

<p>Institution: ABERYSTWYTH UNIVERSITY</p>
<p>Unit of Assessment: 34: Art and Design: History, Practice and Theory</p>
<p>Title of case study: On the Rediscovery, Re-evaluation and Re-presentation of Artistic Reputation</p>
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p>
<p>Investigating how artistic reputation is constructed and sustained, Meyrick considers the professional and institutional forces that shape our artistic heritage. Sourcing, documenting, interpreting and displaying difficult-to-access artworks and archival materials, his research raises awareness of once influential now forgotten 20th-century British artists and collectors. Recovering ‘lost’ cultural capital, Meyrick engages the public through touring exhibitions, publications and public appearances. His research outcomes enrich our cultural life as well as public understanding and appreciation of British print history and Welsh visual culture. They are the principal sources of reference for a wide range of beneficiaries, from curators and dealers to broadcasters and general audiences.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research</p>
<p>The research involves original investigation as new knowledge and insights are gained from previously untapped primary sources. Working with artists or their heirs, Meyrick recreates artist’s careers through neglected or never-before-seen visual and archival materials that languish in museum stores or family lofts: canvases not exhibited since they were painted in the 1910s (<i>Christopher Williams</i>, 2012 [3.7], [3.8]), 1930s (<i>John Elwyn</i>, 1996-2000 [3.9]) and 1950s (<i>Gwilym Prichard</i>, 2001-13 [3.6]; <i>Claudia Williams</i>, 2000-13 [3.5]), prints buried in portfolios since editioned in the 1920s (<i>Sydney Lee</i>, 2013 [3.1]; <i>Edgar Holloway</i>, 1994-2010 [3.4]), and art collections pieced together 80 years after they were dispersed (<i>Hugh Blaker</i>, 1991-2012 [3.12]; <i>Spoils of the Lumber Room</i>, 2012 [3.10]). In recovering and exhibiting marginalized art, Meyrick offers a new appreciation of important figures, historical practices (Lee’s Japanese-manner woodcuts, Williams’ interpretations of Welsh mythology) and artefacts (Blaker’s “<i>Earlier Mona Lisa</i>”, Modigliani’s <i>Annie Bjarne</i>, and Williams’ <i>Wales Re-Awakening</i>).</p>
<p>Discrete yet interconnected outputs have evolved from years studying British print history, the art history of Wales, and collecting practices. During 2007-13, Meyrick authored/co-authored 3 monographs, curated 6 exhibitions and published 9 chapters/catalogues, including invited chapters for Chichester’s Pallant House Museum [3.3], Southampton Art Gallery [3.2], and the National Museum of Wales [3.11]. From national institutions to local authority and commercial galleries, from Dumfries to St Ives, Meyrick’s exhibitions travel UK-wide: <i>Gregynog Prints: from Dürer to Whistler</i> toured 8 venues over 3 years while <i>Edgar Holloway</i> toured eleven venues over two years.</p>
<p>Uncovering the past, rediscovering and re-evaluating, Meyrick makes accessible work hitherto excluded from the canon due simply to a paucity of information or lack of exposure to the artists and collectors and their practices. Investigating how artistic reputation is constructed and sustained, Meyrick advances our understanding of the personal, professional and institutional forces that shape and maintain artistic heritage. Why some artists attain lasting recognition while others fall into oblivion has proved a complex one. Why, for example, despite Christopher Williams’ professional associations and the support from leading figures in politics and academia, a painter whom Lloyd George described as ‘one of the most gifted artists Wales has produced’, could have been forgotten for so long? Or why, despite his many achievements, Sydney Lee RA did not gain lasting critical acclaim—his Holland Park Road home and studio unceremoniously dispersed by public auction in 1953. Meyrick’s work involves archival and artistic archaeology over a sustained period, and delving into the shadows presents a</p>

Impact case study (REF3b)

significant challenge. While Lee's archives had been discarded piecemeal, Williams' papers had lain untouched since his death in 1934.

Beyond talent and accomplishment, research reveals that factors such as aspiration, patronage, opportunity, temperament as well as cultural environments and socio-political agenda come into play. As well as casting new light on print culture in early 20thC Britain, Meyrick's exhibition and book, commissioned by the Royal Academy of Arts, was the first since 1945 to showcase Lee's work: his prints had never been catalogued and his many contributions to the history of British printmaking had received scant appraisal. At the National Library of Wales [NLW], Wales' largest single exhibition space, Meyrick's exhibition drew on family archives and 137 paintings by Williams to provide new insights into the life and career of one of Wales' foremost early 20thC painters. It reappraised the artist's contribution to Welsh art history, one that since devolution could be judged in terms of Wales' own visual culture and not, as previously, solely in relation to English and European traditions.

3. References to the research

BRITISH PRINT HISTORY

3.1 — Meyrick, R. *Sydney Lee Prints: A Catalogue Raisonné* (London: Royal Academy, 2013) 192pp [**Submitted as part of REF2 portfolio**].

3.2 — Meyrick, R. 'Pastoral Re-visions: Little Englandism in British Printmaking 1915-1935', *Ancient Landscapes Pastoral Visions* Southampton Art Gallery, ed. Anderson, A. (London: Antique Collectors' Club, 2008) pp. 28-37

3.3 — Meyrick, R. 'In Pursuit of Arcadia: British Printmaking in the 1920s', *Poets in a Landscape: The Romantic Spirit in British Art*, ed. Martin, S. (Chichester: Pallant House, 2007), pp. 59-82

3.4 — Meyrick, R. *The Etchings and Engravings of Edgar Holloway* (London: Scolar, 1996) 114pp

ART IN WALES

3.5 — Meyrick, R. & Heuser, H. *Claudia Williams: An Intimate Acquaintance* (Bristol: Sansom, 2013) 128pp [**REF2 Submitted**].

3.6 — Meyrick, R. & Heuser, H. *Gwilym Prichard: A Lifetime's Gazing* (Bristol: Sansom, 2013) 112pp

3.7 — Exhibition: Meyrick, R. *Christopher Williams: 'an artist and nothing else'* (Aberystwyth: National Library of Wales, 2012), 137 paintings

3.8 — Book: Meyrick, R. *Christopher Williams: 'an artist and nothing else'* (Aberystwyth: National Library of Wales, 2012) 56pp

3.9 — Meyrick, R. *John Elwyn* (London: Lund Humphries, 2000) 136pp

COLLECTING PRACTICE

3.10 — Meyrick, R. 'Spoils of the Lumber Room – Early Collectors of Wood-Engraved Illustrations from 1860s Periodicals' in Goldman, P. & Cooke, S. (eds) *Reading Victorian Illustration 1855-1875* (London: Ashgate, 2012) pp. 179-199 [**REF2 Submitted**].

3.11 — Meyrick, R. 'Wealth Wise and Culture Kind: Gregynog in the 1920s and 1930s', *Things of Beauty: What Two Sisters did for Wales*, ed. Fairclough, O. (Cardiff: National Museum Wales Books, 2007), pp. 96-111.

3.12 — Meyrick, R. 'Hugh Blaker: Doing his bit for the Moderns', *Journal of the History of Collections*, Vol. 16, No. 2 (Oxford University Press, 2004) pp. 173-189

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4. Details of the impact

Interpreting 'lost' cultural capital for the benefit of society, exhibiting previously unseen artworks by artists hitherto overlooked or marginalized, and disseminating new research on

Impact case study (REF3b)

them, clearly captures the public imagination. Visitor Book comments evidence Meyrick's impact on public knowledge and perception. Both attracting national and international audiences, the Williams exhibition was considered an 'enrichment', 'inspiring' and a 'revelation', while Lee was deemed 'a remarkable exhibition that lights up the imagination', a 'stimulating', 'unmissable' and 'marvellous re-discovery' [5.1, 5.2]. Both organisations invested significant financial, physical and human resources staging Meyrick's research outcomes. 'It was Prof. Meyrick's original research into and detailed documentation of the career and work of the painter-printmaker Sydney Lee,' wrote the RA's Director of Collections, 'that proved the *sine qua non* for an exhibition that, through judicious curatorship and the engaging interpretation that he was uniquely able to provide, succeeded in bringing the full range of Lee's achievements as a printmaker to the notice of more people than ever before, either during the artist's lifetime or since. [...] The moral Meyrick draws from this clear-eyed view of the realities of the art world is in fact extremely positive, in that it has led him to place the beholder—rather than the artist or the critic—at the centre of his concern.' [5.5] £30,000 corporate sponsorship was raised for the Lee exhibition. Its sponsor considered 'the exhibition, catalogue and supporting research were all hugely indebted to the work of Robert Meyrick [who has] done both the Academy and Lee's reputation a considerable service ... largely due to his energy, innovation and ability to appeal to and inform a wider art audience than reached by most professionals.' [5.4] Considered the foremost expert on the artists about whom he writes, NLW has staged 9 of Meyrick's exhibitions from *Gladys Vasey* (1991) to *Christopher Williams* (2012). His research assists our national institutions fulfil their mission; the RA to showcase its history and collections, and NLW to tell the world about Wales. Such exhibitions demonstrate that work of international standing can be produced at national and regional levels. Lee attracted 18,348 visitors, the RA's largest audience for a print exhibition, while Williams received 6,464 visitors at Aberystwyth and 1615 at Bangor Museum [5.8]. For Lee, a free interpretative guide (5,000 copies taken), regular curator tours (30 at each), 4 video introductions [5.11] and Twitter/YouTube activities engaged the public, stimulating debate on blogs in the UK, USA and Thailand. BBC blog and news pages followed the progress of the Williams exhibition [5.3]. Appreciative that Williams had been 'rediscovered after a century of neglect', Wales' first First Minister reviewed the exhibition, while a former UK Sport and Culture Minister thought the exhibition had 'much to tell us about Williams, the painter and humanitarian from Maesteg, [and] about the world of British and European art that he inhabited' [5.3]. Following positive public feedback [5.1&2], the RA has commissioned a 2015 exhibition and book by Meyrick on Stanley Anderson (full sponsorship secured) and National Museum Wales is staging his 2016 exhibition *Christopher Williams' War* to mark the Battle of Mametz Wood centenary and publication of Meyrick's monograph on Williams.

In addition to exhibitions, publications, television and public speaking, online resources initiated and managed by Meyrick further disseminate his research and improve the range and quality of evidence available. Regarded nationally important, www.robertmeyrick.co.uk is periodically archived by UK Web Archive 'to preserve it over time and to make it available to the public', a rare distinction for a personal web domain [5.6]. Such accessible research leads to invitations to speak to special interest groups, eliciting further interaction and discussion, be it a public lecture to the Aberaeron Society in a chapel vestry (2012) or presentation to the international press in Geneva (2012). Meyrick has regularly addressed the Contemporary Art Society (2008, 2013), Victorian Society (2009, 2010, 2012) and ArtFund (2010, 2011, 2012). Television guest interviews [5.9, 5.10], recently for *Fishlock's Wales* (ITV, 11 May 2012) and *Framing Wales* – on location with Dr Kim Howells – (BBC, 17 Feb. & 2 Mar. 2012), widen exposure to and stimulate interest in the research.

As indicator of Meyrick's cumulative impact and esteem, he has been invited to serve on numerous bodies concerned with the practice, history and display of art. He is: Honorary Fellow of the Royal Society of Painter-Printmakers, in recognition of his 'contribution to the art of printmaking in Britain' (2001); member of the UK Print Curators Forum (2003-); first Trustee

Impact case study (REF3b)

of Gregynog (2103-); and Wales' only representative on the Public Catalogue Foundation's Oil Paintings Expert Network steering panel. An author, curator and panel advisor, Meyrick has both enriched cultural life and helped shape our understanding of Welsh visual culture and print culture of the 20s and 30s. His books are the principal sources of reference for a wide range of beneficiaries: individuals, academics and students, curators, auction houses, dealers, broadcasters, private collectors, the press and general public. Curators now use 'RM' prefixes when cataloguing (e.g. British Museum online collections catalogue, search 'Edgar Holloway') and his publications are in libraries from Yale and NYPL to the BM and Rijksmuseum. Requesting advice or information, correspondence from the public, national and international dealers, auctioneers, academics and broadcasters, demonstrate an engagement with and recognition of Meyrick's research.

Evidence suggests collectors now seek out works by artists upon whom he writes. After the exhibition opened, print dealers Allison (Connecticut) and Harvey-Lee (Oxford) sold out Lee stocks, while in July 2013 a London saleroom estimated the aquatint *Sleeping Square* – with Meyrick's catalogue raisonné – at £500-700 (likely £80-120 in 2012). In 2011, Meyrick's influential research on Blaker provided evidence required to authenticate Modigliani's previously unknown 1918 portrait *Anne Bjarne* (Private Collection, Italy). Blaker research also led to an invitation to speak as one of four international scholars at the 2012 Geneva launch of *Mona Lisa: Leonardo's Earlier Version* attended by the world press and web live streamed [5.7]. Reuters followed the launch story with another on Meyrick's research that was taken up by press worldwide, from NBC News and *Chicago Tribune* to the *Caribbean Herald*, *Talk Vietnam*, *Himalayan Times* and *China Daily*.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

5.1 —NLW Visitor Book comments for Christopher Williams exhibition as evidence of impact on public perception: 'never heard of this genius, thanks for introducing me', 'magnificent and inspiring display', 'profoundly impressed, what an experience', 'absolute joy to witness this amazing exhibition – shame on the dunderheads who belittled the work of this Welsh genius' (pdf, 19 pp).

5.2 — RA Visitor Book comments for Sydney Lee exhibition: 'a marvelous re-discovery', 'unaware of this artist, I will be investigating further', 'a remarkable exhibition that lights up the imagination', 'truly enjoyed this inspiring exhibition', 'so exciting to discover a neglected talent', 'let's not let him be forgotten', 'Welcome home Mr Lee!' (pdf, 61 pages).

5.3 — As demonstration of public engagement and discussion, a sample of third party blogs and social media sites focused on the outputs, (pdf).

5.4 — Letter from Chair of Punter-Southall Group, 11 The Strand, London, sponsors of the Royal Academy exhibition *From the Shadows: The Prints of Sydney Lee RA*.

5.5 — Email from the Royal Academy's Director of Collections detailing the relevance and impact of *From the Shadows: The Prints of Sydney Lee RA* (RA, 2013).

5.6 — Contract from the UK Web Archive Copyright Licence requesting permission periodically to capture and archive www.robertmeyrick.co.uk (17 Sept. 2012).

5.7 — Email from the Mona Lisa Foundation, Switzerland inviting Meyrick to give a presentation as one of four international scholars at the 2012 Geneva press launch of the painting and book, *Mona Lisa: Leonardo's Earlier Version* (22 Aug 2012).

5.8 — Email confirmation of National Library of Wales and Royal Academy of Arts visitor numbers for the Christopher Williams and Sydney Lee exhibitions (2 Jan 2013 and 29 May 2013).

5.9 — www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p00nd6zs

5.10 — www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p00nd5lh

5.11 — www.royalacademy.org.uk/ra-magazine/blog/video-shining-a-light-on-sydney-lee,390,BAR.html