William Blake's Universe. Curated by David Bindman and Esther Chadwick. Fitzwilliam Museum, 23 February–19 May 2024.

William Blake's Universe. Ed. David Bindman and Esther Chadwick. Cambridge: Fitzwilliam Museum in association with Philip Wilson Publishers, 2024.

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1 WILLIAM Blake's Universe at the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge was structured as a three-colored path through a blue-coded classical past, a fiery present, and a radiant-yellow future. The vision for the exhibition had been gestating for years as a way of rethinking Blake as a European artist by positioning him in dialogue with German art through a collaboration with the Hamburger Kunsthalle. This partnership revived an earlier collaboration with the Kunsthalle's former director Werner Hofmann, curator of Kunst um 1800, a series of exhibitions including Blake (1975) and John Flaxman (1979), both curated by David Bindman.[1] The 2024 exhibition stemmed, partly, from a reaction to the Brexit referendum in 2016, with Bindman joining forces with Esther Chadwick when she was working at the British Museum.[2] Hamburg was the central point of reference not just because of this museum partnership and its curatorial tradition, but also because of the seminal role that the port city had as a nodal point for European Romanticism, and for the reception of Blake in Germany in particular.

2 Through important shared sources, inspiration, and affinities, the exhibition invited comparisons and outlined a story of parallel trajectories and missed encounters: the mysticism of Jacob Böhme; a classical idiom taking shape through similar academic training and the international style of line engraving associated with Flaxman's outlines; Henry Crabb Robinson's essay on "William Blake: Artist, Poet, and Religious Enthusiast" appearing in the Hamburg-based *Vaterländisches Museum*, which published some covers illustrated by Philipp Otto Runge. Yet Blake and Runge never met. This exhibition brought them together at the Fitzwilliam, offering a unique opportunity to introduce Runge to the British public.

3 The vestibule announced the fundamental point of the exhibition by means of a partition wall structured as a slightly open book, with James S. Deville's life mask of Blake (1823), his eyes closed to suggest the visionary power of his inner world, on a pedestal to the right and Runge's self-portrait to the left. Around them, on the two side walls, self-portraits of James Barry, Flaxman, Henry Fuseli, Samuel Palmer, Asmus Jakob Carstens, and Caspar David Friedrich, along with portraits of Blake by John Linnell, Flaxman, and Catherine Blake, announced the cast of characters that made up Blake's universe within a European context.[3] Openings to the side of the introductory presentation wall led through an intimate space where viewers could watch an informative animation about Blake's work by Laurie Avon and Peter Chownsmith,[4] before entering the gallery representing the past.

The Past: Antiquity and the Gothic

4 To compare academic training milieus, practices, and models at the Royal Academy in London and at the Copenhagen Academy, the wall to the left featured Edward Francis Burney's watercolor of *The Antique Room at New Somerset House* (c. 1780; no. 13) and Christoffer Wilhelm Eckersberg's *Satire on the Life Class at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts* in Copenhagen (1805; no. 14); Runge's drawings of the head of Antinous and Belvedere Torso from classical casts

1. On Kunst um 1800, see David Bindman, "Blake in Germany: The William Blake Exhibition at the Hamburg Kunsthalle and Städel Museum, Frankfurt, 1975," *The Reception of William Blake in Europe*, ed. Sibylle Erle and Morton D. Paley, 2 vols. (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019) 1: 255-59.

2. Luisa Calè, "William Blake's Universe: An Interview with David Bindman and Esther Chadwick," *Blake* 57.3 (winter 2023–24).

3. *William Blake's Universe*, ed. David Bindman and Esther Chadwick (Cambridge: Fitzwilliam Museum in association with Philip Wilson Publishers, 2024) 26-35, nos. 1-11. Catalogue numbers will hereafter be cited in the text.

4. To learn about and view the animation commissioned by the museum, illustrated and directed by Laurie Avon, animated by Peter Chownsmith, and produced by Brilliant Artists in conjunction with the exhibition William Blake's Universe, see <https://brilliantartists.co.uk/laurie-avon-x-william-blakes-universe>.

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in the Copenhagen Academy, and his heads from Raphael; Blake's *The Reposing Traveller* from Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel mediated by an engraving by Adamo "Ghisi" Scultori; Blake's and Runge's drawings from the Hamilton Vases set against Johann Heinrich Wilhelm Tischbein's and Pierre-François Hugues d'Hancarville's reproductive volumes open in a vitrine beneath them; and Barry's "Sacra Familia Christi" after Raphael and Giulio Romano (no. 24). How that practice of copying translates into new classical and biblical subjects was documented by Benjamin West's *Christ Healing the Sick* (no. 25), Blake's watercolors of the story of Joseph (nos. 26a-c), Runge's *Diomedes and Odysseus* (no. 27) and *Achilles and Scamander* (no. 28), and Carstens's *Night and Her Children, Sleep and Death* (no. 29).

5 Flaxman's central role in European neoclassicism was documented by a slightly oblique long vitrine at the center of the long gallery, which enabled comparisons with the works on view on the walls. In the same line of sight as the classical apprenticeship works were his pen and ink and gray wash drawings, including two subjects from Chatterton: *Queen Kenewalcha* and *A Massacre of Britons at Stonehenge* (nos. 31a-b); next to them was the Swedenborgian subject *The Ascension of the Soul* (no. 32). On the other side, the Flaxman vitrine featured a series of graphite drawings and plaster models for funerary relief monuments, and his Dante illustrations and Dante notebook.

6 A viewer facing Flaxman's funerary and medieval subjects could also see a wall hang starting with a more muscular engagement with the human form characteristic of Blake's relationship with Fuseli, from Fuseli's drawing of the back of a woman's torso to Blake's *Hyperion* (*"The Bowman"*), which is a study toward an extra-illustration for the altered copy of Thomas Gray's *Poems* that he produced for Flaxman's wife (nos. 41, 8). Blake's engravings after Fuseli were documented by "Tornado" for Erasmus Darwin's *The Botanic Garden* and the spectacular, oversized "Satan, or Head

of a Damned Soul," which Blake engraved, after an oil sketch by Fuseli, in a format that was too big to fit the dimensions of Johann Caspar Lavater's *Essays on Physiognomy* (1789–98). At this point, a window-shaped opening through the wall offered a glimpse into a radiant-yellow future. This architectural feature remediated Blake's *A Vision: The Inspiration of the Poet* (*Elisha in the Chamber on the Wall*) (c. 1819–20, Tate Britain), yet the view of plates from *Jerusalem* also evoked the use of holes in walls to offer city dwellers a view of the celestial Jerusalem.[5] Depending on their orientation, viewers peering through the hole cut through the gallery of the past could see one of two numinous relief etchings from *Jerusalem*: either "Los at the Forge," his spectre hovering bat winged above him and "suggesting murderous thoughts against Albion" (*Jerusalem* 6.7, E 149; no. 93d), or "a dying swan and a fish-like spirit," positioned as head and tail vignettes with text in between, an impression of plate 11 of *Jerusalem*, which the curators titled "The River Spirits" (no. 93e). Beyond the window hung two of Blake's seven engravings from Dante, "The Circle of the Corrupt Officials: The Devils Mauling Each Other" (*Inferno* 22; no. 45) and "The Circle of the Lustful" (*Inferno* 5; no. 46), and versions of the subject of Ugolino and his sons (*Inferno* 33) from the 1780s, as well as a late tempera (1826–27).

7 The transition between the past and the present was taken up by Blake's engagement with the sculptural group of the Laocoön, documented through commissions to illustrate Flaxman's essay on sculpture for Abraham Rees's *Cyclopædia* (1815–16) and the large etching "יה & his two Sons Satan & Adam as they were copied from the Cherubim of Solomons Temple by three Rhodians & applied to Natural Fact. or History of Ilium," Blake's own image-text Laocoön invention. His graphite and watercolor drawing of the Laocoön next to the door to the present represents a free version capturing the vehement passions and power of pain in Laocoön's predicament, in radical contrast to theories of

5. Anthony Bale, "From Nidaros to Jerusalem; from *Feginsbrekka* to Mount Joy," *Tracing the Jerusalem Code, Volume 1: The Holy City: Christian Cultures in Medieval Scandinavia* (*ca. 1100–1536*), ed. Kristin B. Aavitsland and Line M. Bonde (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2021) 191-97.

beauty advocating containment of emotion and the composure of the classical ideal associated with Winckelmann. This drawing (no. 50) was one of the works that the Fitzwilliam was proud to display as items from the collection of Geoffrey Keynes that have recently come into the possession of the museum.[6]

8 Blake's contrast between "Grecian … Mathematic Form" and Gothic's "Living Form" in the single-sheet relief etching *On Homers Poetry* [and] *On Virgil* (1822) on the same wall cued the reader to look back to the opposite wall, which documented a longue-durée engagement with the subject of "Joseph of Arimathea," developed from the figure of a soldier in Michelangelo's fresco *The Crucifixion of St. Peter* in the Cappella Paolina in the Vatican. This composition was represented by three versions: a Renaissance print of the single figure abstracted from Michelangelo's work, attributed to Nicolas Beatrizet, which is the likely source; an engraving (1773) with Blake's caption "Engraved when I was a beginner at Basires from a drawing by Salviati after Michel Angelo" proudly entered in black ink in the lower margin; and a later version (1810–25) with the following lettering beneath the printed area: "Engraved by W Blake 1773 from an old Italian Drawing | This is One of the Gothic Artists who Built the Cathedrals in what we call the Dark Ages | Wandering about in sheep skins & goat skins of whom the World was not worthy | such were the Christians | in all Ages," and the authorship of the composition proclaimed in larger letters below: "Michael Angelo Pinxit." These two wall displays synoptically captured phases and processes of copying and invention at the heart of Blake's relationship with classical and Gothic forms.

6. Other such works mentioned by Luke Syson and Alexander Klar in their "Directors' Foreword" (*William Blake's Universe* 6) are the first state of "Joseph of Arimathea" (no. 12b) and the first state of the frontispiece to *Jerusalem* (no. 93b).

The Present: Europe in Flames

9 The idea of the present as Europe in flames was powerfully conveyed by a fiery-colored room with a thunderbolt-

shaped partition wall in the middle hosting a disbound copy of Blake's *Europe a Prophecy*. Printed on rectos only, copy K achieved an architectural rebinding of sorts through the structure of the concertina wall that made it possible to pair plates placed one next to the other in a format that evoked book openings. This late copy, printed in 1821, is one of only two that include "Five windows light," a text setting up a fairytale scene of inspiration reminiscent of Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream*, which is a source for Blake's choice of a dreamscape timescale revolving around the sleep of Enitharmon. The first half of the poem faced a selection of plates from *America a Prophecy* copy O on the left wall. Both illuminated books have been in the Fitzwilliam collection since 1950, thanks to the bequest of T. H. Riches, whose Blakes constitute one of the nuclei of the museum's Blake collection represented in the exhibition, alongside Keynes's.

10 The next section in the display of the present featured Blake's relationship with race. *America*'s hopes for the end of empire—"Let the slave grinding at the mill, run out into the field" (6.6, E 53)—are complicated by the treatment of race and slavery in his corpus. "The Little Black Boy," placed on a vertical stand, acted as a partition, making both recto and verso visible and thus capturing problematic constructions of race that contrast blackness of skin complexion with whiteness of soul, evidenced in this Fitzwilliam copy by the black boy turning white in contact with Jesus on the second page. The racial power dynamic of the poem and its illustrations is carefully identified in the catalogue (no. 54), as is the "objectification and eroticization of the enslaved" in Blake's illustrations to John Gabriel Stedman's *Narrative, of a Five Years' Expedition, against the Revolted Negroes of Surinam* (1796), on which Blake worked in 1792–93 (nos. 53a-c). The Fitzwilliam's own entanglement with capital deriving from the slave trade translated in the adoption of the decolonial practice of the trigger warning: "The objects in this case include outdated racist and derogatory terminology."[7] What is achieved by this trigger-

7. Wall caption above the Stedman vitrine. The museum's association with slavery stems from the wealth that the founder, Richard Fitzwilliam, derived from his maternal grandfather, Sir Matthew Decker,

warning caption is questionable. By contrast, recent decolonial engagements with the Stedman plates articulated a poetics of appropriation and dissemination through practices of remixing in the Black Atlantic exhibition that closed the month before the opening of William Blake's Universe.[8] Yet the empty space in this part of the wall was a powerful curatorial decision: placing these plates in a vitrine, rather than hanging on the wall, reflected not only the materiality of the work as a bound book, but also the curators' ethics of horizontality. In line with recent decolonial interventions to topple statues of people involved in slavery, including the decision to institutionalize the horizontal ruination of the statue of Edward Colston in Bristol, the Stedman illustrations were denied the verticality associated with the heroic form.[9]

11 Blake's engravings for Stedman offer a powerful window on the work of the commercial engraver. While the vitrine stated that they "were based on Stedman's original drawings, which are now lost," some Stedman watercolors are available at a click through the digitization of the Stedman Archive at the University of Minnesota. Although these designs are not the basis for Blake's engravings, noting their existence could open up questions about the impulse to

director of the Royal Africa and East India Company. This connection was the motivation behind the exhibition Black Atlantic: Power, People, Resistance (8 September 2023–7 January 2024): see <https://www.museumsassociation.org/museums-journal/news/2023/06/fitzwilliam-museum-explores-founders-links-to-slavery-in-new-exhibition>.

8. Regular visitors to the Fitzwilliam would remember an installation by Jacqueline Bishop in the Black Atlantic exhibition. Her *History at the Dinner Table* features dinner plates illustrated with "beautiful botanical images overlaid with … very traumatic images," detailing a "history of enslavement and violence against women": see Jacqueline Bishop and Victoria Avery (keeper of European Sculpture and Decorative Arts at the Fitzwilliam), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tiW-vhUF9l0>.

9. See "Figure 13: *The toppled Edward Colston statue on public display at M Shed*, Bristol, 7 June 2021," in Edwin Coomasaru et al., "Monuments Must Fall," *British Art Studies* 24 (2023). On the curators' ethics of horizontality, see Calè, "William Blake's Universe: An Interview."

eroticize slave bodies. The intersection between visionary and commercial invention in Blake's engagement with slavery is explored in Richard Price and Sally Price's edition of Stedman's manuscript, which sheds light on competing interests within the publishing world of Joseph Johnson, evidenced by the deletion of criticism of plantation brutality and the insertion of a position against immediate abolition in the 1796 preface.[10] Yet this powerful record of the ideologies of publishing was not distilled in the exhibition display, nor in the catalogue.

12 More resonances with Blake's engagement with slavery in the Continental Prophecies might have articulated the relationship between commercial commissions and prophetic invention by placing *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* closer to the Stedman plates and by displaying the Africa section of *The Song of Los*, represented by the title page and full-plate designs of copy A, on loan from the British Museum. Instead of opting for paraphrases, whose summaries are often debatable in themselves, captions to individual plates could have drawn out revolutionary connections in the Preludium to *Europe*. Christine Gallant points out that the figure about to knife the traveller is racialized and Blake's reference to "dark and desolate mountains / In forests of eternal death" (*Europe* 2.5-6, E 61) is "curiously close to the guerrilla techniques of warfare employed by Surinam Maroons that Stedman describes," as are the fires, while the signet is a well-known tool of slave ownership.[11] The entangled economy of slavery in the global eighteenth century might have been more in focus in the shift from Blake's Europe to the Continental Prophecies and Blake's universe.

13 Blake's millenarian approach to the revolutionary process is explained in Bindman's catalogue essay, which provides a broader understanding and evidence of further works treating subjects appearing in the prophetic books, such as the plagues in *Europe*, in relation to longer histories of natural and political cataclysms within which to situate "the destroying angels' work" in the present moment.[12] The revolutionary process in the making was captured through competing commercial, satirical, and apocalyptic encodings of the history of the present. Blake's commercial illustration of the French Revolution after Charles Reuben Ryley for *Bellamy's Picturesque Magazine* (1793; no. 58) represents the royalist trope of Marie Antoinette as a damsel in distress to be protected from the mob attacking Versailles in October 1789. Evidence of the changing resonances of the Horsemen of the Apocalypse was provided through a gouache by West (1783–1803; no. 60) that documented a commission for the Chapel of Revealed Religion at Windsor Castle, conceived in the late 1770s, whose millenarian composition came to be felt so close to the revolutionary process as to be shelved. The apocalyptic subject's potential application to contemporary events was evident in James Gillray's satire "Presages of the Millennium" (1795; no. 59). Both images provide a spectrum of possibilities for the number of figures and their grouping, conveying the kinetic and catastrophic energy of biblical and historical painting and its satire. By contrast, the concentrated, pared-down composition of Blake's watercolor *Death on a Pale Horse* (1800; no. 61) stood out for its dramatic and meditative depth. Garnet Terry adopted a different approach in his diagrammatic "Prophetic Vision: Daniel's Great Image," a large allegorical image folded into twelve to fit the size of the accompanying open pamphlet: such is the scale required for "Daniel's Great Image of the Mystical Body of Babylon, Shewing the Destruction of Antichrist, the Beast, the Whore, and the False Prophet; According to Rev. XIX:20" (1793; no. 62).

14 The final mise-en-scène for the present featured a selection of prison images, starting with George Romney's drawings of Howard visiting prisons and lazarettos (1790–95; nos. 63a-b). A stipple engraving by Moses Haughton (1813; no. 64) documented Fuseli's lost painting *The Vision of the Lazar House*, inspired by one of the scenes of futurity that the archangel Michael reveals to Adam in Milton's *Paradise Lost* (11.477-90), which was ready by January 1795 and on view as picture 24 at Fuseli's Milton Gallery at James Christie's auction rooms in 1799 and 1800, one of the literary gallery schemes that Blake was originally associated with. Although, oddly, neither *Paradise Lost* nor the Milton Gallery is referenced in the catalogue, this is the context in which Blake produced three versions of the large color monotype *The House of Death* (1795), one of the twelve large color prints from "Historical and Poetical Subjects" (1795/1805), here represented by the extraordinary version owned by the Fitzwilliam, from the same bequest that brought the late *Europe* and *America*.

15 After following the path through "Europe in Flames" around the central partition, viewers saw the dividing wall between the present and the galleries of the past and the future, which were parallel to each other. It displayed two arresting approaches to mediate the genealogies and prospects of the present. The first, Barry's etching and aquatint "The Phoenix, or the Resurrection of Freedom" (1776; no.

10. *"Narrative of a Five Years Expedition against the Revolted Negroes of Surinam," Transcribed for the First Time from the Original 1790 Manuscript*, ed. with introduction and notes by Richard Price and Sally Price (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988) xlix, l. Digital reproductions of Stedman's watercolors are available at <https://umedia.lib.umn.edu/item/p16022coll187:968>.

11. Christine Gallant, "Blake's Coded Designs of Slave Revolts," *Wordsworth Circle* 42.3 (2011): 211–17.

12. David Bindman, "Blake's Continental Prophecies: Apocalypse and Revolution," *William Blake's Universe* 84-89.

51), draws on a classical idiom to visualize the rebirth of revolutionary time embodied in the temple of American liberty beyond the waters, hailed by a transhistorical group of "friends of liberty" gathered by the tomb of Britannia, including Algernon Sidney, John Milton, Andrew Marvell, John Locke, and a self-portrait of Barry himself. The radical caption marks out the publisher John Almon, known for his radical Whig network and as a publisher of newspapers and pamphlets, including Thomas Paine's *Common Sense*. The bust of an oddly hovering, winged allegorical figure of Old Father Time, scythe in hand, comes into the composition from the top-left corner, a tuft of hair on his bald head identifying his association with Kairos and the need to seize the moment to secure this ephemeral moment of fugitive freedom. The cross-Atlantic poetics and politics of this fascinating print are magisterially researched by co-curator Esther Chadwick in her book *The Radical Print*; Sarah Haggarty's essay in the exhibition catalogue integrates the print's reference to Kairos within a wider discussion of temporality in Blake's corpus.[13] A different, future-oriented image of man's revolutionary resurrection was represented by a bold pairing architecturally structured as a diptych to the left of the entrance to the future: Jacques-Louis Perée's "Droits de l'homme" (Rights of Man) (1795–96; no. 122), featuring a male nude that the curators associated with the Apollo Belvedere, one arm holding a pickaxe, the other thrust upwards with a scroll inscribed "Droits de l'homme," in dialogue with Blake's "Albion Rose" ("Glad Day" or "The Dance of Albion") (1794–96). Placed next to Perée's revolutionary icon, Blake's Albion stood as a more abstract image of transcendence, the dawn of a new world, ushering the viewer into the future. While Perée was the only non-British element of the revolutionary present, the future was Anglo-German.

13. Esther Chadwick, *The Radical Print: Art and Politics in Late Eighteenth-Century Britain* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2024); Sarah Haggarty, "Blake, Time and the Present Moment," *William Blake's Universe* 18-25.

The Future: Spiritual Renewal

16 The radiant-yellow future began with a room devoted to "Blake's new religious style" in a range of formats, from poetical and biblical series to compositions toward public works. The first works to meet the eye of the viewer entering the future were three New Testament watercolors selected from the eighty biblical subjects that Blake painted for Butts in the early 1800s: *The Soldiers Casting Lots for Christ's Garments* (no. 68), *The Angel of the Divine Presence Clothing Adam and Eve with Coats of Skins* (1803), and *The Ascension* (1805–06). On the right-hand side of the room hung *An Allegory of the Spiritual Condition of Man* (1811?), from Graham Robertson's collection, Blake's largest extant composition. Bindman's catalogue entry presents this work "as an exercise in public art," citing Blake's *Descriptive Catalogue* (1809), in which he compares his paintings of the "Spiritual Forms" of Nelson and of Pitt to "those Apotheoses of Persian, Hindoo, and Egyptian Antiquity" and envisages producing works

> "on a scale that is suitable to the grandeur of the nation … [with] the figures … one hundred feet in height." Blake was also working on a lost painting of the *Last Judgement*, for which a number of watercolors survive. This suggests some kind of Sistine Chapel-like structure, adorned with large 'Fresco' paintings that would act as a permanent public reminder of the nation's true path to redemption.[14]

While the Tate Britain Blake retrospective in 2019–20 focused on the contrast between the "originals seen in my visions" and the space Blake had available by reproducing the dimensions of the actual display of 1809, the focus at the Fitzwilliam was on religious iconography across formats and genres. The opposite wall featured twelve watercolors from Milton's *Paradise Regained* (1816–18), perhaps originally intended for Butts, but bought by Linnell in 1825. A selection from *Illustrations of the Book of Job* (1825–26) captured a different engagement with the biblical canon, which the curators put into dialogue with "Runge's ambitions for a *Gesamtkunstwerk*," especially connecting plate 14, "When the Morning Stars Sang Together," with Runge's depiction of "Night" in *Tageszeiten* (*Times of Day*, 1802–10; nos. 73c, 79b).

17 The second room of the future concentrated on the mystical print and visual culture produced by the corpus of the seventeenth-century German cobbler turned Christian philosopher Jacob Böhme. His work was introduced by an allegorical portrait by Nicolaus Häublin, which "presents Böhme as a prophet of Christ's second coming," first published in 1677, then used as a frontispiece to *Mysterium Magnum* in 1679 (no. 74). Cecilia Muratori's fascinating and beautifully illustrated catalogue essay illuminates the visual appeal of artisanal material culture mediating Böhme's philosophy by means of the three-dimensional, movable-flap engineering of Dionysius Andreas Freher (1649–1728). To represent "Man in his different three-fold State," Freher produced three tables—which the catalogue reproduces through photographs featuring closed and open flaps (no. 75 and figs. 15-18)—accompanied by "an extensive unpublished treatise, which Freher titled *An Explication of Three Very Different Tables*." However, as Muratori notes, the tables also circulated as independent works: "Holes at the top of these three cardboard sheets suggest they may have been pinned to a wall and viewed as devotional images," but they were "best known through their inclusion as spectacular engraved flap-prints in the Law edition of Böhme" (1764–81).[15] Crabb Robinson noted that Blake commented on "the figures in Law's translation as being very beautiful. Michael Angelo could not have done better."[16] Copies of this edition from the Cambridge University Library and from Trinity College, Cambridge, were open to the title page and to diagrams of "The Tree of the Soul" and "The True Principles of All Things," which invited comparisons to the diagram of the four zoas in Blake's *Milton*. "The Third Table", with its slightly raised flaps, held the promise of layers designed to be lifted to reveal the threefold state of man from macrocosm to the body's interior. Although this potential could not be fulfilled within museum conditions, the mobile engineering of the illustrations was demonstrated on a copy of the Law edition owned by the Ritman Library in Amsterdam in a video projected on the opposite wall.[17]

18 This material culture of mysticism was the shared source underpinning the next and final move in this fascinating exhibition, the comparison between Blake and German mysticism in the long gallery of the future. Chadwick's catalogue essay sheds light on visionary experiences of nature in response to the predicaments of the present: "When

14. David Bindman, *William Blake's Universe* 135 (no. 72), citing *A Descriptive Catalogue of Pictures, Poetical and Historical Inventions, Painted by William Blake* (London, 1809) 3, E 530; 5, E 531.

15. Cecilia Muratori, "'Michel Angelo could not have done better': Dionysius Andreas Freher and the Visual Transmission of German Mysticism in Eighteenth-Century England," *William Blake's Universe* 146-52 (on 149).

16. Reporting a dinner that took place at the London home of the German collectors Karl and Elizabeth Aders on 10 December 1825; see Henry Crabb Robinson, *Diary, Reminiscences, and Correspondence*, ed. Thomas Sadler, 3 vols. (London, 1869) 2: 305; *William Blake's Universe* 142.

17. This animation was produced for the Böhme exhibition Alles in Allem, curated by Claudia Brink, Lucinda Martin, and Cecilia Muratori at the Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden in 2017.

Blake imagined heaven in a wildflower, Europe had been at war for over a decade."[18] A view from the future opened a window onto classical training through the wall shared with the parallel gallery of the past, reversing the view from the past, which set the expectation of seeing the heavenly Jerusalem in the *Jerusalem* plates hanging in the room of the future. The connections made in this section of the exhibition are underpinned by James Vigus's catalogue essay on Crabb Robinson's role in introducing Blake to the German reading public. Vigus reconstructs Crabb Robinson's Anglo-German cultural ties, going back to his studies at the University of Jena, then detailing his connections with Hamburg, including with the bookshop of Friedrich Christoph Perthes in 1805. Crabb Robinson's Blake essay was published in the second volume of Perthes's *Vaterländishes Museum* (1810–11), a periodical "dedicated to cultivating German patriotism as an anti-Napoleonic weapon." To make a case for "Blake as a European artist," Crabb Robinson noted the influence of Albrecht Dürer, Moravian hymns, and Emanuel Swedenborg.[19]

19 A wall devoted to Runge's work on *Times of Day* activated a productive dialogue of forms with Blake's Job plates. In addition to the connection made in the catalogue between Runge's "Night" and Blake's engraving of the morning of creation in *Illustrations of the Book of Job*, Runge's naked female personification of Aurora in preparatory studies for and paintings of *The Morning* (nos. 81-85) recalls a design for Edward Young's *Night Thoughts* (1797). Blake illustrates the asterisked line "Where sense runs savage broke from reason's chain" (Night III, line 22), visualizing sense through a female personification of sensory mysticism, thus working against the negative connotations that Young's text emphasizes in the following line, "And sings false peace, till smoth-

18. Esther Chadwick, "Introduction: Blake, Runge and Visionary Art in Europe c. 1800," *William Blake's Universe* 10-17 (on 11).

19. James Vigus, "Henry Crabb Robinson, William Blake, and Anglo-German Cultural Relations," *William Blake's Universe* 153-55.


JOHN FLAXMAN
Flaxman and Blake both studied at the Royal Academy in London. Flaxman was a sculptor and was one of the first English artists to become famous across Europe. Blake on the other hand struggled to earn a living and make his work understood. Their careers took different paths, but Flaxman and Blake remained lifelong friends. Despite the occasional falling out, they shared a deep interest in spiritual ideas and Christian mysticism.

er'd by the pall."[20] Consider Runge's versions of Aurora: Jan Steinke notes associations with both Venus and Mary in the first version (1808; no. 81); in a construction drawing from 1808, "several lines … intersect at her groin" (164, no. 82b); a composition study dated 1809 positions Aurora on a vertical central axis, using triangulation to relate elements of the composition by means of lines converging in her womb (no. 85).[21] Runge's iconography and geometry of composition suggest an embodied mysticism that can be compared with Blake's approach to bodily organs as mystical gates to transcendence. Actual points of contact between the two artists are not known, nor whether Runge had a chance to see a copy of the *Night Thoughts* engravings, although the volume was among Blake's best-known works. On the basis of similarities with the framing borders of the Job engravings, Sibylle Erle wonders whether Blake saw engravings of Runge's *Times of Day*, given that the German collectors Karl and Elizabeth Aders owned a copy, which he might have seen when he dined at their house in London in December 1825.[22] In bringing such a rich apparatus of works associated with *Times of Day* in dialogue with Blake, the exhibition raised questions that will nourish research to come.

20 Joseph Leo Koerner's catalogue essay on "Runge's Times" illustrates the convergence of botanical, folk, mystical, and craft engagement with plants, from scissor-work and silhouettes to drawing, in the attempt to capture images of becoming and epochs, and "portray the experience of time in the medium of images."[23] Runge's botanical vision of the hours differs from neoclassical personifications drawing on classical mythology visualized by Flaxman, while both also translated into motifs for interior decoration, as they did in Goethe's house in Weimar. In Runge's botanical symbolism Koerner observes the phases of the plant cycle compressed in the image of the plant "radically reimagining" Lessing's notion of the point in time or "fruitful moment." In its theorization of experiential, natural, and mystical time, Koerner's reading of Runge offers a fascinating counterpoint to Haggarty's essay about Kairos, or the fugitive, climactic moment in Blake. While Runge's mysticism of the lily peopled with diminutive allegorical human forms is quite different from Blake's dynamic Darwinian loves of the plants, comparison between the two artists invites renewed attention to the mysterious full-plate illustration to *The Song of Los* retitled "King and Queen on a Lily" in the room of the present, and to "Lovers in the Water Lily," the head vignette to chapter 2 of *Jerusalem*, positioned on the other side of the dividing wall of the future.

21 To look back from the end of the future was to see a new dawn, embodied in the engraving, etching, and drypoint print of "Albion Rose" (c. 1804, but captioned "WB inv 1780"; no. 94) hanging on the end of the partition wall. Blake's iconic image is often used as a framing device for his corpus: while Tate Britain positioned it at the entrance of their 2019–20 retrospective, the curators of William Blake's Universe used two versions to mark the beginning and ending of the room of the future. The transition from political to mystical inflections of the composition was told through a contrast with the earlier, color-printed version, juxtaposed with Perée's "Droits de l'homme" at the threshold from the revolutionary present to the future. At the end of the future room, by contrast, the curatorial line of sight invited a comparison between Runge's female body of Aurora and Blake's male personification of "Albion Rose" as a different kind of "Glad Day," with a newly added bat-like moth and worm indicating resurrection from the physical world of mortality. The penultimate four lines of *Jerusalem* provided an evocative wall inscription to capture the mysticism of natural history: "All Human Forms identified even Tree Metal Earth & Stone. all / Human Forms identified, living going forth & returning wearied / Into the Planetary lives of Years Months Days & Hours reposing / And then Awaking into his Bosom in the Life of Immortality" (*Jerusalem* 99.1-4, E 258).

22 The choice to have Blake's *Jerusalem* facing Caspar David Friedrich's *Lebensalter*, literally "Ages of Life" but translated as *The Ages of Man* in the exhibition and catalogue (c. 1826; no. 86), produced a startling contrast in modes of attention. Friedrich's seven sepia sketches were received as "dream images": such "riddles or artistic hieroglyphs … exercise the imagination far more than they satisfy the eye," said a contemporary reviewer.[24] These essential elemental compositions in which the human form is diminutive, almost accessory, could not be more different from the compressed intensity of the *Jerusalem* plates. Positioned in a section on Romantic nationalism, *Jerusalem* was also in dialogue with other approaches to national identity. William Vaughan's catalogue essay offers a helpful comparative framing for converging and diverging ways of seeing the nation refracted in the elements of nature featured in the exhibition, from iconographies of the fatherland that Runge produced for Perthes's *Vaterländishes Museum*, and Friedrich's patri-

20. Edward Young, *The Complaint, and the Consolation; or, Night Thoughts* (London: Edwards, 1797) 46.

21. For a technical description of this drawing, see Peter Prange's entry in the Hamburger Kunsthalle's online collection, <https://online-sammlung.hamburger-kunsthalle.de/de/objekt/34194>.

22. Sibylle Erle, "Blake in Hamburg," *VALA* 5 (November 2024) 135-36 (on 136); see note 16 for evidence of Blake's visit to their home.

23. Joseph Leo Koerner, "Runge's Times," *William Blake's Universe* 178-85 (on 182).

24. Cited by Andreas Stolzenburg in his catalogue entry for Friedrich in *William Blake's Universe* (172).

otic and obliquely anti-French German landscapes, to Samuel Palmer's conservative organic rural idylls.[25]

25. William Vaughan, "Romantic Nationalism in Germany and Britain," *William Blake's Universe* 204-11.

23 While Blake's engagement with Böhme and Swedenborg is often discussed, in drawing German connections within Blake's universe, this bold, imaginative, original, and elegant exhibition offered new ways of seeing and stimulated formal, historical, and metaphysical questions about Romantic art in a millenarian European art world.