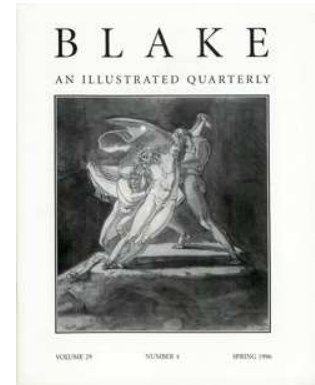


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Blake in the Marketplace, 1995, Including a Survey of Blakes in Private Ownership

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Joseph Holland, formerly of New York, Los Angeles, and Santa Fe, died on December 28, 1994. With his friend Vincent Newton, Joe formed a small but impressive collection of original prints and drawings by Blake, supplemented with standard bibliographies, editions, and criticism. Both men attended the legendary A. E. Newton auction in 1941, where Joe purchased a color-printed and richly hand-colored impression of *The Book of Urizen* pl. 22 from copy B of *A Small Book of Designs* (illus. 2) and one of only four known impressions of the tailpiece (pl. a) for *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*. Other treasures in the collection included a good, uncolored impression of *Little Tom the Sailor*, once in the W. E. Moss collection, and two Visionary Heads. A fine Shakespearean actor, a founding member of the Mercury Theatre with Orson Welles, and a true lover of Blake, Joe Holland will be deeply missed by all those fortunate enough to have known him.

The sale of the Newton collection was handled by John Windle Books of San Francisco, now the world's leading dealer in Blake and Blakeana. The resulting catalogue 26, issued in December 1995 as a memorial to Joe Holland and entitled *The Blake Collection of Joseph Holland & Vincent Newton*, is the most impressive Blake sales catalogue issued by a book or art dealer (as distinct from an auction house) since the Quaritch Blake lists of 1885-86. The catalogue also includes many volumes and a few prints from sources other than the Holland collection and a retrospective listing of important works by Blake acquired by Windle for private clients over the last few years. All the lots of original Blake materials actually offered for sale are included in the listings below.

To have the Holland color print of *Urizen* come on the market is a signal event. To have two further prints also from copy B of *A Small Book of Designs* become available in the same year is enough to make a Blake collector's head spin. The design only from *The Book of Urizen* pl. 3, color printed and delicately hand tinted, appeared on the auction block at Christie's London on 25 April (illus. 1). My own pre-sale guess was that the print would fetch bids well beyond the estimate range of £30,000-50,000 and would very probably be won by the American private collector who, over the last 15 years, has amassed an outstanding collection of Blake's illuminated prints (for a tentative handlist, see *Blake* 27 [1994]: 104). I was wrong as to both price and purchaser. Although this anonymous collector knew of the sale, she/he failed to bid. Indeed, there seems to have been only one bidder in the room—Windle, acting on behalf of the artist and author Maurice Sendak. Windle apparently bid only against the reserve—that is, the price (in this instance, probably £25,000) beneath which a lot will not be sold—and won the print at just £28,000 (with the addition of the purchaser's premium, £32,200).

The third color print from the *Small Book* copy B, the Leviathan from *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* pl. 20, appeared at Sotheby's London less than three months later (illus. 3-5). Windle was once again the winning bidder at £32,000 on an estimate of £20,000-30,000. But this time, Windle was acting for Essick rather than Sendak. The underbidder (that is, the party with the bid just prior to the winning bid) was an anonymous presence on the telephone. The long captions to illus. 2 and 3 offer some speculations about how these and other prints in the *Small Book of Designs* were produced. The captions to illus. 3-4 record the sad history of the Leviathan's mistreatment over the years; illus. 5 presents its restoration.

The sale of all three prints from either the *Small* or *Large* books of designs still possessed by individual collectors—excluding three still in the Keynes Family Trust, but destined for the Fitzwilliam Museum—prompted me to make a rough survey of all original Blakes remaining in private ownership. Absent a deaccession by an art museum or institutional library, only such works, plus new discoveries, are likely to come on the market. I have of course excluded commercial book illustrations and such relatively common prints as the Job, Dante, and Canterbury Pilgrims engravings, but I have included all drawings and paintings, illuminated prints, manuscripts, texts first printed in letterpress in Blake's lifetime, and the rarer separate prints designed and executed by Blake. These I have grouped by medium and genre, in accord with the perceptions of the market as to the relative value of (for example) paintings versus pencil sketches, or prints versus water colors.

The Visionary Heads constitute by far the largest category of Blake's work still in private ownership. All 50 sheets still in the Larger Sketchbook are privately owned, along with 20 sheets from the dismembered and dispersed Smaller Sketchbook and 28 miscellaneous sheets, for a total of 98 examples. Some of these are counterproofs and many are rather faint or slight. Barring the discovery of a large cache of unrecorded works by Blake, the Visionary Heads should appear on the market more frequently than anything else of interest to Blake collectors and scholars.

If we exclude the Visionary Heads, the list of drawings in private hands shrinks dramatically: 30 pencil sketches, four in pen and ink, 30 monochrome wash drawings, and 30 water colors (including 10 from the great series of Bible illustrations Blake sold to Thomas Butts). Tempera paintings are rarer still, with only nine still privately owned. We should also expect a few of the once-recorded but now untraced drawings and paintings—in all, 184 listed by Butlin—to turn up over the decades and eventually make their way to the marketplace.

There are 32 privately-owned detached leaves from Blake's illuminated books, but only 19 complete (or near-complete) copies printed by Blake himself. Posthumously-printed copies are rarer, with only four still owned privately. The "untraced" category again offers the collector some hope: eight copies printed by Blake, two posthumous, and 38 individual leaves.

Separate prints must be divided into several different categories. As previously mentioned, there are only three privately-owned prints from the *Small Book of Designs* copy B. There are three further illuminated-book plates probably printed as separate prints by Blake (as distinct from those printed for inclusion in books) and still in private hands. All but three of the