

THE WILLIAM BLAKE GALLERY

Opening Exhibition: *Always in Paradise: A William Blake Chrestomathy*

October 2016



EXHIBITION GUIDE

from

JOHN WINDLE ANTIQUARIAN BOOKSELLER

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Always in Paradise: A William Blake Chrestomathy

... the notion that man has a body distinct from his soul, is to be expunged; this I shall do by printing in the infernal method, by corrosives, which in Hell are salutary and medicinal, melting apparent surfaces away, and displaying the infinite which was hid. If the doors of perception were cleansed every thing would appear to man as it is, infinite.
– ***The Marriage of Heaven and Hell***

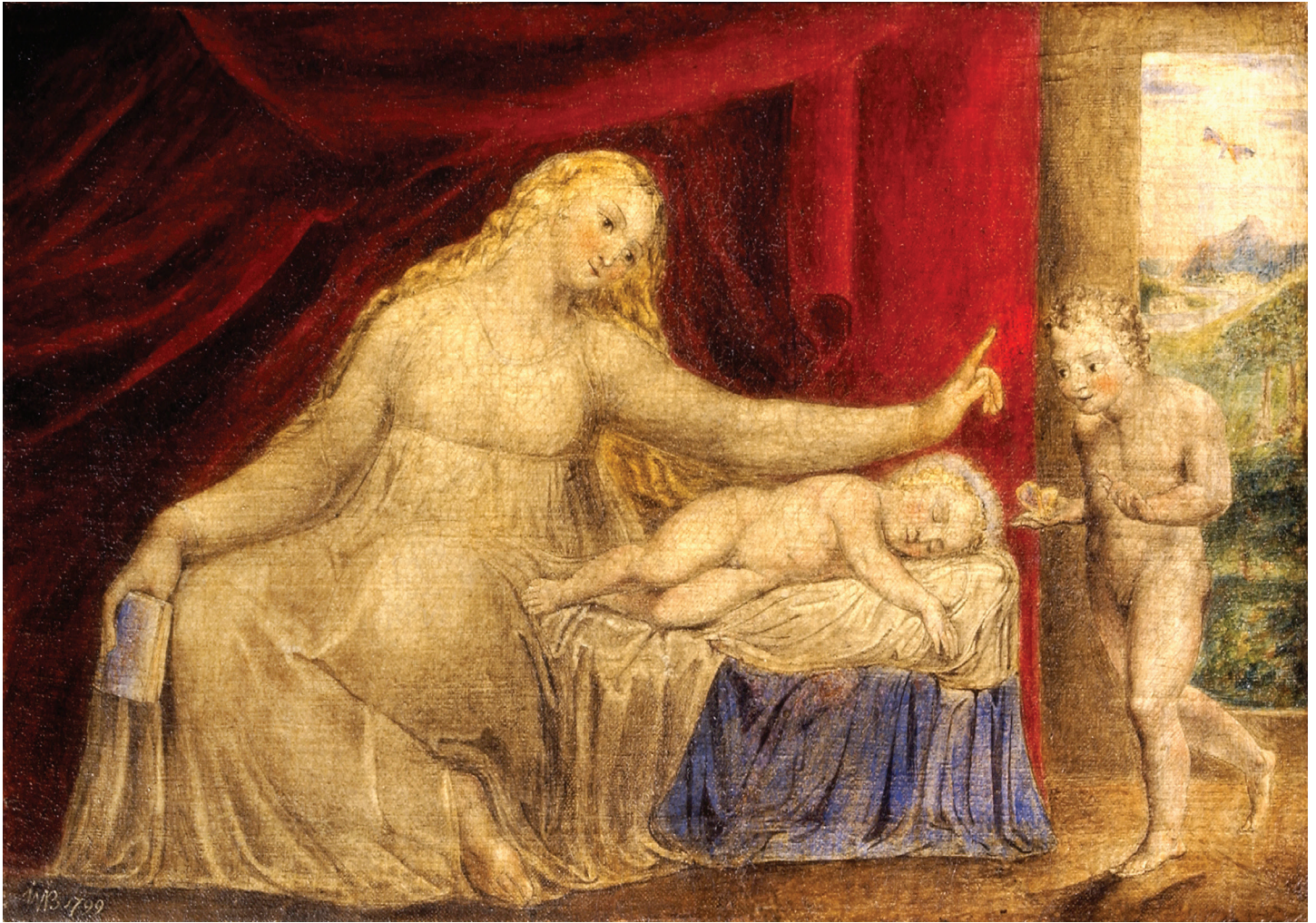
The first William Blake Gallery was opened by William Blake in May, 1809. The exhibition went on for several months; Blake did not sell a single work and the only reviewer described it as “the wild effusions of a distempered brain.” Even Blake’s friend George Cumberland wrote that the catalogue was “part vanity, party madness – part very good sense.”

Little appreciated in his lifetime, since his death, Blake’s reputation has ascended like one of his own angelic forms and he is now considered among the most significant figures of the Romantic movement. A political radical inspired by the American and French revolutions, a visionary Christian against all forms of organized religion, through his work he sought no less than the redemption of humanity from the chains of reason and industrialization and the liberation of men and women to love freely. As a visionary poet and philosopher, and as a pioneer of the *livre d’artiste*, and of printmaking technique, Blake reaches forwards through time with enduring relevance. His works have influenced groups as diverse as the Romantic poets, the Transcendentalists, the Beats and hippies, an extraordinary range of artists and musicians, from his own time to today. His legacy is spread across world’s greatest libraries, galleries and museums.

Yet, over 200 years since Blake’s own gallery closed, we have the singular pleasure of opening the second ever gallery dedicated to primarily to Blake’s work. It is the vision of John Windle, an antiquarian bookseller and a specialist in Blake for several decades. Its purpose is to show Blake’s work, as well as work by contemporary artists inspired by Blake. Blake’s mystic visions inspired hundreds of enigmatic artworks. His commercial engravings spanned a surprising range of styles and appeared in many significant books of the early 19th century. His works are highly sought after, yet he remains one of the only seminal Romantic-era artists whose work is still available to collect, including much within reach of the ordinary collector (although, rightly stated, no Blake collector can really be described as “ordinary”).

When asked about her husband, then in his final years, Catherine Blake remarked “I have very little of Blake’s company. He is always in paradise.” The nature of Blake’s heaven and hell, and even his paradise, continues to engage all who encounter his works. The William Blake Gallery opens with a selection of original works which together illustrate the breadth of Blake’s achievements, from his earliest experiments in relief etching to his last commercial commission. We hope this rare opportunity to view a range of Blake’s work in one place—a chrestomathy of sorts—will provide an introduction to novitiates and a pleasure for the avowed, while setting the stage for exhibitions to come.

And everything that lives is holy.
– ***The Marriage of Heaven and Hell***



The Virgin Hushing the Young John the Baptist (1799).

Pen and ink and tempera on paper on linen, laid down on canvas 10.6 x 15 inches (27 x 38 cm). Signed with monogram and dated 1799 at lower left.

This painting is part of a commission of fifty tempera paintings that Blake received in 1799 from Thomas Butts, a clerk in the office of the Muster-Master General. The tempera series was a Biblical cycle, with typological connections between Old and New Testaments. They were all executed in an experimental technique which the artist referred to as 'Portable Fresco' and were stylistically influenced by early Renaissance panel paintings. These "experiments with tempera were concerned with finding a way of preserving the linear clarity of watercolor without losing the density of oil painting" (Bindman, 1977, p. 117). Blake "used carpenters' glue as a medium, aiming to give [the tempera paintings] the permanence and density of oil painting, and used pen to avoid the 'indefinite' effect of oil" (Bindman, 1982-83, p. 132). Only about thirty of the fifty works survive, of which seven remain in private hands. Of the seven, the present work is by far the best preserved, probably due to it being painted on a paper support that has been laid down on fine, Tüchlein-like linen. P.O.R.



The Complaint of Job.

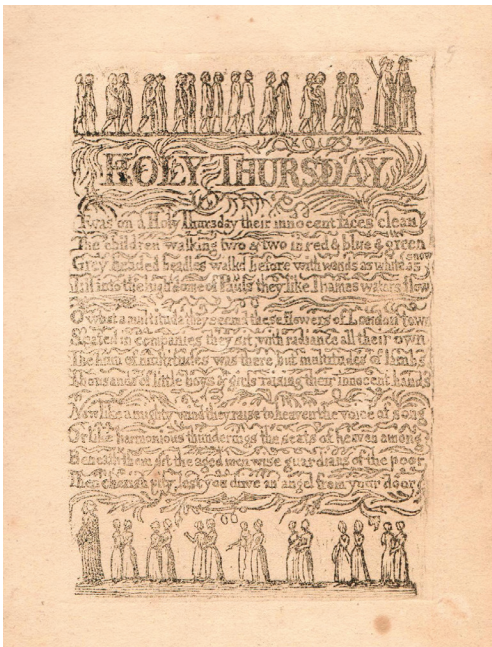
(c. 1785) (Recto).

Standing Figure. (Verso).

Pen and India ink (recto), pencil (verso) on paper, approx. 12.75 x 18.5 inches (32.5 x 46 cm).

This is an important preparatory sketch for the first extant preliminary drawing for the great separate print of *Job* (c.1793), probably executed five to eight years before that engraving. It depicts a grieving Job, his wife and three friends beside him. The separate print was captioned with the biblical quotation “What is Man That Thou shouldest Try him Every Moment?” (Job VII 17:18). The figure in the flowing robe on the verso is unidentified. The preliminary drawing is now in the Achenbach Collection in San Francisco

and the four known impressions of the separate print are all in England (The British Museum, The Fitzwilliam Museum (2), and the Essick private collection). N.F.S.



“Holy Thursday”.* Plate 19 from *Songs of Innocence.

[London]: The Author & Printer W Blake[,] 1789.

Copper relief etching, printed in black on wove paper, plate 4.5 x 2.9 inches (11.4 x 7.4 cm), leaf 7.9 x 4.7 inches (20.3 x 12.0 cm).

First printing, first issue, of Blake’s first extant attempt at illuminated printing. On Ascension Day, known as Holy Thursday, orphans in London’s charity schools were washed, dressed, and paraded to St Paul’s Cathedral for a special ceremony. Blake’s counterpart poem in *The Songs of Experience* questions both the joy of the orphans and the nature of the charity they receive in a supposedly prosperous country. This is the earliest impression of an illuminated plate printed by Blake ever offered for sale. P.O.R.

“Calling Card” (sometimes called a bookplate) for George Cumberland.

[London: ?William Blake, ?1827]

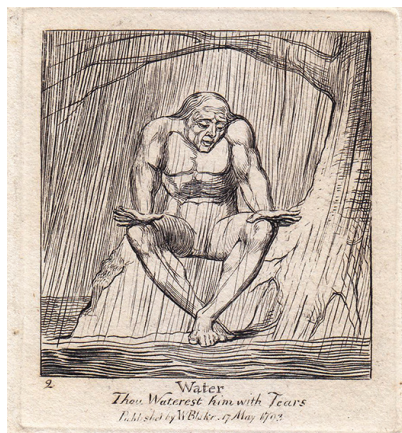
Copper engraving, printed in black on thick card, platemark 1.3 x 3.2 inches (3.3 x 8.1 cm).

Blake’s last engraving, executed for one of his closest friends. The images invoke one of Blake’s greatest themes—the relationships between time and eternity. Although probably intended as a calling card, two books have been located with this card pasted in, both written by George Cumberland Jr. \$20,000.



OPENING EXHIBITION GUIDE

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***For the Sexes: The Gates of Paradise.* [London: c. 1825?].**

Copper intaglio etchings, printed in black on wove paper.

In a departure from his earlier prophetic books, “The Gates of Paradise” was Blake’s first attempt to convey his message primarily by images, like an emblem book. “Through a numbered series of prints with inscriptions ranging from a single word to brief aphorisms, Blake puts the course of human life from birth to death in psychological perspective. Some of the plates form narrative sequences; others exemplify mental states and their reification in the external world.” (The Blake Archive). These plates are from an incomplete set of the final (5th) lifetime state.

Plate 4. “Water”. 13.8 x 11.7 inches (35 x 29.7 cm). (107343) \$40,000.

Plate 5. “Earth”. 10.8 x 9.7 inches (27.4 x 24.6 cm). (107344) \$40,000.

Plate 6. “Air”. 10.6 x 9.5 inches (26.9 x 24.1 cm). (107345) \$40,000.

Plate 8. “Hatching ripe”. 10.7 x 7.8 inches (27.2 x 19.8 cm). (107346) \$40,000.

Plate 13. “Aged ignorance”. 12.0 x 10.3 inches (30.5 x 26.2 cm). (107347) \$40,000.

Plate 14. “Does thy God”. 12.3 x 11.4 inches (31 x 28.9 cm). (107348) \$40,000.



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Chaucers Canterbury Pilgrims Painted in Fresco by William Blake & by him Engraved & Published October 8 1810. [London: Colnaghi printing, after 5 March 1881].

Copper engraving, printed in black on laid India paper, 36.9 x 11.8 inches (93.9 x 30 cm).



Final (5th) state. With this engraving, based upon his own painting of the subject, Blake hoped to achieve the critical and financial success that had evaded him for so long. It was not to be. “Most contemporary connoisseurs probably found the print old-fashioned and ‘Gothic’ in the pejorative sense...” (Essick, pp. 86-88). Blake’s bitterness was increased when his former friend Thomas Stothard executed a successful print of the same subject. The engraving did find a few admirers: Charles Lamb pronounced it the finest criticism of Chaucer’s poem he had ever read. “A work of wonderful power and spirit, hard and dry, yet with grace.” SOLD.

Illustrations of the Book of Job. London: [plates dated] 1825 [but published 1826].

Copper engravings (22 plates including title), proofs on India paper mounted on handmade paper, 12.6 x 10 inches (32 x 25.4 cm).

First edition, limited to 150 proof sets, the best printing of these famous plates which comprise Blake’s major single achievement as a printmaker after the illuminated books. Illustrations of the Book of Job was Blake’s last completed prophetic book. “It was produced while Blake was still working on Jerusalem, his most obscure book; yet the illustrations are Blake’s most lucid; and they are the supreme example of his reading the Bible in its spiritual sense” (S. Foster Damon, *A Blake Dictionary*, p. 217). \$125,000.



Illustrations to Dante’s Inferno. [London: for John Linnell, 1838].

Copper engravings (7 plates), printed on laid paper, platemark 13.8 x 10.8 inches (35 x 27.5 cm).

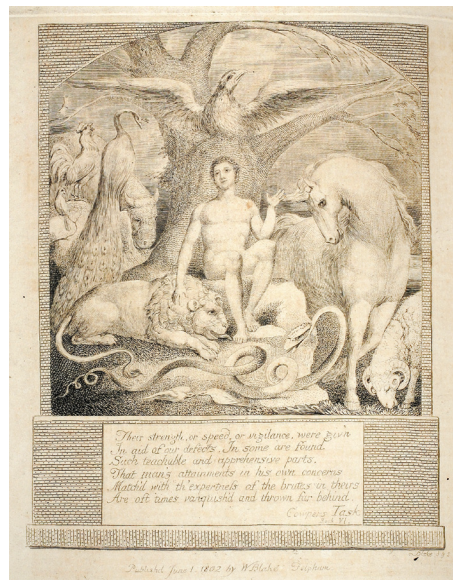
Incomplete at the time of his death, Blake’s illustrations for the Divine Comedy, commissioned by John Linnell, are some of his finest and most affecting inventions. From 102 illustrations, ranging from pencil sketches to finished watercolours, Blake made these seven engravings, also left incomplete. First proof printing (subsequent to a few proofs possibly pulled by Blake himself). \$350,000.



“Adam and the Beasts”. Frontispiece to *William Hayley’s Designs to a Series of Ballads, Founded on Anecdotes Relating to Animals*. Chichester. Printed by J. Seagrave, and sold by him and P. Humphry (et al.) for W. Blake, 1802.

Copper etching/engraving, printed in black on wove paper, sheet 9.8 x 6.85 inches (25.0 x 17.4 cm), platemark 6.9 x 6.3 inches (17.5 x 16.0 cm).

Frontispiece to the first edition of the rarest letterpress publication containing engravings by Blake. The work was a financial disaster, and unfortunately Blake had borne most of the publication costs. He was eventually reduced to reusing unsewn sheets of the 1802 Ballads for sketch paper. \$49,500.



Illustrations to William Hayley’s Ballads. Founded on Anecdotes Relating to Animals, with Prints Designed and Engraved by William Blake. Chichester: J. Seagrave, for Richard Phillips, 1805.

Copper etchings/engravings, printed in black on wove paper, platemark 6.7 x 4.7 inches (17 x 12 cm).

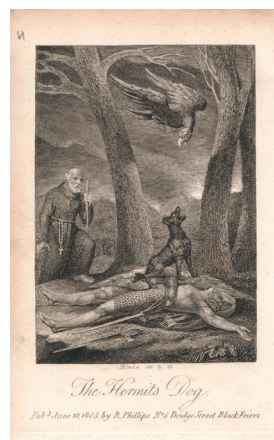
Three years after the unsuccessful first edition of Hayley’s Ballads (See “Adam and the Beasts”), Hayley convinced a London bookseller to back a new, expanded edition. Blake engraved new plates of his designs for three of the 1802 ballads (“The Dog”, “The Eagle”, and “The Lion”) and designed and engraved new illustrations for two of the additional ballads (“The Hermit’s Dog” and “The Horse”).



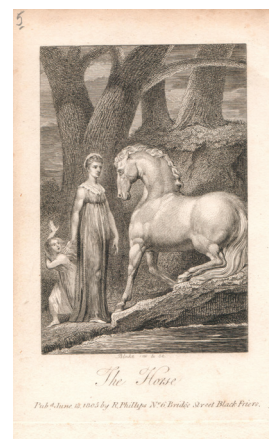
First state. \$975.



First state. \$975.



Only state. \$975.



Only state. \$975.



Illustration to William Hogarth’s “The Beggar’s Opera, Act III”: in *The Original and Genuine Works of William Hogarth*. London: Boydell and Company, c.1795.

Oblong large folio on wove paper, platemark 22.9 x 17.9 inches (58.3 x 45.5 cm) on sheet 25.6 x 19.3 inches (65 x 49 cm).

Third and best state of the single plate Blake engraved for Hogarth’s *Works*, first published by Boydell in 1790, this state appearing in the second, undated edition c. 1795. It was the last state of the plate before hands other than Blake touched up the plate. \$3,500.



The Trianon Press reproductions are recognized as the finest examples of the art of facsimile reproduction; working closely from Blake's original illuminated works, each leaf is faithfully hand-colored through stencils to achieve an astonishing exactitude. Still the best facsimiles available, the facsimiles of Blake are of such quality that they can scarcely be detected from the original works, making the unobtainable obtainable.

In addition to the finely bound facsimiles of the illuminated books, over 2,500 facsimile plates are also available, as suites and separate plates. Please enquire.

ANNOUNCING

CATALOGUE 65 : Always in Paradise

from

JOHN WINDLE ANTIQUARIAN BOOKSELLER

The opening of the William Blake Gallery is accompanied by a new catalogue of rare books and artworks from John Windle Antiquarian Bookseller.

In addition to the works exhibited here, the extensively illustrated catalogue features several hundred other items by or relating to William Blake, including separate plates and prints in series, books containing Blake's commercial engravings, facsimile and scholarly editions, biographies, bibliographies, and criticism, as well as a selection of other works by artists inspired by Blake.

Copies of the catalogue may be obtained in person from the William Blake Gallery, from our antiquarian bookshop in the same building (Suite 233), or by contacting us at sales@johnwindle.com, or 415-986-5826.

For more information, please visit www.johnwindle.com.