

SIXTH STREET AT CONSTITUTION AVENUE NW WASHINGTON DC 20565 • 737-4215 extension 224

NATIONAL GALLERY EXHIBITS BLAKE WATERCOLORS  
AND PRINTS FROM ROSENWALD COLLECTION

WASHINGTON, D.C. April 9, 1970. A selection of 25 works by William Blake (1757-1827), English artist and poet, are presently on view throughout the month of April at the National Gallery of Art, in response to the many requests to place on exhibition again a representative sampling of Blake's watercolors, drawings, and engravings from the National Gallery's renowned Rosenwald Collection.

Included are two engravings from the book of Job, considered among Blake's most important work, and two well-known examples, Whirlwind of Lovers, one of his engraved illustrations for Dante's Divine Comedy, and a watercolor depicting The Great Red Dragon and the Woman Clothed with the Sun, from the twelfth chapter of Revelations.

Blake's illustrations cover many areas ranging from his own books of poetry to engravings on single subjects. His sources of inspiration indicate the depth and perception of his visionary spirit: the Bible, particularly the books of Job and Revelations, Spenser, Chaucer, Milton, Shakespeare, Homer, Virgil, and Dante.

Son of an English shopkeeper, Blake was sent to drawing school at the age of ten. At fourteen he was apprenticed to the engraver James Basire. At this period he spent many hours drawing the Gothic

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monuments in Westminster Abbey, which was the strong medievalizing influence on his later style.

At the age of twenty-one, his apprenticeship over, Blake began work as a professional illustrator and engraver. His imaginative mind led to experiment and invention of new techniques in the field of printmaking, especially a process called relief-etching which he uses effectively in Let Him Look up into the Heavens and Laugh in the Bright Air.

The Rosenwald Collection of more than 20,000 prints and drawings was given to the National Gallery over a number of years by Lessing J. Rosenwald, Jenkintown, Pennsylvania. This exhibition of Blake's works from his collection is installed in the East Corridor, on the ground level.

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