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N E W S

Scripting a City of Art: Golgonooza

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by Gould in his letter to *The Times*, but also by Sir Karl Parker, of the Ashmolean Museum at Oxford, and by Raymond Lister, of Cambridge. Gould pursued the matter in correspondence with several other experts from 1970 until this summer when Geraldine Norman finally put the story in print.

Keating claims to have imitated many artists in the past several years, including among others Rembrandt, Gainsborough and Reynolds, Constable, Turner, Degas, and Renoir, but he has also confessed to being a bad imitator--and wondered how so many could have been taken in. Keating is now collaborating with Geraldine Norman and her husband on a book about Keating's years as an imitator, and he has volunteered to assist a committee of inquiry set up by the British Antique Dealers' Association to look into the matter of the thirteen doubted Palmers. (Readers who want more details of the story should see *The Times*, which has printed articles on the faked Palmers almost daily since mid-July.)

Forthcoming Publications

Geoffrey Keynes has edited a Blake Trust volume on Blake's Laocoön with twelve monochrome reproductions and commentary, bound in half leather, that is now scheduled for publication by Trianon Press toward the end of 1976.

All the engraved and etched prints that Blake designed himself, including the works in illuminated printing, will be reproduced in a forthcoming volume edited by David Bindman and Deirdre Toomey. There will be about 600 reproductions, an introduction of about thirty pages, and brief comments on each plate. Thames & Hudson expects to publish the volume in 1977.

A Correction

In Frank Parisi's review of the Oothoon Dance Theatre production of "The Mental Traveller" (*Blake Newsletter* 36, Spring 1976, p. 128), Heidi Parisi is listed in the credits as choreographer. In fact the choreography was by Heidi Parisi and Neil Tennant.

Scripting a City of Art: Golgonooza

A buzz saw tears through fresh timber, raining a shower of wood shavings on the heads of workers slathering mortar onto layers of brick. The construction crew is small, the labor large: transforming a dream into a reality.

The dream is the collective vision of a group of local artists drawing inspiration from the spiritual ideals of the Romantic poet William Blake and his mythical city of art, Golgonooza.

The artists claim dedication to the rebirth of that city, to perpetuating Blake's divine humanity, his cosmos of spiritual--yet human--beings.

One way of perpetuating is to record the written word, and by building a "scriptorium"--a printing

house based on the handiwork of medieval monks and ancient engravers--the Golgonooza group hopes to begin publishing the works of Blake, local poets and their own writings.

Among the artists building the two-story structure that will house the scriptorium in Millfield are Assoc. Prof. of Art Aethelred and Alexandra Eldridge, proprietors of the Church of The Blake Revival; Daren Neglia, who has just returned from a nine-month stint as an apprentice in the Center for Book Arts in New York; architectural designer David Calahan; writer and illustrator Doug Lovelace and woodworker/ironcaster/jack-of-all-trades Nick Engler.

With a shop of friends skilled in various trades from stonemasonry to building design, the group is aiming toward completion of the scriptorium by late fall.

Watching the building go up brick by brick, it is hard to visualize what the strange combination of timber, old bricks and stone will look like. But a glance at designer Calahan's intricate blueprints reveals that the building is not as haphazard as it appears.

Calahan, who claims the plans were just the fruit of a few spare hours, searched for a cubit--the Biblical measuring unit--that would reflect the spirit in which the building was designed. Most ancient cathedrals were built with cubits, measured by dimensions such as the distance to Jerusalem or the length of the church bells' wave-length, he said.

"Blake found--or constructed--twenty-seven cathedral cities in England, each representing a quality, a psychological reality. He divided the world into twenty-seven ages, represented by those cathedral cities, each with a remarkable feature," Calahan explains.

"It works out neatly," he adds. "Blake was able to master a means of making it more comprehensible, more real to study the Bible, to make it all seem less accidental.

"The number twenty-seven is also a recurring number in Blake's cosmology of the civilized world, so my cubit became twenty-seven inches, and the rest of the building was based on that."

Other considerations for the scriptorium were a strong foundation, inner space for a printing press, a bookbinding workshop and individual working areas in two stories.

The finished facade will be an eclectic mix of medieval half-timber house, Gothic cathedral, gables, sheer-buttressed walls and "elaborated barn," he noted.

"It was great to have the opportunity to do an irresponsible building with no authority, no money or time limit. It was harder on my conscience, though--I got away with things I never could have working for a client.



"Nobody has faith anymore in the relationship between a building as they see it and all its integral parts," he said of the many considerations in the scriptorium design.

He compared it to systems module planning, "the interlocking of different proportions to add up to be more than just the sum total of the parts."

The integral parts in the scriptorium, the group hopes, will add up to a tangible whole: an alternative press, titled, appropriately, The Golgonooza Press.

"We can't get published by established commercial publishers, so we'll do it on our own," declares Alexandra Eldridge.

The first project for the Golgonooza Press is the publication of a limited edition of one of Blake's smaller works, such as the "Book of Los" or the "Book of Ahania," and another edition of the notes group members have taken during the years of Aethelred Eldridge's weekly Blake readings in the church.

"It's the labor of Los," explained Neglia, referring to Blake's eternal prophet, "incessantly building Golgonooza."

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An Announcement

It is not always remembered that the impression of the *Laocoön* belonging to Sir Geoffrey Keynes is not unique, but that another one is recorded in *Separate Plates*. According to Keynes it was last recorded at the George C. Smith sale in 1938 where it was bought by Sessler. In the process of preparing with Deirdre Toomey an edition of *The Complete Engravings of William Blake* for the publishers Thames and Hudson I set about tracking down the unique *Death's Door* engraving, the only one for *Blair's Grave* engraved by Blake not Schiavonetti, which had also not been seen since the 1930s. Thanks to a clue given me by Sir Geoffrey Keynes I eventually located it in a the collection of Mrs. Charles T. Rosenbloom. To my surprise the owner also sent me a photograph of the second *Laocoön* impression, which I reproduce here. I have not yet been able to see the print itself, but from the photograph there are a number of potentially interesting differences. First of all it seems not to have been seriously damaged as Keynes suggests, and it seems to be an earlier impression than the Keynes example, because there are still traces of work which has been cleaned off the latter. The decorative flourish at the right, following "What we call *Antique Gems*," was once balanced by a similar one on the left, and engraved lines running from the left hand upper corner and the lower left corner appear to be traces of an earlier format. Most tantalizing of all, however, are the unmistakable traces of erased lettering all down the left hand side. They are not readable in the photograph, but there is some hope that close inspection of the original will bring them out. What remains to be seen is whether these traces will yield some additional epigrams. (David Bindman)