

[To] Mr Butts, Gr Marlborough Street
Felpham Novr. 22: 1802
Dear Sir

My Brother tells me that he fears you are offended with me. I fear so too because there appears some reason why you might be so. But when you have heard me out you will not be so

I have now given two years to the intense study of those parts of the art which relate to light & shade & colour & am Convinced that either my understanding is incapable of comprehending the beauties of Colouring or the Pictures which I painted for You Are Equal in Every part of the Art & superior in One to any thing that has been done since the age of Rafael.--<All> Sr J Reynolds's discourses <to the Royal Academy> will shew. that the Venetian finesse in Art can never be united with the Majesty of Colouring necessary to Historical beauty. & in a letter to the Revd Mr Gilpin author of a work on Picturesque Scenery he says Thus "It may be worth consideration whether the epithet Picturesque is not applicable to the excellencies of the inferior Schools rather than to the higher. The works of Michael Angelo Rafael &c appear to me to have nothing of it: whereas Rubens & the Venetian Painters may almost be said to have Nothing Else.-- Perhaps Picturesque is somewhat synonymous to the word Taste which we should think improperly applied to Homer or Milton but very well to Prior or Pope. I suspect that the application of these words are to Excellencies of an inferior order & which are incompatible with the Grand Style You are certainly right in saying that Variety of Tints & Forms is Picturesque: but it must be rememberd on the other hand.

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that the reverse of this--(uniformity of Colour & a long continuation of lines) produces Grandeur"-----So Says Sir Joshua and So say I for I have now proved that the parts of the art which I neglected to display in those little pictures & drawings which I had the pleasure & profit to do for you are incompatible with the designs--There is nothing in the Art which our Painters do. that I can confess myself ignorant of I also Know & Understand & can assuredly affirm that the works I have done for You are Equal to Carrache or Rafael (and I am now Seven years older than Rafael was when he died) I say they are Equal to Carrache or Rafael or Else I am Blind Stupid Ignorant and Incapable in two years Study to understand those things which a Boarding School Miss can comprehend in a fortnight. Be assured My dear Friend that there is not one touch in those Drawings & Pictures but what came from my Head & my Heart in Unison. That I am Proud of being their Author and Grateful to you my Employer. & that I look upon you as the Chief of my Friends whom I would endeavour to please because you among all men have enabled me to produce these things. I would not send you a Drawing or a Picture till I had again reconsiderd my notions of Art & had put myself back as if I was a learner I have proved that I am Right & shall now Go on with the Vigor I was in my Childhood famous for

But I do not pretend to be Perfect. but if my Works have faults Caracche Corregios & Rafaels have faults also. let me observe that the yellow leather flesh of old men the ill drawn & ugly young women & above all the dawbed black & yellow shadows that are found in most fine ay & the finest pictures. I altogether reject as ruinous to Effect tho

Connoisseurs may think otherwise.

Let me also notice that Carraches Pictures are not like Correggios nor Correggios like Rafaels & if neither of them was to be encouraged till he did like any of the others be must die without Encouragement My Pictures are unlike any of these Painters & I would have them to be so I think the manner I adopt More Perfect than any other no doubt They thought the same of theirs

You will be tempted to think that As I improve The Pictures &c that I did for you are not what I would now wish them to be. On this I beg to say That they are What I intended them & that I know I never shall do better for if I was to do them over again they would lose as much as they gaind because they were done in the heat of My Spirits

But You will justly enquire why I have not written All this time to you? I answer I have been very Unhappy & could not think of troubling you about it or any of my real Friends (I have written many letters to you which I burnd & did not send) & why I have not before now finishd the Miniature I promissd to Mrs Butts? I answer I have not till now in any degree pleased myself & now I must intreat you to Excuse faults for Portrait Painting is the direct contrary to Designing & Historical Painting in every respect--If you have not Nature before you for Every Touch you cannot Paint Portrait. & if you have Nature before you at all you cannot Paint History it was Michall Angelos opinion & is Mine. Pray Give My Wife's love with mine to Mrs Butts assure her that it cannot be long before I have the pleasure of Painting from you in Person & then that She may Expect a likeness but now I have done All I

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could & know she will forgive any failure in consideration of the Endeavour.

And now let me finish with assuring you that Tho I have been very unhappy I am so no longer I am again Emerged into the light of Day I still& shall to Eternity Embrace Christianity and Adore him who is the Express image of God but I have traveld thro Perils & Darkness not unlike a Champion I have Conquerd and shall still Go on Conquering Nothing can withstand the fury of my Course among the Stars of God & in the Abysses of the Accuser My Enthusiasm is still what it was only Enlarged and confirmd

I now Send Two Pictures & hope you will approve of them I have inclosed the Account of Money recievd & Work done which I ought long ago to have sent you pray forgive Errors in omissions of this kind I am incapable of many attentions which it is my Duty to observe towards you thro multitude of employment & thro hope of soon seeing you again I often omit to Enquire of you But pray let me now hear how you do & of the welfare of your family Accept my Sincere love & respect

I remain Yours Sincerely
WILLm BLAKE

A Piece of Sea Weed Serves for a Barometer [i]t gets wet & dry as the weather gets so