


THE PROJECT PORTAL

William Blake: Apprentice and Master

A group of people, likely students, are gathered at an event. They are wearing costumes and have their faces painted. One person in the foreground has blue and white face paint. Another person in the background has a red and white costume. The scene is indoors, possibly a museum or gallery, with a poster visible in the background.

The Project Portal offers collaborative opportunities through the Ashmolean Museum University Engagement Programme and the TORCH Knowledge Exchange Programme in order to strengthen existing ties between the Museum and the academic community. Researchers and graduate students are encouraged to develop project ideas linking their research to the museum's exhibitions. For the 'William Blake: Apprentice and Master' exhibition (4th December 2014 – 1st March 2015), two graduate students came up with a range of vibrant projects designed to bring their research and the exhibition to life for a wider audience.

Katherine Fender

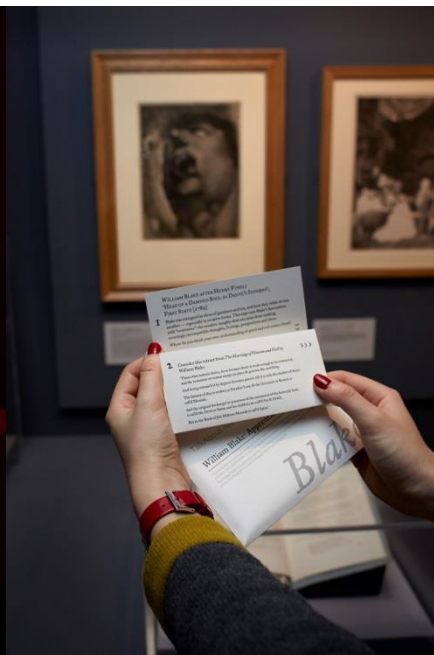
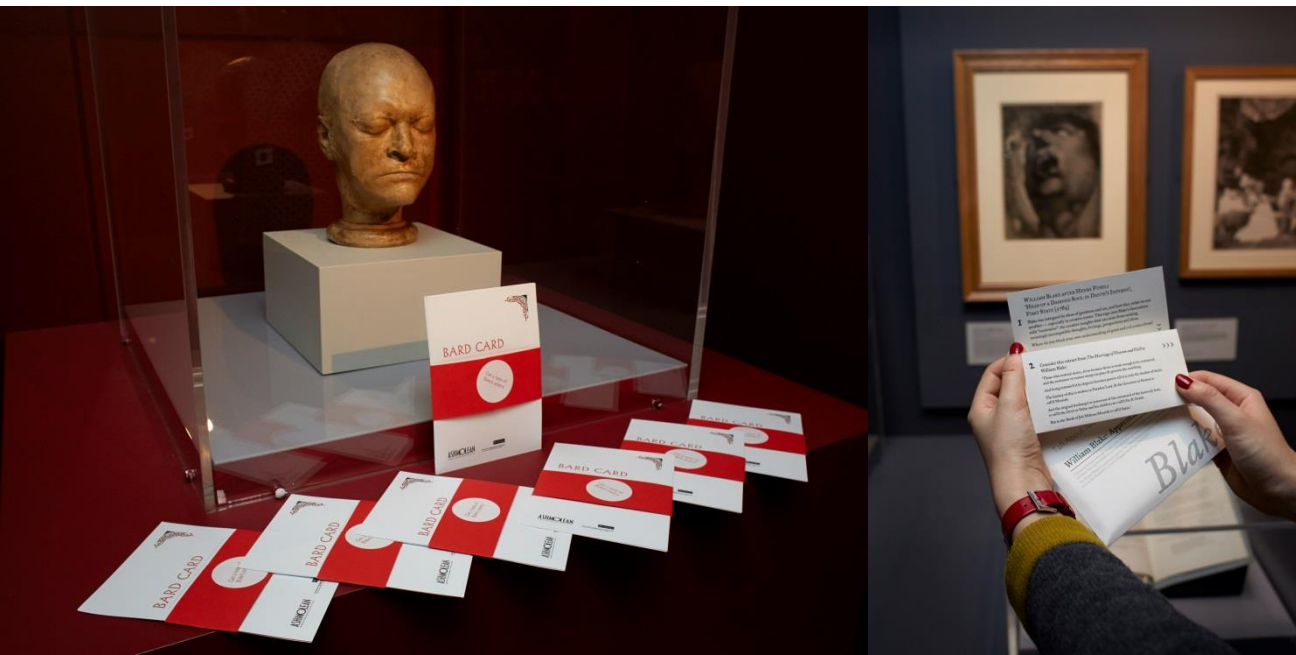
Katherine is a third year doctoral student at the University of Oxford, researching her conception of the bardic and the Welsh Sublime in eighteenth-century and Romantic period poetry. She previously studied at Pembroke College, University of Cambridge, where she completed an MPhil. in Eighteenth-Century and Romantic Studies, following an undergraduate degree in English Literature at the University of Warwick.

Katherine worked with the Ashmolean on a two projects. Firstly, she curated performances of a series of Blake's poems which offered a taste of the way that Blake used the figure of the bard in order to articulate his own unique poetic vision. The poems were performed by the actors of the Oxford University Dramatic Society during the 'Heaven and Hell' LiveFriday, a free late night opening of the museum in celebration of Blake which marked the culmination of the 'Inspired by Blake' festival in collaboration with Blackwell's Bookshop. The actors performed the poems in the exhibition space dressed as bards, angels, and demons. A second performance also took place during the festival as part of a 'Blake at Breakfast' event in the Ashmolean's rooftop Dining Room.



Katherine's second project involved creating printed packs for visitors to take into the exhibition. Alongside the Ashmolean UEP team, she designed a bespoke William Blake 'TalkAbout' tour, in which visitors were given a series of cards with conversational menus to spark discussions about the content of the exhibition. Each card also contained an extract of poetry related to the artwork, encouraging visitors to think about the fascinating relationship between text and image in Blake's art.

Katherine also designed packs of 'Bard Cards', which were given free with every ticket to the exhibition during the 'Heaven and Hell' LiveFriday, and made her research into the figure of the bard in Blake's poetry accessible to visitors as they explored the galleries. Each pack contained five printed postcards, outlining Katherine's research on one side, with a printed extract of Blake's poetry on the other.



Edward Youansamouth

Edward studied for his BA and MA in Theology at Durham before moving to Regent's Park College in Oxford to begin his DPhil, which is funded by the AHRC. His doctoral project seeks to explore the affinities between William Blake's theology of the Imagination and the thought of the Cambridge Platonist Peter Sterry.

Edward presented a special tour of the exhibition for members of the university, exploring the connection between Blake's innovative artistic practice and his personal theology of the Imagination. By looking at some of the objects in the 'William Blake: Apprentice and Master' exhibition, Edward examined how Blake's method of 'printing in the infernal method', referred to by modern scholars as 'relief-etching', relates to his theological desire to reveal 'the Infinite in all things'. Edward suggested that Blake's works of illuminated printing, in which the printing plate was eaten away by acid rather than engraved, participated in the very apocalypse ('unveiling') of perception that Blake described when he said that 'the whole creation will be consumed and appear infinite and holy whereas it now appears finite and corrupt'.

