

William Blake: The Drawings for Dantes Divine Comedy



Imagination ablaze: 750 years on from Dantes birth, William Blakes spectacular illustrations to *The Divine Comedy* Celebrated around the world as a literary monument, *The Divine Comedy*, completed in 1321 and written by Dante Alighieri (1265-1321) is widely considered the greatest work ever composed in the Italian language. The epic poem describes Dantes journey through Hell, Purgatory, and Heaven, representing, on a deeper level, the souls path towards salvation. In the last few years of his life, Romantic poet and artist William Blake (1757-1827) produced 102 illustrations for Dantes masterwork, from pencil sketches to finished watercolors. Like Dantes sweeping poem, Blakes drawings range from scenes of infernal suffering to celestial light, from horrifying human disfigurement to the perfection of physical form. While faithful to the text, Blake also brought his own perspective to some of Dantes central themes. Today, Blakes illustrations, left in various stages of completion at the time of his death, are dispersed among seven different institutions. This TASCHEN edition brings these works together again, alongside key excerpts from Dantes masterpiece. Two introductory essays consider Dante and Blake, as well as other major artists who have been inspired by *The Divine Comedy*, including Sandro Botticelli, Michelangelo, Eugene Delacroix, Gustave Dore and Auguste Rodin. With a close reading of Blakes illustrations, and 14 fold-out spreads to allow the most delicate of details to dazzle, this is a breathtaking encounter with two of the finest artistic talents in history, as well as with such universal themes as love, guilt, punishment, revenge, and redemption.

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