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The Incisive Line

PRINTS, PAINTINGS & DRAWINGS

BY RICHARD FOZARD (1925-2000)

Prints in the pastoral tradition

Richard Fozard's fine engravings and etchings present a potent vision of landscape. He was an individual and a spiritual artist in the tradition of Samuel Palmer. In 1821,



Dr Thompson's edition of Virgil was published; this included a series of tiny pastoral wood-engraved illustrations by William Blake which were to inspire numerous acolytes of Blake's own era, particularly notable amongst whom were Palmer (1805-1881) and Edward Calvert (1799-1883). In his youthful, visionary, gum and wash drawings and paintings (c.1825-35) of rural Shoreham, in Kent, Palmer offered a paradisiacal

Bride' (1828), in which a maiden – naked like a Greek goddess - leads a lamb along a grassy path in an undulating English landscape exemplifies his approach. This genre of visionary art was enthusiastically revived by Frederick Griggs (1876-1938) and others in the 1920s; decades later, Richard Fozard was to plough this same furrow bringing to it his own deeply ingrained love of landscape, acute observations of rural life in both England (particularly Wensleydale, Northumbria and Cornwall) and Italy, practised drawing skills, and a unique, spiritual, poetic vision of the world around him.

Haunting etchings such as *Winter, wood gatherers, Anticoli, Italy*, 1978, display particularly strong resonances of Palmer. In this work a lone figure, viewed from behind in the dark of a silent wood, loads sticks onto the pannier of a donkey while a wild pig roots at his feet; in the distance, picked out in dusky twilight, is another solitary figure set against the background of a gently rounded Palmer-esque hill. Another tiny but highly atmospheric etching of the same year, *'Evening Natter', Anticoli, Italy* combines elements of Palmer and Calvert with its luminous moonlit view of a darkly shuttered house before which is a charming vignette, seemingly, of the satyr Pan and an anonymous dark companion, herding a flock of goats along a path. In the foreground is a more prosaic but no less intriguing view of five men in Homburg hats, huddled in intimate conversation, whilst two sturdy women pass by 'taking unleavened bread to be baked in the village's communal oven' (as Fozard explains in a pencil note beneath the image).



The pull of the sea

Fozard's career as an artist-printmaker began in 1939 when, at 14 years of age, he entered the litho-art studio of the Gilchrist brothers (process engravers) who paid for him to take evening classes in design and life drawing. With the onset of the Second World War, the firm's work changed and he took work on the land, returning to his childhood love: the Yorkshire Dales.

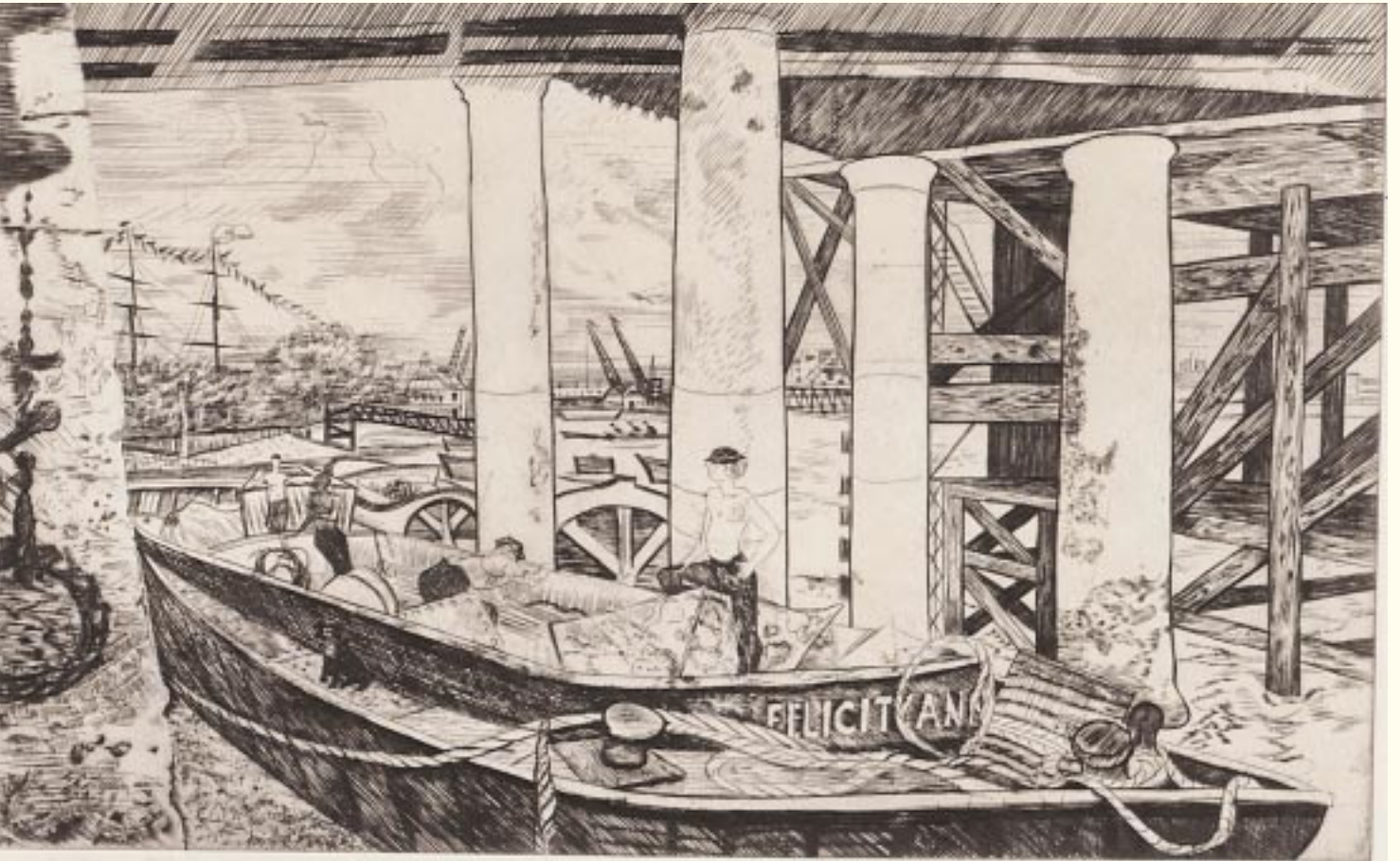


left *Winter, wood gatherers, Anticoli, Italy*, etching and aquatint, 1978

bottom left *'Evening Natter', Anticoli, Italy*, etching and aquatint, 1978

bottom right *Fishermen's cottages by Bedruthen Steps - Cornwall*, engraving, 1986

view of rural England, fecund with ripening crops – an idyll dominated by the cycle of the farming year – minutely observed and fluidly depicted but showing none of its real hardships. Calvert's engravings seem to combine a love of the English landscape with a nostalgic appreciation of classical antiquity. His line engraving 'The



There he worked on the 'Dig for Victory' campaign with gardeners at country-house estates. "Bothy life", he wrote, 'was heaven, to enjoy the peace of growing things and the true wealth of ordered country life, living away from the industrial smoke.' In 1943 he was called up from work at the Harewood House estate to serve in the Armed Forces and, until 1946, saw out the war in the Royal Navy. During this period, he travelled to Australia, Hong Kong and Japan and developed a life-long love of the sea while, at the same time, maintaining his drawing skills by taking a correspondence art course. 'I would labour at exercises in tropical heat,' he wrote, 'and provide a service to illustrate and write messmates' letters to girlfriends. Here the subtle imagination was much valued to heal the distance of longing hearts.' Fozard's understanding and appreciation of boats and the mariner's life is strongly evidenced in numerous, vigorous and accurately drawn pen and ink sketches of fishing and rowing boats. His fine engraving *Fishermen's cottages by Bedruthen Steps - Cornwall*, 1986, depicts a blustery day on a cliff-edged coast. Before a rickety brick and wood terrace of cottages (reminiscent of early Sutherland etchings of similarly dilapidated structures) children and a dog play with a ball while a woman tries to prevent her washing blowing off the line. In a particularly outstanding engraving, wistfully titled *A Greenwich scarpard. Dreams of Past Glories*, 1988, a bare-chested docker at work on an old hull is described with

just a few deft burin strokes defining the contours of biceps and the curve of his belly.

The impact of Italy

In 1946, once the war was over, Fozard was able to leave the Navy and became a full-time student in painting and illustration in his home town, at Leeds College of Art. In 1949 he went on to London's Royal College of Art to study engraving under Professor Robert Austin PRE (1895-1973) whose tuition emphasized strong draughtsmanship and composition above all other considerations. Fozard absorbed Austin's principles as doctrines on which, throughout his life, his



top *A Greenwich scarpard. Dreams of Past Glories*, engraving, 1988

right *Piazza Anticoli*, etching/aquatint, 1956



entire artistic practice was based. In 1952 he graduated with the RCA Diploma and Silver Medal. Afterwards, having won a Prix de Rome scholarship in printmaking, he went to Italy and spent three years exploring the ancient Mediterranean coastline, discovering the masters of the Renaissance and wintering in the mountain villages of the central Apennines. This experience was to have a profound impact on his work.

One particular Italian village - Anticoli, Corrado - recurs frequently in numerous vibrant etchings, engravings and fine pen drawings which describe, through almost inconsequential but beautifully observed details, the bustle and business of peasant life in 1950s Italy. An etching entitled *Piazza Anticoli*, of 1956, commissioned by the Print Collectors' Club of the Royal Society of Painter-Printmakers, is a particularly fine example. Here, an everyday 'snapshot' of village life – an assortment of people and animals casually criss-crossing the main square - is rendered with evident love and empathetic feeling both for his subject and for the process of transforming these acutely observed fleeting moments into timeless, absorbing images. In the engraving *Children at play, Anticoli, Italy*, 1979, a woman bearing a water jug makes stately progress along a narrow street lined with tall tenements, while a man riding a donkey disappears around a corner; the starched white school pinafores of a group of children contrast vividly with the dark squares of closed window shutters. *A Lady of Anticoli*,

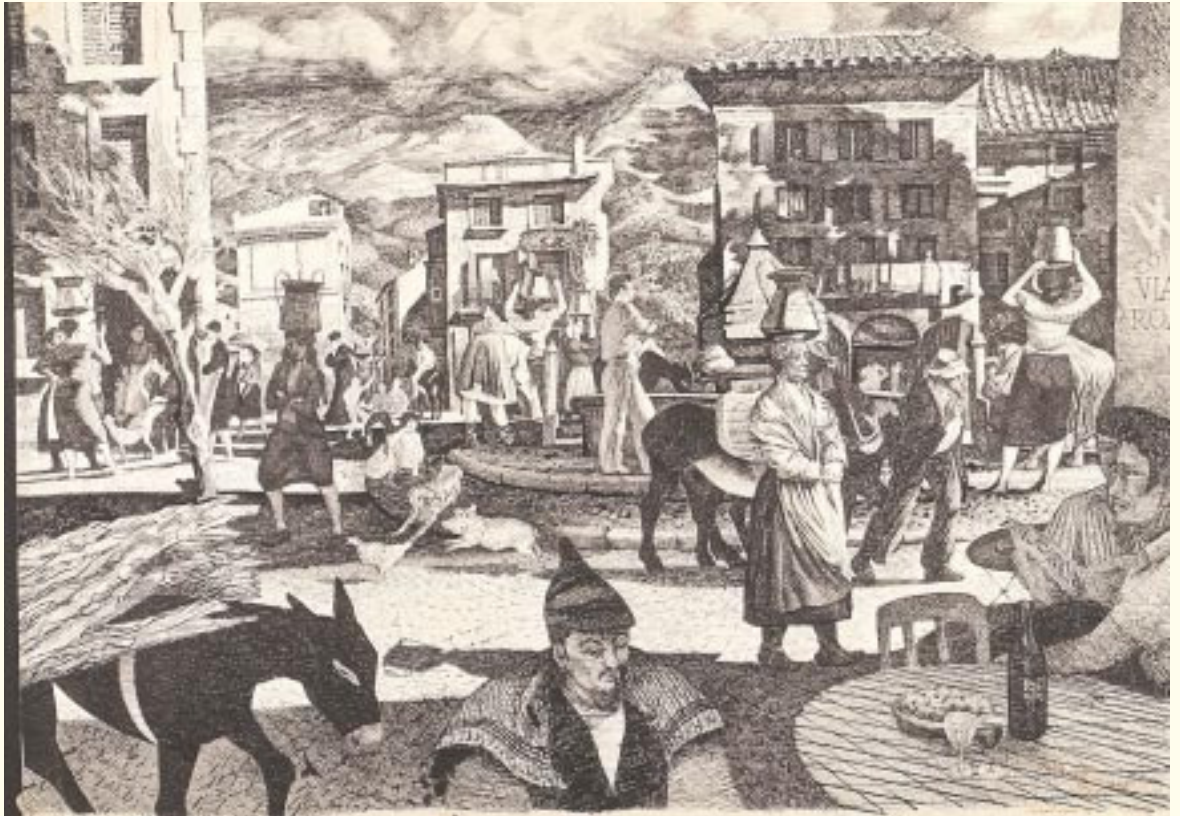
Corrado, Italy, undated, is a moving portrait of an aged crone with an infinitely sad expression, whose features appear as if hewn from the rugged rock of her hillside home.

In the last decade of his life, Fozard produced few new prints (and it should be noted that dates on his prints referred only to the moment of printing, not necessarily to the date of production) but made a series of large monochrome reed-pen and ink drawings which offer definitive, striking examples of his skill as a draughtsman and of his enduring love for the hills and countryside of Italy. The drawing *Hills around Anticoli with Dove Tower*, 1989, is a spectacular drawing of a charming brick-built tower behind which spreads a panoramic vista of rugged hills peppered with olive trees and tiny donkeys picked out under the fierce heat of the midday sun. Each tree is distinctly delineated with lively pen marks and each casts its own distinct shadow. *Piazza Anticoli* (subsequently titled), 1988 is perhaps even more impressive - a real tour de force. It depicts dozens of figures traversing the old town square – the locals going about their business and enjoying the sunlight and the shade of a tree which casts strong shadows onto ancient shuttered tenements. In the left foreground a donkey ambles by, bearing large bundles of sticks. In the right foreground is a café table set with a bottle of wine and two glasses, at which, in the shade, sits a moustachioed man reading the daily newspaper 'Il Giornale'. In the middle distance, a group of women collect water from a pump, filling amphorae which they balance on their heads for the journey home. Young, big-hipped women stop to exchange news while a statuesque aged signora, her stance exuding the dignity of honest toil, makes her way slowly across the square, water jug carefully balanced. Children run about in play;



left *Children at play, Anticoli, Italy*, engraving, 1979

right *A Lady of Anticoli, Corrado, Italy*, engraving, undated



top *Piazza Anticoli* (subsequently titled), pen and ink, 1988

right *Strong Winds brought us together – Light Airs carry our Thoughts*, (detail), engraving with aquatint, state III, undated

one tiny girl in a plain white shift stops to watch a dog and a pig chasing a chicken. A priest briskly crosses the piazza, his long black robe flapping in the breeze. In this particular drawing, Fozard seems to draw together figures and structural elements from many of his earlier Italian-themed etchings and engravings and unites them into one large, complex but exuberantly vibrant composition.

The teaching years and Hayter's influence

In 1956 he returned to London to a job as printer and demonstrator in the Royal College of Art's printmaking department headed, at the time, by Julian Trevelyan (1910-88) at whose inspiration Fozard developed an enthusiasm for intaglio colour printing. That same year he was also elected an Associate of the Royal Society of Painter-Etchers and Engravers. Around this same time too, Fozard collaborated with SW Hayter (1901-88) and others in Paris, editing for many artists and galleries. Whilst Fozard's own work was always strongly representational in nature, a more abstract quality of line in certain works reveals the influence of Hayter and Trevelyan. The black and white engraving and aquatint *Strong Winds brought us together – Light Airs carry our Thoughts*, for example, delineates a shoreline of rugged rocks and wheeling gulls in a swirling, blustery sky. Within this naturalistic depiction are echoes of Hayter-esque jaggedly zig-zagging forms and the angular gulls seem to meld into the forms of rocks which, in turn, are echoed by the shapes of fast-moving clouds. *By Bedruthen Steps*, Cornwall, 1986, shares similarly Hayter-like qualities.

In 1961 he moved to Hornsey College of Art, later to be merged with Middlesex Polytechnic (now University), lecturing three days per week until 1986. As a teacher, he always emphasised the primacy of good draughtsmanship and, as a printmaker, he was a seasoned and patient master of his craft whose students were inspired by the experience of watching him ink, wipe and print an intaglio plate. During this period he continued to work on his own drawings, paintings, etchings and engravings many of which focussed evocatively on rural England and the crafts of farming, such as *Dry stone walling. Northumbria, 1981*; *First [sheep] dip of the year, Riding farm. Northumberland, 1988*; and





Evening No. 1. Fishermen, circling crane. Northumbria, 1981. The College's printmaking department at that time was housed at Alexandra Palace and, tragically, many of Fozard's finest etching and engraving plates were lost when the department was gutted by fire in 1980. Many of the prints which survive him are uneditioned artist's proofs or state proofs and, in many cases, are the only extant examples of particular images. From 1986 until his death in 2000, his circumstances were gradually reduced with a cut in his part-time teaching hours from three days per week to a few days per term. When I first met him, in 1991, he was working from a cosy, if immensely cluttered, studio in Vauxhall, south London. Although it was against the studio's rules, he often slept there, surrounded by his own drawings and engravings as well as postcards of Renaissance masterpieces which he had taped over all the walls.

Richard Fozard was a gifted artist whose work celebrated the joys of a simpler lifestyle than many of us, today, will ever experience. Born in the interwar years, at the height of the revival of the romantic rural tradition,

this was a heritage which his own art espoused with single-minded conviction. By 1925, the year of his birth, the revival of that peculiarly English tradition - a visionary art combining observation of landscape with a spiritual, poetic response to it - was at its height. At this time too, the market for etchings and engravings, often depicting detailed rural scenes and exemplified by the work of artists including Anthony Gross (1905-84), Paul Drury (1903-87), Charles Tunnicliffe (1901-82) and Graham Sutherland (1903-80), had never been stronger. This was a heyday for printmaking, when etchers were able to make a substantial living, purely on the sales of original prints, which were in popular demand and achieved high prices. Sadly, the Great Depression of the late 1920s marked the end of this halcyon period for British printmaking. Had Fozard been born just twenty years earlier, he would doubtless have been making prints during this 'boom' time and would have achieved the success and financial security which he deserved but



never achieved. This exhibition is the first major retrospective survey of his collected works - etchings, copper engravings, woodcuts, pen and ink drawings and watercolours - ever to be held. It will offer a unique opportunity to assess the strength of his works and to celebrate his artistic vision and accomplishments, establishing him as a notable, individual figure in that special tradition of English, poetic, pastoral art.

Anne Desmet RE

Anne Desmet is a practising artist-printmaker and is also editor of 'Printmaking Today' - the quarterly journal of contemporary international graphic art.

left *Dry stone walling. Northumbria, etching and aquatint, 1981*

bottom right *First [sheep] dip of the year, Riding farm. Northumberland, aquatint and engraving, 1988*

bottom right *Evening No. 1. Fishermen, circling crane. Northumbria, etching and aquatint, 1981*





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