminated Books. Special thanks to Martin Butlin for encouraging this project many years

ago when he came to see San Francisco's latest Blake acquisition, Morton Paley for kindly reading the manuscript for this brochure and the wall labels, the Institute for Aesthetic Development for donating Blake books to the Special Collections of the CSUEB Library, Myoung-ja Lee Kwon and Richard Apple of the CSUEB Library for loaning their rare volumes, John Windle for loans of 19th century Blake facsimiles, my colleague James Petrillo for curating the multimedia portion of this exhibition, including a performance piece, and the dedicated Gallery staff: Ryan Onstine, Jill Therrien, and Philip Ringler.

Lanier Graham, Director, University Art Gallery, CSUEB

## **What is an "ILLUMINATED BOOK?"**

### **What is a FACSIMILE?**

Blake was inspired by the hand painted Illustrated Manuscripts of the Middle Ages in which words & images were combined by richly dynamic ways. He regarded this art form, and all Gothic art forms, as expressions of the most true Christian religion. Those were unique volumes, available to only a few. Blake, the democratic printer, wanted reproducibility. About 1788 he developed a remarkable technique that enabled him to print from one plate words he wrote and images he engraved. The resulting *Illuminated Books* (as he called them) have something of the look of Illuminated Manuscripts.

Earning his living as a commercial engraver, he was called on to provide illustrations for a wide variety of books. Sometimes he designed the plates and engraved them. Sometimes, he engraved plates after designs by other authors. Sometimes he provided the images quite apart from how the words were printed. Sometimes he designed relationships between his illustrations and the author's words. As interesting as they are, those commercial books are not the primary subject of this exhibition.

*Illuminated Books* by Blake are defined as those he conceived, wrote, designed, engraved, printed, and published himself. These books are distinguished from the other books he illustrated by the dynamic visual integration of his words with his images both rendered with his own hand. Not all of them were colored by Blake or his wife. However, the best known examples have been colored either with printer's ink or watercolor or both. These are Blake's most famous achievements as an artist, and the focus of this exhibition.

As a rule, only a few copies of each *Illuminated Book* survive. Sometimes only one copy survives. Probably only a few copies were made. Not only were such books very labor intensive, but very few people were interested in buying such strange books. Only his *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* enjoyed a modest commercial success during his life time. It continues to enjoy popularity today as a trade paperback.

Most of his other *Illuminated Books* are known primarily to collectors of limited edition facsimiles volumes in which the original books have been replicated as exactly as possible, often with plates of the same size. It is because of exceptional faithfulness to the original visual experience that a facsimile is regarded as something much more than a mere reproduction of the type usually found in art books. Reproductions can be very far from the qualities of the original work. So much has been done with facsimiles in recent years that a new dialog has developed around degrees of verisimilitude in printed and digitized images. Here is a special category of "virtual reality."

The same type of visual analysis used on original prints can be used to evaluate the qualities of facsimile prints. Some facsimile pages are so good that they have fooled experts. The facsimile editions in this exhibition cover the full chronological range from the 19th century publications by Swinburne in 1866 and Muir in 1885, to a trade edition facsimile of 2004. The quality ranges from small paperbacks available for a few dollars to the best facsimile volumes ever produced. The best were made at the Trianon Press in Paris for the William Blake Trust. The Trianon process of reproduction was collotype, a highly accurate photographic process, that was completed by the pochoir hand coloring of each plate, and then very fine leather binding.

For three decades, starting in the 1950s, the Blake Trust published beautiful limited edition facsimiles of the *Illuminated Books*. Following the publication of those deluxe limited editions, the Trust published or helped to publish modestly printed trade editions in hardcover and paperback for a wide audience in collaboration with Oxford University Press, Princeton University Press, and Thames & Hudson. Dover's miniature editions are available for a few dollars. When the Blake Trust began, an original Blake book could be purchased for a several hundred dollars. Today it is almost impossible to buy original *Illuminated Books*, no

matter how much money a collector or museum might have. Even single *Illuminated* prints sell for over a million dollars. Facsimiles are as close as most people can come to the original experience.

Until the contemporary era after World War II, almost all Blake studies were focused on his poetry. His visual art was not widely known, even in academic circles. It is largely due to these deluxe facsimile editions, and the many trade editions that followed, that it is now widely appreciated that Blake the artist is as important as Blake the poet.

How many *Illuminated Books* did he make? Scholars count in different ways, but there is a majority opinion which places the range between 18 and 21, depending on how one counts. There are 18 true books, and three other “books” of only one or two pages, all of which have the core quality of having his words and his images rendered in his hand on the same page.

The definitive list is available in many places including three authorities quite often referred to today: David V. Bindman, [William Blake: The Complete Illuminated Books \(all in one volume with Trianon Press plates\)](#), David V. Erdman, [The Illuminated Blake: William Blake’s Complete Illuminated Works with a Plate-by-Plate Commentary \(black & white plates\)](#), and the online Blake Archive at [www.blakearchive.org](http://www.blakearchive.org). This remarkable database, which was started in the 1990s by Morris Eaves, Robert N. Essick, & Joseph Viscomi, is the most important collection of digital facsimiles of all the pages of all the titles in the canon of Blake’s *Illuminated Books*. That website is available for your use around the corner in the Electronic Gallery. The Bindman and Erdman books are also available in this exhibition for you to look at in detail.

Slight differences of sequence and date appear on various scholarly lists. Blake sometimes did different editions of the same basic material, and sometimes worked on a book for many years. There can be 10 or 15 years between start and finish. There is room for informed disagreement among scholars on dating. Blake himself was not always consistent. Mechanical exactitude was far from his mind. Indeed, he often seems to have enjoyed being inconsistent so that each copy of each title would be “original.”

[Illustrations of the Book of Job](#), his last completed masterpiece as a book artist, is a special case. Here he did not weave word & image together as he did before, but there is a rich weaving of visual and verbal images in black, white, and gray. It is included here as published, along with some color versions. The exhibition concludes with his illustrations for Dante’s [Divine Comedy](#), a book project that was never completed. One can only imagine what the final book might have been. There were many studies, but only a few images were engraved. While it is not an *Illuminated Book*, the images are so powerful that they have been described as Blake’s “last will and testament.”

~ LG

# INTRODUCTION

by David Bindman

(reproduced from The Complete Illuminated Books on the Information Wall)

[text TO FOLLOW]

# CHRONOLOGY

by David Bindman

(reproduced from The Complete Illuminated Books on the Information Wall)

[text TO FOLLOW]

-----

# FAMOUS BLAKE QUOTATIONS

(Displayed on the Information Wall)

**"My fingers emit sparks of flame... ."**

**"As a man is, so he sees."**

**"Energy is eternal delight."**

**"Eternity is in love with the productions of time."**

**"He who binds to himself a joy does the winged life destroy;  
but he who kisses the joy as it flies lives in eternity's sunrise."**

**"Love seeketh not to please itself."**

**"Arise and drink your bliss, for every thing that lives is holy!"**

**"And we are put on earth a little space  
That we may learn to bear the beams of love."**

**"If the doors of perception were cleansed  
every thing would appear...as it is, infinite."**

# INTRODUCTORY GALLERY

## WALL #1

1.

A. C. Swinburne

**WILLIAM BLAKE: A CRITICAL ESSAY**

**WITH ILLUSTRATIONS FROM BLAKE'S DESIGNS IN FACSIMILE**

London: Hotten (1866) 1868

Collection: John Windle, San Francisco

This book was the first critical study of Blake's work and the first to contain color facsimiles of Blake prints. After that there were many books with reproductions, but only a few color facsimiles until the volumes of the Blake Trust after World War II. During the century in between, some of the best color facsimiles were published by Muir and Dent. Examples are on view in Gallery 2

2.

William Blake

**"Glad Day" or "Albion rose"**

Engraving composed & executed by Blake.

1st version (drawing) 1780. 1st state 1796. This 2nd state c1804

as replicated by lithography in Geoffrey Keynes, Engravings by William Blake: The Separate Plates, A Catalogue Raisonné.

Dublin: Emery Walker 1956

Collection: John Windle, San Francisco

Conceived soon after the end of his apprenticeship, this is perhaps Blake's best known print.

It represents the joyous spirit of liberty. It was not made for an Illuminated Book but does relate

to the story of Albion, a central Blake hero, who is a personification of humanity becoming free from the chains of tyrannical reason and materialism. The first version, a drawing, Blake dated 1780.

The 1st engraved state appeared in the Large Book of Designs which Blake printed in 1796 in color. This better-known 2nd state, not colored, is described by Blake as Albion on the plate.

3.

William Blake

**JERUSALEM THE EMANATION OF THE GIANT ALBION** 1804+

London: Trianon Press for the William Blake Trust 1952

Collection: CSUEB Library, Special Collections.

This black & white facsimile, one of the Blake Trust's first efforts, came long before the brilliant color facsimiles of 1974 and 1991 which are on view in the last gallery.

## WALL #2

4.

**WILLIAM BLAKE'S WATER-COLOUR DESIGNS**

**FOR THE POEMS OF THOMAS GRAY** edited by Geoffrey Keynes,

London: Trianon Press for the Blake Trust, 1971.

Collection: John Windle, San Francisco



A trade edition with some facsimile plates based on the deluxe edition. Gray is one of the best known of the early Romantic poets. Many school children still recite "Elegy written in a Country Church-Yard." Blake made many watercolor studies about 1797 but the book project was never completed.

5.

William Blake

**"The Descent of Odin (Serpent and the Wolf Dog)"**

Facsimile plate from **WILLIAM BLAKE'S WATER-COLOUR DESIGNS FOR THE POEMS OF THOMAS GRAY** edited by Geoffrey Keynes, London: Trianon Press for the Blake Trust, 1971

Collection: Institute for Aesthetic Development, Brentwood

6.

**BLAKE'S WATERCOLORS FOR THE POEMS OF THOMAS GRAY WITH COMPLETE TEXTS**

Mineola, New York: Dover 2000

Collection: Institute for Aesthetic Development, Brentwood

Using Trianon Press plates, this trade edition replicates in color all 116 of Blake's watercolor studies.

7.

**A TROUBLED PARADISE:**

**WILLIAM BLAKE'S VIRGIL WOOD ENGRAVINGS**

by Robert Essick & John Windle, San Francisco: Windle, 1999

[with facsimile plates of all 17 of the original prints of 1821]

Wood engravings composed & executed by Blake, 1821

Collection: Institute for Aesthetic Development, Brentwood

Gift of John Windle

These are Blake's only wood engravings. They first appeared in a Latin textbook.

WALL#3

8.

**[ABOVE] Thomas Phillips**

**PORTRAIT OF WILLIAM BLAKE, 1807**

oil. National Portrait Gallery, London

poster reproduction

Collection: Institute for Aesthetic Development, Brentwood

9, 10, & 11

**[RIGHT] William Blake**

**Three plates from Robert Blair's THE GRAVE**

Unknown publisher, 19th century

illustrated with images designed by Blake & engraved by Schiavonetti.

Titlepage: "The Skeleton Reanimated," "Death of the Strong Wicked Man," and "The Soul exploring the Recesses of the Grave."

Collection: Institute for Aesthetic Development, Brentwood

**[IN THE WALL CASE]**

12.

**[LEFT:] Frontispiece & Titlepage in**

**Robert Blair's THE GRAVE**

London: Double-Elephant & Quarto Co, 1973

The frontispiece portrait of Blake is by Schiavonetti after Phillips.

The rest of the engravings in this book were composed by Blake

& executed by Schiavonetti, 1808

Collection: Institute for Aesthetic Development, Brentwood

Blair's popular neo-gothic poem was first published in 1743. For this 1808 book Blake made 12 compositions, but the engraving were done by Schiavonetti who stayed close to Blake's drawings.

This paperback facsimile is the same size as the original edition.

13.

[RIGHT:] **ROBERT BLAIR'S *THE GRAVE***

**ILLUSTRATED BY WILLIAM BLAKE: A STUDY WITH FACSIMILE**

by Robert Essick & Robert Morton

London: Scolar Press 1982

Collection: CSUEB Library, Special Collections

WALL #4

## **BLAKE IN OUR TIME**

Blake continues to be very much alive in our contemporary world as a poet, as an artist, and as an inspiration. On display in this case are artifacts that indicate how wide that popularity is. His poem "The Tiger" has appeared in more anthologies than any other poem in the English language. His poetry is still sung in English churches. The Beat Generation poet Allen Ginsberg set his poems to music. A number of contemporary songsters, such as Patti Smith, are making music in his honor. "The Doors" named themselves after a line by Blake. Blake's work appears on the cover of Art History textbooks. Museums in England and the United States have presented major exhibitions in recent years. Facsimiles of his Illuminated Books are available for very modest prices. In addition to several documentaries, feature films such as "Dead Man" and "Jerusalem" have recently been made with Blake's character as the central figure. There are even buttons and tattoos! - Jill Therrien

14.

William Blake

**SONGS OF INNOCENCE AND OF EXPERIENCE**

Edited by Ruthven Todd

London: Falcon Press 1947

Collection: Institute for Aesthetic Development, Brentwood

Gift of A. B. B. MacLeMore

15.

William Blake, **SONGS OF INNOCENCE AND OF EXPERIENCE**

Edited by Geoffrey Keynes

Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press with Trianon Press, 1970

Collection: Institute for Aesthetic Development, Brentwood

A medium-format trade paperback using the plates of the deluxe Trianon Press editions.

16.

William Blake, **SONGS OF INNOCENCE**

[On the cover: "Color Facsimile of the First Edition with 31 Color Plates"]

New York: Dover 1971 (\$2.00 in 1971)

Collection: Institute for Aesthetic Development, Brentwood

A small-format trade paperback. Students owe a great deal to Dover Publications for many available full-color facsimiles such as this one available for very small prices.

17.

William Blake, **SONGS OF EXPERIENCE**

[on the cover: "Facsimile Reproduction with 26 Plates in Full Color"]

New York: Dover 1984 (\$3.50 in 1984)

Collection: Institute for Aesthetic Development, Brentwood

A small-format trade paperback. Students owe a great deal to Dover Publications for many available full-color facsimiles such as this one available for very small prices.

18.

William Blake, **THE MARRIAGE OF HEAVEN AND HELL**

Edited by Geoffrey Keynes

Oxford: Oxford University Press with Trianon Press 1975 (\$7.95 in 1975)

Collection: Institute for Aesthetic Development, Brentwood

A medium-format trade paperback using the plates of the deluxe Trianon editions. The original Trianon Press series, finely bound, was expensive. The OUP series made those wonderful plates available to a wide public for a modest price. Blake worked on the original edition about 1789-90.

19.

William Blake, **THE MARRIAGE OF HEAVEN AND HELL**

Mineola, New York: Dover 2004 (\$4.95 in 2004)

Collection: Institute for Aesthetic Development, Brentwood

A small-format trade paperback using the plates of the deluxe Trianon editions.

20.

William Blake, **JERUSALEM**

Edited by Morton D. Paley

Princeton: Princeton University Press with the Blake Trust 1998

Collection: CSUEB Library, Special Collections

Gift of the Institute for Aesthetic Development, Brentwood

A large-format trade edition using plates from the deluxe Trianon editions. It is Volume 1 of the series which replicates all the Illuminated Books. The entire series is available in the Special Collections of the CSUEB Library.

21.

**BLAKE'S JOB:**

**WILLIAM BLAKE'S ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE BOOK OF JOB**

Engravings composed & executed by Blake, 1825

Edited by S. Foster Damon

New York: Dutton (1966) 1969

Collection: Institute for Aesthetic Development, Brentwood

This was the last of his own books that Blake completed. It was made without color.

22.

**A PORTRAIT OF BLAKE** by Leonard Baskin

Lithograph from a Wood Engraving, signed [nd]

Collection: Institute for Aesthetic Development, Brentwood

23.

**SONGS OF INNOCENCE & EXPERIENCE BY WILLIAM BLAKE TUNED BY ALLEN GINSBERG**

Phonograph record by MGM Records [1970]

Collection: Institute for Aesthetic Development, Brentwood

24.

**BLAKE ART TATTOOS** by Marty Noble

Dover Publications, 2002

Collection: Institute for Aesthetic Development, Brentwood

Gift of John Windle

25-44.

**Twenty BLAKE BUTTONS**

ca.2005

Collection: Institute for Aesthetic Development, Brentwood

=====

## ADJUNCT INFORMATION SPACES

There are many interactive elements in this exhibition,  
in part because CSUEB is a major media center,  
in part because most of the CSUEB Art Majors are media majors,  
and in part because many visitors like  
to look up their own information.

Adjoining the Introductory Gallery to the right  
is an Information Wall  
with the "Introduction,"  
"Illustrated Chronology,"  
and famous Blake quotations,  
along with books that visitors  
can leaf through  
at their leisure:

The Complete Illuminated Books edited by Bindman,  
The Illuminated Blake edited by Erdman,  
the Jerusalem facsimile edited by Paley,  
Blake's Job edited by Damon,  
and Blake's Dante by Klonsky.

Adjoining the Introductory Gallery to the left  
is the Electronic Gallery which has two 18-inch monitors  
connected to the internet.

A wall label guides visitors  
to recommended websites, such as the Blake Archive,  
but the larger world of Blake information online  
also is available.

The wall label, surrounded by a collage  
of printouts from various websites by  
Philip Ringler, is as follows:

Blake is vast.  
He includes many realities.

What is

your favorite Blake image?

Your favorite Blake line?

Your favorite combination?

Find your favorite Blake  
in the library,  
in your own facsimiles  
(for the price of a movie),  
or right here online  
where you can visualize  
his words & images  
in a wide range  
of sizes.

# Early Years

## GALLERY #2

---

1.

**William Blake**

**ALL RELIGIONS ARE ONE** c1788

**London: Trianon Press for the William Blake Trust 1970**

**Collection: CSUEB Library, Special Collections**

About 1788, while making this small book and the following one, There Is No Natural Religion, Blake invented a form of relief etching that enabled him to print his words and images from the same plate. The basic message is that of the title. Each religion is an expression of the "Poetic Genius" of humanity. The argument is presented in a series of emblematic images with aphoristic statements.

---

2.

**William Blake**

**THERE IS NO NATURAL RELIGION** c1788

**London: Trianon Press for the William Blake Trust 1971**

**Collection: CSUEB Library, Special Collections**

In a small format quite like that of All Religions Are One, Blake presents a two-part argument. In the first part are the rationalistic positions of John Locke. In the second part are Blake's refutations of rationalistic religion with declarations of superior spiritual truth.

---

3.

**William Blake**

**SONGS OF INNOCENCE** 1789

**London: Trianon Press for the William Blake Trust 1954**

**Collection: CSUEB Library, Special Collections**

A book of children's poems, pervaded by a gentle spirituality. What is evoked is that state of mind which precedes the horrific duality of ordinary adult consciousness in which reason is at war with emotion. It is the first of his full-color Illuminated Books, and the only one that enjoyed a modest commercial success during his lifetime. The basic elements of his mature style of visual-verbal synthesis are present. Among the best known lines in this book are:

*"And we are put on earth a little space  
That we may learn to bear the beams of love."*

-----  
4.

**William Blake**

**SONGS OF EXPERIENCE 1794**

**New York: Minton Balch 1927**

**Collection: CSUEB Library, Special Collections**

This book was added to SONGS OF INNOCENCE in 1794, and usually bound with it. This is a less joyful collection of poems which sets adult experience against the innocence of childhood. Blake continued to print the combined collections, with variations, for many years. Included in Songs of Experience are the legendary lines from his most famous poem:

*"Tyger Tyger burning bright,  
In the forest of the night;  
What immortal hand or eye  
Could frame they fearful symmetry?"*

-----

5.

**William Blake**

**THE BOOK OF THEL 1789**

**Providence: Brown University 1971**

**Collection: CSUEB Library, Special Collections**

**Gift of the Institute for Aesthetic Development, Brentwood**

The story is about a maiden's quest to understand mortality. Although given many clues, she fails to feel a oneness with the natural cycle of birth, death, and continuous rebirth.

-----

6.

**William Blake**

**THE MARRIAGE OF HEAVEN AND HELL 1790**

**London: Trianon Press for the William Blake Trust 1975**

**Collection: CSUEB Library, Special Collections**

**Gift of the Institute for Aesthetic Development, Brentwood**

This is a book of particular richness, both verbally and visually, with vibrant expressions of Blake's metaphysics. He asserts the classic position of Perennial Philosophy that eternity and time interpenetrate, and that "Eternity is in love with the productions of time." He argues (as he will for the rest of his life) that a worship of rationalized reality over emotional reality leads to a death of the Soul. The Age of Enlightenment had put too much emphasis on what Blake calls "Analytics." This so-called heavenly aspect of life must be balanced with what many think of as hellish - spontaneous impulses. Blake further states that "Energy is eternal delight," and that to realize our divinity as human beings we must lead spontaneous lives, taking joy in the non-rational energies of the body. In dialogues with the Biblical Prophets Isaiah and Ezekial, Blake listens to them explain their beliefs. They explain that they have discovered "the infinite in everything," and want to raise others "into a perception of the infinite." That section concludes with the resounding lines:

*"If the doors of perception were cleansed  
every thing would appear...as it is, infinite -"*

# Middle Years

## GALLERY #3

---

7.

**William Blake**

**VISIONS OF THE DAUGHTERS OF ALBION 1793**

**London & Toronto: Dent 1932**

**Collection: Institute for Aesthetic Development, Brentwood**

After a powerful frontispiece, comes the story of a sexually liberated woman named Oothoon and her troubled relationship with two lovers: Theotormon (Emotion) and Bromion (Reason). The Daughters of Albion (England/Humanity) hear the tormented cries of Oothoon as she seeks to find the divine balance between emotion and reason, and they sigh with her. Blake's closing words thunder for the all too neglected intuitive side of life: "*Arise and drink your bliss, for every thing that lives is holy!*" Along the way, Blake is criticizing sexual repression, slavery, and colonialism.

Digital Reproductions from VISIONS

---

8.

**William Blake**

**AMERICA a PROPHECY 1793**

**London: Trianon Press for the William Blake Trust 1963**

**Collection: CSUEB Library, Special Collections**

The first of the large-scale Prophecy Books of the 1790s. It is Blake's response to the horrific events of the bloody French Revolution, and the more promising events of the American Revolution. The divine positive energy of revolution is personified by Orc. Orc confronts Urizen (Reason), the Fallen Angel who is harming all of England, and all of the modern world, by generating an excessive worship of reason.

Digital Reproductions from AMERICA



---

9.

**William Blake**

**EUROPE a PROPHECY 1794**

**London: Trianon Press for the William Blake Trust 1969**

**Collection: CSUEB Library, Special Collections**

A continuation of the tale of the conflict between the spontaneous creative energy of Orc and the deadly energy of Urizen (Reason), whose incarnation is Isaac Newton who mechanized the modern perception of the universe. Included is a long list of sad events since the spontaneous love that Christ radiated. The frontispiece, usually called "The Ancient of Days" is one of Blake's best known plates. It shows an old gray bearded man in the sky holding an open compass down toward the earth. Once thought to symbolize the beneficent act of Creation, it is now considered symbolic of Urizen (Reason) imposing excessive rationality on the people of the earth. Blake predicts an apocalyptic revolution against the chains of Reason.

9a.

William Blake

An Early Version of "Ancient of Days,"

the frontispiece of EUROPE a PROPHECY

c1794. electrographic reproduction (reduced)

Collection: Institute for Aesthetic Development, Brentwood

This is one of Blake's best known images. He made many versions right up until his final days. Some think the very lightly colored versions of this image may have been colored by Catherine Sophia Blake, his wife.

9b.

William Blake

An Early Version of "Ancient of Days,"

the frontispiece of EUROPE a PROPHECY

c1795. electrographic reproduction (reduced)

Collection: Institute for Aesthetic Development, Brentwood

9c.

William Blake

A late version of "Ancient of Days"

the frontispiece of EUROPE a PROPHECY

c1821. electrographic reproduction (reduced)

Collection: Institute for Aesthetic Development, Brentwood

9d.

William Blake

A late version of "Ancient of Days"

the frontispiece of EUROPE a PROPHECY

c1821. poster reproduction (enlarged)

Collection: Institute for Aesthetic Development, Brentwood

Digital Reproductions from EUROPE

-----  
10.

**William Blake**

**THE FIRST BOOK OF URIZEN 1794**

**in THE URIZEN BOOKS** edited by David Worrell

Princeton: Princeton University Press with the William Blake Trust 1995

Collection: CSUEB Library, Special Collections

Gift of the Institute for Aesthetic Development, Brentwood

The story is a Creation Myth, a retelling of Genesis. Reason (Urizen) divides itself from the original cosmic unity. Los (creative/artistic energy) sets out to portray Urizen so humanity can perceive it for what it is, and guard against rationalism and materialism. Orc (revolutionary energy) is chained to a rock (at least for now). Urizen has entrapped humanity in a "Net of Religion." The title of this book is misleading as there were no later books of Urizen *per se*. However, the Urizen theme is continued in later books.

Digital Reproductions from Urizen

-----

11.

**William Blake**

**THE SONG OF LOS 1795**

**London: Trianon Press for the William Blake Trust 1975**

**Collection: CSUEB Library, Special Collections**

A continuation of the story of the evil role of Urizen (Reason) in the development of religion in Africa and Asia. Los personifies creative/artistic energy that is trapped in a "Net of Religion." Cosmic harmony will be restored when Urizen is overthrown.

-----

12.

**William Blake**

**THE BOOK OF LOS 1795**

**London: Trianon Press for the William Blake Trust 1976**

**Collection: CSUEB Library, Special Collections**

Eno, a matriarchal bard, tells more about the evil from Urizen. Los feels the pain of the world, makes matter from the Void, and binds Urizen.

-----

13.

**William Blake**

**THE BOOK OF AHANIA 1795**

**London: Trianon Press for the William Blake Trust 1973**

**Collection: CSUEB Library, Special Collections**

The story is about the Children of Israel lead by Moses. Urizen's female emanation, Ahania, began as Pleasure but was twisted by Urizen's Moral Law into Sin.

-----  
14.

**William Blake**

**MILTON a POEM 1804+**

**London: Trianon Press for the William Blake Trust 1967**

**Collection: CSUEB Library, Special Collections**

Begun in 1804 but not completed until about 1810 and expanded about 1818. The text pages are printed, like most of his earlier books, but the full-page plates are colored with watercolor washes. The density and complexity of Milton anticipates Jerusalem. Blake regarded Milton as the greatest of English poets, and identified with him as a fellow poet inspired by Angels. (But he did not like his Puritanism.)

The story starts with Milton returning to earth from heaven. He walks with Blake, somewhat like Virgil walked with Dante in The Divine Comedy. Blake portrays more cosmic conflict between the forces of Good & Evil, and rails against the "dark Satanic Mills" - the dehumanizing factories of the Industrial Revolution that were filling the landscape of England. Eventually, Milton reunites with his feminine aspect and thus moves toward a consciousness in which duality is resolved.

Blake again is speaking of the ultimate need for self-transcendence, and of the ideal psycho-cosmic state of the "hermaphrodite" (androgynous): "male & female In one wonderful body." Thus could all nations become Jerusalem (Eden) again. Passages of this great book are more widely known than any other long passages by Blake. Having been set to music as a hymn, the following words are still sung in many British churches. They have become in the mind of many, almost a second national anthem:

*"Bring me my Bow of burning gold;  
Bring me my Arrows of desire:  
Bring me my Spear: O clouds unfold!  
Bring me my Chariot of fire.*

*I will not cease from Mental Fight,  
Nor shall my Sword sleep in my hand  
Till we have built Jerusalem  
In England's sweet & peaceful Land."*

# Late Years

## GALLERY #4

15.

**William Blake**

**JERUSALEM THE EMANATION OF THE GIANT ALBION 1804+**

**London: Trianon Press for the William Blake Trust 1974**

**Collection: CSUEB Library, Special Collections.**

With 100 plates and more than 4,500 words, this is the culminating volume in the series of Blake's prophetic books. Blake regarded it as his greatest work. Although it carries a date of 1804, he continued working on it for two decades. Seeing himself in the ancient tradition of true prophets, Blake claims he did not write one word of it himself, but that it was dictated to him by "Authors [who] are in Eternity." The narrative structure of the text is as detailed as Homer or Dante or Milton, and seems to have emerged as spontaneously as in a novel by Joyce. Only one of the several surviving copies of this great book is fully colored.

The story is of Albion (personifying England and/or Humanity), who is made miserable by the memory of sinning. He would rather die than live with this pain. Blake says that any sin can and should be forgiven, and any religion that says otherwise is wrong. In Blake's mind, dogmatic Church rules, which went back to the repressive era of the Puritans, were depressing the spirit of England, as were the bloody wars with France. Albion eventually does die, but his feminine emanation, Jerusalem, survives by bursting from his breast like a "snowy cloud." Somewhat uncomfortable inside the garment of a human form, sweet Jerusalem personifies the spirit of peace and harmony.

Blake's image of Jerusalem as the emanation of "every individual man" is reminiscent of both Jung's *anima*, and images from Jewish Kabbalah in which Adam Kadmon is the primal Androgyne who combines masculine knowledge (*bina*) with feminine wisdom (*hokhma*). In many mystical paths around the world, these are the two aspects of our psychology that must be harmonized if we are to be truly enlightened. A better known Jewish mystical tradition perceives *Shekhinah* as the feminine spirit of God who returns to each Jewish community on every Sabbath "like a bride" to bestow spiritual completion. The Jewish Kabbalists personify her as a woman.

Albion is brought back to life by Britannia, another aspect of the divine spirit of England, with Jesus by her side. She thinks she had killed Albion in her dream. Albion talks man-to-man with Jesus who looks like Los, and then witnesses the divine prophecy that the awakened spirit of Jerusalem will "overspread all Nations." To help move the world in that direction, Albion shoots arrows of love in the four directions.

The title page appears to be a multiple "portrait" of Jerusalem, the feminine emanation of Albion, in various states, and perhaps also Vala. Among the many other remarkable images in this book is another version of the moon-ark (page 24) which Blake had rendered as a miniature masterpiece for the tailpiece of Bryant's Mythology when he was a teenage apprentice in the 1770s.

In the final plate we find Los, the Artist of all Forms, standing between the feminine power of the moon (which Blake thought of as Space) and the masculine power of the sun (which Blake thought of as Time). In the background is Stonehenge, symbol of the ancient spirituality of England which Blake considered less noble than that which will pervade the new Jerusalem. Los, the Poet-Blacksmith, holds in his left hand tongs that resemble a compass (which was held earlier by Urizen and by Isaac Newton as a symbol of rationality), and in his right hand he holds the hammer of intuitive force that forges all feeling into form. Los thus symbolizes balanced being, or what Blake called "Human Divine" - a state of being all of us can attain.

-----

16.

**William Blake**

**JERUSALEM THE EMANATION OF THE GIANT ALBION 1804+**

edited by Morton D. Paley

Princeton: Princeton University Press with the William Blake Trust 1991

Collection: CSUEB Library, Special Collections

Gift of the Institute for Aesthetic Development, Brentwood

Digital reproductions from JERUSALEM

-----

17.

**William Blake**

**ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE BOOK OF JOB 1826**

**London: Trianon Press for the William Blake Trust 1987**

**Collection: CSUEB Library, Special Collections.**

This is Blake's last great book. Completed near the end of his life, the style is more simple and more spacious, and the figures much more realistic. The scenes are framed tightly. The words and images are not woven together as in his earlier style. They are integrated in a new way. There is a remarkable precision in each visual and verbal line. Blake alerts us to this: "...not a line is drawn without intention. [...] As Poetry admits not a Letter that is Insignificant, so Painting admits not a Grain of Sand or a Blade of Grass insignificant - much less an Insignificant Blur or Mark." This retelling of the Biblical drama takes place entirely inside the soul of Job. All the characters in this visual play are inside his mind. He is a prominent, respected man who prides himself on his spirituality. That pride is his problem, along with his following overly rationalized moral laws, and his rather superficial modes of worship which lead him to only a superficial experience of the transcendent. If he is to find his unity with true divinity, he must move to a higher level of consciousness.

This is not an easy path. He must suffer the loss of all attachments in order to be rid of the disease of ignorance that covers his body with boils, and to be able to cast out the Satan within him - the Satan who is selfishness and pride. He must see with new eyes. Those eyes, or levels of awareness, appear to be the seven Angels on the title page. Eventually, Job and his wife are able to perceive the dynamic reality of the divine, not as a static iconic image, but as a swirling whirlwind of ever moving cosmic energy. Here is the Spirit of all Creation, all Forgiving, and all Loving, animating all of the harmonious universe. After this vision, comes the sound of the stars singing, the appearance of Jesus as an ever-present reality, and finally the restoration of the family of Job offering their art to the Glory of God. They have realized that God is the loving, ever-creative energy inside all of them and inside all of divine humanity.

In this edition, the editor has illustrated preliminary drawings beside the engravings, and has included states. All the images are in a book at the Information Wall and online in the Electronic Gallery.

17a.

William Blake

The Vision of Eliphaz ("Then a Spirit passed before my face")

related to Book of Job, plate 9

watercolor & ink, c1823-26. Poster reproduction

Collection: Institute for Aesthetic Development, Brentwood

---

18.

William Blake

ILLUSTRATIONS TO THE DIVINE COMEDY OF DANTE 1826-27

New York: Da Capo Press 1968

Collection: CSUEB Library, Special Collections

This is the last and best known of Blake unfinished book projects. The commission from John Linnell was accepted in 1824. During the last three years of his life, Blake seems to have worked primarily on the Dante project. He eventually produced over 100 large drawings and a number of smaller drawings. Some of these drawings are profoundly beautiful. Others are awkward and/or incomplete. Blake was able to engrave only seven plates before he passed away in the summer of 1827. Anthony Blunt describes these images as Blake's "last will and testament."

From a psychological point of view, it must have been a difficult project. Blake admired Dante deeply as a poet with a powerful cosmic vision. He even quickly learned Italian in order to read the original poetry. However, Blake's idea of religion as forgiveness was strongly opposed to Dante's idea of religion as retribution.

Scholars still debate how often Blake was staying close to Dante's ideas and how often Blake was illustrating his own ideas. For example, "Beatrice Addressing Dante from the Car" for Dante was an image symbolic of the mystery of the Eucharist. In Blake's illustration, as Morton Paley points out, the image is of Blake's Nature Goddess.

The best known engraving in the series is Blake's "Whirlwind of Lovers." In the past, Blake's image was titled "Whirlwind of the Lustful." This older title is closer to what Dante had in mind - the sinfulness of lust and its appropriate punishment in Hell. However, Blake did not regard sexual love as sinful, and did not accept the traditional idea of Hell. Indeed, in The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, Blake described what many called hellish as heavenly. Many images show Blake following Dante closely, but here is a reversal. A close examination of the many faces in Blake's engraving reveals little that looks like suffering, and much that looks like joyous loving. In short, in this image Blake turned Dante inside out.

Blake made 108 studies for his Dante, after quickly learning Italian in order to be able to read the original text. The studies include a wide range of rapid pencil studies and highly finished watercolors. Almost half the studies are watercolor. Blake also made seven engravings. Only one of those was completed when he passed away: the famous "Whirlwind of Lovers" ("Circle of the Lustful").

This section of the exhibition begins with two pages from Milton Klonsky, Blake's Dante: The Complete Illustrations to the *Divine Comedy*, 1980, illustrating in color two of the

watercolor studies. The three separate plates on display are from the Da Capo Press portfolio in which all 108 studies are reproduced in their original size.

-----

19.

**William Blake**

**WILLIAM BLAKE'S LAOCOON**

**A LAST TESTAMENT**

**WITH RELATED WORKS**

***On Homer's Poetry and On Virgil,***

***The Ghost of Abel***

**edited by Geoffrey Keynes**

**London: Trianon Press for the William Blake Trust 1976**

**Collection: CSUEB Library, Special Collections.**

"Laocoon" (c1826) consists of a single sheet. Blake's rendering of the famous Greek sculpture is surrounded by many of his statements about art, commerce, and religion. The Greeks looked at this sculpture and saw a priest and his two sons, Blake saw Jehovah and his sons, or in Morton Paley's words "natural man and the separated will."

"The Ghost of Abel" (1822) consists of two sheets which were made in response to Byron's drama, *Cain, A Mystery*. Blake expounds on sin, atonement, peace, and love.  
[BOUND IN THIS VOLUME, BUT NOT ON DISPLAY]

"On Homer's Poetry [and] On Virgil" was engraved on a single sheet.

In the upper portion, Homer's poetry is described as "perfect Unity." However, Blake from his moral perspective sees in Homer's heroics and the Greek love of war as continuing to infect Europe with wars. In the lower portion, Virgil is quoted as saying "Let others study Art." In other words, Greece and Rome said they loved art, but they loved war more.  
[BOUND IN THIS VOLUME, BUT NOT ON DISPLAY]

-----

20.

**William Blake**

**COLOUR VERSIONS OF WILLIAM BLAKE'S BOOK OF JOB ILLUSTRATIONS FROM  
THE CIRCLE OF JOHN LINNELL**

Edited by David Bindman, Essay by Bo Lindberg

London: William Blake Trust 1987

Collection: CSUEB Library, Special Collections

[ON VIEW IN THE CSUEB LIBRARY]

This portfolio contains colored versions of the Job plates. They seem to be not preliminary studies but impressions colored after the publication of the book as uncolored line engravings in 1825. The Blake Trust saved this volume to the end, as it is the only title in the Trianon Press series for which attribution to Blake is not certain. Who colored them? This remains a matter of some debate. Several hands have been proposed: Blake himself, Mrs. Blake, and others, particularly John Linnell an artist who commissioned the Job book in the first place and who was very close to Blake. Although all the coloring may not be by Blake, some of it may well be. If the coloring is not by Blake, this group of colored impressions offers further evidence for the complexity of the "School of Blake" which developed around Blake in his last years.