



Installation view, *William Blake's Universum*, Hamburger Kunsthalle. Photo: Christoph Irrgang, Hamburg.

A R T I C L E

Blake and Exhibitions, 2024

BY LUISA CALÈ

LUISA CALÈ (l.cale@bbk.ac.uk) is professor of Romantic and nineteenth-century literature and visual culture in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at Birkbeck, University of London. She writes about practices of reading, viewing, and collecting in the Romantic period. Her monograph, entitled *The Book Unbound: Material Cultures of Reading and Collecting, 1750–1850*, funded by the Leverhulme Trust, is forthcoming from Cambridge University Press. She is the exhibitions editor for *Blake*.

IN 2024 Blake's work was exposed in British, European, and global settings. His role as a foundational artist in

the British School was explored in two different directions in London. The rehang of Tate Britain included a recentering and reenvisioning of British art, including the commissioning of a mural by Chris Ofili and his dialogue with Blake (17 April 2023–2 June 2024).¹ While the Fitzwilliam copy of Blake's life mask was on display in the British and German instantiations of *William Blake's Universe*, the National Portrait Gallery copy marked his role among Old Master precedents and inspirations in *Francis Bacon: Human Presence*.

- 2 Blake's European dimensions were tested through two major initiatives: *William Blake's Universe* explored the European roots and resonances of his work through a dialogue with German art, thanks to a partnership between the Fitzwilliam Museum and the Hamburger Kunsthalle. The exhibitions in Cambridge and Hamburg identified European traditions in academic training underpinning neoclassical art as an approach to the past, set Blake's continental proph-

1. Reviewed in Luisa Calè, "Blake and Exhibitions, 2023," *Blake*, vol. 58, no. 1, summer 2024, <https://doi.org/10.47761/biq.366>. For a contrast with Blake's previous location, adjacent to Turner, see Michael Glover, "William Blake, Our Contemporary," *Hyperallergic*, 26 Sept. 2023, hyperallergic.com/847018/william-blake-our-contemporary-tate-britain.

ecies in the revolutionary present, and captured understandings of the future by tracing a mystical vein in European Romantic art with shared roots in the work of Jacob Böhme. The Tate partnered with the Reggia di Venaria outside Turin and chose the theme of dreams to present its collection of Blakes and British Romantic art in a grandiose European palace setting.

- 3 A focus on the underworld featured Blake within domestic and grand-tour settings in which the geological imagination is informed by folk, religious, and scientific lore. At the Reggia di Venaria, a section titled “Satan and the Underworld” displayed a range of works by Blake and his contemporaries, including James Barry’s Miltonic “Satan, Sin, and Death.” However, the exhibition could not include Blake’s two watercolors specifically depicting that subject from *Paradise Lost*, since all loans were from the Tate, which does not own Blake’s versions. By contrast, *Satan Arousing the Rebel Angels*, illustrating *Paradise Lost* book 1, was loaned from the Victoria and Albert Museum to document interest in the vertical axis of travel to the underworld in the Louvre-Lens exhibition about subterranean worlds.
- 4 Blake’s illustrations to John Gabriel Stedman’s *Narrative, of a Five Years’ Expedition, against the Revolted Negroes of Surinam* (1796) continued to exercise creative, critical, and curatorial practice in 2024. After his representations of the inhuman treatment of slaves were included in *Reinventing the Americas: Construct. Erase. Repeat* at the Getty Center, Los Angeles (23 August 2022–8 January 2023) as part of a colonial archive of European encounters with America, this corpus was on view in the UK and Germany, where approaches ranged from the use of a trigger warning about the book at the Fitzwilliam to the decolonial aesthetics of self-reflection informing the display in Hamburg. Shanghai-born artist Hu Yun widened the scope of Blake’s Stedman compositions within the global legacies of colonial exploration in his retrospective at Rockbund Art Museum, in a building that had formerly housed the natural history collection of the Royal Asiatic Society.

William Blake’s Universe

**Curated by David Bindman and Esther Chadwick
Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge
23 February–19 May 2024**

Catalogue: Bindman, David, and Esther Chadwick, editors. *William Blake’s Universe*. Fitzwilliam Museum/Philip Wilson Publishers, 2024.

This exhibition brought the Fitzwilliam Blake collection into dialogue with German mysticism, documenting a shared mystical source in the corpus of Jacob Böhme—evidenced

by Cambridge copies of the Law edition illustrated by Dionysius Andreas Freher—and the parallel development of British and German millenarian Romantic visions in the corpuses of Blake, Caspar David Friedrich, and Philipp Otto Runge. This comparative European approach brought into view a classical idiom rooted in the artists’ academic training in London, Copenhagen, and Dresden.² Comparisons between individual works and shared themes produced bold and illuminating juxtapositions. Blake’s mediated encounter with Michelangelo was evidenced by a wall hang bringing together three versions of the subject of Joseph of Arimathea (an engraving attributed to Nicolas Beatrizet, and two by Blake, dated 1773 and 1810–25). On the wall at the other end of the room were versions of the *Laocoön* as an encyclopædia plate, an engraving surrounded by Blake’s aphoristic marginalia, and a drawing. The exhibition featured two copies of “Albion Rose,” one placed next to Jacques-Louis Perée’s “Droits de l’homme” (“Rights of Man”) (1795–96) and another in dialogue with Friedrich’s *Lebensalter* (*Ages of Life*, but translated as *The Ages of Man* in the exhibition) (c. 1826).³

James S. Deville, *Head of William Blake*, 1823
Fitzwilliam Museum, M.7-1947

Catherine Blake, *Portrait of the Young William Blake*,
c. 1830? (Butlin #C3)
Fitzwilliam Museum, PD.14-1953

John Flaxman, *Portrait of William Blake*, 1804
Fitzwilliam Museum, 828.f.37

John Linnell, *William Blake*, 1821
Fitzwilliam Museum, PD.61-1950

John Linnell, *Head and Shoulders of William Blake*, 1820
Fitzwilliam Museum, PD.57-1950

John Linnell, *Portrait of Blake at Hampstead*, c. 1825
Fitzwilliam Museum, PD.58-1950

The Past: Antiquity and the Gothic

“Joseph of Arimathea among the Rocks of Albion”:
First state, 1773
Second state, c. 1810–25
Fitzwilliam Museum, P.391-1985, P.392-1985

2. See cat. no. 15, p. 43, for Runge’s studying in Copenhagen; p. 44, no. 18, for the academy in Dresden.

3. For a full review, see Luisa Calè, “*William Blake’s Universe*, Fitzwilliam Museum, 23 February–19 May 2024; *William Blake’s Universe*, edited by David Bindman and Esther Chadwick,” *Blake*, vol. 58, no. 3, winter 2024–25, <https://doi.org/10.47761/biq.376>.

Aminadab, Called "The Reposing Traveller," after
Michelangelo and Adamo Scultori, c. 1785 (Butlin #170
verso)
British Museum, 1867,1012.205

The Apotheosis of Bacchus, after d'Hancarville, c. 1779–85
(Butlin #174)
British Museum, 1867,1012.207

Joseph's Brethren Bowing Down before Him, c. 1784–85
(Butlin #155)
Fitzwilliam Museum, 456A

Joseph Ordering Simeon to Be Bound, c. 1784–85 (Butlin
#156)
Fitzwilliam Museum, 456B

Joseph Making Himself Known to His Brethren, c. 1784–85
(Butlin #157)
Fitzwilliam Museum, 456C

"Homer Invoking the Muse," after Flaxman, for Flaxman,
Iliad, 1805
Fitzwilliam Museum

"Head of a Damned Soul," after Fuseli, c. 1789–90
Fitzwilliam Museum, P.423-1985

"Tornado," after Fuseli, for Darwin, *The Botanic Garden*,
1795
Fitzwilliam Museum, P.546-1985

Hyperion ("The Bowman"), late 1790s (Butlin #336)
Fitzwilliam Museum, PD.167-1985

Ugolino and His Sons in Prison, wash drawing, c. 1780–85
(Butlin #208)
Hamburger Kunsthalle, 1980-128

Ugolino and His Sons in Prison, tempera, 1826–27 (Butlin
#805)
Fitzwilliam Museum, PD.5-1978

Engravings for the *Divine Comedy*, 1826–27:
"The Circle of the Corrupt Officials: The Devils Mauling
Each Other"
"The Circle of the Lustful: Paolo and Francesca"
Fitzwilliam Museum, P.812-R, P.810-R

On Homer's Poetry [and] On Virgil, c. 1822
Fitzwilliam Museum, P.711-1985

☞ & his two Sons Satan & Adam (*Laocoön*), c. 1826–27
Fitzwilliam Museum, P.398-1985

For Rees's *Cyclopædia*, 1820:
"Sculpture" (Venus de Medici, Apollo Belvedere, Laocoön)
"Sculpture" (Durga Slaying Mahishasura, An Etruscan
Patera, A Colossal Statue at Thebes, Persian Sculpture at
Persepolis, A Chinese Statue)
Fitzwilliam Museum, P.579-1985, P.739-1985

Free Version of the Laocoön, c. 1825 (Butlin #681)
Fitzwilliam Museum, PD.29-2020

The Present: Europe in Flames

America, a Prophecy copy O, composed 1793, printed
c. 1821:
Frontispiece
Title page
"A Prophecy"
"The morning comes"
"The terror answered"
"Thus wept the Angel voice"
"Over the hills"
Fitzwilliam Museum, P.127-1950 (1, 2, 5, 8, 10, 12, 18)

For Stedman, *Narrative*, 1796:
"Europe Supported by Africa and America," hand colored
"Group Imported to be Sold for Slaves"
Cambridge University Library, Keynes.H.4.12; British
Museum, 2006,0830.49

"The Little Black Boy," printed recto/verso
Fitzwilliam Museum, P.679-1985

Visions of the Daughters of Albion copy P, composed 1793,
printed c. 1818, open to the title page
Fitzwilliam Museum, P.126-1950

The Song of Los copy A, composed and printed 1795:
Frontispiece
Title page
King and Queen on a Lily
Los Rests from His Labours
British Museum, 1856,0209.409, 410, 413, 416

Europe copy K, composed 1794, printed c. 1821, all
eighteen prints on display
Fitzwilliam Museum, P.127-1950 (19-36)

"F[rench] Revolution," after Ryley, for *Bellamy's
Picturesque Magazine*, 1793
Fitzwilliam Museum, P.544-1985

Death on a Pale Horse, c. 1800 (Butlin #517)
Fitzwilliam Museum, 765

The House of Death, c. 1795 (Butlin #322)
Fitzwilliam Museum, 1769

“Albion Rose,” from the so-called Large Book of Designs,
1794–96 (Butlin #262.1)
British Museum, 1856,0209.417

The Future: Spiritual Renewal

The Soldiers Casting Lots for Christ's Garments, 1800
(Butlin #495)
Fitzwilliam Museum, PD.30-1949

*The Angel of the Divine Presence Clothing Adam and Eve
with Coats of Skins*, 1803 (Butlin #436)
Fitzwilliam Museum, PD.29-1949

The Ascension, c. 1805–06 (Butlin #505)
Fitzwilliam Museum, PD.32-1949

Watercolors for *Paradise Regained*, c. 1816–18, all twelve
on display (Butlin #544)
Fitzwilliam Museum, PD.14-1950 to PD.25-1950

An Allegory of the Spiritual Condition of Man, 1811?
(Butlin #673)
Fitzwilliam Museum, PD.27-1949

Illustrations of the Book of Job, 1823–26:
“Job and His Family”
“Job's Evil Dreams”
“When the Morning Stars Sang Together”
“Job and His Daughters”
“Job and His Family Restored to Prosperity”
Fitzwilliam Museum, P.454-1985 (2, 12, 15, 21, 22)

Samuel Palmer, *The Magic Apple Tree*, c. 1830
Fitzwilliam Museum, 1490

Samuel Palmer, *Coming from Evening Church*, 1830
Tate, N03697

Jerusalem copy B, composed 1804–20, printed 1821,
frontispiece
Private collection

Jerusalem, frontispiece, proof impression
Fitzwilliam Museum, P.24-2018



Photo by Thomas Adank; reproduced by kind permission of the Fitzwilliam Museum.

Jerusalem copy B, composed 1804–20, printed 1821:
Title page
Pl. 6, “His Spectre driv’n by the Starry Wheels”
Pl. 11, “To labours mighty, with vast strength”
Pl. 14, “One hair nor particle of dust”
Pl. 25, “And there was heard a great lamenting in Beulah”
Private collection

Jerusalem copy H, composed 1804–20, printed c. 1832, pl.
28, “Every ornament of perfection”
Fitzwilliam Museum, P.5054-R

Jerusalem, pl. 37, “And One stood forth”
Fitzwilliam Museum, P.708-1985

Jerusalem, pl. 51, Vala, Hyle, and Skofeld
Fitzwilliam Museum, P.709-1985

Vala, Hyle, and Skofeld, and Another Figure, c. 1810
Hamburger Kunsthalle, 1976-258

Jerusalem, pl. 100
Fitzwilliam Museum, P.710-1985

“Albion Rose,” second state
British Museum, 1894,0612.27

胡昀: 远山 / Hu Yun: *Mount Analogue*
Rockbund Art Museum, Shanghai
23 March–25 August 2024

Untitled (from the narrative of a five years expedition) (2016–17), a creative intervention on Blake’s illustrations to Stedman’s *Narrative* by Shanghai-born artist Hu Yun, featured in the first chapter, “China Journal,” of the project “Complex Geographies” at the Rockbund Art Museum, “which in 1933 served as the location for China’s first natural history museum—the Royal Asiatic Society Museum.”⁴ The exhibition was titled after René Daumal’s *Le Mont Analogue* (1952), originally subtitled in translation “An Authentic Narrative,” then retranslated under the title *Mount Analogue: A Tale of Non-Euclidian and Symbolically Authentic Mountaineering Adventures*, which generalizes the French “alpine adventures” for a global public.⁵ The ascension narrative, arranged over three floors, was given con-

4. www.rockbundartmuseum.org/exhibition/hu-yun-mount-analogue.

5. René Daumal, *Le Mont Analogue: Récit véridique*, Gallimard, 1952, translated into English by Roger Shattuck in 1959. Subsequent editions bear the subtitle *Roman d’aventures alpines, non euclidiennes et symboliquement authentiques*, reflected in the changed English title *Mount Analogue: A Tale of Non-Euclidian and Symbolically Authentic Moun-*

tinuity by *The Hollow-Men*, a site-specific installation of sails mounted in the hollow in the middle of the floors of the building, evoking the colonial travel that brought the natural history collection together. In this context of colonial exploration and encounter, Hu Yun’s engagement with Blake became part of a wider study, exposing official histories, taxonomies, archives, and foundational figures in colonial natural history.⁶

Hu Yun’s reenvisioning of Blake was placed on a mezzanine above *The Hollow-Men*. The seven works framed on the wall are obtained by an art of deletion or redaction, which takes out the colonial bodies from Blake’s compositions for Stedman’s *Narrative*: “Taking out certain elements in the original drawings by Blake, Hu Yun intentionally leaves viewers with plenty of blankness. Such abstraction points directly to the violence behind taxonomy and selective recording.”⁷

Untitled (from the narrative of a five years expedition),
2016–17

Ink on tracing paper, 7 pieces, 26.5 × 19 cm. (image), 52 ×
36 cm. (framed)

Wallpaper dimensions variable

*Mondes souterrains: 20,000 lieux sous la terre /
Subterranean Worlds: 20,000 Leagues under the Earth*
Curated by Alexandre Estaquet-Légrand, Jean-Jacques
Terrin, and Gautier Verbeke
Musée du Louvre-Lens
27 March–22 July 2024

The exhibition was conceived as a “path of initiation,” a “physical experience” for visitors, who, “cut off from the world,” “discover[ed] chasms and caves.” It used *The Fall of the Titans* (anonymous copy, retouched by Peter Paul Rubens, of a drawing by Pieter Coecke van Aelst) to document the underworld described in Hesiod’s *Theogony* (eighth century BCE).

Satan Arousing the Rebel Angels, one of twelve watercolors commissioned by Thomas Butts, was displayed in a section named “Descent into the World Beyond” to capture the association of the underworld with hell: “Civilizations have

taineering Adventures, translated by Carol Cosman, Overlook Press, 2004.

6. For the exhibition’s engagement with colonial natural history and disciplinary formations, see Jennifer Piejko, “Hu Yun Turns to the Unfinished Novel,” *Frieze*, no. 245, 11 June 2024, www.frieze.com/article/hu-yun-mount-analogue-2024-review.

7. Aike Gallery, photos of Rockbund Art Museum installation, *Instagram*, 26 May 2024, www.instagram.com/p/C7brmvsRCnj.



All Rockbund Art Museum installation views: Hu Yun, *Mount Analogue*, 23 March–25 August 2024. © Rockbund Art Museum, Shanghai. Photo: Yan Tao.





Photo: © Musée du Louvre-Lens/Emmanuel Watteau.

conceived the abyss as the realm of death where the dead hope to find eternal life or resurrection. Reflecting the hierarchies of mortal worlds, these infra-worlds have their divinities, but, braving the rules of life and death, some gods and heroes have tried to trespass their doors to travel in subterranean worlds.⁸ Blake's muscular Satan exemplifies the heroic decision to renew the onslaught of the rebel angels.

Watercolors for *Paradise Lost*, Butts set, 1808:
Satan Arousing the Rebel Angels (Butlin #536.1)
 Victoria and Albert Museum, FA.697

8. Quoted from the visitor guide; the translation is mine.

William Blakes Universum

**Curated by Andreas Stolzenburg in collaboration with
 David Bindman and Esther Chadwick
 Hamburger Kunsthalle
 14 June–8 September 2024**

Catalogue: Stolzenburg, Andreas, in collaboration with David Bindman and Esther Chadwick, editors. *William Blakes Universum*. Hamburger Kunsthalle/Hatje Cantz, 2024.

The collaboration between the Fitzwilliam and the Hamburger Kunsthalle served a mutual interest in establishing a dialogue between Blake and German Romantic art. Almost fifty years since a groundbreaking Blake exhibition commissioned by the Kunsthalle's then director Werner Hofmann as part of a cycle on British Romantic art and curated by David Bindman (1975), Bindman joined forces with Esther Chadwick and Andreas Stolzenburg to reinvent Blake in a German and European context for a different generation, after Brexit. The Fitzwilliam took the partnership as an opportunity to present the work of Philipp Otto Runge to the British public, whereas fewer Runge works



All Hamburger Kunsthalle photos: Christoph Irrgang, Hamburg.

were exhibited in Hamburg. Conversely, despite the pioneering work of Henry Crabb Robinson in introducing Blake to the German reading public in an article published in *Vaterländisches Museum* (1811), the Kunsthalle claimed that “[Blake’s] work is still little known outside of England.” Both exhibitions prided themselves on the display of objects from Sir Geoffrey Keynes’s bequest to the Fitzwilliam; for the Kunsthalle, “This exhibition will be the first public showing of the entire Blake collection of the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge together with the bequest of the well-known Blake collector Geoffrey Keynes.”¹⁰

German reception of *William Blakes Universum* noted the coincidence with the 250th anniversary of Caspar David Friedrich’s birth¹¹ and applauded the exhibition’s dialogue with German art to claim Blake as a “true European,”¹² despite his never having traveled outside England. Yet reviewers also expected an explicit engagement with Blake’s contemporary legacy as a “painter, poet, mystic, proto-hippie,”¹³ and “anarchistic rebel.”¹⁴ A number of reviews wanted the exhibition to engage with his significance in pop culture, “from Aldous Huxley to the Doors, from Patti Smith to Ridley Scott.”¹⁵ If it “lacked the thunderous sound of rock music,”¹⁶ its vibes were activated by an iconic use of “The Ancient of Days,” “reminiscent of an album by a heavy metal band.”¹⁷ One review contrasted the status of Blake’s

“Jerusalem” hymn as an “unofficial national anthem” to his countercultural power in music, film, and book arts: “The Doors also set his verses to music, Jim Jarmusch created a cinematic monument to him with *Dead Man*. His poetry also influenced Allen Ginsberg and Bob Dylan, and Blake pioneered the graphic novel genre.”¹⁸

To bring Blake’s world to a contemporary audience, Hamburg’s initiatives included commissioning a delightful graphic novel about Blake’s life by local comic-book artist Noëlle Kröger, who centered the narrative around Blake’s collaboration with his wife, Catherine, remediating some of his visual inventions within the comic-book panels. While the Fitzwilliam familiarized Blake’s character by means of short glosses and an abridgment of the action in the captions below the plates of the continental prophecies, the Kunsthalle produced a glossary on one of the exhibition’s walls. “A Note on Gender Images” acknowledged Blake’s “queer potentials and interpretations,” yet claimed that

[t]he characteristics of the allegorical figures in Blake’s mythology are based on ideas of masculinity and femininity that appear stereotypical—or even sexist and misogynistic—from today’s perspective.... The allegories employed by Blake in his mythical worlds always present contemporary variations of the historically evolved binary system of gender.

Hopefully, the upcoming bicentenary will be an opportunity to translate recent research on queer Blake into curatorial initiatives that revisit the gender dynamics and queer sensibilities to be found and reinvented in his corpus.

The Kunsthalle’s most original intervention consisted in its approach to the illustrations to Stedman’s *Narrative*. Both in Cambridge and in Hamburg, how to mediate Blake’s engagement with slavery was a curatorial problem that raised questions in contemporary decolonial aesthetics. The Fitzwilliam opted for a trigger warning written on the wall above the glass vitrine with the Stedman plates, which were deliberately placed horizontally, activating an “ethics of horizontality” to deny such subjects the honor of verticality, echoing the deposition and then horizontal display of statues associated with slavery.¹⁹ In Hamburg the vitrine

9. www.hamburger-kunsthalle.de/en/william-blakes-universe, accessed 10 Sept. 2025. This claim is surprising, given the evidence discussed in *The Reception of William Blake in Europe*, edited by Sibylle Erle and Morton D. Paley, 2 vols., Bloomsbury Academic, 2019.

10. www.hamburger-kunsthalle.de/en/william-blakes-universe, accessed 10 Sept. 2025.

11. Nicola Kuhn, “Ausstellung über William Blake; Die Götter treten gegeneinander an,” *Der Tagesspiegel*, 21 June 2024. The Friedrich anniversary was celebrated with a retrospective at the Hamburger Kunsthalle (15 Dec. 2023–1 April 2024, www.hamburger-kunsthalle.de/de/caspar-david-friedrich), preceding *William Blakes Universum* but overlapping with the Fitzwilliam’s *William Blake’s Universe*. The Metropolitan Museum of Art also marked the occasion with *Caspar David Friedrich: The Soul of Nature*, “organized in cooperation with the Alte Nationalgalerie of the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, and Hamburger Kunsthalle . . .” (8 Feb.–11 May 2025, www.metmuseum.org/exhibitions/caspar-david-friedrich-the-soul-of-nature).

12. Vera Fengler, “Ich sehe was, was du nicht siehst; Das Kunstspiel zum Mitmachen—jeden Montag im Abendblatt. Heute: William Blake, ‘Der Alte der Tage; Europa, eine Prophezeiung,’” *Hamburger Abendblatt*, 15 July 2024.

13. Peter Richter, “William Blake in Hamburg; Beim Propheten der Bärte; Die Hamburger Kunsthalle entdeckt schon zum zweiten Mal den Maler, Dichter, Mystiker und Proto-Hippie William Blake,” *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 7 Aug. 2024.

14. Wolfgang Krischke, “Anarchistischer Rebell und Kündler esoterischer Visionen,” *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 3 July 2024.

15. See Krischke.

16. See Kuhn.

17. See Fengler.

18. See Kuhn.

19. On the “ethics of horizontality,” see Luisa Calé, “*William Blake’s Universe*: An Interview with David Bindman and Esther Chadwick,” *Blake*, vol. 57, no. 3, winter 2023–24, <https://doi.org/10.47761/biq.352>. The statue of Bristol slave-trader Edward Colston was toppled in 2020, went on temporary display in the horizontal rather than the vertical position until January 2022, and that solution was made permanent in spring 2024 after Bristol inhabitants were surveyed about and approved this decolonial curatorial strategy: see Chloe Harcombe and



with the Stedman prints was placed beneath protective cloths, under a wall text:

The images in this display case are concealed as they contain racist depictions that are directed against Black people. We have not made them directly visible for this reason, but the fabric can be lifted to view them. How does this change the way we see? What impact does this intervention have on the way you view the depiction?

In addition, there are racial epithets on the sheets. These are terms introduced by white people to devalue and exclude groups and people by emphasising supposed inequality and producing inequality.

While this concealment might appear to restrict, Sibylle Erle argues that the choice to lift the cloths activated the viewer's participation.²⁰ The glass vitrine is a museological

device that isolates and protects the object from spectators, yet the reflective interference of the glass adds the spectators' faces to the display. At the Kunsthalle this interference was enhanced by a radical intervention that brought the most original and creative curatorial practice in decolonial aesthetics to Blake studies.

The decision to add a mirror to the Stedman display was the product of a process of consultation involving the gallery's Education Department in collaboration with freelance curator Christopher Nixon,²¹ who suggested Pedro Lasch's *Black Mirror* experiments.²² The decolonial introduction of mirrors into the exhibition space magnifies

Alice Bouverie, "Edward Colston Statue Goes on Permanent Display in Bristol Museum," *BBC News, Bristol*, 14 Mar. 2024, www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-bristol-68569148.

20. See Sibylle Erle, "Blake in Hamburg," *VALA*, no. 5, 2024, pp. 134-36.

21. Curator of the Colonial Past and Postcolonial Present at the Stiftung Historische Museen Hamburg, 2020-21 (zugang-gestalten.org/sprecherinnen/christopher-nixon); author of *Den Blick erwidern. Epiphanie und Ästhetik postkolonial*, Passagen Verlag, 2023.

22. For mention of Lasch's *Black Mirror*, see also Erle, "Blake in Hamburg." For details of the process, I am grateful to Julia Kersting, curatorial assistant at the Hamburger Kunsthalle, who was responsible for the organization and implementation of this display.



viewers' discomfort, making them see themselves reflected in scenes of colonial violence and exploitation, addressing them as participants rather than detached observers. To support such a practice of self-reflection in *William Blakes Universum*, the gallery added this label to the Stedman display:

We don't just look at the images through the mirror in this display case. We see ourselves. The mirror throws our gaze back at us. It is intended to encourage us to become aware of our voyeuristic, eager, curious gaze at these depictions and invite us to reflect on our own gaze. Who is looking at whom here? Who is the subject, who is the object of observation? Because the way people and bodies are depicted here is also the result of a constructed and culturally learnt colonial point of view, a colonial regime of looking. (Integrating a mirror here was inspired by the complex project *Black Mirror* by the artist Pedro Lasch, ongoing since 2007.)

This invitation to decolonize the gaze exposed, interrogated, and subverted subject positions and ways of seeing in "a colonial regime of looking." Lasch argues that *Black Mir-*

ror/Espejo Negro, "with its play of transparencies and reflections, makes impossible any clear separation between past-present, artwork-viewer-environment..."²³ Lifting the protective cloths brought viewers in contact with the display, implicating them in the cruelties of slavery captured by Blake.

Slow Looking
Samek Art Museum, Bucknell University, Lewisburg
4 September–8 December 2024

Showcasing a bequest from Bucknell alum Stuart Coyne, this exhibition advocated slow looking by trying to evoke the wall hangs of Coyne's San Francisco apartment. "Christ Descending into the Grave" and "The Soul Hovering over

23. Quoted from pedrolasch.com/blackmirror.html#en; for further information, see *Black Mirror/Espejo Negro*, edited by Pedro Lasch, John Hope Franklin Humanities Institute/Nasher Museum of Art at Duke University, 2010.

the Body,” two etchings by Louis Schiavonetti after Blake’s inventions for Robert Blair’s *The Grave*, featured at the center of a hang including Hogarth’s “The Sleeping Congregation.”

Schiavonetti after Blake, published in Blair, *The Grave*, 1813:

“Christ Descending into the Grave”

“The Soul Hovering over the Body, Reluctantly Parting with Life”

Samek Art Museum, 2023.5.19, 2023.5.20

Dürer to Matisse: 400 Years of European Prints

Curated by Dana Cowen

Ackland Art Museum, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

27 September 2024–5 January 2025

This exhibition selected samples from *Illustrations of the Book of Job* for a survey of printmaking and “art historical movements from the Renaissance to Cubism and beyond.”²⁴ Blake’s engravings were put into conversation with Dürer’s

24. ackland.org/exhibition/durer-to-matisse-400-years-of-european-prints.



Photo: © Samek Art Museum, Bucknell University.



Photo: Ackland Art Museum, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

and works in various print media by Rembrandt van Rijn, Giovanni Battista Piranesi, Francisco de Goya, Edgar Degas, Mary Cassatt, Vincent van Gogh, Käthe Kollwitz, Edward Munch, and Pablo Picasso.

Illustrations of the Book of Job, 1823–26:

“Satan Going Forth from the Presence of the Lord”²⁵

“Job and His Wife Restored to Prosperity”

Ackland Art Museum, 58.1.1067.1, 58.1.1067.14

Francis Bacon: Human Presence

Curated by Rosie Broadley

National Portrait Gallery, London

10 October 2024–19 January 2025

Catalogue: Broadley, Rosie, editor. *Francis Bacon: Human Presence*. National Portrait Gallery, 2024.

25. Thirty-six prints from the museum, including “Satan Going Forth,” were displayed at other North Carolina universities in 2023, as documented in Calé, “Blake and Exhibitions, 2023.”

Francis Bacon: Human Presence documented Bacon’s encounter with Old Masters. The impact of Blake was signaled by his life mask, made by James Deville in 1823, owned by John Linnell, and acquired by the National Portrait Gallery in 1918. In the exhibition, the life mask complemented *Study for Portrait II (after the Life Mask of William Blake)* (1955), which Bacon painted in response to a commission from the composer Gerard Schurmann.²⁶ Bacon kept a plaster cast purchased from the museum shop in his studio, but preferred to work from a photograph.

James S. Deville, *Head of William Blake*, 1823

National Portrait Gallery, NPG 1809

Francis Bacon, *Study for Portrait II (after the Life Mask of William Blake)*, 1955

Tate, T02414

26. Exhibit labels, www.npg.org.uk/assets/uploads/files/Francis-Bacon_LARGE%20PRINT_GUIDE.pdf, p. 39.

Belle da Costa Greene: A Librarian's Legacy
Curated by Philip S. Palmer and Erica Ciallela
Morgan Library and Museum, New York
25 October 2024–4 May 2025

Catalogue: Ciallela, Erica, and Philip S. Palmer, editors. *Belle da Costa Greene: A Librarian's Legacy*. Morgan Library and Museum/DelMonico Books, 2024.

Blake's watercolor *The Lord Answering Job out of the Whirlwind*²⁷ featured among the acquisitions of the Morgan's inaugural librarian, Belle da Costa Greene (1879–1950), daughter of the first black graduate of Harvard College, whose family changed their name “to pass as white in a racist and segregated America.”²⁸ Greene joined the library in 1905 and oversaw its development after J. P. Morgan's

27. After three months, the library substituted *When the Morning Stars Sang Together*. Many thanks to Sheelagh Bevan, Andrew W. Mellon Curator of Printed Books and Bindings at the Morgan, for this information.

28. www.themorgan.org/exhibitions/belle-da-costa-greene.

death in 1913, working as director after J. P. Morgan, Jr., turned the library into a public institution in 1924. In a letter to Morgan Sr. in 1909, the same year in which she acquired the Blake prints, she announced the acquisition of the only surviving manuscript of Edgar Allan Poe's “The Raven” and went on to articulate her ambition for the Morgan Library. She viewed the British Museum and the Bibliothèque Nationale de France as her only rivals when it came to purchasing incunables, bindings, and the classics.²⁹

Watercolors for the book of Job, Butts set:
The Lord Answering Job out of the Whirlwind, c. 1805–06
(Butlin #550.13)

When the Morning Stars Sang Together, c. 1805–06 (Butlin #550.14)

Morgan Library and Museum, 2001.75, 2001.76

29. Exhibition audio stop 11, “Belle Greene Builds the Collection,” www.themorgan.org/exhibitions/online/belle-da-costa-greene/11.



Photo: © Morgan Library and Museum. Photography by Carmen González Fraile, 2024.

Blake e la sua epoca. Viaggi nel tempo del sogno / In the Age of William Blake. Visionary Journeys

Curated by Alice Insley

Reggia di Venaria, Turin

31 October 2024–2 February 2025

Catalogue: Insley, Alice, editor. *Blake e la sua epoca. Viaggi nel tempo del sogno*. Hopefulmonster, 2024.

This first Italian Blake retrospective invited the viewer to envision Blake's art in a European palace built to embody the royal ambition of the Savoy family before the unification of Italy, emulating some architectonic features of Versailles. In stark contrast with Blake's politics and the viewing conditions of Blake's works in his own time, this bold contrafactual setting afforded yet another opportunity to think about the role he might have had in public art: it projected *The Spiritual Form of Pitt* on a flimsy fabric fluttering from above, a ghostly haunting presence for a European dwelling. Drawing on the Tate collection, the exhibition introduced Blake through British Romantic art and British Romantic art through Blake.³⁰ It subsequently moved to the Museum of Fine Arts in Budapest in September 2025 in what amounts to the first exhibition of Blake originals in Hungary,³¹ and will next be shown at the National Gallery of Ireland, Dublin, in 2026.

Introduction

Blake, *The House of Death*, 1795–c. 1805 (Butlin #320)
Tate, N05060

Blake, *The Night of Enitharmon's Joy*, formerly *Hecate*,
c. 1795 (Butlin #316)
Tate, N05056

Blake, *Satan Exulting over Eve*, c. 1795 (Butlin #291)
Tate, T07213

Horror and Peril

John Hamilton Mortimer, *Banditti Going Out in the Morning*, 1773
Tate, T08277

Philip James de Louthembourg, *Travellers Attacked by Banditti*, 1781
Tate, T00921

30. For a full review, see Luisa Calè, "Blake e la sua epoca. Viaggi nel tempo del sogno, La Reggia di Venaria, 31 October 2024–2 February 2025; Blake e la sua epoca, edited by Alice Insley," *Blake*, vol. 59, no. 1, summer 2025, <https://doi.org/10.47761/biq.391>.

31. See Calè, "Blake e la sua epoca" n4.

In the style of John Hamilton Mortimer, *Rocky Landscape with Banditti*, c. 1770–80

Tate, T00342

Nathaniel Dance, *Two Women in a Dungeon*

Tate, T08444

John Hamilton Mortimer, *The Captive*

Tate, T10125

Attributed to George Richmond, *Fettered Nude Figure Reclining by a Rock*, c. 1825

Tate, A00838

James Barry, *Study for Philoctetes on the Island of Lemnos*, 1770

Tate, T08127

George Romney, *John Howard Visiting a Lazaretto*, c. 1791–92

Tate, T03547

Blake, *The House of Death*, c. 1790 (Butlin #259)

Tate, N05192

Henry Fuseli, *Lady Macbeth Seizing the Daggers*, exhibited 1812?

Tate, T00733

Blake, *The Blasphemer*, c. 1800 (Butlin #446)

Tate, N05195

Blake, watercolor for the *Divine Comedy*, 1824–27: *The Punishment of the Thieves* (Butlin #812.102)

Tate, N03364

Blake, *The Body of Abel Found by Adam and Eve*, c. 1826 (Butlin #806)

Tate, N05888

Samuel Colman, *The Death of Amelia*, 1804?

Tate, T02109

William Westall, *The Commencement of the Deluge*, exhibited 1848

Tate, N01877

Philip James de Louthembourg, *An Avalanche in the Alps*, 1803

Tate, T00772

Francis Danby, *The Deluge*, c. 1840?

Tate, N06134



BLAKE

e la sua epoca

Viaggi nel tempo del sogno

(particolare) William Blake, *Oberon, Titania e Puck con le Fate che danzano*, 1786 ca., acquarello e grafite su carta
 Tate: Presentato da Alfred A. de Pass in memoria di sua moglie Ethel 1910

Mostra organizzata
 in collaborazione con la Tate, UK



Reggia di Venaria

31 Ottobre 2024 — 2 Febbraio 2025



Alexander Cozens, *A Shipwreck Fantasy*: Inscrutable
Tate, T08772

François Louis Thomas Francia, *A Shipwreck*
Tate, T08915

Jacob More, *The Deluge*, 1787
Tate, T12758

Samuel Colman, *The Destruction of the Temple*, c. 1830–40
Tate, T01980

Fantastical Creatures

John Hamilton Mortimer, *Caliban?*, 1770s
Tate, T09101

John Hamilton Mortimer, *Caricature Heads*
Tate, T09097

John Hamilton Mortimer, *Fish Devouring Shell Food*
Tate, T09124

John Hamilton Mortimer, *A Sea Monster with Fish*
Tate, T10131

Attributed to Master of the Giants, *Unknown Mythological
Subject*
Tate, T01843

John Varley, *Sketch for Treatise on Zodiacal Physiognomy*,
1828
Tate, T07251

Blake, *The Head of the Ghost of a Flea*, c. 1819 (Butlin
#692.98)
Tate, N05184

John Linnell, *The Man who Built the Pyramids (after
William Blake)*, c. 1825
Tate, N05185

Blake, *The Ghost of a Flea*, c. 1819–20 (Butlin #750)
Tate, N05889

Thomas Rowlandson, *The Judge*
Tate, T08531

Thomas Rowlandson, *Queen Anne's Bounty*
Tate, T09201

Blake, *Illustrations of the Book of Job*, 1823–26, reprinted
1874:

“Behemoth and Leviathan”
Tate, A00026

Susanna Duncombe, *The Ghost Scene from The Castle of
Otranto*
Tate, T04244

John Hamilton Mortimer, *Three Skeletons*
Tate, T10127

British School, *Lord William and the Ghost of His Nephew*
Tate, T09855

Nathaniel Dance, *The Ghost of Mrs. Swellenberg's Uncle*
Tate, T08415

Nathaniel Dance, *A Monster Emerging from a Cave*
Tate, T08436

Nathaniel Dance, *A Dog-Headed Monster in a Cave, a
Lilliputian Figure Below*
Tate, T08437

Enchantments

Henry Fuseli, *The Shepherd's Dream, from Paradise Lost*,
1793
Tate, T00876

George Romney, *Tom Hayley as Robin Goodfellow*,
1789–92
Tate, N05850

George Romney, *Lady Hamilton as Cassandra*, c. 1785–86
Tate, N01668

Henry Fuseli, *The Debutante*, 1807
Tate, N03396

Henry Fuseli, *Charis Phykomené*, 1791
Tate, T10440

Henry Singleton, *Ariel on a Bat's Back*, exhibited 1819
Tate, N01027

Blake, *Oberon, Titania, and Puck with Fairies Dancing*,
c. 1786 (Butlin #161)
Tate, N02686

Blake, *Design from Visions of the Daughters of Albion*, pl. 7
[Bentley; Erdman pl. 4], c. 1795 (Butlin #265)
Tate, N03374

Blake, Design from *The Book of Urizen*, pl. 2, “Teach these Souls to Fly,” 1796, c. 1818 (Butlin #261.5)
Tate, N03696

William Young Ottley, *A Flight of Angels*
Tate, T09144

J. M. W. Turner, *A Subject from the Runic Superstitions*, exhibited 1808
Tate, N00464

Theodor von Holst, *The Fairy Lovers*, c. 1840
Tate, T01518

Theodor von Holst, *Fantasy Based on Goethe’s Faust*, 1834
Tate, T05747

William Etty, *The Fairy of the Fountain*, 1845
Tate, N04108

Blake, Design from *The Book of Thel*, pl. 7 [Bentley; Erdman pl. 5], “Doth God take Care of these,” 1796, c. 1818
Tate, T13000

Blake, Design from *The Book of Urizen*, pl. 19, “Is the Female death” / “Become new Life,” 1796, c. 1818
Tate, T12998

After Joshua Reynolds, *Puck or Robin Goodfellow*
Tate, N05384

Romanticizing the Past

Benjamin West, *The Bard*, 1778
Tate, T01900

Blake, *The Bard, from Gray*, 1809? (Butlin #655)
Tate, N03551

Blake, *Lear and Cordelia in Prison*, c. 1779 (Butlin #53)
Tate, N05189

Robert Blake, *The Preaching of Warning*, c. 1785? (Butlin #R6 recto)
Tate, A00003

Richard Westall, *A Gaelic Warrior Pointing to a Vision*
Tate, T08653

Nathaniel Dance, *Macbeth Entering the Witches’ Cavern*
Tate, T08445

Thomas Girtin, *A Subject from Ossian*
Tate, T08935

J. M. W. Turner, *From Spenser’s Fairie Queene*, c. 1807–08
Tate, D08139

William James Müller, *Stonehenge*
Tate, N02385

Samuel Palmer, *Tintagel Castle*, 1848
Tate, T13441

Edward Calvert, “The Bride,” 1828
Tate, A00157

Samuel Palmer, *A Hilly Scene*, c. 1826–28
Tate, N05805

The Gothic

Thomas Girtin, *Guisborough Priory, Yorkshire*, 1801
Tate, T00993

Edward Hawke Locker, *Riveaulx Abbey*, 1802
Tate, T08202

Francis Towne, *Netley Abbey*, 1809
Tate, T08194

J. M. W. Turner, *Salisbury: A Gothic Porch in a Garden*, 1798?
Tate, D02350

Alexander Cozens, *The Enchanted Castle*
Tate, T08042

Robert Ker Porter, *An Ancient Castle*, c. 1799–1800
Tate, T08532

John Sell Cotman, *An Ancient Castle*
Tate, T08122

George Cuitt, Jr., *Window in Conway Castle*, 1807
Tate, T08756

Circle of Dr. Thomas Monro, *A Ruin and Trees by a Pool: Moonlight*
Tate, D00856

Blake, *Detailed Drawings for A Figure Standing in a Gothic Apse*, c. 1819 (Butlin #692.22)
Tate, T01335

Blake, *Judas Betrays Him*, c. 1803–05 (Butlin #491)
Tate, T06606

Blake, *The Entombment*, c. 1805 (Butlin #498)
Tate, N05896

Blake, *Bathsheba at the Bath*, c. 1799–1800 (Butlin #390)
Tate, N03007

Satan and the Underworld

Nathaniel Dance, *A Devil with Torch and Spear*
Tate, T08433

Nathaniel Dance, *A Devil with a Spear*
Tate, T08434

Blake, *Satan Smiting Job with Sore Boils*, c. 1826 (Butlin
#807)
Tate, N03340

James Barry, “Satan, Sin, and Death,” c. 1792–95
Tate, T06578

Blake, *Satan in His Original Glory*, c. 1805 (Butlin #469)
Tate, N05892

John Robert Cozens, *Satan Summoning His Legions*,
c. 1776
Tate, T08231

John Robert Cozens, *A Milton Subject, Unfinished*
Tate, T08232

John Charles Denham, *A Haystack Resembling a Devil*
Tate, T10448

George Cumberland, *Inside the Peak Cavern, Castleton*,
Derbyshire, c. 1820
Tate, T02304

Blake, *The Spiritual Form of Pitt Guiding Behemoth*, 1805?
(Butlin #651)
Tate, N01110

Blake, watercolors for the *Divine Comedy*, 1824–27:
Plutus (Butlin #812.14)
The Primaeval Giants Sunk in the Soil (Butlin #812.60)
*The Wood of the Self-Murderers: The Harpies and the
Suicides* (Butlin #812.24)
The Devils, with Dante and Virgil by the Side of the Pool
(Butlin #812.40)
The Inscription over the Gate (Butlin #812.4)
Tate, N03355, N03363, N03356, N03358, N03352

John St. John Long, *The Temptation in the Wilderness*, 1824
Tate, T04169

Theodor von Holst, *Charon*, c. 1837
Tate, T15482

J. M. W. Turner, *The Cave of Despair*, c. 1835
Tate, N05522

Formerly attributed to John Martin, *The Fallen Angels
Entering Pandemonium, from Paradise Lost Book I*,
exhibited 1841?
Tate, N05435

Blake, Design from *The Book of Urizen*, pl. 11, “Every
thing is an attempt” / “To be Human,” 1796, c. 1818
Tate, T13003

Blake, Engravings for the *Divine Comedy*, 1826–27,
reprinted 1892:
“Ciampolo the Barrator Tormented by the Devils”
“The Six-Footed Serpent Attacking Agnolo Brunelleschi”
“The Pit of Disease: The Falsifiers”
“The Serpent Attacking Buoso Donati”
“The Baffled Devils Fighting”
Tate, A00006, A00008, A00010, A00009, A00007

Blake, *Illustrations of the Book of Job*, 1823–26, reprinted
1874:
“The Fall of Satan”
Tate, A00027

David Scott, “The By-Way to Hell”
Tate, N02405

Edward Dayes, *The Fall of the Rebel Angels*, 1798
Tate, T05210



Consorzio delle Residenze Reali Sabaude/Fotografo Andrea Guermani.