

**The heroic splendor and hand-painted details of Blake's great prophetic vision are newly revealed in this Octavo Edition**

William Blake, *The Book of Urizen*. London: privately printed, ca. 1818. 11 9/16 inches x 9 3/8 inches (294 x 238 mm), 66 pages, 28 plates.

The artistic genius of William Blake (1757–1827) found expression in both graphic works and visionary poetic writings. Among Blake's most masterful productions are books that combined these forms, which he personally engraved and printed using a technique of his own devising. These works were hand-colored by Blake as individual copies were sold, often years or even decades after their original conception, and consequently each surviving copy reflects a unique alignment of the artist's creativity and vision.

*The Book of Urizen* was originally engraved in 1794 as *The First Book of Urizen*, for a projected series of works expressing Blake's idiosyncratic cosmogony; in this late copy Blake modified the title page design to omit the word "First." Only a handful of copies are known to have been completed, and this was the only one executed later in the artist's career (ca. 1818, printed on paper watermarked 1815).

This copy is printed in orange (others are in brown and green) and elaborately hand-colored with brush and watercolor pigments, heightened with gold and silver. Blake's painstaking technique transforms the relatively flat picture surface of the original engravings into a fantastical epic in miniature that combines his bardic verse with otherworldly imagery to recount as never before the origins of human experience. All the details, some obscure in the earlier copies, are here elaborated and made clear, as if Blake had come to some final determination about the order and function of both the text and the pictures of *The Book of Urizen*. As such, it has an heroic splendor, and forms a grand finale to the first part of Blake's great prophetic vision.

This exquisite copy of *The Book of Urizen* from the Lessing J. Rosenwald

Collection at the Library of Congress was bound by the Club Bindery in 1908 in brown morocco. "BLAKE — URIZEN 1794" is in gilt letters running up spine, which has raised bands. It was sold by its anonymous owner at Sotheby's on January 20, 1852, and acquired by Richard Monckton Milnes, later the first Lord Houghton. This book was subsequently owned by William Augustus White, perhaps the greatest collector of the works of Blake of all time. White added his name and a record of the cost to the first and last flyleaves, and arranged for its present binding.

Octavo code: blkurz