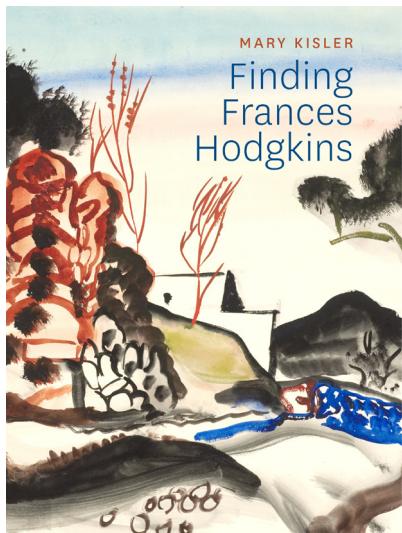




# Finding Frances Hodgkins

MARY KISLER



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## A FRESH NEW LOOK AT WHERE, WHEN AND WHY FRANCES HODGKINS PAINTED SOME OF HER BEST-KNOWN WORKS

When Frances Hodgkins, our most celebrated artist, first left New Zealand in 1901, location became a key factor in her determination to succeed as an artist. In this engaging book, curator Mary Kisler follows in Hodgkins' footsteps through England, France, Italy, Morocco, Spain and Wales to discover the locations in which Hodgkins constantly pushed her exploration of modernism.

Warm, insightful, fresh, expert and richly illustrated with more than 70 artworks, this handsome book sheds new light on Hodgkins' life, art and social milieu.

'Massey University Press is giving the established players in New Zealand art publishing some stiff competition with their elegantly produced and beautiful books. Even before diving into Mary Kisler's *Finding Frances Hodgkins*, it's a gorgeous wee thing ... Kisler writes with a light touch and includes herself in the narrative without being intrusive, in such a way that getting to know her is a natural and pleasant component of the text and doesn't distract from Fanny H. at all. ... It's also handsomely illustrated with reproductions of Hodgkins' paintings, illustrative material and Kisler's snaps of the scenery as it is today. I love it.'

– Andrew Paul Wood

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Mary Kisler** is the Senior Curator, Mackelvie Collection, International Art at Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki. Mary earned her Master's degree in Art History and Italian at the University of Auckland in 1994. She has been a curator at the Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki since 1998, caring for a collection that spans from c1150 to 1950, a large part of which is European art but which also includes a small collection of Indian miniatures and Japanese ukiyo-e prints. In 2010 Godwit published her book *Angels & Aristocrats: Early European Art in New Zealand Public Galleries*. In 2019 the Auckland Art Gallery will publish her Hodgkins catalogue raisonnée to accompany a major Hodgkins exhibition.

### SALES POINTS

- An engaging and fresh look at the life and work of Frances Hodgkins
- Reads almost like a detective story as one of our leading curators tracks down the locations of key works
- The ideal book for all lovers of Hodgkins' work
- Published to coincide with the major Hodgkins exhibition at the Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki
- Beautifully packaged and full of images
- An ideal gift

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But at first, this was only a small homecoming, for which Richmond invited only the recently widowed and a bottle host. (The latter I have the moral courage to refuse.) Then the term era of "Whales" very "hot" was reached, and the town was compelled to close its bars to drink other people's whisky when available.

One Sunday the Rev. Nicholas K. Johnson, a Congregationalist minister, was invited to speak at the First Congregational Church of the town, up to that was hot flattery about many of the local churches, where, structure first, it had been submitted before too much trouble was taken to get it into the pulpit. The sermon was well received. The E.C. churchmen all sat in silence and the humor of the buildings so spiffed them, however, that a hearty cheer was given at the end.

For several days before these great preparations all the saints in the church were taken down and cleaned with a new broom & fresh water. The church was then decked out with flowers and a new organ, built by a brother of the minister, was placed in the organ loft and after them came a number of young girls to whom they consoled themselves looking so sprightly and gay against the background of grim old men.

The day before the great festival, the town was decked out by the girls in their prettiest attire and the flowers were put in the church and the town was "all gay" with "Carnival" written on this in large letters.

"You would like to see the Pantes along the shore," the Painter said.

You would love the Calvarys and the Pieta's along the roads. The Pieta's are generally half raised in monuments of a recumbent figure of the dead Christ rudely modelled and sometimes colored. It is very beautiful country all round this neighbourhood and the peasants are a real joy. I would like to buy a few and take them out with me as properties. Some of



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### Tangier and Tétouan MOROCCO

When Hodgkins set off across the Straits of Gibraltar to Morocco in 1902, you sense her delight at discovering a society that was a little wilder, a little rougher around the edges than the well-honed and manicured towns and villages of France, with their complicated stone or half-timber buildings that she had so admired when she first arrived in Europe, and to which she was to return many times in the next decade.

On her arrival in Tangier she wrote to Dorothy Kate Richmond: "There is a decided piquancy about the manner of one's arrival in Morocco which has its charms. One is practically herded into Tangier & the passage of oneself & ones baggage thro' the Customs is more like the process of passing a sheet thro' a mangle than anything I have ever seen — however once we can thr' all right, the baby, bedding, bundles & all & here we are in this wondrous land of delight — Heaven! How beautiful it is!"

She was travelling with the widowed Mrs Ashington, whom she had met in Quebec the previous year, an amiable companion who could afford slightly grander rooms than Hodgkins. Tangier — not least the smells, noise and chaos of the souk — was an assault on the senses, and

the pair rapidly decided on the commercial hotel, which had been recommended by an aristocratic friend of Mrs Aspinwall, would not suffice if they were to get any sleep. 'We are shaken out of bed at gunfire in the morning; it is fired from a battery just below us & what with the Ramadiyyah and al-Feasting all night it is hardly the place for two peacefully inclined arabs to be.' Through a contact of Alfred East, an Orientalist painter who was Tangier at the time, they moved to Villa Valentina, a painter who was based at the road to Fez, on a terrace overlooking the sea and gardens behind it. On a grander scale, it was run by a German woman and still within walking distance of the centre of town.

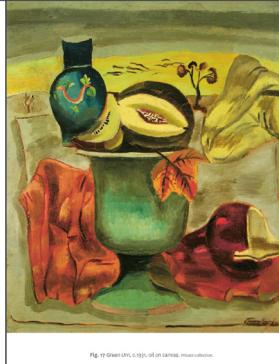


Fig. 16 SIE *Life with Vase and Eggs (Flowers and Spanish Pottery)*, c.1925, gessoche on paper. Herefordshire County Council collection.



Fig. 9 The summit [St Jeanne], c.1929-30, watercolour on paper. Private collection.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT Marseilles scenes: The ceramic bath tiles of the Hôtel Pérot; a stormy evening from my hotel balcony; the MUCEM museum; Fort Jean, past which Hodgkins would have sailed when she entered Marseilles harbour in 1901.

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other fish of the day were sorted after the boats had been pulled up on the sand. Perhaps the air was particularly tangy, as Martigues' other main industry at the time derived from the aforementioned vast salt pans clinging to the inner shore of the bay. Happily, I was able to demonstrate that Hodgkins absolutely fell in love with the place, which is why she came back four times. How we come to ruin is what we write in *histoires* . . .



**ABOVE** Fig. 23  
Venedas  
Lagoon, c.1921,  
watercolour on  
paper. Private  
collection.

**BETWEEN** Fig. 24  
Harbour, South  
of France, c.1939,  
watercolour and  
gouache on paper.  
Private collection.