

[email I sent to the Chair on 2 July 2007, prior to the launch in Parliament]

Hi Tim,

These past weeks, in all the excitement, and exhaustion, of the fund-raising campaign, I have stopped often in the deluge of emails, phone calls and frantic surfing the web to redirect my mind towards the first question, Why are we doing this?

We're getting closer to the launch event and I'd like to share some reflections.

The plain answer may be, that we're doing all this so that we can secure, help create, offer to others a space conducive to creation and renewal, including renewal of the world outside, even if in the humblest measure.

The challenge is huge and in the urge to get such gigantic amounts of money we will feel the pressure of the world shouting, even with its best intentions, how we should be doing this. And still, the goal is not the norm: no visitor centre, not yet another pretty place offering chewed up, pasteurised art as a commodity, but a place that honours and echoes the work and quest of a very complex, fiery visionary and man of great integrity.

I think, with Blake's question, of a place for "improvement of the things of the spirit". You summarised it in that sentence that I wish had appeared in the flier: "We are inviting support from everyone who is strengthened by the knowledge that somewhere in the world such a place exists; a home for the dissenting imagination."

To talk about inviting, rather than asking for, support, is key. To give towards this project (money, time, work) is actually to contribute to the building of a stronghold for ourselves, a place where the seed of faith in a better world that has not yielded, impotent, to the laws of greed and money and the erring of vacant scared souls can be nourished.

It may sound naive but I don't think it is. We are doing that already, giving towards that ideal.

What it means, a dissenting imagination, is a difficult question. Blake did not address it to the air --he addressed it to his time and his world, and so must we address it to ours.

In this confusing world of ours, all forms of dissent seem to be reabsorbed by an omnivorous culture of surplus as soon as they see the light. So perhaps dissent now means, among other things, not conforming to that prodigal culture, to resist the pervading compulsion to be at the top of it all, to defend --as artists, as thinkers-- our right to respite, to a space of quiet where a vision of Man as inherently blessed, and *blessing* of the world around him through the way he looks at that world, and acts upon it, can be found again.

I guess what we want is to create a place out of whose door the man in Glad Day can step again and again.

It feels daunting if we want, on top of it all, to get the money for it: big money to create something that in essence, I think, must be *small*, noiseless in proportion to how its roots become profound and what is created and thought there expands. It will be important to be thinking of these things next Monday, and do our best to extend to those who attend the invitation you worded in that sentence.

I am a bit anxious, I don't know if we'll manage to get the money *while* remaining faithful to an initial vision. But I think we should not be afraid, and that the more honest we are about that vision, the more contagious it may be. I suspect that deep inside those are many who long for a place like this, even if they don't voice it.... we just may have lost the words to name that longing.

Good night.

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