

XI.

[PUBLIC ADDRESS]

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**Chaucers Canterbury Pilgrims
Being a Complete Index of Human Characters
as they appear Age after Age**

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[Engraved by William Blake tho Now Surrounded by Calumny & Envy]

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**This Day is Publishd Advertizements to Blakes Canterbury
Pilgrims from Chaucer.
Containing Anecdotes of Artists. Price 6^d**

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If Men of weak Capacities[*in Art*] have alone the Power of Execution in Art M^r B has now put to the test. If to Invent & to Draw well hinders the Executive Power in Art & his Strokes are still to be Condemnd because they are unlike those of Artists who are Unacquainted with Drawing [*& the accompanying*] is now to be Decided by The Public[.] M^r B s Inventive Powers & his Scientific Knowledge of Drawing is on all hands acknowledgd it only remains to be Certified whether [*The Fools hand or the*] Physiognomic Strength & Power is to give Place to Imbecillity[*and whether an unending xxxxxdx xxx an unabated study & practise of forty Years[---] for I devoted myself to Engraving in my Earliest Youth [---] are sufficient to elevate me above the Mediocrity to which I have hitherto been the victim*] <In a work of Art it is not fine tints that are required but Fine Forms, fine Tints without, are loathsom> <Fine Tints without Fine Forms are always the Subterfuge of the Blockhead>

I account it a Public Duty respectfully to address myself to The Chalcographic Society & to Express to them my opinion the result of the incessant Practise & Experience of Many Years That Engraving[*is in a most wretched state (of) arising from an*] <as an Art is Lost in

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England owing to an artfully propagated> opinion that Drawing spoils an Engraver[*which opinion has been held out to me by such men as Flaxman Romney Stothard It*] I request the Society to inspect my Print of which Drawing is the

Foundation & indeed the Superstructure it is Drawing on Copper as Painting ought to be Drawing on Canvas or any other

In this Plate M^r B has resumed the style with which he set out in life of which Heath & Stothard were the awkward imitators at that time it is the style of Alb Durers Histries & the old Engravers which cannot be imitated by any one who does not understand Drawing & which according to Heath & Stothard Flaxman & even Romney. Spoils an Engraver for Each of these Men have repeatedly asserted this Absurdity to me in condemnation of my Work& approbation of Heaths lame imitation Stothard being such a fool as to suppose that his blundering blurs can be made out & delineated by any Engraver who knows how to cut dots & lozenges equally well with those little prints which I engraved after him five & twenty Years ago & by which he got his reputation as a Draughtsman

The manner in which my Character <has been blasted these thirty years> both as an artist & a Man may be seen particularly in a Sunday Paper cald the Examiner Publishd in Beaufort Buildings. <(We all know that Editors of Newspapers trouble their heads very little about art & science & that they are always paid for what they put in upon these ungracious Subjects> & the manner in which I have routed out the nest of villains^l will be seen in a Poem concern[*in*]g my Three years <Herculean> Labours at Felpham which I will soon Publish. Secret Calumny & open Professions of Friendship are common enough all the world over but have never been so good an occasion of Poetic Imagery[.] When a Base Man means to be your Enemy he always begins with being your Friend Flaxman cannot deny that one of the very first Monuments he did I gratuitously designd for him <at the same time he was blasting my character as all Artist to Macklin my Employer as Macklin told me at the time> how much of his Homer & Dante he will allow to be mine I do not know as he went far enough off to Publish them even to Italy. but the Public will know & Posterity will know

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Many People are so foolish to think that they can wound M^r Fuseli over my Shoulder they will find themselves mistaken they could not wound even M^r Barry so

A Certain Portrait Painter said To me in a boasting way Since I have Practised Painting I have lost all idea of Drawing. Such a Man must know that I lookd

upon him with Contempt he did not care for this any more than West did who hesitated & equivocated with me upon the same subject at which time he asserted that Wooletts Prints were superior to Basires because they had more Labour & Care now this is contrary to the truth[.] Woolett did not know how to put so much labour into a head or a foot as Basire did he did not know how to draw the Leaf of a tree all his study was clean strokes & mossy tints[.] how then should he be able to make use of either Labour or Care unless the Labour & Care of Imbecillity[?] The Lifes Labour of Mental Weakness scarcely Equals one Hour of the Labour of Ordinary Capacity like the full Gallop of the Gouty Man to the ordinary walk of youth & health I allow that there is such a thing as high finishd Ignorance as there may be a fool or a Knave. in an Embroiderd Coat but I say that the Embroidery of the Ignorant finisher is not like a Coat made by another but is an Emanation from Ignorance itself & its finishing is like its master The Lifes Labour of Five Hundred Idiots for he never does the Work Himself

What is Calld the English Style of Engraving such as proceeded from the Toilettes of Woolett & Strange (for theirs were <Fribbles> Toilettes) can never produce Character & Expression. I knew the Men intimately from their Intimacy with Basire my Master & knew them both to be heavy lumps of Cunning & Ignorance as their works Shew to all the Continent who Laugh at the Contemptible Pretences of Englishmen to Improve Art before they even know the first[*lines*] <Beginnings> of Art[.] I hope this Print will redeem my Country from this Coxcomb situation & shew that it is only some Englishmen and not All who are thus ridiculous in their Pretences Advertizements in Newspapers are no proof of Popular approbation. but often the Contrary A Man who Pretends to Improve Fine Art Does not know what Fine Art is Ye English Engravers must come down from your high flights ye must condescend to study Marc Antonio & Albert Durer[.] Ye must begin before you attempt to finish or improve & when you have begun you will know better than to think of improving what cannot be improv'd It is very true what you have said for these thirty two Years I am Mad or Else you are so both of us cannot be in our right senses Posterity will judge by our Works[.] Wooletts & Stranges works are like those of Titian & Correggio the Lifes Labour of Ignorant journeymen Suited to the Purposes of Commerce no doubt for Commerce Cannot endure Individual Merit its insatiable Maw must be fed by What all can do Equally well at least it is so in England as I have found to my Cost these Forty Years

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<Commerce is so far from being beneficial to Arts or to Empire that it is destructive of both <as all their History shews> for the above Reason of Individual Merit being its Great hatred. Empires flourish till they become Commercial & then they are scatterd abroad to the four winds>

Wooletts best works were Etchd by Jack Brown Woolett Etchd very bad himself. Stranges Prints were when I knew him all done by Aliamet & his trench journeymen whose names I forget.

The Cottagers & Jocund Peasants the Views in Kew Gardens Foots Cray & Diana & Acteon & in short all that are Calld Wooletts were Etchd by Jack Browne & in Wooletts works the Etching is All tho even in these a single leaf of a tree is never correct PAGE 56

Such Prints as Woolett & Strange produc'd will do for those who choose to purchase the Lives labour of Ignorance & Imbecillity in Preference to the Inspired Moments of Genius & Animation PAGE 60

I also knew something of Tom Cooke who Engraved after Hogarth Cooke wished to Give to Hogarth what he could take from Rafael that is Outline & Mass & Colour but he could not [*& Hogarth with all his Merit never g*] PAGE 57

I do not pretend to Paint better than Rafael or Mch Anglo <or Julio Romano or Alb Durer> but I do Pretend to Paint finer than Rubens or Rembt or Correggio or Titian. I do not Pretend to Engrave finer than Alb Durer Goltzius Sadeler or Edelinck but I do pretend to Engrave finer than Strange Woolett Hall or Bartolozzi <& All> because I understand Drawing which they understand not PAGE 58

In this manner the English Public have been imposed upon for many Years under the impression that Engraving & Painting are somewhat Else besides Drawing[.] Painting is Drawing on Canvas & Engraving is Drawing on Copper & Nothing Else & he who pretends to be either Painter or Engraver without being a Master of Drawing is an Impostor. We may be Clever as Pugilists but as Artists we are & have long been the Contempt of the Continent [*Aliamet*] Gravelot once said to My Master Basire [*you*] <De> English may be very clever in [*your*] <deir> own opinions but [*you*] <dey> do not draw [*the*] <De> draw

Resentment for Personal Injuries has had some share in this Public Address But Love to My Art & Zeal for my Country a much Greater. PAGE 59

Men think they can Copy Nature as Correctly as I copy Imagination this they will find Impossible. & all the Copies or Pretended Copiers

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of Nature from Rembrat to Reynolds Prove that Nature becomes [*tame*] to its Victim nothing but Blots & Blurs. Why are Copiers of Nature Incorrect while Copiers of Imagination are Correct this is manifest to all PAGE 39

I do not condemn Rubens Rembrant or Titian because they did not understand Drawing but because they did not Understand Colouring how long shall I be forced to beat this into Mens Ears I do not condemn [*Bartolozzi*] <Strange> or Woolett because they did not understand Drawing but because they did not understand Graving I do not condemn Pope or Dryden because they did not understand Imagination but because they did not understand Verse[.] Their Colouring Graving & Verse can never be applied to Art <That is not either

colouring Graving or Verse which is Unappropriate to the Subject> He who makes a Design must know the Effect & Colouring Proper to be put to that Design & will never take that of Rubens Rembrandt or Titian to [put] <turn> that which is Soul & Life into a Mill or Machine PAGE 46

They say there is no Strait Line in Nature this Is a Lie like all that they say, For there is Every Line in Nature But I will tell them what is Not in Nature. An Even Tint is not in Nature it produces Heaviness. Natures Shadows <are> Ever varying. & a Ruled Sky that is quite Even never can Produce a Natural Sky the same with every Object in a Picture its Spots are its beauties[.] Now Gentlemen Critics how do you like this[?] You may rage but what I say I will prove by Such Practise & have already done so that you will rage to your own destruction[.] Woollett I knew very intimately by his intimacy with Basire & I knew him to be one of the most ignorant fellows that I ever knew. A Machine is not a Man nor a Work of Art it is Destructive of Humanity & of Art the Word Machination [seems]

Woollett I know did not know how to Grind his Graver I know this he has often proved his Ignorance before me at Basires by laughing at Basires knife tools & [p 4.7] ridiculing the Forms of Basires other Gravers till Basire was quite dashd & out of Conceit with what he himself knew but his Impudence had a Contrary Effect on me[.] Englishmen have been so used to Journeymens undecided bungling that they cannot bear the firmness of a Masters Touch[.] Every Line is the Line of Beauty it is only fumble & Bungle which cannot draw a Line this only is Ugliness[.] That is not a Line which Doubts & Hesitates in the Midst of its Course PAGE 38

There is just the same Science in Lebrun or Rubens or even Vanloo that there is in Rafael or Mich Angelo but not the same Genius[.] Science is soon got the other never can be acquired but must be Born

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The Originality of this Production makes it necessary to say a few words

While the Works[*of Translators*] of Pope & Dryden are lookd upon as [in the Same class of] the Same Art with those of Milton & Shakespeare while the works of Strange & Woollett are lookd upon as the same Art with those of Rafael & Albert Durer there can be no Art in a Nation but such as is Subservient to the interest of the Monopolizing Trader[*whose whole*] [*who Manufactures Art by the Hands of Ignorant Journeymen till at length Christian Charity is held out as a Motive to encourage a Blockhead & he is Counted the Greatest Genius who can sell a Good for Nothing Commodity for a Great Price[.] Obedience to the Will of the Monopolist is calld Virtue [p 61] and the really <Industrious> Virtuous & Independent Barry is driven out to make room for a pack of Idle Sycophants with whitlors on their fingers*] Englishmen rouse yourselves from the fatal Slumber into which Booksellers & Trading Dealers have thrown you Under the artfully propagated pretence that a Translation or a Copy of any kind can be as honourable to a Nation as An

Original [*Belying*] Be-lying the English Character in that well known Saying Englishmen Improve what others Invent[.] This Even Hogarths Works Prove a detestable Falshood. No Man Can Improve An Original Invention.[*Since Hogarths time we have had very few Efforts of Originality*] <Nor can an Original Invention Exist without Execution Organized & minutely Delineated & Articulated Either by God or Man[.] I do not mean smoothd up & Niggled & Poco Piud[*but*] <and all the beauties pickd out[*but*] & blurrd & blotted but> Drawn with a firm <and decided> hand at once[*with all its Spots & Blemishes which ^tare beauties & not faults*] like Fuseli & Michael Angelo Shakespeare & Milton>^t PAGE 44

Let a Man who has made a Drawing go on & on & he will produce a Picture or Painting but if he chooses to leave off before he has spoild it he will Do a Better Thing PAGE 62

I have heard many People say Give me the Ideas. It is no matter what Words you put them into & others say Give me the Design it is no matter for the Execution. These People know <Enough of Artifice but> Nothing Of Art. Ideas cannot be Given but in their minutely Appropriate Words nor Can a Design be made without its minutely Appropriate Execution[.] The unorganized Blots & Blurs of Rubens & Titian are not Art nor can their Method ever express Ideas or Imaginations any more than Popes Metaphysical jargon of Rhyming[.] Unappropriate Execution is the Most nauseous <of all> affectation & foppery He who copies does not Execute he only Imitates what is already Executed Execution is only the result of Invention

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Whoever looks at any of the Great & Expensive Works <of Engraving> that have been Publishd by English Traders must feel a Loathing & Disgust & accordingly most Englishmen have a Contempt for Art which is the Greatest Curse that can fall upon a Nation

He who could represent Christ uniformly like a Drayman must have Queer Conceptions consequently his Executi[o]n must have been as Queer & those must be Queer fellows who give great sums for such nonsense & think it fine Art

The <Modern Chalcographic> Connoisseurs & Amateurs admire only the work of the journeyman Picking out of whites & blacks in what is calld Tints they despise drawing which despises them in return. They see only whether every thing is coverd down but one spot of light

M^r B submits to a more severe tribunal he invites the admirers of old English Portraits to look at his Print PAGE 66

It is Nonsense for Noblemen & Gentlemen to offer Premiums for the Encouragement of Art when such Pictures as these can be done without

Premiums let them Encourage what Exists Already & not endeavour to counteract by tricks[.] let it no more be said that Empires Encourage Arts for it is Arts that Encourage Empires Arts & Artists are Spiritual & laugh at Mortal Contingencies[.] It is in their Power to hinder Instruction but not to Instruct just as it is in their Power to Murder a Man but not to make a Man

Let us teach Buonaparte & whomsoever else it may concern That it is not Arts that follow & attend upon Empire[s] but Empire[s] that attends upon & follows[*wherever Art leads*] The Arts PAGE 64

I do not know whether Homer is a Liar & that there is no such thing as Generous Contention[.] I know that all those with whom I have Contended in Art have strove not to Excell but to Starve me out by Calumny & the Arts of Trading Combination PAGE 67

No Man of Sense can think that an Imitation of the Objects of Nature is The Art of Painting or that such Imitation which any one may easily perform is worthy of Notice much less that such an Art should be the Glory & Pride of a Nation [*& that the man who does this is*] The Italians laugh at English Connoisseurs who are[*All*] <most of them> such silly Fellows as to believe this

A Man sets himself down with Colours & with all the Articles of Painting he puts a Model before him & he copies that so neat as to make it a Deception now let any Man of Sense ask himself one Question Is this Art. can it be worthy of admiration to any body of Understanding.

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Who could not do this what man who has eyes and an ordinary share of patience cannot do this neatly. Is this Art Or is it glorious to a Nation to produce such contemptible Copies Countrymen Countrymen do not suffer yourselves to be disgracd PAGE 66

The English Artist may be assured that he is doing an injury & injustice to his Country while he studies & imitates the Effects of Nature. England will never rival Italy while we servilely copy. what the Wise Italians Rafael & Michael Angelo scorned nay abhorred as Vasari tells us

Call that the Public Voice which is their Error
Like as a Monkey peeping in a Mirror
Admires all his colours brown & warm
And never once perceives his ugly form

What kind of Intellects must he have who sees only the Colours of things & not the Forms of Things PAGE 71

A jockey that is any thing of a jockey will never buy a Horse by the Colour & a Man who has got any brains will never buy a Picture by the Colour

When I tell any Truth it is Not for the sake of Convincing those who do not know it but for the sake of defending those who Do PAGE 76

No Man of Sense ever supposes that Copying from Nature is the Art of Painting if the Art is no more than this it is no better than any other[']s Manual Labour any body may do it & the fool often will do it best as it is a work of no Mind PAGE 78

The Greatest part of what are calld in England Old Pictures are Oil Colour Copies from Fresco Originals the Comparison is Easily made & the Copy Detected Note I mean Fresco Easel or Cabinet Pictures on Canvas & Wood & Copper &c PAGE 86

The Painter hopes that his Friends Anytus Melitus <& Lycon> will percieve that they are not now in Ancient Greece & tho they can use the Poison of Calumny the English Public will be convincd that such a Picture as this Could never be Painted by a Madman or by one in a State of Outrageous manners as these [Villains] <Bad Men> both Print & Publish by all the means in their Power. the Painter begs Public Protection & all will be well PAGE 17

I wonder who can say Speak no Ill of the Dead when it is asserted in the Bible that the name of the Wicked shall Rot[.] It is Deistical

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Virtue I suppose but as I have none of this I will pour Aqua fortis on the Name of the Wicked & turn it into an Ornament& an Example to be Avoided by Some & Imitated by Others if they Please

Columbus discoverd America but Americus Vesputius finishd & smoothd it over like an English Engraver or Corregio or Titian PAGE 18

What Man of Sense will lay out his Money upon the Lifes Labours of Imbecility & Imbecillitys Journeymen or think to Educate[an Idiot] <a Fool> how to build a Universe with Farthing Balls The Contemptible Idiots who have been calld Great Men of late Years ought to rouze the Public Indignation of Men of Sense in all Professions

There is not because there cannot be any difference of Effect in the Pictures of Rubens & Rembrandt when you have seen one of their Pictures you have seen All It is not so with Rafael Julio Romano Alb D Mich Ang Every Picture of theirs has a different & appropriate Effect

Yet I do not shrink from the Comparison in Either Relief or Strength of Colour with either Rembrandt or Rubens on the Contrary I court the Comparison & fear

not the Result but not in a dark Corner[.] their Effects are in Every Picture the same Mine are in Every Picture different

I hope my Countrymen will Excuse me if I tell them a Wholesom truth Most Englishmen when they look at a Picture immediately set about searching for Points of Light & clap the Picture into a dark corner[*this in*] <This when done by> Grand Works is like looking for Epigrams in Homer> A point of light is a Witticism many are destructive of all Art <One is an Epigram only> & no Grand Work can have them they Produce System & Monotony

Rafael Mich Ang Alb D Jul Rom are accounted ignorant of that Epigrammatic Wit in Art because they avoid it as a destructive Machine as it is

That Vulgar Epigram in Art Rembrandts Hundred Guilders has intirely put an End to all Genuine & Appropriate Effect all both Morning & Night is now a dark cavern It is the Fashion <t> ¹ When you view a Collection of Pictures painted since Venetian Art was the Fashion or Go into a Modern Exhibition with a Very few Exceptions Every Picture has the same Effect. a Piece of Machinery[*of*] <or> Points of Light to be put into a dark hole PAGE 18

Mr B repeats that there is not one Character or Expression in this Print which could be Produced with the Execution of Titian Rubens Coreggio Rembrandt or any of that Class[.] Character & Expression can only be Expressed by those who Feel Them Even Hogarths Execution cannot be Copied or Improved. Gentlemen of Fortune who give Great Prices for Pictures should consider the following [p 19]

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Rubens s Luxembourg Gallery is Confessd on all hands [*because it bears the evidence at first view*] to be the work of a Blockhead <it bears this Evidence in its face> how can its Execution be any other than the Work of a Blockhead. <Bloated [*Awkward*] Gods> Mercury Juno Venus & the rattle traps of Mythology & the lumber of an[*old*] awkward French Palace are[*all*] thrown together around <Clumsy & Ricketty> Princes & Princesses higgledy piggedly On the Contrary Julio Rom[ano's] <Palace of T at Mantua> is allowed on all hands to be <the Production of> a Man of the Most Profound sense & Genius & Yet his Execution is pronounced by English Connoisseurs & Reynolds their Doll to be unfit for the Study of the Painter. Can I speak with too great Contempt of such Contemptible fellows. If all the Princes in Europe <like Louis XIV & Charles the first> were to Patronize such Blockheads I William Blake a Mental Prince should decollate & Hang their Souls as Guilty of Mental High Treason

Who that has Eyes cannot see that Rubens & Correggio must have been very weak & Vulgar fellows & <we> are[*we*] to imitate their Execution. This is[*as if*] <like what> Sr Francis Bacon[*should downright assert*] <says> that a healthy Child should be taught & compell'd to walk like a Cripple while the Cripple must be taught to walk like healthy people O rare wisdom PAGE 18

I am really sorry to see my Countrymen trouble themselves about Politics. If Men were Wise <the Most arbitrary> Princes could not hurt them If they are not Wise the Freest Government is compell'd to be a Tyranny[.] Princes appear to me to be Fools Houses of Commons & Houses of Lords appear to me to be fools they seem to me to be something Else besides Human Life PAGE 20

The wretched state of the Arts in this Country & in Europe originating in the Wretched State of Political Science which is the Science of Sciences Demands a firm & determinate conduct on the part of Artists to Resist the Contemptible Counter Arts [*set on foot*] <Established> by Such contemptible Politicians as Louis XIV & [*but*] originally set on foot by Venetian Picture traders Music traders & Rhime traders to the destruction of all true art as it is this Day. To recover Art has been the business of my life to the Florentine Original & if possible to go beyond that Original <this> I thought the only pursuit worthy of [*an Englishman*] <a Man>. To Imitate I abhor I obstinately adhere to the true Style of Art such as Michael Angelo Rafael Jul Rom Alb Durer left it [*the Art of Invention not of Imitation. Imagination is My World this world of Dross is beneath my Notice & beneath the Notice of the Public*] I demand therefore of the Amateurs of art the Encouragement which is my due if they <continue to> refuse theirs is the loss not mine <& theirs is the Contempt of Posterity> I have Enough in the Approbation of fellow labourers this is

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my glory & exceeding great reward I go on & nothing can hinder my course
And in Melodious accents I
Will sit me down & Cry. I. I.

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An Example of these Contrary Arts is given us in the Characters of Milton & Dryden as they are written in a Poem signed with the name of Nat Lee which perhaps he never wrote & perhaps he wrote in a paroxysm of insanity In which it is said that Miltons Poem is a rough Unfinish'd Piece & Dryden has finish'd it Now let Drydens Fall & Miltons Paradise be read & I will assert that every Body of Understanding [*& sen(se) will*] must cry out Shame on such Niggling & Poco Piu as Dryden has degraded Milton with But at the same time I will allow that Stupidity will Prefer Dryden because it is in Rhyme [*but for no other cause*] <& Monotonous Sing Song Sing Song> from beginning to end Such are Bartolozzi Woollett & Strange PAGE 23

⁴[*That Painted as well as Sculptured Monuments were common among words the Ancients is evident from the words of the Savants who compared the Plain [unpainted] <Those> Sepulchers Painted on the outside with others [of] only of Stone. Their Beauty is Confess'd even by the Lips of Pasch himself.*] The Painters of England are unemploy'd in Public Works. while the Sculptors have continual & superabundant employment Our Churches & Abbeys are treasures of [*Spiritual riches*] their producing for ages back While Painting is excluded Painting the Principal Art

has no place[*in our*] <among our almost> only public works.[*while*] <Yet> it is more adapted to solemn ornament than[*dead*] Marble can be as it is capable of being Placed in any heighth & indeed would make a Noble finish <Placed> above the Great Public Monuments in Westminster St Pauls & other Cathedrals. To the Society for Encouragement of Arts I address myself with[*duty &*] Respectful duty requesting their Consideration of my Plan as a Great Public[*deed*] means of advancing Fine Art in Protestant Communities Monuments to the dead Painted by Historical & Poetical Artists like Barry & Mortimer. I forbear to name[*a li*] living Artists tho equally worthy I say Monuments so Painted must make England What Italy is an Envied Storehouse of Intellectual Riches PAGE 24

It has been said of late years The English Public have no Taste for Painting This is a Falshood The English are as Good judges[*as*] <of> Painting as of Poetry & they prove it in their Contempt for Great Collections of all the Rubbish of the Continent brought here by Ignorant Picture dealers an Englishman may well say I am no Judge of Painting when he is shewn these Smears & Dawbs at an immense

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price & told that such is the Art of Painting I say the English Public are true Encouragers of[*Great*] <real> Art while they discourage & look with Contempt on False Art PAGE 25

In a Commercial Nation Impostors are abroad in all Professions these are the greatest Enemies of Genius[*Mr B thinks it his duty to Caution the Public against a Certain Impostor who*]. In[*our Art*] the Art of Painting these Impostors sedulously propagate an Opinion that Great Inventors Cannot Execute This Opinion is as destructive of the true Artist as it is false by all Experience Even Hogarth cannot be either Copied or Improved <Can Anglus never Discern Perfection but in the Journeymans Labour> PAGE 24

I know my Execution is not like Any Body Else I do not intend it should be so <None but Blockheads Copy one another> My Conception & Invention are on all hands allowd to be Superior My Execution will be found so too. To what is it that Gentlemen of the first Rank both in Genius & Fortune have subscribed their Names[*--*] To My Inventions. the Executive part they never Disputed the Lavish praise I have recieved from all Quarters for Invention & Drawing has Generally been accompanied by this he can conceive but he cannot Execute* this Absurd assertion has done me & may still do me the greatest mischief I call for Public protection against these Villains I am like others Just Equal in Invention & in Execution as my works shew I in my own defence Challenge a Competition with the finest Engravings & defy the most critical judge to <make> the Comparison Honestly [p 24] asserting in my own Defence that This Print is the Finest that has been done or is likely to be done in England where drawing <its foundation> is Contemnd and absurd Nonsense about dots & Lozenges & Clean Strokes made to occupy the attention to the Neglect of all real Art I defy any Man to Cut Cleaner Strokes than I do or rougher when I please & assert that he who thinks he can Engrave or Paint either without being a Master of Drawing is a Fool [& he]

Painting is Drawing on Canvas & Engraving is Drawing on Copper & nothing
Else <Drawing is Execution & nothing Else> & he who Draws best must be the
best Artist [&] to this I subscribe <my name as a Public Duty>WILLIAM BLAKE
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*P. S. I do not believe that this Absurd opinion ever was set on foot till in my
Outset into life it was artfully publishd both in whispers & in print by Certain
persons whose robberies from me made it necessary to them that I should be
[left] hid in a corner it never was supposed that a Copy Could be better than an
original or near so Good till a few Years ago it became the interest of certain
envious Knaves