

AN ILLUSTRATED QUARTERLY
BLAKE

N E W S

Yale/Toronto Exhibition

Blake/An Illustrated Quarterly, Volume 14, Issue 2, Fall 1980, p. 108



NEWSLETTER

YALE/TORONTO EXHIBITION

David Bindman is organizing an exhibition of Blake's work that will open at Yale in September 1982 and move to Toronto in January 1983. The exhibition prospectus reads as follows:

The last full-scale Blake exhibition to be held in North America was in 1939 at Philadelphia, and the most recent in Great Britain was the highly successful one at the Tate Gallery in 1978. The Tate exhibition had an unequivocal purpose, which was to establish Blake as one of the greatest of British artists in the same rank as his great contemporaries Constable and Turner. In my view and that of many people who saw the exhibition, it proved the point beyond reasonable doubt. For this reason, I think that an exhibition in which attention is focused exclusively upon Blake's qualities as a visual artist does not need doing again in the same way. We need now to take a wider and more exploratory view of Blake, and try to answer the kind of questions which must arise once Blake's stature as an artist has been accepted. While I think it is vital to show Blake at his very best, I feel we must go further in setting the intellectual and artistic context of his work and revealing his mind. There is a danger of being too didactic and I propose that this be avoided by separating visually the main display of Blake's art from the comparative material,

IO SPECIAL ISSUE

Jim Bogan and Fred Goss are editing a special Blake issue of *IO* which they have announced as follows.

Greetings: Almost 200 years ago William Blake engraved these prophetic words: "Rouze up, O Young Men of the New Age! set your foreheads against the ignorant Hirelings; For we have Hirelings in the Camp, the Court, and the University, who would, if they could, for ever depress Mental and prolong Corporeal War." In response to Blake's summons, number 29 of the *IO* series will be a Blake issue which will gather some of the sparks of inspiration that are flying from Los' hammer in this new age. We are interested in any work that makes use of energies sympathetically awakened by contact with Blake's works/spirit. The meeting might be as direct as Ginsberg's visitation by Blake in Harlem or as indirect, say, as Snyder's "It" arising from the reading of a Blake poem during a storm.

which will run parallel to it. To give an example of how this might work: the earliest illuminated books may be shown according to their chronological development within Blake's work, but nearby, perhaps on an adjacent wall, there might be a small display explaining Blake's new printing techniques with samples of other eighteenth-century experiments. While there will be, wherever appropriate, works by Blake's friends and contemporaries, efforts will be made to define their relationship to Blake in intellectual terms rather than just through visual parallels.

It will be necessary to make a considerable representation of the great watercolor series such as the illustrations to the Bible, Milton and Dante, but I also want to try to bring the illuminated books into the foreground and take advantage of the great strides that have been made in recent years in their elucidation. American libraries are astonishingly rich in fine hand-colored copies, and an important place would be given to Blake's masterpiece, Mr. Mellon's unique colored copy of *Jerusalem*. There are difficulties in "explaining" these works in visual form, but I think it can be done by drawing attention to the historical and religious themes in the books. For example, a small number of images can be brought in to illustrate Blake's idea of Jerusalem, e.g., Richard Brothers' designs for the rebuilding of the Holy City; and antiquarian treatises can be used to show the importance of Stonehenge in Blake's conception of ancient British history.

The result should be an exhibition which will reveal the breadth and quality of Blake's art, but will also open up vistas to the serious inquirer by making connections between his art and wider currents of thought in his time. DAVID BINDMAN, WESTFIELD COLLEGE, UNIVERSITY OF LONDON.

The traditional concerns of *IO* may certainly be focused on Blake: cabala, alchemy, astrology, anthropology, psychology, shamanism, intuitive scholarship. We are looking for prose, verse, and black/white graphics. Forms may include: poems, creative essays, aphorisms, meditations, inspired scholarship beyond the MLA mold, speculations, jokes, maps, charts, dreams, visions, experiences when reading Blake aloud--PRIMARY RESPONSES. A second emphasis of the issue will be works that provide ways into Blake for those who would like guides high in clarity and low in jive. Subjects of interest here are Blake's prosody, myth-structures, the sexes, the evolution of his understandings, etc.

Send submissions at your earliest convenience or whenever they blossom. Deadline: 15 February 1980. Please include stamped, self-addressed envelope. Kindly pass the word along to anyone you know who might be interested in contributing to this project. SWEET JOYS BEFALL THEE, JIM BOGAN/FRED GOSS, ART DEPARTMENT, UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI-ROLLA, ROLLA, MO. 65401.