

# FRYER *Folios*



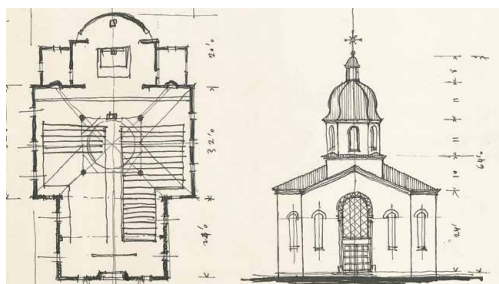
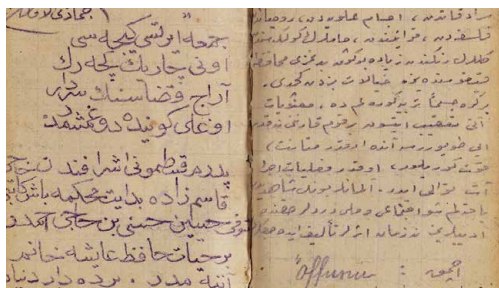
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FEBRUARY 2016



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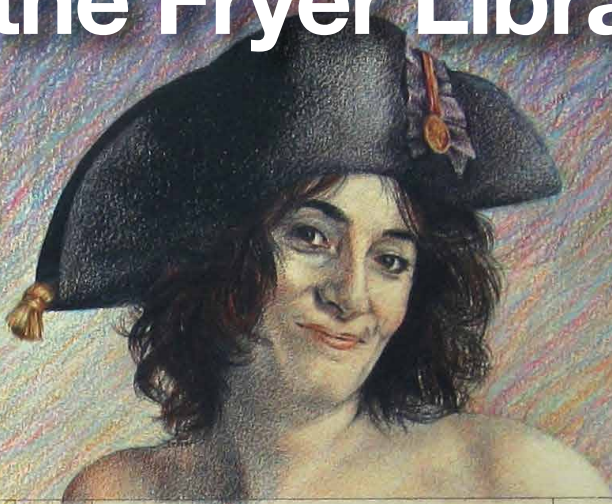
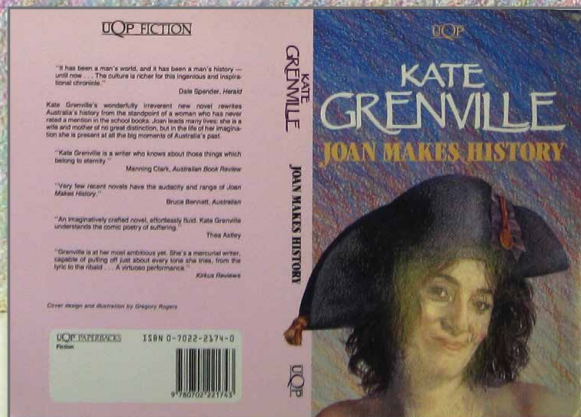
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Front cover: Map of a railway line from Berlin to Adrianópolis. In 'Diary of a Turkish Soldier who fought at Gallipoli', F592, Fryer Library, University of Queensland Library.

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# Gregory Rogers' Work Finds its Way Home to the Fryer Library



Robyn Sheahan-Bright

On 13 February 2014, a treasure trove of boxes and parcels containing Gregory Rogers' archives arrived at Fryer Library. Contents included original art and many associated documents from the work of this award-winning illustrator, picture-book artist and writer.

Gregory (Greg) Rogers was considered a 'national treasure'<sup>1</sup> by colleagues, and his

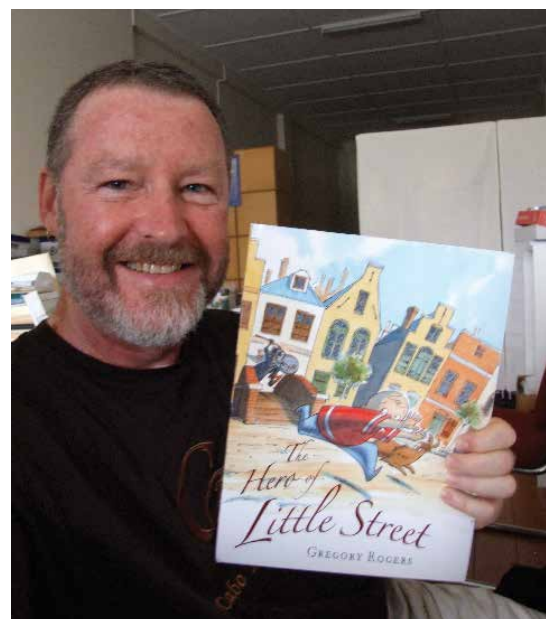


illustration output attests to that fact. He was born on June 19, 1957 and lived most of his life in Brisbane. There he studied fine art and worked as a graphic designer before taking up freelance illustration in 1987. His first major publishing

commissions were covers for young adult and adult novels for UQP, and he later created covers for many other Australian publishers.

His first illustrated trade picture book was *Auntie Mary's dead goat* by Margaret Card (1990). His subsequent picture books were collaborations with acclaimed authors such as Margaret Wild, Ian Treviskis, Laurie Stiller, Gary Crew, Libby Hathorn and Victor Kelleher. He also illustrated educational books, anthologies of poems, junior series, collections of short stories and non-fiction texts. In 1993 his book, *Lucy's bay*, written by Gary Crew, was shortlisted for the Children's Book Council of Australia (CBCA) Picture Book of the Year Award. In 1994 he became the first Australian recipient of the prestigious UK Kate Greenaway Medal for his illustrations in Libby Hathorn's *Way home*.<sup>2</sup>

Greg took to writing with his brilliant wordless picture book series, comprising *The boy, the bear, the baron, the bard* (2004), *Midsummer knight* (2006) and *The hero of Little Street* (2009). *The boy, the bear, the baron, the bard* was shortlisted for the CBCA books awards in 2005 and was selected by the *New York Times* as one of the year's ten best illustrated children's books published in the USA. It was also recognised by the American Library Association, the Australian and New Zealand Illustration Awards and the APA. *The hero of Little Street* won the CBCA Picture Book of the Year Award in 2010 and was



Header: Original artwork for Kate Grenville's *Joan makes history* from the Gregory Rogers collection, UQFL494, Fryer Library, The University of Queensland.

Above: Gregory Rogers' 1994 Kate Greenaway Medal.

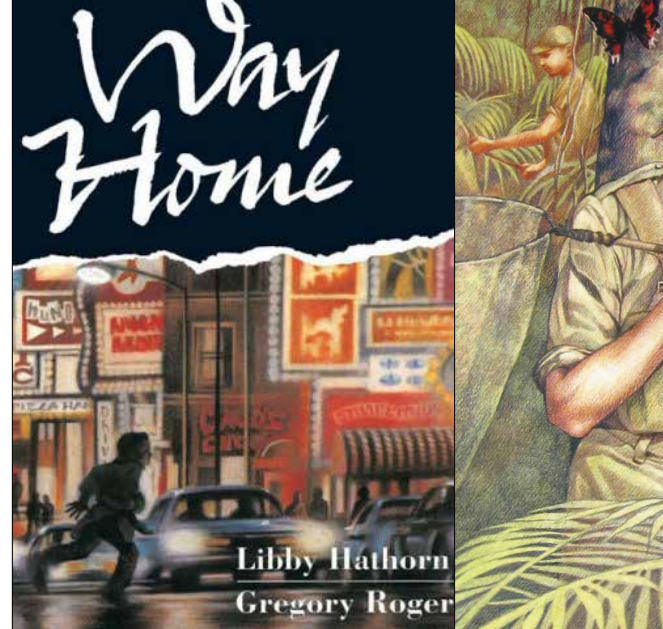
Left: Gregory Rogers 2010. [image supplied]

awarded an Honour Listing by IBBY (International Board on Books for Young People) in 2012. Greg taught and lectured in illustration; painted portraits; and was a talented musician who played the cornet, recorder and baroque guitar music of the 16th and 17th centuries. He was also a passionate collector of music, antiques, and books.

After his death on 1 May 2013, Greg's friends Jane Barry and Margaret Connolly (his literary agent), together with Greg's solicitor, Peter McCartney, arranged to have his works acquired by the Fryer Library. Earlier approaches to another library had not come to fruition, but the listing of items done then was of immense benefit when it came to acquiring this collection. These boxes and parcels joined a donation made by Greg in 2008 of forty-three cover artworks (later Fryer purchased two more). Greg also made a subsequent donation under the Cultural Gifts Program in 2011 of another folio of his cover art.<sup>3</sup> These extraordinary covers were commissioned by University of Queensland Press, and UQP's archives are also held at Fryer. Together they form a significant collection which offers an insight not only into the published work of Gregory Rogers, but also into his many other projects and interests.

Currently, I'm researching the archive (with thanks to Fryer Library's Amanda Main for her assistance) with a view to compiling and writing a book to accompany an exhibition to celebrate his life and work. The collection includes beautiful works of art from many of his published covers and picture books which evince the wide range of styles he employed during his career. There are also many pieces of 'process' sketches and ideas which resulted in a picture book or cover artwork. It traces a 'journey' through Greg's life with items included such as some of his earliest drawings as a school child at Coorparoo, and certificates from that time. There is a gorgeous self-portrait of Greg as a young man, examples of the innovative graphic design he did in the 80s, before working in publishing, and a few photos taken as reference for his photo-realistic covers and picture book art (I have hopes that more of these will emerge at some stage).

Below: Jane Barry, Laurie McNeice, Francisco Roelas and Penelope Whiteway. [image supplied]



In 1994, his friends were thrilled to hear he'd become the first Australian to win the prestigious Kate Greenaway Award. His Kate Greenaway Award Medallion and Certificate, and photos taken in London in 1995 accepting the award with other creators, are also included in the collection.

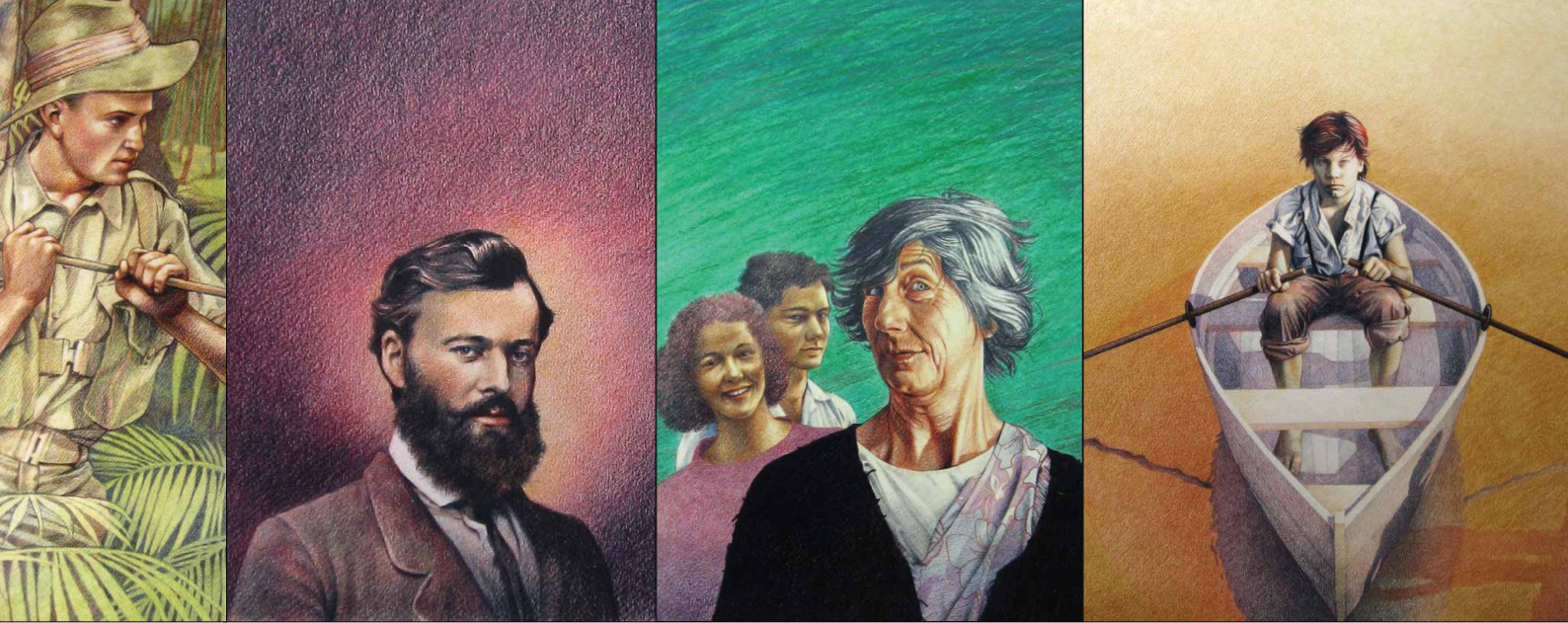
Greg entered the Archibald Prize in 2002. A CD contains images of his Archibald portrait of Leigh Matthews.

After years illustrating the texts of others, Greg wrote *The boy, the bear, the baron, the bard* and two subsequent titles in a series; and his work really took flight in a new vivacious style of comic-like art which was witty and bold, and full of sub-text and cultural reference.<sup>4</sup> I've not yet viewed the original art from this series, which is included amongst this collection, nor the process for this and the further two titles, but I have located fascinating files containing further concepts for the series, including synopses.

The life of an artist inevitably has its highs and lows. Greg was sometimes disenchanted by the field, and so was delighted to be recognised by Australian peers with the 2010 CBCA Picture Book of the Year award for *The hero of Little Street*. 'I was always drawn back to something inside me that had never been fulfilled. The finding of my own unique voice and the telling of stories that were mine and only mine.'<sup>5</sup> His CBCA Medal and Certificate are safely stored in the archive.

Greg's IBBY Honour Listing 2012 for *The hero of Little Street* was later acknowledged at a ceremony to present the certificate organised by Book Links (Qld) and IBBY Australia at the State Library of Queensland. His IBBY Certificate is another inclusion.

Immediately after his death, two picture books—his self-authored *Omar the strongman* (Scholastic) and *What's wrong with the wobbegong?* by Phillip Gwynne (Little Hare Books) which Greg illustrated—were published. (Greg had proofs of both in his hospital room before he died). In September 2015, for the first time, the three books in this BBBB series were



Above: Cover of *Way home*; Original artworks for UQP publications from the Gregory Rogers Collection, UQFL494, Fryer Library, The University of Queensland.

Left: Gregory Rogers and Margaret Connolly at the Bologna International Children's Book Fair, 2011. [image supplied]

published by Allen & Unwin in one beautifully produced volume—a tribute to his talents and reputation, and one of his greatest achievements as an artist. Greg was always enthused by ideas for future projects.

An intriguing range of concepts and ideas for works he was planning to write and illustrate in future are also represented in the archive, including those relating to his longstanding passion to complete a work on the life of Erik Satie.

Greg had a wide circle of friends with whom he shared his many interests. Margaret Connolly recalls fondly his great sense of humour: 'Like most of his friends, I don't think I had a conversation with Greg where he didn't make me laugh out loud, and how rare a gift is that?' Jane Barry adds that he relished sharing fine meals with his friends (how he loved a sticky date pudding!), and also had a great affection for the many cats he cared for in his various homes.

He was a polymath; a remarkably creative artist, photographer and writer; a musician and performer; and to many people, an extraordinary friend. After depositing the collection at Fryer

Library, Jane Barry wrote me an email stating: 'I do feel that today was the culmination of something very big but absolutely right. Greg would be happy, and all the generations to come who now get to see his work and take pleasure in it will be too.'

Having delved into many items in this collection in recent months, I am certain that this will be a more than fitting testimony to his many talents. It is indeed a treasure trove – and it is priceless.

DR ROBYN SHEAHAN-BRIGHT operates justified text writing and publishing consultancy services, and publishes regularly on children's literature, Australian fiction and publishing history. She was inaugural director of the Queensland Writers Centre, and was co-founder of Jam Roll Press. In 2011, she was the recipient of the CBCA Dame Annabelle Rankin Award for Distinguished Services to Children's Literature in Queensland, and in 2012 the CBCA Nan Chauncy Award for Outstanding Services to Children's Literature in Australia. She is a member of the Boards of the Australian Children's Literature Alliance and Australian Society of Authors, and of the IBBY Australia Committee.

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