NEWS

An Interior for William Blake

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The latest change is exceptional, the most significant since the first Blake Newsletter with illustrations—also the first to roll off a printing press—was published in 1970. Like that innovation, this one has shaped the journal from top to bottom. Two years ago we began to plan the moment when we'd be able to make the jump from a conventional method of production to a method that would exploit the advantages of desktop publishing technology.

Desktop publishing has transformed the publishing industry. Despite its homely name, this revolutionary technology brings big challenges to a small operation like ours, such as a complete change in the meaning of “managing editor.” Patricia Neill, known to all our contributors and most of our readers as Blake’s managing editor, has always supervised the production of each issue. But only after spending the last couple of years plumbing the intricate depths of Aldus PageMaker, our professional desktop publishing software, and then practicing her skills on a heap of university posters, brochures, and newsletters, did she feel prepared to execute the layout of Blake.

Last summer Richard Rosenbaum, the production manager at Cornell University Press, designed for us a format that is well adapted to our situation. We require layout that can efficiently accommodate illustrated articles, notes, lists, and reviews in pages designed for readability and some elegance rather than for complicated graphic effects. Our new design, even as it introduces several major changes to the layout, preserves the features that make Blake recognizable, notably its organization, large trim size, and multiple columns. We have followed Dick Rosenbaum's proposed modifications in virtually every respect. Look closely and you'll notice that we've changed the paper, reverted to two columns from three, and changed all the type fonts, the size and placement of columns, the section openings, and the design of our cover and inside front pages. Not least, we've changed printers.

Now an issue of Blake leaves Rochester as a collection of files on a computer disk—these PageMaker files contain the layout for every page of the issue—and a small bundle of photos. Our new printer, the highly regarded and technically up-to-date firm of Braun-Brumfield, Inc., in Ann Arbor, Michigan, converts those files, along with halftones shot separately, into photographic negatives that are then used directly to produce plates for the offset press.

Desktop publishing gives us significant new advantages. We have more control of the layout; changes are easier to make; the time from initial layout to printed issues is shorter; and costs are less. In a time of hardened budget cutting, we must do everything we can to minimize expenses, preferably without compromising quality. Our change in production methods helps us accomplish that.