WILLIAM BLAKE (1757-1827)

William Blake was born in London. His father was a merchant. He received very little schooling and education, but not for what concerns art: apprenticed to an engraver, he learnt lots of things about miniatures and drawing. Due to this experience, he started decorating the books of other writers.

He married the daughter of a poor merchant, woman that he always loved much, but so uneducated that he had himself to teach her how to read and write. She started helping him with his work, together with his younger brother. When he died, Blake said that he had seen his spirit flying to Heaven.

Blake always had visions: when he was a child he used to see God and the angels looking at him, and, as an adult, to see the Archangel Gabriel, the virgin Mary and the most important dead men of the past conversing to him. For this reason he was considered as a madman, but he knew that was just the appearance of his thought, of his “inner light”.

He also introduced a particular process of printing, that he said to have learnt from the spirit of his brother. According to this process pages were printed and then colored by hand. By this process he created lots of wonderful, strange pages full of flowers and leaves: every work thus became a work of art.

He always lived a lonely life in London. His last years were however serene. He also believed the real man had to follow imagination and always considered death as a change from a room to another.

WORKS:
His most important works are two collections of poems called “Songs of innocence” and “Songs of experience”. The two collections, whose pages were decorated by Blake himself, are complementary. In the first one seems to remind men’s condition in the Garden of Eden, or the spirit of an innocent child. Whereas in the second one, he talks about adult life: selfish and unfair.

These two aspects are both present in men’s souls: the lamb, representative character of the first collection of poems, symbolizes God’s love for us, and the tiger, representative character of the second one, gives a clear message of strength and doubt towards God and life.