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Roger Fry, Bloomsbury and Transfer Lithography

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Abstract: This article investigates Bloomsbury artist and critic Roger Fry's adoption of transfer lithography as a printmaking process in the 1920s, filling a gap in the existing literature. It locates Fry's use of the medium within the context of Bloomsbury innovation before the Second World War, placing more emphasis on technique than taste than is usually the case with scholarship on Bloomsbury. The article describes what was then an unusual and controversial process, which Fry used for his published lithographs, including his portfolio *Ten Architectural Lithographs* of 1930. It also considers the dispute surrounding the whole status of transfer lithography as a fine art form. Special attention is then paid to the 13 Fry lithographs in the Te Papa collection, donated by both Rex Nan Kivell and by Pamela Diamand, the artist's daughter. The article then considers why these items by a very English artist were donated to a museum in New Zealand, especially by his only daughter in the UK. It concludes by considering the importance of these lithographs, arguing ultimately that they should be understood within the context of Roger Fry rather than simply by viewing Roger Fry within the context of Bloomsbury.

KEYWORDS: Roger Fry, transfer lithography, Bloomsbury, Rex Nan Kivell, Pamela Diamand, National Art Gallery, Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa.

Introduction: Fry, Bloomsbury and Innovation

From a 21st century perspective, the work of Bloomsbury Group artists may seem rather safe; old fashioned, even. Works by Vanessa Bell, Duncan Grant and Roger Fry remain sought-after by collectors today but rarely appear to offer too much of a challenge, certainly in matters of taste. But it is important to remember that in their day, these artists really were considered revolutionary.

According to Richard Shone, by 1910 Bloomsbury painters and critics were: ‘essential figures’ in the British art scene, contributing to a: ‘far reaching change in taste’. Indeed, they became ‘a centre of cultural authority in the period’.¹ Far from following the tastes and conventions of the Victorian era, as Nicholas Serota reminds us, they: ‘rebelled against what they saw as the unnecessary conventions and moral double-standards of an earlier generation’ and: ‘started afresh’.² Indeed, continues Shone, in their early years the Bloomsbury painters compounded: ‘excitement, liberation, destruction and revision’. They: ‘contributed a vivid unbuttoning of pictorial language and content to British art at the time.’³

The visual energy of Bloomsbury, however, was by no means limited to easel painting. This is especially well illustrated by Fry’s Omega Workshops venture, from 1913 to 1919. Here was a project that embraced textiles, ceramics, furniture, and even clothing, designed by artists and sold under the collective mark of Omega. From a 21st century perspective this might be dismissed as merely decorative or indeed ‘interior design’ but it is often forgotten that, as Christopher Reed put it, in its time Omega was: ‘on the cutting edge of developments in modernist aesthetics associated with the Cubists, Futurists and Fauves.’⁴ Bell, Grant and Fry were very actively involved in Omega design, but so were others of their wider circle, including Henri-Gaudier-Brzeska, Winifred Gill, Frederick Etchells, and (prior to a famous falling out with Fry) Percy Wyndham Lewis. Shone argues that several strands

of: 'the London avant garde were brought together in a moment of unprecedented collaboration.' Much of the work, he continues, was: 'distinctly ahead of its time in Britain' and some was even 'revolutionary'.⁵

This brings us to Fry himself. Fry was the most multi-talented of the Bloomsbury circle. Despite taking first class honours in Natural Sciences at the University of Cambridge, he then trained as a fine artist in London and Paris. He also rapidly distinguished himself as a connoisseur, with expertise in Italian Old Masters, co-founding the *Burlington Magazine* in 1903, which he also co-edited for ten years. Such was his international reputation that in January 1906 he was appointed Curator of the Department of Paintings at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.⁶

Although Fry was already well-known among the cognoscenti, it was not until what Richard Cork calls the: 'Art-Quake of 1910'⁷ that Fry fully emerged into the public sphere. Fry's exhibition 'Manet and the Post-Impressionists' at London's Grafton Galleries provided what Cork terms a: 'landmark event' in which 'Britain was at last forced to shed its insular ignorance and confront the radically changing direction of European painting.'⁸ According to Richard Shone: 'There had been nothing quite like it'.⁹ This and Fry's second Post-Impressionist show at the Grafton in 1912 had both provoked: 'an enormous furore' with the curator dismissed by some as 'a sensationalist and madman'¹⁰. In the art world itself, Fry became the: 'spokesman and apologist (with Clive Bell) of the new movement in England.'¹¹ For Denys Sutton, Fry in the 1910s was a 'pioneer'¹² who was: 'determined to bring about a revolution in English art'.¹³ This was to be achieved not only by the staging of controversial exhibitions, but also in his critical and theoretical writings. His 'Essay in Aesthetics', first published in 1909,¹⁴ advocated nothing less than the abandonment of 'any subservience to verisimilitude' and so '...a time bomb was ticking away in English aesthetic appreciation, of which the consequences were to be far-reaching.'¹⁵ Christopher Green sees Fry as

‘modernism’s impresario’ who from 1906 had become charged with: ‘applying his new modern values as widely as possible’ culminating in an ‘extraordinary attempt to make “modern” the art of all times and all cultures.’¹⁶

Virginia Woolf, researching her biography of Fry, noted in her diary that he had: ‘two lives – enough for six books.’¹⁷ Caroline Elam added pairings of her own:

Fry the painter and Fry the critic and lecturer; Fry the old master connoisseur and Fry the advocate of Post-Impressionism and non-Western art – this latter being one aspect of the most remarkable metamorphosis, Fry the Victorian who remade himself as a Modern.¹⁸

It is this multifaceted Fry who in the 1920s began working with the unusual and controversial technique of transfer lithography.¹⁹ Very little has been written about this in the existing literature – a gap which the current article seeks to fill. Similarly, there has been a distinct lack of critical reaction – then or now – to Fry’s work in this medium. This can be explained by the way in which so little of this work has been exhibited to date. Indeed, research for this investigation has found evidence of only one Fry lithograph being publicly shown. This was listed in the Arts Council’s ‘Roger Fry Paintings and Drawings’ exhibition catalogue of 1952. Here, a portrait of the artist’s mother, Lady Fry, is included as the only lithograph – almost as an afterthought as the final entry.²⁰

Transfer Lithography

Although the ‘art quake’ of 1910-12 had subsided, and the Omega workshops had folded in 1919, the years post-World War One did not see Fry slide into inactivity.

Throughout the 1920s, he continued to publish, to lecture, to instigate, to travel and to work as an artist. In a 1976 interview his son Julian (1901-1984) said: ‘He was remarkable for his openness to new ideas, even wild ones. Virginia [Woolf] brings this out in her biography.’²¹

Julian Fry attributed much of his father’s appetite for ideas and experimentation to his

undergraduate background as a scientist at Cambridge: 'That's where I think he was way ahead in his mental attitude to a lot of his friends.'²²

Fry continued enthusiastic contact with leading contemporary artists of the day: Picasso and André Derain dined at his house in Camden,²³ and he went on to review a 1919 London exhibition of modern French paintings, featuring work not only of his dinner guests but also of Raoul Dufy and Henri Matisse. The novelist, critic and fellow Francophile Arnold Bennett wrote an introduction to the catalogue.²⁴ Fry left for France in 1920, moving easily between Paris, provincial France and London, and published his most famous work: *Vision and Design*.²⁵ Clearly, there was no post-war slowing of Fry's considerable and wide-ranging energy.

Fry also continued to paint. Following the armistice he had sold his house in Guildford and in 1919 moved to Dalmeny Avenue, Camden, where the attic room became his studio.²⁶ The end of the war also enabled him to travel freely again in France. This included Provence where, according to Spalding, he discovered that the secret of the landscape lay: 'not in bright hues but in the purity and beauty of its greys.'²⁷ Cézanne was clearly an influence (Fry went on to publish his *Cézanne: A Study of his Development* with the Hogarth Press in 1927)²⁸. At Vence in the Alpes Maritimes he showed paintings in a 1920 exhibition by himself, Duncan Grant and Vanessa Bell. It was a period of intensive activity for Fry as a painter: That same year he exhibited over 80 of his paintings at a one man show at the Independent Gallery in London. It was not a success, commercially or critically. Commercially, he sold just one picture and five studies. Critically, *The Spectator*, for example, opined: 'Mr. Fry does always paint; that is to say with each stroke of paint he defines, as a good writer defines with every word.' Their critic continued: 'At his best he is an artist who can express his own interests, his own values in terms of art.'²⁹ Fry was not best

pleased. On a 'cold and black' wet day in June he wrote to dispiritedly to Marie Mauron that the reaction to the exhibition had 'tried' his philosophy. He continued:

I have offended British snobbism. My painting is not sufficiently accentuated; there's nothing fashionable in it. There's no formula one can recognise at once. Finally, there's nothing to excite the idle gaze of those in search of distraction. Result a complete fiasco.³⁰

Fry continued: 'That is my last effort –really my last, since henceforth I shall shut up shop. I shall exhibit no more.' But he did add that he would nevertheless 'go on painting' -which he did.³¹

Fry's vow to eschew exhibiting yet continue painting is articulate. It is more than simply the reaction of an artist scorned. It demonstrates that although he was aware that public success as a working artist was unlikely now ever to be his, he still needed –and was determined- to paint. That same year in Brittany he completed his large oil 'In the Morbihan' (1920), which despite his statement to Marie Mauron was exhibited at that year's Salon d'Automne in Paris. Throughout the decade he continued to spend much of his time painting in France,³² even buying what Sutton describes as 'a small peasant house' in St Rémy, in Provence.³³ It was during this period that Spalding notes a change in Fry's style which occasionally: 'led him dangerously close to over-literal representation.'³⁴ Fry himself saw this slightly differently. As he wrote to Marie Mauron in 1921, he considered himself to have been born 'classical' which he explained as: 'one who enjoys above all pure art without any rhetorical emphasis, art which expresses a sensation without wishing to impose it.'³⁵

It is in precisely this context that the ever-restless Fry embarked upon his new enthusiasm: transfer lithography. In 1927, he came across a shop in Paris that sold the then innovative lithographic transfer paper.³⁶ This technique enabled the artist to draw on paper rather than directly on to the lithographic stone itself. The design on paper was then placed face down on the stone, dampened, and the design transferred to the stone via a press. The paper was removed and the stone prepared for prints to be taken directly from it.³⁷ The result

was that final print was not made in reverse but in the same aspect as the original drawing. A consequence of this was that the works could be signed, dated or titled on the transfer paper itself, as Fry did.³⁸

According to Linda Stiber Morenus, many of today's lithographers are unfamiliar with the method and history of transfer lithography.³⁹ A brief background is therefore helpful.

Pioneer Alois Senefelder discussed the use of transfer paper in his important *A Complete Course of Lithography* of 1819. He declared: 'This manner is peculiar to the chemical printing, and I am strongly inclined to believe, that it is the principal and most important part of my discovery.'⁴⁰ According to Clint Adams, however, this enthusiastic definition of a 'peculiar' technique actually contributed to later controversies about the 'appropriateness and merit' of transfer lithography.⁴¹ Certainly, it had its supporters: Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot (1796 – 1875) was an early adopter: see, for example, his transfer lithograph *Le Dormoir des Vaches* (Sleeping Cattle) (1871) (Fig. 1). Transfer lithography was clearly an attractive medium, holding the potential, at least, for those who wanted to draw in the field from nature rather than from memory on the stone.⁴² Odilon Redon (1840-1916) noted that the paper: '...transmits so perfectly to the stone the finest and most moving inflections of the spirit.'⁴³

One of the earliest pioneers of the technique in London was the American-born Joseph Pennell (1857-1926), a contemporary of Fry (1866-1934). Pennell became interested in the process in 1893 following a demonstration by lithographer Thomas R. Way at the Art Workers' Guild in London and Pennell began experimenting with a relatively rough, textured transfer paper.⁴⁴ Other papers became commercially available via specialists such as Charles Goulding, whose papers Pennell used and discussed in his Cantor Lectures at the Royal Society of Arts in 1914.⁴⁵

Among the medium's detractors, however, it was argued that because the artist drew onto paper instead of directly on to the stone, and required the assistance of a professional printmaker, the artist was too far removed from the process, rendering the result a mechanical reproduction of a drawing and therefore not an 'original' print.⁴⁶ That was certainly the view of Walter Sickert, who publicly questioned the fundamental status of the process as an art form in his review: 'Transfer Lithography' for the *Saturday Review* in 1896, declaring:

The artist who does transfer lithographs is... using a debased instrument. It has its conveniences, it is true, but it is nonsense to talk of a revival of lithography on these terms. It is full of decadence... Drawings of merit may be executed in this, as in any other medium; but the art of lithography is degraded.⁴⁷

Pennell did not take this lightly, suing Sickert over the article in 1897. The court found that transfer lithography *was* lithography and awarded Pennell £50 in damages.⁴⁸ Doubtless the contention continued even when the litigation had ended.

Transfer lithography today remains something of a niche technique. It is described as an 'additional' technique in *Tamarind Techniques for Fine Art Lithography* (2009), in which Marjorie Devon explains both damp matrix and damp paper techniques, using both ready and custom-made lithography transfer papers.⁴⁹ Renée Loche in *Lithography* (1974) notes the convenience of the technique including its portability and the advantages of the artist being able to draw the composition: 'the right way round'.⁵⁰ Loche, however, still prefers the traditional technique, arguing that: 'working directly on the stone – although demanding and calling for greater technical skill- produces a clarity and vigour that are hardly ever matched by transfers.'⁵¹ Loche, however, still maintains that: 'Prints carried out by a lithographer after an artist's drawing are in fact, not considered as original works of art; they are reproductions.'⁵² The use of the term 'after' here is, however, a contentious one.

Fry as a Transfer Lithographer

We can only speculate how much Fry cared about earlier controversies relating to the legitimacy of transfer lithography on that day in 1927 when he came across lithographic paper for sale in Paris.⁵³ Most likely, given his and Bloomsbury's distaste for Victorian attitudes and enthusiasm for experiment and innovation, he did not. But we can be sure that he went ahead with his customary zeal. On 19 August 1927 he wrote to his lover Helen Anrep:

I worked on the litho stone at the factory yesterday and shall get a proof today. I hope it'll be alright. The one of the church at Toulon has come out splendidly brilliant. Shall I send you a copy? Only please take care of it as I'm only having twenty-five in all done and it's rather big and awkward...⁵⁴

What became of the planned edition is not clear.⁵⁵ A later letter to his mother, Lady Fry, confirms his continued use of lithography. On 5 February 1929 he wrote:

P.S. My lithographs arrived from Paris but are held up by our absurd custom house, who, I fear, may want to tax me for doing my own work. If I get them out in time I shall send you one as a little birthday present, though this is not a birthday letter.⁵⁶

Although there is no specific reference to Fry working with either the traditional or the transfer method here, we do have the connection between Fry, Paris, prints and London. More importantly, chronology supports his use of the transfer method. We know from a letter to Virginia Woolf that he had been in Paris in November 1928 ('I think England's hopeless' he complained: 'We've never got over the Norman conquest...').⁵⁷ It is the work itself, however, that speaks most clearly.

Fry's known lithographs can all be dated between 1927 and 1930, starting with his visit to the shop in Paris and ending with the publication of his portfolio *Ten Architectural Lithographs*, published by the Architectural Press in London. Tate Britain hold a full set of the latter,⁵⁸ while Te Tapa's larger collection of 13 includes two which are also included in *Ten Architectural Lithographs*.⁵⁹ All but one of these lithographs appears to have been drawn in France –the exception being of one of Trinity College, Cambridge.

We know that Fry was a committed Francophile⁶⁰, and during the years in question his letters reveal that, at the very least, he had travelled in and between Paris, Cassis, Marseilles, Vichy and Dieppe in 1927; Monte Carlo, Cassis, Brantôme (Dordogne), Port-Vendres (Pyrénées-Orientales) and to Paris in 1928; Paris again in 1929; and Baumes de Venise (Vaucluse) and Montrésor (Indre-et-Loire, from which he visited Tours) in 1930.⁶¹ Access to France was frequently to Newhaven to Dieppe, which was especially convenient from the Bloomsbury farmhouse at Charleston, East Sussex as well as from central London.

It would be a project in itself to seek to identify each of the locations in which the surviving lithographs were made as so many are either un-titled or only vaguely so, either by Fry or in the relevant catalogues. The Te Papa collection comprises a total of 13 lithographs by Fry, although there are two copies of one of these (*Church*), bringing the number of different images to 12. The vaguer titles are *Farmhouse*, *Landscape with Summerhouse*, *Landscape with Trees*, *The Bridge*⁶² and *Church*. Others are more helpfully specific: *Rock-Cut Church*, *Saint Emilion*, *Baroque Altar*, *Perpignon*, *Interior Cluny Museum*, *Paris*, *St Jacques*, *Dieppe* and *Near Brantôme*. *La Charité* (two different images) is presumably La Charité-sur-Loire (today in Bourgogne-Franche-Comté). All are signed in the 'plate' but only three are similarly dated (two 1927 and one 1928). Only one individual print bears an edition number one of the two copies of *Church* (1927), which is editioned lower right '5/20'. In comparison, the *Ten Architectural Drawings* portfolios are signed and numbered from an edition of 40 by Fry himself, but only on an accompanying slip covering the entire portfolio and not on the individual prints themselves.

It is easy to see why landscape and especially architectural subjects appealed to Fry as a transfer lithographer. First, it was a very portable medium, with drawings able to be made outdoors and in the 'field' (Fig. 2) from life and not in a studio on a large and heavy stone after much preparation. Although we cannot be sure that Fry worked in this way –at all let

alone exclusively- the transfer medium certainly permitted this while the traditional technique did not. It is entirely possible, for example, that his transfer lithograph of the garden scene *Landscape with Summerhouse* (1928) was made in this way, due to its relatively loose and spontaneous ‘sketchy’ quality, especially in the foreground (Fig 3). Second –and this is especially the case with architectural subjects- they could be both drawn and printed ‘the right way round’ via the transfer process, unlike traditional lithography in which one of the two had to be performed ‘in reverse’ making it either technically extremely challenging or topologically inaccurate. Third, the technique enabled a very fine graphic quality throughout, with results which could be mistaken for drawing to the inexpert eye.

Each of the 13 Te Papa Fry lithographs could have made good use of the portable transfer lithography medium especially the larger prints such as *Interior Cluny Museum*, Paris (Fig. 4) with an image size of 360mm (width) x 494mm (height). Transporting and working upon a stone of this size (and weight) outside the studio would have been extraordinarily impractical, even on an interior location. Working on transfer paper would have had the additional benefit of enabling multiple drawings/attempts on site or per journey –again a highly unlikely prospect with lithography stones. Not all the images, however, are accurate in every detail. This is partly due to the creative liberties frequently taken by artists –and especially formalists such as Fry- but also because not all the drawings may have been completed in their entirety on site. This is especially possible with some of the most detailed works, such as *Baroque Altar, Perpignan* (1930) (Fig. 5) which compared (for example) with figure 3 are especially finely worked.

One print from the Te Papa collection serves as an illustrative case study: *St Jacques, Dieppe* (1927) (Fig. 6).⁶³ The date 1927 corresponds with Fry’s discovery of transfer paper in Paris⁶⁴ when he began his experiments in lithography.⁶⁵ We have seen from his letters that he was in Paris at least twice in 1927 (August and September). We also know that he was in

Dieppe at least twice that year, the second time in October, so the chronology is entirely supportive of his presence in France.⁶⁶ The date '27' also appears next to Fry's signature, bottom right.

The location fits, too. We have already seen that Dieppe was (and still is) a channel port served by ferry from Newhaven in East Sussex, convenient for both London and Charleston. Not only was Dieppe a frequent port of entry for British visitors to France, it was also at the time a fashionable resort visited in its own right. As Michael Barker shows in his article 'Bloomsbury and Dieppe' in *The Charleston Magazine*, Dieppe in the nineteenth century became: 'the most fashionable resort in the land' with its casino, theatre and *bains chauds* (hot baths).⁶⁷ Until the 1930s: 'Dieppe and its hinterland was probably depicted by more artists than any other town of its size in the world.'⁶⁸ Sickert (that voluble critic of transfer lithography) visited and Georges Braque (1883-1963) settled there; the latter is buried at the church in nearby Varengeville-sur-Mer. In 1927 Duncan Grant and Vanessa Bell painted murals at 'Auppegard', one of Dieppe's small châteaux, where Fry also came to stay as a guest along with his lover Anrep, whom he described in a letter announcing his visit to André Gide as 'my new illegal wife.'⁶⁹

The Église Saint-Jacques is a high Gothic church in the centre of Dieppe. Fry's view is unusual in that it concentrates on the columns and ceiling viewed from the south aisle, looking diagonally towards the east, rather than along the central nave of the church. We do not see the altar and only part of a pulpit. Some artistic license seems to have been taken with the architectural detail: Fry has simplified the ceiling bosses, while the capitals of his columns appear Tuscan rather than the actual Corinthian. He has also embellished the pulpit with a statuette instead of a sphere. However, the orientation of both the signature/date and the church interior are correct, again demonstrating Fry's use of transfer lithography. The image dimension of 364mm (width) x 546mm (height) also supports the possibility of his

having have taken advantage of working (at least partially) in situ on lithography paper: remains extremely unlikely that a large, heavy, lithographic stone would have been used at the church.

The graphic detail is very fine. Considerable detail can of course be achieved with traditional lithographs drawn directly on to the stone, but the transfer process makes this considerably easier and more effective for non-specialist lithographers such as Fry. Compared, for example, with the broad, charcoal-like effect of Corot's *Le Dormoir des Vaches* (Fig. 1), Fry's *St Jacques, Dieppe* looks much more akin to a pencil drawing made with a variety of points from velvety-soft to a much finer tip, including touch pencil and crayon.⁷⁰ The darker areas make effective use of cross-hatching to build up the full and half tone areas. The paper is smooth with no visible manufacturer's watermark.⁷¹ The whole image is characteristically Fry, with the subject, angle and rendition each concerned much more with formal design than architectural text-book veracity. This was, after all, the same Fry who in 1920 had declared in *Vision and Design* that: 'the graphic arts are the expression of the imaginative life rather than a copy of actual life'.⁷² Here, he graphically combines the two.

Why Te Papa?

This brings us now to the question of why Te Papa in New Zealand has such a strong collection of lithographs of France by an English artist. The question of France is relatively easily answered by Fry's Francophilia, which has already been discussed. And it was in France, of course, that he discovered the necessary materials. The questions of an English donor and a New Zealand museum involve more investigation.

All the Fry lithographs in the Te Papa collection were donated by one of two people: Rex Nan Kivell or Mrs Pamela Diamand.⁷³ Rex Nan Kivell (1898-1977) was an especially interesting character, born Reginald Nankivell and also known as Sir Rex de Charembac Nan Kivell CMG. He was born in Christchurch, but his own account of his life is held to be unreliable.⁷⁴ According to John R. Thompson, for example, his claim that he was appointed to the Danish Order of Dannebrog: ‘apparently lacked foundation.’⁷⁵ Styling himself Rex de Charembac Nan Kivell, he set up as an art dealer in London in the 1920s, during which time he would have had every opportunity to become familiar with the work of the Bloomsbury artists, including Fry. In January 1953, Kivell donated hundreds of his important collection of prints by British artists to New Zealand museums and art galleries. ‘Together’, writes Oliver Stead, ‘they were the most significant single gift of contemporary British graphic art ever made to the nation of New Zealand.’⁷⁶ There are today more than 500 prints donated by Kivell in the Te Papa collection. Two of the Te Papa Fry lithographs were donated by Kivell: *La Charité* (c. 1930) and *Church* (1927). In both cases the date of accession (1953) tallies exactly with the date of the larger donation. Kivell was subsequently appointed Companion of St Michael and St George (CMG) by the British in 1966 and then knighted in 1976.⁷⁷ As Thompson avers:

Sir Rex had lived an extraordinary life, shaped in the grand manner to his own exacting design. An archetypal outsider—illegitimate, homosexual, self-educated and antipodean—he acquired a residence in London, a country house in Wiltshire and a villa in Morocco overlooking the Strait of Gibraltar.⁷⁸

Pamela Diamand’s donations came in 1958, five years after Kivell’s. The Te Papa acquisition records do not confirm any connection between the two gifts, but the chronology—together with Kivell’s wide circle in London—suggests that Diamand’s donations may have been prompted by Kivell. Pamela Diamand (1902-1985) was the younger of Fry’s two children with his wife Helen (formerly Helen Coombe).⁷⁹ She was born Agnes Pamela Fry in

Dorking: Her childhood, though interesting, was not easy, due to the delicate and deteriorating mental health of her mother, who was installed in a mental home in 1910. Pamela married the Romanian Avram Diamand, who was naturalised as a UK citizen and predeceased her in 1969. Throughout her life, Pamela took a keen interest in her father's work and legacy, translating, for example, Fry's important late lecture 'The Double Nature of Painting', delivered in French in Brussels in 1933, and posthumously published in *Apollo* magazine in 1969.⁸⁰

On 2 June 1958, Pamela wrote to the (then) National Gallery of Wellington. She explained that her aunt (Roger's sister) Marjory had died and that a number of works by her late father were: 'now available for public galleries should there be any demand for them.' She offered them one work on condition that it was exhibited to the public.⁸¹ A meeting in London was sought in August 1958 with Stewart MacLennan, Director of the National Art Gallery of New Zealand, who was at the time traveling in New York and Europe.⁸² The records do not show whether the meeting took place as planned, but they do confirm that Fry's oil painting *St Rémy Well* (1931-33) (Fig. 7) was acquired by the gallery in December 1958, along with the ten 'original' lithographs that complete the Te Papa collection.⁸³ Each, along with the painting, is credited: 'Gift of Mrs Pamela Diamand, the artist's daughter, England, 1959.'⁸⁴

Pamela Diamand hoped that her relationship with the museum would not end there. The archives reveal that she had keenly supported a plan for an entire exhibition of her late father's work. The discussion began in October 1979 when Anne Kirker, then Curator of Prints and Drawings at the National Art Gallery, formally proposed an exhibition of 'Paintings and allied material by Roger Fry' to the governing council.⁸⁵ She explained that during her recent studies in London, she had met Pamela Diamand and the idea had been discussed. Pamela, she wrote, still owned 'examples of the artist's finest paintings' which

could be combined with drawings and supporting materials, together with additional works loaned by her circle of contacts. Kirker added that Richard Morphet, then curator of the modern collection at the Tate Gallery, had agreed to support the exhibition and to write the introduction to the supporting catalogue. Kirker concluded that such an exhibition would not only be: 'of considerable interest to New Zealand as a whole,' but it would also be: 'particularly meaningful in the light of the Gallery's own collection with its strength in early 20th Century British Art.'⁸⁶ Kirker sent Pamela a copy of the proposal, to which she responded with enthusiasm, adding that her son Roger Diamand and daughter Annabel Cole had also agreed to lend works. In a post-script she noted that Virginia Woolf's biography of Roger Fry had just been reprinted in paperback.⁸⁷

Pamela Diamand, along with Anne Kirker, was to be disappointed. The committee met on 25 October 1979 and although very grateful (etc.) decided that such an exhibition was a 'low priority' within the current programme. Kirker reported to Diamand that: 'it was felt that our idea would need to wait a while', and that the proposed material to be included would also need to be reconsidered.⁸⁸ The exhibition was thus very politely kicked into the long grass. Mrs Diamand died in 1985.

Anne Kirker's letter to Pamela Diamand, however, remains as pertinent today as it was then. She wrote:

In spite of my efforts to try and convince members of the council that Fry's paintings should be viewed as considerable achievements in themselves, quite aside from the artist's formidable reputation as a writer and art critic, the general consensus of opinion was that he should be seen in context with other practitioners of the Bloomsbury Group.⁸⁹

Fry certainly agonised about his abilities as a fine artist, which must have been all the more difficult as he considered himself primarily to be a painter, no matter how he is best remembered today.⁹⁰ At the same time, however, he was aware that he was not a fine art 'genius'. As he wrote to Virginia Woolf in 1928, he had no doubt about *her* genius, and had never doubted that such a thing existed. But he added:

I have no scintilla of genius myself, though I've arrived at the conviction –oh ever so gradually- that my painting has rather more to it than Clive [Bell] and the snob world have ever grasped...⁹¹

Frances Spalding argued in 1980 that Fry's achievement as an artist had been 'overshadowed' by the great artists about whom he himself wrote. That said, his work was characterised by a 'classical quality' that separated it from his contemporaries.⁹² As Fry himself wrote of his work to Vanessa Bell from St Tropez in 1922: 'there's a lot of queer stuff hidden away in them' as a result of his: 'wanderings and peering and gropings' in the world of art, and: 'I think they will only come out gradually'.⁹³ He continued:

I shall never make anything that will give you or anyone else the gasp of delighted surprise at a revelation, but I think I shall tempt people to enjoy a quiet contemplative pleasure - the pleasure of recognising that one has spotted just this or that quality which has a meaning tho' mostly one passes it by.⁹⁴

This, concludes Spalding, would: 'ensure him a distinct position in the history of twentieth-century British art.'⁹⁵

Conclusion

The aim of this article has never been to judge the artistic quality of Roger Fry's lithographs. Rather, it has been to explain and to locate his lithographs within the context of his greater life, work and considerable achievements as a connoisseur, critic, curator, theorist, writer, enthusiast and innovator, in addition to his own work as an artist. The committee that turned down the proposed National Art Gallery exhibition appear wrong today to insist that Fry must be seen primarily within the context with other, differently accomplished, members of the Bloomsbury Group. Rather, Fry's fine art should be viewed instead within the context of his own remarkable and multi-talented life. The international strength of the Te Papa

collection of his lithographs contributes to that. It is to be hoped that Fry's Te Papa lithographs will be exhibited at some point in the future as works unusual in their medium by an unusually significant artist and critic.

Acknowledgments

I wish to thank Mark Stocker who invited me to write this article and continued to offer advice and make contacts between me and the relevant experts in New Zealand. Here, Lizzie Bisley, Curator of Modern Art at Te Papa, was most generous with her time and expertise on the Roger Fry acquisition papers, while Oliver Stead, Curator of Drawings, Paintings and Prints at the Alexander Turnbull Library, National Library of New Zealand, provided most valuable guidance on Rex Nan Kivell. In the UK, Judith Maguire of Bath Spa University guided my research into transfer lithography. I would like also to thank Anne Kirker in Queensland, Australia, Stephen Kargère in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and Tom Edwards in London. Finally, I am grateful for the advice and support of the two independent referees who peer reviewed this article.

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Notes

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- ¹ Richard Shone, *The Art of Bloomsbury* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999). 12.
- ² Nicholas Serota, "Foreword," in *The Art of Bloomsbury*, ed. Richard Shone (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), 20.
- ³ Shone, *The Art of Bloomsbury*: 22.
- ⁴ Christopher Reed, "Introduction," in *Beyond Bloomsbury: Designs of the Omega Workshops 1913-19*, ed. Alexandra Gerstein (London: The Courtauld Gallery/Fontanka, 2009), 13.
- ⁵ Shone, *The Art of Bloomsbury*: 138.
- ⁶ For an overview of the multi-faceted Fry, see: Richard Howells, "Copies and Translations: Roger Fry, Old Masters and the Omega Workshops," *The British Art Journal* XVI, no. 1 (2015): especially pp. 54-5.
- ⁷ Richard Cork, "From 'Art-Quake' to 'Pure Visual Music'," in *Art Made Modern*, ed. Christopher Green (London: Merrell Holberton and The Courtauld Gallery, 1999), 59.
- ⁸ *Ibid.*, 61. For a perspective of the exhibition 100 years on see the centenary edition of *The Burlington Magazine* including the editorial (page 779) and Anna Gruetzner Robins, "'Manet and the Post-Impressionists': a checklist of exhibits," *The Burlington Magazine* CLII, no. 1293 (2010).
- ⁹ Richard Shone, *Bloomsbury Portraits* (London: Phaidon, 1993). 59.
- ¹⁰ *Ibid.*
- ¹¹ *Ibid.*
- ¹² Denys Sutton, "Preface," in *The Letters of Roger Fry*, ed. Denys Sutton (London: Chatto and Windus, 1972), 1.
- ¹³ *Ibid.*, 41.
- ¹⁴ Although most famously published in Fry's collection *Vision and Design* in 1920, this (then) radical essay had first appeared in the *New Quarterly* in 1909. For the later and more accessible version see Roger Fry, *Vision and Design* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1920). 16-38.
- ¹⁵ Sutton, "Preface," 35.
- ¹⁶ Christopher Green, ed. *Art Made Modern: Roger Fry's Vision of Art* (London: Merrell Holberton/TheCourtauld Gallery, 1999), 9.
- ¹⁷ Virginia Woolf, *The Diary of Virginia Woolf*, ed. A.O. Bell and A. McNeillie, Five vols., vol. Three (London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1984). 159. Cited in Caroline Elam, *Roger Fry's Journey: From the Primitives to the Post-Impressionists* (Edinburgh National Galleries of Scotland, 2006), The Watson Gordon Lecture, 2006. 13.
- ¹⁸ ———, *Roger Fry's Journey: From the Primitives to the Post-Impressionists*: 13.
- ¹⁹ Fry as a printmaker had already experimented with and published woodcuts: See his *Twelve Original Woodcuts* published by the Hogarth Press, 1921.
- ²⁰ Item number 75: 'Portrait of Lady Fry, The Artist's Mother, Lithograph, Lent by Miss Margery Fry' in The Arts Council, *Roger Fry Paintings and Drawings* (London: The Arts Council, 1952), Exhibition Catalogue. 28. No dimensions or other details are given, and this entry is separated from all the others by four asterisks. A later exhibition of Fry's 'paintings, drawings and lithographs' was staged at the commercial Bloomsbury Workshop gallery in London in 1993. Some wood cuts were also shown, but the emphasis in Francis Spalding's catalogue notes is entirely on painting. The Bloomsbury Workshop, *Roger Fry: An Exhibition of Paintings, Drawings and Lithographs* (London: The Bloomsbury Workshop, 1993), Exhibition pamphlet.
- ²¹ S.P. Rosenbaum, *Conversation with Julian Fry*, ed. Jean Moorcroft Wilson, Bloomsbury Heritage (London: Cecil Woolf, 2005). 19-20.
- ²² *Ibid.*, 20.
- ²³ Frances Spalding, *Roger Fry: Art and Life* (London: Paul Elek/Granada, 1980). 225.
- ²⁴ *Ibid.*, 226.
- ²⁵ Fry, *Vision and Design*.
- ²⁶ See his daughter Pamela's account quoted in Sutton, "Preface," 60. Pamela adds that Fry also slept in this studio room.
- ²⁷ Spalding, *Roger Fry: Art and Life*: 229.
- ²⁸ Roger Fry, *Cézanne: A study of his development* (London: Hogarth Press, 1927).
- ²⁹ *The Spectator*, 18 June 1920, cited in Spalding, *Roger Fry: Art and Life*: 235.
- ³⁰ Roger Fry, letter to Marie Mauron, June 20, 1920. Roger Fry, *The Letters of Roger Fry*, ed. Denys Sutton, 2 vols., vol. 2 (London: Chatto and Windus, 1972). 481.
- ³¹ *Ibid.*

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- ³² Spalding, *Roger Fry: Art and Life*: 238. Also Sutton, "Preface," 65.
- ³³ ———, "Preface," 68.
- ³⁴ Spalding, *Roger Fry: Art and Life*: 238.
- ³⁵ Roger Fry, letter to Marie Maaron, February 1, 1921. Fry, *The Letters of Roger Fry*, 2: 502.
- ³⁶ Spalding, *Roger Fry: Art and Life*: 265.
- ³⁷ For a detailed description and photographs of transfer lithography for the practitioner, see Renée Loche, *Lithography, Craft and Art* (New York and London: Van Nostrand Reinhold 1974). 66-70. A description and variations on the technique can also be found in Marjorie Devon, *Tamarind Techniques for Fine Art Lithography* (New York: Abrams, 2009). 203-7.
- ³⁸ Close examination under magnification by the author confirms this.
- ³⁹ Linda Stiber Morenus, "Joseph Pennell and the Art of Transfer Lithography," *Print Quarterly* 21, no. 3 (2004): 265.
- ⁴⁰ Alois Senefelder, *A Complete Course of Lithography* (London: R. Ackermann, 1819). 256. Cited in Clinton Adams, "The Nature of Lithography," in *Lasting Impressions: Lithography as Art*, ed. Pat Gilmour (London: Alexandria Press, 1988), 27.
- ⁴¹ ———, "The Nature of Lithography," 27.
- ⁴² It also provided the opportunity for artists, if they preferred, to sketch in the field by traditional means and then re-work their images onto transfer paper with lithographic pencil or crayon later in the studio.
- ⁴³ Odilon Redon, *To Myself: Notes on Life, Art and Artists* trans. Mira Jacob and Jeanne L. Wasserman (New York: George Braziller, 1986). 108. Cited in Adams, "The Nature of Lithography," 29.
- ⁴⁴ Morenus, "Joseph Pennell and the Art of Transfer Lithography," 248.
- ⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 252.
- ⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp 252 and 65.
- ⁴⁷ Walter Sickert, "Transfer Lithography," *The Saturday Review*, 26 December 1896. Cited in Adams, "The Nature of Lithography," 29.
- ⁴⁸ ———, "The Nature of Lithography," n. 360.
- ⁴⁹ Devon, *Tamarind Techniques for Fine Art Lithography*: 203-7. Although Devon describes the use of both Dolphin and Charbonnel papers, the latter are no longer available, certainly online (searched 18 March 2020).
- ⁵⁰ Loche, *Lithography*: 66.
- ⁵¹ *Ibid.*
- ⁵² *Ibid.*, 110. Loche added that "unfortunately" some contemporary artists still signed and number these. Fry, it should be noted, almost exclusively only signed and dated his lithographs in the "plate".
- ⁵³ This was quite possibly specialist lithography materials suppliers F Charbonnel, founded in 1862 and with premises (still extant) at 13 quai Montebello near the Notre-Dame.
- ⁵⁴ Fry, *The Letters of Roger Fry*, 2: 605.
- ⁵⁵ Frances Spalding in her doctoral thesis suggests that Fry worked with "traditional" lithography before experimenting with the transfer process. See: Frances Spalding, "The Paintings of Roger Fry" (Sheffield City Polytechnic, 1977).
- ⁵⁶ Roger Fry, letter to Lady Fry 05 February 1929 in Fry, *The Letters of Roger Fry*, 2: 636.
- ⁵⁷ Roger Fry, letter to Virginia Woolf 03 November 1928 in *ibid.*, 631.
- ⁵⁸ Tate collection reference P08164 ff. The works were transferred from the library to the prints and drawing room in 1979 and are not on public view.
- ⁵⁹ The Te Papa Collection contains 13 Fry lithographs, including one (close) duplicate. For the avoidance of any confusion, then, the Te Papa collection contains 13 individual prints but only 12 different images: there are two versions of *Church* (1927), each from a different donor.
- ⁶⁰ See for example, the chapter: "Roger Fry's France" in Mary Ann and Sarah Bird Wright Caws, *Bloomsbury and France: Art and Friends* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000). 303-25.
- ⁶¹ Fry, *The Letters of Roger Fry*, 2: passim.
- ⁶² This is possibly one part of the Pont Neuf in Paris, showing also the tip of the Île Saint-Louis, the Châtelet tower and the Samaritaine on the left. My thanks to Lina Fradin for help with this identification.
- ⁶³ Te Papa reference number 1959-0004-11
- ⁶⁴ Spalding, *Roger Fry: Art and Life*: 265.
- ⁶⁵ Fry, *The Letters of Roger Fry*, 2: 605.
- ⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, passim.
- ⁶⁷ Michael Barker, "Bloomsbury and Dieppe," *The Charleston Magazine* 2000, 18.
- ⁶⁸ *Ibid.*
- ⁶⁹ Roger Fry, Letter to André Gide, 27 September 1927, Fry, *The Letters of Roger Fry*, 2: 617. Barker, "Bloomsbury and Dieppe," 20-21. Fry was still technically married to Helen Fry, so his use of the term 'illegal wife' is playfully ironic. Roger and Helen Fry never divorced, and although he and Helen Anrep remained

partners until the end of his life, they never married as this would have been bigamous under law while still married to Helen.

⁷⁰ The Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, notes to the gallery exhibition "Lithographs by Odilon Redon" (22 September 2009 - 10 January 2010) explain that a number of mark-making points were available to the transfer lithographer: "the lithographic pencil, crayon or chalk which produces various thicknesses of lines and allows subtle tonal gradations." Fitzwilliam Museum, "Lumière: Lithographs by Odilon Redon," <https://www.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/gallery/redon/index.html>.

⁷¹ Investigation under light by Tom Edwards of Abbot and Holder, London, reveals that another Fry lithograph with them (though not in the Te Papa Collection), *Notre Dame, Aubeterre* (1930) is by contrast printed on laid paper, but again with no sign of a watermark to establish the paper manufacturer. Correspondence with the gallery, May 04 2020.

⁷² Roger Fry, *Vision and Design* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1928; repr., 1929). 20.

⁷³ Pamela Diamand's name is frequently misspelled 'Diamond'. Diamand, however, is correct.

⁷⁴ See John R Thompson, "Nan Kivell, Sir Rex De Charembac (1898–1977)," in *Australian Dictionary of Biography* (Melbourne University Press, 2000).

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ Oliver Stead, "Graphic Gifts: The Rex Nan Kivell Gift Collections," *Art New Zealand* 66(1993): 78. I gratefully acknowledge Oliver Stead's guidance on my research into Kivell.

⁷⁷ The Order of St Michael and St George was used to honour services to the British Commonwealth. For more on Kivell see: John R Thompson, "Self-Made: Towards a Life of Rex Nan Kivell," in *Paradise Possessed* (Canberra: National Library of Australia, 1998). Also: Stead, "Graphic Gifts: The Rex Nan Kivell Gift Collections." and: ———, "New lamps for old : the activities of Sir Rex De Charembac Nan Kivell as a collector and dealer of fine art " (University of Otago, 2004).

⁷⁸ Thompson, "Nan Kivell, Sir Rex De Charembac (1898–1977)."

⁷⁹ Helen Fry (nee Coombe) should not be confused with Helen Anrep. The former was his wife, the latter his later partner. See also note 73 above.

⁸⁰ Roger Fry, "The Double Nature of Painting," *Apollo* (1969).

⁸¹ Pamela Diamand, "Letter to the Curator, National Gallery of New Zealand, 02 June 1958," in *Roger Fry acquisition files, Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa* (Wellington, New Zealand: Te Papa Tongarewa, New Zealand, 1958).

⁸² ———, "Letter to Stewart MacLennan, 02 July 1958," in *Roger Fry acquisition files, Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa* (Wellington, New Zealand: Te Papa Tongarewa, New Zealand, 1958).

⁸³ National Art Gallery of New Zealand, "Acquisition Record, National Art Gallery of New Zealand, 30 December 1958," in *Roger Fry acquisition files, Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa*. (Wellington: Te Papa Tongarewa, New Zealand, 1958). I gratefully acknowledge the assistance of Lizzie Bisley, Curator of Modern Art at Te Papa, in locating the acquisition correspondence and documentation.

⁸⁴ Although the acquisition records are dated 30 December, 1958, the current catalogue gives the date of the gifts as 1959.

⁸⁵ Anne Kirker, "Exhibition Proposal to the National Art Gallery Council 2 October 1979," in *Roger Fry acquisition files* (Wellington: Te Papa Tongarewa, New Zealand 1979).

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ Pamela Diamand, "Letter to Anne Kirker, National Art Gallery, Wellington, New Zealand, 09 October 1979," in *Roger Fry acquisition files, Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa* (Wellington, New Zealand: Te Papa Tongarewa, New Zealand, 1979).

⁸⁸ Anne Kirker, "Letter to Pamela Diamand, 1 November 1979," in *Roger Fry acquisition files* (Wellington: Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, 1979).

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ See Sutton, "Preface," 80.

⁹¹ Roger Fry, Letter to Virginia Woolf, 03 November 1928. Fry, *The Letters of Roger Fry*, 2: 631.

⁹² Spalding, *Roger Fry: Art and Life*: 273.

⁹³ Roger Fry, letter to Vanessa Bell, 07 October 1922. Fry, *The Letters of Roger Fry*, 2: 526-7.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 527.

⁹⁵ Spalding, *Roger Fry: Art and Life*: 273.