



FRANCES HODGKINS
1869-1947

QUEEN ELIZABETH II ARTS COUNCIL OF NEW ZEALAND

FRANCES HODGKINS
1869-1947
A CENTENARY EXHIBITION

Cover: Arthur Lett Haines
Frances Hodgkins 1919
chalk 8x5½

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1969

Foreword

In 1954, concluding a study of Frances Hodgkins confined to local collections, E. H. McCormick pointed to the need for 'a truly retrospective exhibition, selected from the whole range of Frances Hodgkins's work in Britain, New Zealand, and Australia.' Through the initiative of the Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council of New Zealand this project has now been undertaken. To mark the centenary of the artist's birth on 28 April 1869 the Council commissioned Dr McCormick and myself to organize such an exhibition. The work has been carried out by the staff of the Auckland City Art Gallery in consultation with the Arts Council.

Our aim has been to assemble not necessarily the 'best' works but a fully representative selection covering a painting life that lasted half a century. In this task we have been ably assisted by Miss Mary Chamot who acted as the London representative, corresponding with English owners and inspecting works in many collections. In addition we have made extensive use of Miss Chamot's catalogue published in *Frances Hodgkins: Four Vital Years* by Arthur R. Howell.

In the catalogue the emphasis has been placed on the artist's life and development rather than on minutiae of concern to art scholars. The photographs and extracts from letters used here and on the biographical screens which accompany the exhibition have been drawn from originals in the Field-Hodgkins collection of the Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

Special acknowledgements are due to the trustees, committees, and directors of public art collections in New Zealand and abroad, along with many private owners who have lent works or made paintings available for inclusion in this exhibition. I should like to thank Dr McCormick for his advice throughout and the staff of the Auckland City Art Gallery for their assistance. Finally, I wish to express my thanks to the Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council, without whose generous support this exhibition would not have been possible.

G. C. Docking
Director, Auckland City Art Gallery, 5 March 1969

7 BABETTE



The Art of Frances Hodgkins

The belated recognition accorded Frances Hodgkins in the last years of her life has not, it seems, been widely sustained into the 1960s. Bryan Robertson, writing in 1963, observed that Frances Hodgkins was then almost totally neglected, though he felt that she should hold a high place in English painting of the thirties and forties¹. Yet, to many critics then, and in the early 1950s, her eminence seemed indisputable: it is on their assessment that her current New Zealand reputation largely relies. It is ironic that New Zealand, the country which she urged in 1924 not to erect a memorial tablet to her memory, has undertaken to present this first full retrospective exhibition of her work. The whole question of the artist's expatriation, and the consequent attitudes within New Zealand towards her life and work, lie outside the scope of this brief essay. Our aim is an assessment of her achievement as a painter in the context of twentieth century European art.

Many of the claims once made for Frances Hodgkins as a gifted colourist, a magnificent technician, and a master of intuitive method, now seem difficult to uphold. More justifiable were the comments of John Rothenstein in 1952 when he said that, 'To-day she has found favour with fashionable opinion: she is even spoken of as a great master. But of course she was not that: she lacks the scale, the range, the variety, the purposefulness. What Frances Hodgkins succeeded in doing, after twenty years of ceaseless experiment, was so to attune her eye and train her hand as to enable her to respond "to the broken earthenware strewn about making such lovely shapes in the pure clear light," and to make out of such things fantasies intimate and lovely, yet so convincing that, in her own words, we can hear them clink'². The qualities to which Rothenstein alludes in the latter part of this quotation, and attributes to Frances Hodgkins's work in general, are particularly evident in paintings like *The broken bowl* (no 44) to which her own words refer. This exhibition, besides confirming that Rothenstein's observations on the artist's limitations are for the most part true, reveals that the quality of her output varied considerably and that her importance rests on a small number of works. Such paintings as *The red cockerel* (no 33), *Plants and cockerels* (no 40), *Pumpkins and pimenti* (no 81), *Self portrait: still life* (no 93) and others produced between 1924 and the middle forties must assure the artist of continued recognition. The quality of these works is much superior to that of the impressionist watercolours painted before her final departure from New Zealand in 1913 or that of the late gouaches which were acclaimed at the time of her death.

Throughout her life Frances Hodgkins needed the stimulus of an accessible subject. At the end of her career she was to describe Cerne Abbas, one of her last rural haunts, as 'that cosy little village which we [w]rung dry in our search after subjects.' Her first European excursion represents the beginning of a lifelong need to travel and explore in search of such suitable subject-matter. The watercolours from this trip have been described by E. H. McCormick as the work of a 'colonial tourist, . . . occupied, with infinite diligence, in tracing to its source the tradition she had inherited'³.

As might be expected, the paintings produced before the first world war, all watercolours, reveal a slow, consistent, and predictable development. An illustrative impressionism conveys a young woman's absorption in domestic figure groups, wistful portraits, and picturesque continental views. At their best, such works as *At the window* (no 14) and *Summer* (no 18) with their fluid handling of the medium, achieve a cosy lyricism, a quality which can lapse into the fey sentimentality of *La première communion* (no 17). Her last New Zealand painting, *Maori woman's head* (no 19), although not as cloying as the *Maori woman and child* (no 4) painted thirteen years earlier, still does not rise above the competent level of her previous works.



Loveday and Ann: two women with a basket of flowers (no 20) is a radical reworking of a familiar subject the figure group, which dominates her output in the war years and achieves its final successful expression in *Spanish shrine* (no 72). With its controlled application of thin paint, *Loveday and Ann*, Frances Hodgkins's first known oil, is a successful venture into a new medium. She departs from the muted palette of her earlier watercolours with the use of a bright secondary colour scale. Both this innovation and the decorative treatment of the background suggest a debt to Bonnard while the figure on the right recalls the art nouveau arabesques of Munch. Despite inconsistencies in the treatment of the heads and hands, *Loveday and Ann* has a freshness and spontaneity found in few of her later oils.

In most of the works produced between 1915 and 1920 (nos 20-28) the artist is coming to grips with the problems of a painter rather than with those of an illustrator. The decorative devices and the use of flat black seen in *Loveday and Ann* are fully exploited in *The Edwardians* (no 25), while in *Refugee children* (no 26) closed areas of flat colour are consciously used and controlled. Yet in these works and also in *Woman seated in a rocking chair* (no 29) Frances Hodgkins is unable to refrain from fussy attention to modelled detail in the painting of the heads, while her children exhibit the cuteness observable in *Summer*.

In spite of its ambitious size, *Portrait of Moffat Lindner* (no 21) does not achieve a commensurate sense of scale and the use of thin oil on an absorbent white ground gives it the appearance of a small watercolour unjustifiably enlarged. In the unfortunate *Portrait of Miss Beatrice Wood* (no 23) and the later *Portrait of a young woman* (no 28) the wistfulness portrayed in *The girl with flaxen hair* (no 1), *Babette* (no 7), and *La première communion* becomes a forced and modish charm.

The body of Frances Hodgkins's paintings between 1920 and 1928 (nos 27-39) is very much that of a painter who has exhausted the possibilities of an illustrative naturalism and is forced to cast about for new directions. Nowhere can this break be seen more clearly than in a comparison between *Portrait of a young woman* and the contemporary *Portrait of Arthur Lett Haines* (no 27). In a style clearly indebted to Harold Gilman, the latter work, with its clear planar divisions, shows the artist painting a portrait in which the head is subordinate to the conception of the work as a whole. In this period of eclecticism two of the strongest works are *The red cockerel* and *Lancashire family* (no 34). The first is a successful attempt to assimilate the discoveries of the cubists. Although an impressionist shimmer is maintained despite considerable later reworking, the painting convincingly employs cubist space. With its Léger-like handling of volumes, *Lancashire family* is, despite minor discordant elements such as the treatment of the eyes, a generally successful attempt to recast the familiar family group in more concrete form.

In 1929 Frances Hodgkins became a member of the Seven and Five Society, a group which had seen the need for an understanding of Cézanne, Matisse, and early cubism. Up to this time she had not extended the insight into cubism apparent in *The red cockerel* and her work continued to show diverse interests – a form of linear neoclassicism in *Mother and child* (no 36), the use of a Redonesque palette in *Farmyard scene* (no 39), and the colour and technique of van Gogh in *The birdcage* (no 42). At about the time she joined the Seven and Five group the artist's mature style began to emerge. *Plants and cockerels* of c1928, is an early example of a subject, the still life in a landscape, which dominated her work up to and including the Bridgnorth series of c1932. In *Plants and cockerels* the understanding gained from her brief encounter with cubism enables her to restate her naturalistic vision with confidence. Through her consistent treatment of volume, her control of aerial perspective, and her use of satisfying colour-tone relationships the domestic objects are both physically and pictorially contained within an encompassing landscape. The satisfying low-key palette of this painting is a distinguishing feature of many of her later successful works. It is in this harmonious employment of subdued colour that her ability as a colourist lies.



33 THE RED COCKEREL

57 PRIMULAS



The extensions of the landscape still-life theme, *A country window* (no 43), *Still life in a landscape* (no 45), *Still life* (no 47), *Landscape with still life* (no 54), and *Arum lilies* (no 62) succeed where Frances Hodgkins has reconciled the spatial problems of integrating a foreground group with a receding landscape. An impediment in this solution is often the artist's laboured handling of impasted oil paint. No such clumsiness is apparent in the tightly organized *Still life with eggs, mushrooms and tomatoes on a table* (no 48) or in the fluid and plastic contemporary watercolours, *The broken bowl* and *Still life*. In *Landscape with still life* she achieves a degree of unity by the repeated use of flat decoration. Among the landscapes of this period *Flatford mill* (no 49) hovers uneasily between a naturalistic statement and a more stylized rendering. This conflict occurs to some extent in *The valley mill* (no 51), a work which also reveals a problem she often encountered when painting buildings. Although not as critical here as in later works, the lack of a convincing scale gives them a toy-like quality.

The works of 1930 and 1931 display, for the most part, a looser decorative freedom in the elaboration of established themes. Among her pencil drawings, the Matissean *Primulas* (no 57) and *Still life* (no 64) exhibit an assurance not seen in the more ambitious *Seated woman* (no 46) of c1929. By 1932 a renewed interest in the effects of light becomes apparent. Where light had previously been used to describe and model form it now becomes a dominant element in her work.

In the hatched technique of the Bridgnorth series, the three preceding drawings, and more particularly in the 'wet' watercolour technique of the Cornish series, form becomes subservient to a soft enveloping luminosity. The more successful Leeds version of *Wings over water* (no 69) is a not wholly convincing attempt to combine this atmospheric shimmer with an accomplished version of the familiar still-life in the foreground.

In Frances Hodgkins's later works of the thirties, and in those of the forties, the dissolution of form apparent in the Cornish series develops into formlessness in her attempts to achieve a loose abstracted unity. With few exceptions she was unable to achieve in gouache or oil the freshness which often characterises her watercolours. The success of the gouache *Pumpkins and pimenti*, with its rhythmic movement of light and the sensitive harmony of its colour-tone relationships, was rarely to be repeated. Although the gouaches of the forties are predominantly light in tone and fluid in execution they become increasingly chalky and unresolved. The unassuming scale and delicate, controlled handling of *Mushrooms* (no 92) lift it well above the other works in this medium.

With the exception of *Self portrait: still life* and *Christmas tree* (no 100), Frances Hodgkins met with little more success in her later oils. The outstanding *Self portrait: still life* achieves a tension and clarity that elude her in the landscapes *Kimmeridge foreshore* (no 87) and *Houses and outhouses, Purbeck* (no 88). Like her other successful final works, all still lifes, *Christmas tree* employs a shallow picture-space in which a loose arrangement of objects is convincingly held without disappearing into nebulous space as they do in her landscapes.

Frances Hodgkins's output of major works is small; this exhibition could have been halved without any loss in quality. She can never be classed as a great or even a major artist; an assessment which, with remarkably few exceptions, can be made of most of her English contemporaries. In many of her works the oppressive dictates of the subject and her incomplete realization of pictorial space place severe limits on her achievement. At her best Frances Hodgkins's inherent delight in intimate and homely detail finds enduring expression.

IAN ROBERTS DAVID ARMITAGE *Auckland March 1969*

1 '1893/1963 British painting': *Studio*, vol 165, no 840, April 1963, p139

2 *Modern English painters, Sickert to Smith*, London, 1952, pp119-120

3 *Works of Frances Hodgkins in New Zealand*, Auckland, 1954, p70



92 MUSHROOMS

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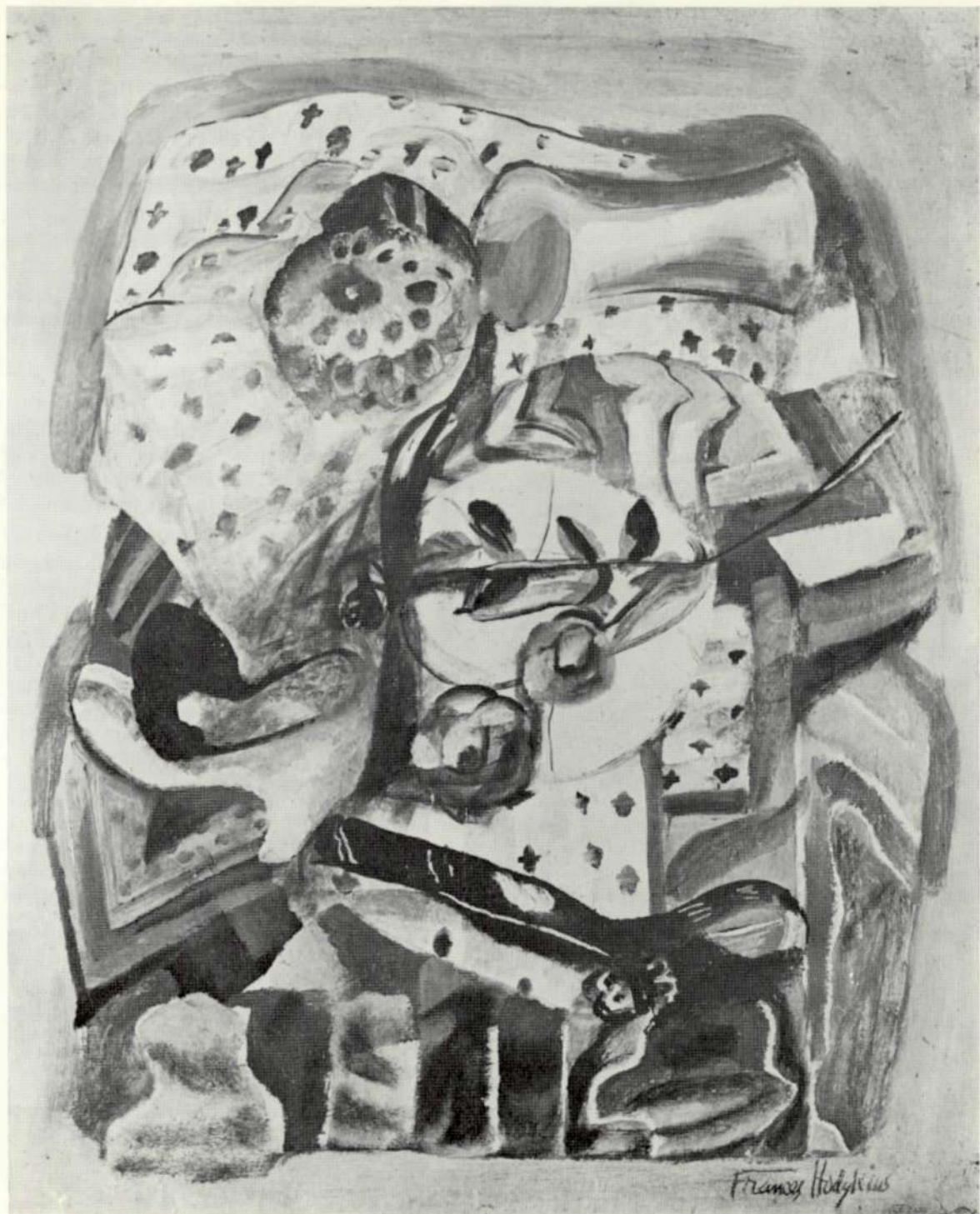
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Measurements are given in inches, height before width. Nos 15, 17, 23, 24, 85 will not be shown outside New Zealand.



1869-1901

Frances Mary Hodgkins was born in Dunedin, New Zealand, on 28 April 1869, the third child of an English migrant, William Mathew Hodgkins and his Australian wife, Rachel Owen (*née* Parker). W. M. Hodgkins was a solicitor by profession but, more significantly for his daughter's future, he was also a landscape painter and the leading figure in the city's nascent artistic life. In his small circle of amateurs and connoisseurs Frances Hodgkins slowly discovered her vocation. Many sketches in pencil and watercolour survive from her girlhood days, and in 1890 she first exhibited with the New Zealand art societies in Dunedin and elsewhere. No youthful prodigy, she emerged as something more than a promising amateur only after her gifted elder sister married a Wellington solicitor in 1893, the year she herself first attended classes given by the Italian painter G. P. Nerli. To this period belong the two earliest works included in the present exhibition. In February 1895 she took a step towards professionalism by entering the Dunedin School of Art to study for the South Kensington examinations. Having gained first-class passes, she began her long career as a private teacher in August 1896. At the beginning of 1898, with her father's death and the family's impoverishment, she was forced to depend solely on her own earnings and worked with such success that within three years she was able to realize the ambition of travelling abroad. When she left in February 1901 her expressed intention was to visit England and Europe for twelve months, after which she would again establish herself as painter and teacher in Dunedin or Wellington.



DUNEDIN c1889

'I was born in Dunedin; we were an English family in a Scottish settlement. Probably we learned something from our environment. My father loved, and ardently pursued, art under all sorts of difficulties and discouragements as you may imagine in so new a country. Of his children, only two daughters – my sister, Mrs. W. H. Field, and myself – were inspired by his example and influence to follow in the thorny way, and both have adopted his medium – water-colours. According to common opinion, I was very successful. . . . Before I left New Zealand, I had painted a great deal, done a lot of teaching, and had illustrated for our newspapers, which are very liberal in that direction. Perhaps I ought to have been content with what was a very interesting life, but I felt I was only groping; that I had not realised myself; that I wanted to see the masterpieces of all time; learn what was being done in my chosen medium, and measure myself with the moderns. So I sailed for the old world. . . .'

In an interview with C. Hay Thomson, 6 January 1913



2

1893

1 THE GIRL WITH FLAXEN HAIR

watercolour 19 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 15

Mr E. H. McCormick

The same model appears in the next work; both were almost certainly painted after Frances Hodgkins became a pupil of Nerli.

2 A GOOSE GIRL
watercolour 13½ x 7
Mrs A. R. O. Gabites



'I have got my competition head finished at last and Father is quite excited about it and has hunted up an elaborate title for it and a verse of poetry, which he is going to get inscribed on a plate to be put on the frame! I havent the heart not to agree with him so for once he is going to get his own way. He says that if I call it a "Head of an Old Woman" which it is, he will forbid me sending it.' To her sister, Mrs Field, 26 June 1895

1900

4 MAORI WOMAN AND CHILD
watercolour 24 x 17¼
National Art Gallery, Wellington

Maoris were among the artist's favourite subjects from 1896 onwards, and this work may have been painted at Otaki during a northern holiday in the summer of 1899-1900.



1895

3 HEAD OF AN OLD WOMAN
watercolour 19½ x 14½
Theomin Gallery, Dunedin

In July 1895 the work was awarded a prize by the New Zealand Academy of Fine Arts, Wellington, for the best study in colour from life and was later exhibited under the title,

Thinking of the Olden Time –
Of days long vanished,
Of years gone by.



MOROCCO 1903

1901-1913

'It has been a week of excitement for me – each post has brought me in some good news from Paris about my pictures – flattering press notices – kind letters – requests for lessons etc & I am feeling a little happier than usual. . . . Aren't you willing I should stay & follow it up? Don't you want me to find myself permanently & definitely in an established niche in the Art world. I wish you were as terribly ambitious for me as I am for myself. . . . I feel that Fathers heritage to me should work out its true fulfillment – I have a long way to travel yet but I am further on the way each year – & who knows when I may find myself – there!'

To her mother, c15 October 1910

Her departure for Europe in 1901 was the turning-point in Frances Hodgkins's life. The first summer she joined Norman Garstin's sketching class in Normandy. Here, as well as in later visits to the Riviera, Italy, Brittany, and Morocco (nos 5 and 6) she not only acquired a taste for exotic travel but made such friends and patrons as the Nickalls sisters and Moffat Lindner who for the next two decades figure in her correspondence and occasionally in her painting (nos 10 and 21). In this circle of English artists and their pupils her watercolours were much admired and sometimes bought. Even more encouraging, she had work shown in three London exhibitions and at the Royal Academy where one of her Moroccan figure studies was accepted in the spring of 1903. Following further travels in Belgium and Holland she left for New Zealand after nearly three years abroad. The disillusionment she felt on her return was accentuated by the unhappiness of a broken engagement, and after two years in Wellington she set off for Europe early in 1906, again, she announced, for a year or so. Despite lack of money and some opposition from her mother, this stay was prolonged until 1912 and finally resulted in Frances Hodgkins's decision to pursue her career in Europe. For a time she continued her continental travels in northern Italy (no 8), France, and Holland (no 11) until in November 1908 she settled in Paris (nos 13 and 15) which remained her headquarters until 1914. Here she had marked success as a watercolourist, taught at the Academy Colarossi, and ran a painting school of her own. Her strongest professional ties remained, nevertheless, with England: the two one-man exhibitions of these years, in 1907 and 1909, were both held in London, and the pupils who attended her Montparnasse studio or her summer classes at Concarneau and similar resorts came either from Britain or the colonies. In October 1912, after winding up her class at St. Valéry-sur-Somme, she left for a long-promised visit to her family, taking with her a large collection of watercolours painted in the previous decade. She showed this work at Melbourne in November and, with spectacular results, at Sydney in the following April; other exhibitions followed in Adelaide, Dunedin, and Wellington. Acclaimed by both critics and public, she embarked for Europe, now for the last time, in October 1913. One record of the visit has survived, the head of a Maori woman (no 19), probably painted at Rotorua.



1903

5 ORANGE SELLERS, TANGIER

watercolour 20 x 15½

Theomin Gallery, Dunedin

The painting was commissioned by D. E. Theomin, a Dunedin collector, whom Frances Hodgkins met during a visit to Morocco in the winter of 1902-3.

'I wish I could have sent you my large picture of the market - it is the apple or rather the onion of my eye . . . a jumble of onions melons & oranges - It is going tomorrow to Mr. Theomin - I am going to eschew vegetables after this with a comfortable feeling I have done my duty by them -' To Miss D. K. Richmond, 7 March 1903



6 STUDY OF A SOUDANESE

watercolour 14 x 10¼

Mrs R. D. Todd

This work, which bears the artist's original title, was also, presumably, painted in Morocco.

1905

7 BABETTE

watercolour 15¾ x 9¾

Mr H. M. W. Atkinson

One of the few works painted while the artist was living in Wellington from the end of 1903 until the beginning of 1906.



1906

8 RED SAILS

watercolour 27 x 17 $\frac{3}{4}$

Public Art Gallery, Dunedin

Probably painted at Chioggia near Venice in the summer of 1906.

'It is very hot & there isn't a square inch of shade in Chioggia so I have made friends with the matron of a nice cool old work house where I take my models & paint in the shady quadrangle. . . . The red & yellow sails of course are the feature of Chioggia, otherwise it would be quite uninteresting.' To her mother, 27 June 1906



9 MOTHER AND CHILD

watercolour 23 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 16 $\frac{1}{2}$

Mr and Mrs Peter Field

This rendering of a familiar subject may have been done in northern France during the summer or in Provence towards the end of the year.

1907

10 THE WINDOW SEAT

watercolour 25 x 20 $\frac{1}{4}$

Art Gallery of New South Wales

The two figures were the artist's friends, Maud and Una Nickalls, whom she painted at their home 'Wispers', near Stedham, Sussex, while visiting them late in 1907. The following year this painting and one by Thea Proctor shared a prize in the Franco-British Exhibition, London. In 1913 it was bought by the New South Wales gallery and seems to have been the first work by Frances Hodgkins acquired by a public collection outside New Zealand.

'Did I tell you I painted a portrait of Maud & Una at Wispers - in evening dress pale mauve & blue, in the window seat by lamp light & faintest moonlight - a very good thing I say & Mr. Paterson [her London dealer] says ditto. . . .' To her mother, 19 December 1907

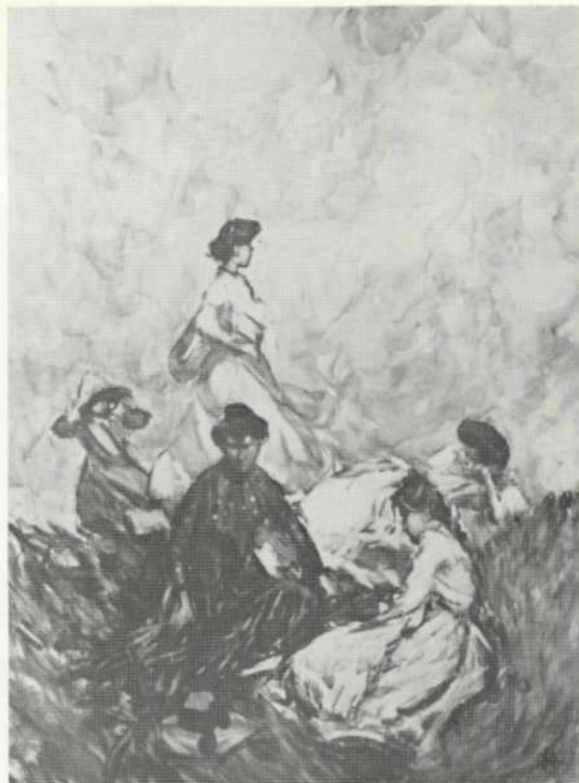
'I expect before this reaches you you will have heard of my good fortune in winning 1st Prize at the Franco British in the Australian Section of Women's Art - or rather a $\frac{1}{2}$ share in the 1st prize. . . . This prize money has saved the day. . . .' To her mother, 6 July 1908



c1907

11 DUTCH INTERIOR
watercolour 23½ x 19½
Mrs N. M. Paterson

Painted in Holland where the artist lived from May 1907 until August 1908.



c1908

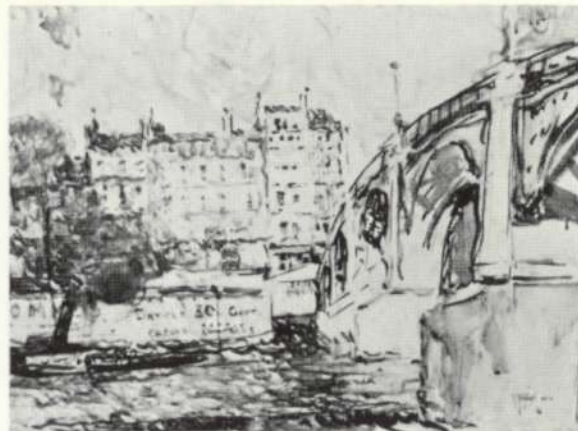
12 THE HILL TOP
watercolour 29½ x 22½
National Art Gallery, Wellington

Painted in England in the latter part of 1908 or possibly in France a year or so later.

1910

13 ON THE SEINE, PARIS
watercolour 17 x 22½
Lady Rich

Probably the Pont Neuf, near the Quai de Conti, where a friend had an apartment.



13

c1912

14 AT THE WINDOW
watercolour 25½ x 25
Art Gallery of South Australia





15 BARGES ON THE SEINE, PARIS

watercolour 22½ x 17¼

Mr C. R. Hosking

16



16 THE CONVALESCENT

watercolour 17¾ x 21¼

Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester

17 LA PREMIERE COMMUNION

watercolour 22 x 15¾

Woodford House, Havelock North



18 SUMMER

watercolour 23½ x 19¾

Public Art Gallery, Dunedin



1913

19 MAORI WOMAN'S HEAD

watercolour 13¾ x 10¾

Mr and Mrs Peter Field

Frances Hodgkins's last known New Zealand work, probably painted at Rotorua.

'Luckily the weather is good so I am having two good goes a day at the Maori, but have not yet got any thing worthy of them. My hand & eyes are out & I can't get on to the colour a bit. I find them as fascinating as ever & if I lived in N.Z I should settle alongside this sympathetic Lake - I love it.'
To her brother-in-law, W. H. Field, 1 March 1913



LONDON 1920



1913-1927

'I wish the papers wouldn't make me out a sort of freak artist – I am really a very sober minded thoughtful sort of person with nothing slapdash or offhand about my work – every stroke I put down comes from real conviction & is a sincere aspect of truth – if not the whole truth – If I can only live long enough the world will have to acknowledge me – I am horribly stubborn & I haven't lived these long years of privation & hard work for nothing.'

To her mother, 30 December 1918

The visit to her native hemisphere marked a climax in the artist's career. Now in her middle forties, she returned to France only to experience war and its aftermath. When the teaching season of 1914 was cut short, she took refuge in England and settled at St Ives, Cornwall, which remained her base until 1920. Established in her own studio with more leisure than she had enjoyed for years, she began to work in oils and painted numerous portraits and figure studies (e.g. nos 20–23 and 25). In the hope of securing portrait commissions, she moved to London at the end of 1918 and again in 1920, but post-war conditions defeated her and she gladly returned to Cornwall. After the second venture she sub-let her London studio to Cedric Morris and Arthur Lett Haines (no 27), both artists of a younger generation whose friendship stimulated and sustained her in the difficult years that followed. One-man exhibitions organized by obscure London galleries in 1920 and 1923 added little to reputation or resources and even teaching failed her. An ill-fated, possibly ill-conceived, excursion to France in 1920 left her penniless, compelling her to return to England, this time to Burford in the Cotswolds, her home until the autumn of 1923. Among those attending her summer classes at this time were two art teachers, Hannah Ritchie and Jane Saunders (no 32). It was through their efforts that Frances Hodgkins found employment designing fabrics in Manchester just as she had decided to leave for Australia. This added yet another to the long succession of failures, but the appointment saved her at a critical juncture and encouraged her to continue the struggle. She stayed two years in Manchester, met such patrons as Forrest Hewit and Mrs L. C. Wertheim, painted with habitual industry (e.g. nos 34 and 35), and held an exhibition in November 1926. The following June, after winding up her affairs, she again set off for France.

1915

20 LOVEDAY AND ANN : TWO WOMEN WITH A BASKET OF FLOWERS

oil 26½ x 26½

The Tate Gallery, London

The earliest known work in oils by Frances Hodgkins, probably painted at St Ives.

1916

21 PORTRAIT OF MOFFAT LINDNER

oil and tempera 47 x 40½

Public Art Gallery, Dunedin

Moffat Lindner was a St Ives artist whom Frances Hodgkins met during her first visit to Europe. The work was begun in January 1916 and, on the evidence of the letter quoted below, was considerably modified before taking its final form.

'Mr. Lindner & his little girl Hope are posing for me against his great Studio window – open, with the wind tossing her brown hair, the sea beyond. They wear such jolly tweed clothes, he snuff coat, check waistcoat & orange tie with black spots – & his jolly pink face & white curls – same colouring as Father – you may remember he always reminds me of him, a young edition, very dapper. Hope in grey tweed, berry red buttons & bright blue Tam, white stockings. This is a 4ft. x 3ft. canvas in oil – and so far it shapes well.' To her mother, 10 January 1916





c1916

22 BELGIAN REFUGEES

oil 31 x 28

Mr Arthur Lett Haines

1918

23 PORTRAIT OF MISS BEATRICE WOOD

oil 28½ x 28½

Mrs T. E. Y. Seddon

Commissioned by the present owner and painted at St Ives.

'The other day 3 nice girls, all from NZ, blew in to the Studio - Miss Denniston of Peel Forest - Barker - ditto & Beatrice Wood from Chch, a bright fair haired girl with a fluffy dog in her arms. She wanted me to paint her a sketch of herself for her Dad - William Wood - which I did! She was awfully pleased & sent a cheque for 8 gns and has dunned her Father for the balance of £12.12.' To W. H. Field, 30 March 1918



23

24



c1918

24 BARN IN PICARDY

watercolour 22¼ x 18½

Canterbury Society of Arts, Christchurch



25 THE EDWARDIANS

oil 40 x 40

Auckland City Art Gallery

According to information given to the previous owner, Mrs L. C. Wertheim, the figures depicted in this work were two residents of St Ives, Mr and Mrs Skinner, with their maid.

1919

26 REFUGEE CHILDREN

oil and tempera 24 x 28½

Mrs M. E. Hewit and Miss E. M. Hewit



Francis Bacon

1920

27 PORTRAIT OF ARTHUR LETT HAINES

oil 17 x 15

Mr Arthur Lett Haines

Painted at Newlyn, Cornwall, soon after Frances Hodgkins met Arthur Lett Haines and Cedric Morris.



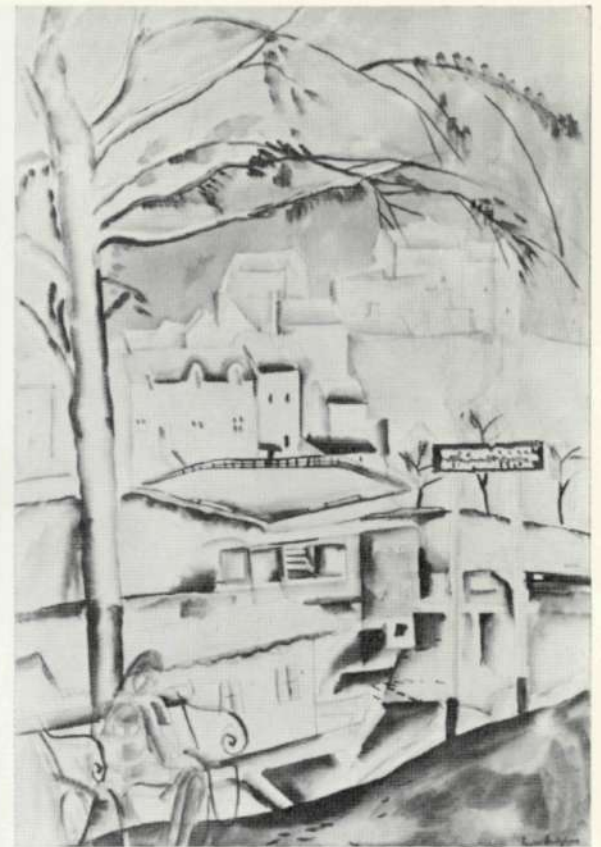
28



29 WOMAN SEATED IN A ROCKING CHAIR

watercolour 17 x 16 $\frac{3}{4}$

Art Gallery of New South Wales



c1921

30 THE YELLOW HOUSEBOAT

watercolour 19 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 13 $\frac{3}{4}$

Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester

31 STREET

watercolour 19 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 16 $\frac{1}{4}$

Mrs M. E. Hewit and Miss E. M. Hewit

Probably painted in the south of France in the winter of 1920-21.

c1920

28 PORTRAIT OF A YOUNG WOMAN

oil 18 x 18

Palmerston North Art Gallery



31



1922

32 DOUBLE PORTRAIT
oil 24 x 30½
Mr C. O. Brasch

The figures in this portrait are Miss Hannah Ritchie (left) and Miss Jane Saunders who had been pupils of the artist in France before the war and were at this time art teachers at the Manchester Girls' High School.

1924

33 THE RED COCKEREL

oil 27½ x 36

Public Art Gallery, Dunedin



c1927

34 LANCASHIRE FAMILY

oil 28½ x 28½

Auckland City Art Gallery

According to the artist when the work was recovered in 1944, it was painted near the end of her stay in Manchester.

'my dusty old picture painted quite 15 yrs. ago in the purlieu of Ancoats (Manchester) a squalid & slummy spot but the real thing for picture making. I have the dimmest idea of what the picture is like - I remember about that period I had artistic yearnings to paint Lancashire Mill Girls: some of them were raging beauties I loved painting piled up family groups This must have been one of them - It was shown at the London Group & skied.' To Eardley Knollys, 6 June 1944

35 LANCASHIRE MILL GIRLS

watercolour 21 x 15

Miss Janet Green





FLATFORD MILL 1930

1927-1939

' . . . I have had to choose between showing my work in the older established Shows and the smaller exclusive modern ones with whom I am in sympathy – which are difficult to get into without money – I preferred not to show at all rather than exhibit with the older traditional set with whom I have nothing in common – But chiefly, I have not been able to afford to exhibit & have had to put my art aside & do other money making jobs – in order to live – That's the whole secret of my delayed success – But now I am slowly creeping back – and invitations from the right quarters are coming in – and, I hope, my Show will make things right for me. . . . I am wayward – what artist worth his salt is not? But au fond – deep in my work – I am steadfast & steady as a rock – I have changed & evolved & experimented – but am none the worse for that – My present work is consistent – I shall sink or swim by it – I think swim –'

To Mrs Wertheim, 13 February 1928

Her emergence from provincial obscurity into the ranks of the English *avant-garde* may be conveniently dated from the summer Frances Hodgkins spent at Tréboul after leaving Manchester. In the small Breton port she renewed her friendship with Cedric Morris and Arthur Lett Haines whose joint influence may often be detected or inferred in the events leading to her recognition. She now began to exhibit with more progressive societies and in 1929, sponsored by Cedric Morris, was elected to the advanced Seven and Five Society. She also began to associate with a wider circle of young artists and intellectuals. In the late twenties she met the writer Geoffrey Gorer (see no 71) who became her friend and supporter, as did John Piper and, some years later, Anthony and Katharine West (no 85). After the summer at Tréboul she gave up teaching with marked results on the bulk and quality of her output. Oils, watercolours and drawings by Frances Hodgkins, notably the combination of landscape and still life so distinctive of this period (nos 40, 43 and 69), became a feature of the London art scene, appearing in many mixed exhibitions and at two one-man shows in 1928 and 1929. By this time her work had attracted the attention of Arthur R. Howell of the St George's Gallery, where she held a successful exhibition in October 1930. A business agreement with him led to a contract with the Lefevre Galleries, her dealers from 1931 onwards. Her nomadic habits, now even more marked than before, were in part due to the demands of a full-scale exhibition every second year. Seeking fresh surroundings and sympathetic company, she travelled in France (nos 37, 38 and 44), the Balearic Islands (nos 72-74), and Spain, but the English landscape often proved her most fruitful source (e.g. the Cornish series, nos 69-71, and the Bridgnorth series, nos 75-79). In 1934 she paid the first of several visits to Wales (no 89) and towards the close of the decade, as war again approached, she settled in Dorset (nos 87 and 88).

c1927

36 MOTHER AND CHILD
watercolour 20 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 14 $\frac{1}{2}$
Mr Peter Millard



36

37



37 CONCARNEAU

watercolour 17 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 21 $\frac{1}{2}$

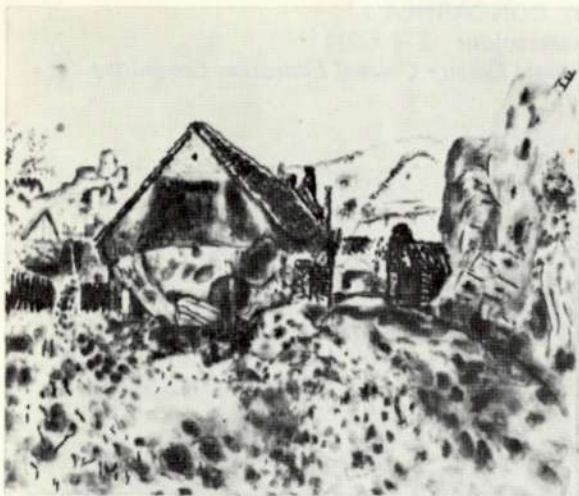
Dorset County Council Education Committee

38 THE FRENCH INN-KEEPER, FRANCOIS

watercolour 18 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 14

Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool





39

40



1928

39 FARMYARD SCENE
watercolour $18\frac{1}{2} \times 21\frac{3}{8}$
Mr Dunstan Curtis

c1928

40 PLANTS AND COCKERELS
watercolour $18\frac{1}{4} \times 14$
Mrs Alan Ward



1929

41 STILL LIFE
pencil $14\frac{3}{4} \times 17\frac{3}{8}$
The Tate Gallery, London

c1929

42 THE BIRDCAGE
oil $30 \times 23\frac{3}{8}$
Mrs L. C. Wertheim



43 A COUNTRY WINDOW
oil 24×29
Mr John Aldridge





44

44 THE BROKEN BOWL

watercolour 13 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 17 $\frac{1}{2}$

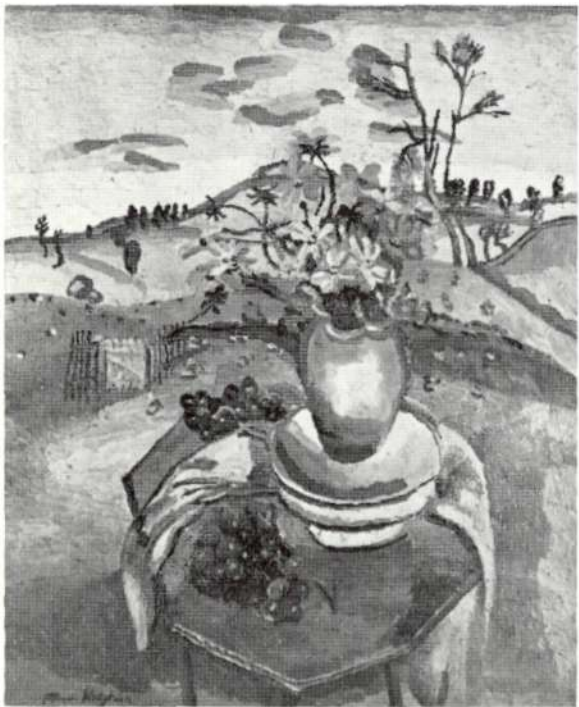
Mr Dunstan Curtis

This work may have been among the 'first fruits' of a visit to Pastorale in the south of France, mentioned in the following passage from a letter to the artist's dealer.

'Really it is so lovely up on this misty mountain where the air is like wine – and the wine like champagne – all is lovely all is peaceful not even the faintest whiff of a neighbour to spoil the absolute charm of the place – There is work enough for a life time So far I have done nothing but look – Faces figures landscapes panoramas and the Basses Alpes waiting to be painted but let me tell you that in my humility I have not lifted eyes higher than the red earth & the broken earthen ware pots strewn about making such ripping shapes turning in the pure clear light – you may hear them clink as you un-roll the Water Colours I am sending along to you They are first fruits – and an earnest of better to come. . . .'
To Arthur R. Howell, 5 December 1929



45



45 STILL LIFE IN A LANDSCAPE

oil 32 x 28

New Zealand Embassy, Paris

46 SEATED WOMAN

chalk 37 x 23 $\frac{1}{2}$

The Tate Gallery, London

47 STILL LIFE

watercolour 18 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 22

Wakefield City Art Gallery



48 STILL LIFE WITH EGGS, MUSHROOMS
AND TOMATOES ON A TABLE
oil 25½ x 21
Public Library and Museum, Hove

49



1930

49 FLATFORD MILL

oil 28½ x 30

The Tate Gallery, London

From July to October 1930, Frances Hodgkins lived at or near Flatford Mill, Constable's birth-place, working for an exhibition which was held in St George's Gallery, London, in October.

'I . . . am glad of the quiet & deep peace of this place but anywhere in England is unsympathetic & difficult for an artist - The sea of green every where - The red brick - & the stoney paths & stoney stares of the villagers - Oh Lord! But the big free Studio at the Mill is a real catch - & worth a lot to me - I quite like the mile walk thro' fields & over stiles to & fro night & morning. . . .' To Mrs Wertheim, c9 July 1930

'I have got well into the spirit of the place & it is yielding up riches - undreamed of, at first sight - I am glad I have stayed & got so into rapport with the country - No distractions or interruptions - not even a fly settles on me - but butterflies often -' To Mrs Wertheim, 8 August 1930

50 STILL LIFE IN A GARDEN

watercolour 16½ x 25½

Mr Arthur Lett Haines

Painted at Wilmington, Sussex, where Frances Hodgkins paid short visits in the summer of 1929 and again towards the end of 1930.

'I have found a Room to paint in - There are nice faces to look at rather choice country, "Landscape", around - the South wind ahead of me, the Downs at my back - This is about the note of it - Of course nothing like as good as the Eastern Counties - but with many more amenities for winter quarters -' To Arthur R. Howell, 15 November 1930

51 THE VALLEY MILL

oil 24¾ x 29

Art Gallery of Ontario

c1930

52 ENTRANCE TO TUNNEL

gouache 16¼ x 21¾

Mrs M. E. Hewit and Miss E. M. Hewit





53 GARDEN GATE
watercolour 25½ x 19½
Mrs Peter Gorer

54



54 LANDSCAPE WITH STILL LIFE
oil 25 x 30
Art Gallery of South Australia



55 MOTHER AND CHILD
pencil 20¾ x 14
Salford Museum and Art Gallery



56 NUPTIAL BOUQUET
watercolour 21½ x 15¾
Donald and Mary Potter

57 PRIMULAS
pencil 15¾ x 11½
The British Council, London



58 RIVER GARDEN
watercolour 18 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 15 $\frac{1}{4}$
Leeds City Art Gallery

59 STILL LIFE IN LANDSCAPE
watercolour 17 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 23 $\frac{1}{2}$
Mrs M. E. Hewit and Miss E. M. Hewit



60 TWO CHILDREN
oil 28 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 23 $\frac{1}{2}$
Auckland City Art Gallery



61 WOMAN AND YOUNG GIRL
pencil 17 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 12 $\frac{3}{4}$
Victoria and Albert Museum, London



c1931

62 ARUM LILIES

oil 25½ x 21¼

Executors of the late Hon Lady Ridley

63 ROSES AND CHINA

watercolour 22 x 18½

Salford Museum and Art Gallery

64



65



64 STILL LIFE

pencil 15¼ x 18¼

City of Manchester Art Galleries

65 THE WHITE HOUSE

oil 26 x 25

Art Gallery of New South Wales



c1932

66 DRAWING WITH LANDSCAPE

pencil 21¾ x 17

The British Council, London



67 LEAVES AND A POT

pencil 18 x 23

Mrs P. Broke Freeman

68



68 NARCISSUS AND FRUIT

pencil 18½ x 14½

Dartington Hall Trustees, Totnes, Devon



69 WINGS OVER WATER

oil 25½ x 36½

Leeds City Art Gallery

This work was probably painted at Bodinnick, Cornwall, or based on sketches made there during a stay in the winter and spring of 1931-2. In a letter to her friend Dorothy Selby in April, Frances Hodgkins mentioned 'the parrot' and the previous December wrote to the same correspondent from her lodgings, 'The Nook':

'... I searched round & found Bodinnick up a creek, over several ferries & quite ungettable after dark - & here I am - The Nook is neither of the "Rookery" or of the "Cosy" sort but suits my needs - no other fool could stand it - ... It is too cold to work out of doors - Besides which the colour is so dark & sodden with damp - Bracken is bright red - black ships on the river -'

70 WINGS OVER WATER

pencil 20½ x 24

Mr John Piper

The drawing from which the next work was evidently painted; probably also done at Bodinnick or elsewhere in Cornwall.



70



71 WINGS OVER WATER

oil 28 x 36

The Tate Gallery, London

Presented to the Gallery in memory of Mrs R. A. Gorer by her sons. According to Geoffrey Gorer, this was one of the very few paintings with which Frances Hodgkins expressed herself completely satisfied, and she was delighted when Mrs Gorer insisted on buying it immediately she saw it in the studio.



1933

72 SPANISH SHRINE

oil 25½ x 36½

Auckland City Art Gallery

This and the three following works are records of a visit Frances Hodgkins paid to the Balearic Islands in the winter and spring of 1932-3.

'I am still reacting pleasantly to Ibiza in the painting way and find heaps to do - all very lovely I can hardly believe it - Weather much colder - but fine today - houses very cold & we seek bed - or the cafe in evenings - to keep warm - twice weekly a 6d. Cinema to help kill time. . . .' To Miss Dorothy Selby, 10 January 1933

73



c1933

73 IBIZA

gouache 16½ x 21½

Dartington Hall Trustees, Toines, Devon



74 IBIZA HARBOUR

oil 23¼ x 28¼

Mrs Lea Jaray-Bondi

75 A CORNISH GARDEN

gouache 21¼ x 17¼

Sheffield Art Gallery

The title is clearly erroneous: this and the next four associated works were all the outcome of a sketching holiday at Bridgnorth, Shropshire, in the summer of 1932. Unfortunately the related pencil drawing has not been traced.



75



76 THE LAKE

gouache 17 x 21½

The Tate Gallery, London

The previous title, 'River Garden, Bridgnorth', is obviously more accurate.



77 PLEASURE BOATS
watercolour 21 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 17
Mr F. H. Corner

78 PLEASURE GARDEN
watercolour 20 $\frac{7}{8}$ x 16 $\frac{3}{4}$
Robert McDougall Art Gallery, Christchurch

c1934

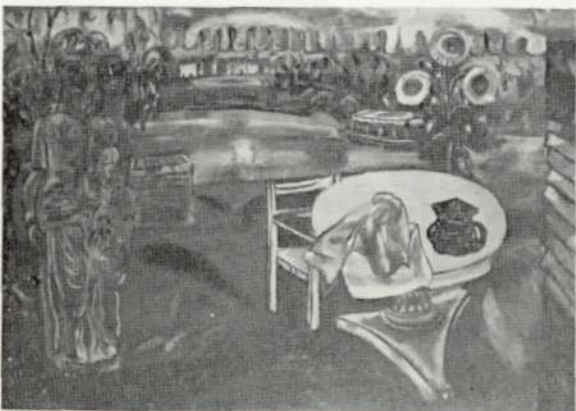
79 SABRINA'S GARDEN
oil 25 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 36 $\frac{1}{2}$
Bristol City Art Gallery

The culminating work in the series and a favourite of the artist; 'Sabrina' is the Roman name for the river Severn which flows through Bridgnorth.

'The original painting of Sabrinas Garden with its 2 wooden figures is, incidentally my favourite of that vintage 1930-40. . . . Another painting I am rather partial to is Wings over Water shown at the National Gallery & now at Leeds Art Gallery - ' To Mr Watson of Horizon, 14 November 1941



78



79



1935
80 PRIVATE BATHING
gouache 21 x 29 $\frac{1}{2}$
Mr Geoffrey Gorer



81 PUMPKINS AND PIMENTI
gouache 20 x 28
Sir Kenneth Clark



1936

82 IN PERSPECTIVE

watercolour 20½ x 25¾

Victoria and Albert Museum, London

83 SILVER HOWE

gouache 20½ x 27¾

Mrs Peter Gorer

'Silver Howe', the house depicted, was owned by friends of Mrs R. A. Gorer.



c1936

84 ELIZABETH AND SARAH MARTIN

charcoal 14¾ x 17¾

Art Gallery and Museum, Brighton

The two girls were nieces of the Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia, at this period living in exile at Buxted Park, Sussex; as a child their father had been befriended and adopted by an Englishman, Dr Martin.

1937

85 KATHARINE AND ANTHONY WEST

oil 27¾ x 32½

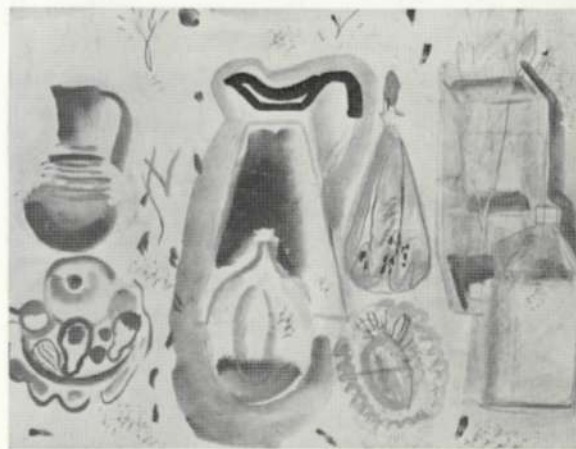
National Art Gallery, Wellington

In September 1937 Frances Hodgkins stayed with Anthony West and his wife (the painter Katharine Church) at Quarry Farm, Tisbury, Wiltshire. According to Mrs West, the double portrait was painted later, without the knowledge of the 'sitters', from sketches made by the artist.

'I had the happiest long week end with the Wests & have painted 3 quite attractive canvases inspired by objects observed by me out of the corner of my subjective eye, when really looking for black berries - you'll see! They are 2 delightful Dears Anthony & Kitty - I loved my visit to them -' To her dealer, Duncan Macdonald, 20 September 1937



85



1938

86 ARRANGEMENT OF JUGS

watercolour 18½ x 24½

Mr John Piper

The preliminary drawing for the lithograph of the same name which Frances Hodgkins produced in March 1938.



87 KIMMERIDGE FORESHORE

oil 40 x 30

Staff Common-Room, Victoria University of Wellington

This work (or rather, the sketches on which it was based) dates from an excursion in July 1938 to Kimmeridge near Worth Matravers, in a part of Dorset known as the Isle of Purbeck.

'I was safe away in the wilds – Kimmeridge, a tiny fishing village on this coast – where I made numerous drawings – in pencil – and am now back at Worth, & am going to make them into pictures – the same old hat trick – you know!' To Miss Dorothy Selby, 27 July 1938

88 HOUSES AND OUTHOUSES, PURBECK

oil 34 x 44

The British Council, London

For two years from May 1937 onwards Frances Hodgkins had lodgings in 'Sea View', a farmhouse in Worth Matravers. The house and the dairy farm opposite appear in several works of the period.

'... I have taken two rooms at a Farmhouse where I shall stay as long as it suits me – It is close to the sea, that is 1 mile down & 5 miles up. . . . I mean to sit quiet & wait for the impulse – it pays –' To Mrs R. A. Gorer, 18 May 1937



88

89 SOLVA

gouache 21 $\frac{7}{8}$ x 30 $\frac{1}{4}$

Birmingham City Art Gallery

Solva is a fishing village in Pembrokeshire, Wales, which Frances Hodgkins visited in the late summer and autumn of 1936 and again in September 1938.

'I have been working moderately hard, moderately successful in a landscape of steep valleys speedy rivers & castles looking like their own mountains but it takes a long long time to acquire a little idiom & rhythm in paint – if ever – Such nice gentle people I was among at Solva, mostly bird watchers & such all terribly poor –' To Duncan Macdonald, c12 November 1936



CORFE CASTLE 1945



1939-1947

'I am rather worried about the fate of some of Father's watercolours – now alas rather discoloured – which I have had with me these many years and I feel should be sent back to NZ. . . . I think they ought to be offered to one of the Art Galleries as valuable & interesting records of early NZ life – He was a wonderful what they now call pedestrian artist who painted as he strolled taking Nature as he found her – Also he was the ideal "Sunday" painter as they are called in France Looking back & remembering, what a lovely temperament his was and how little of his serenity & happy outlook on life has come my way except of late years when I have learnt a little wisdom & philosophy. My aspect of the family talent, or curse? has taken the form of a deep intellectual experience a force which has given me no rest or peace but infinite joy & sometimes even rapture.'
To W. J. P. Hodgkins, 27 August 1940

Although she was known in the thirties as a member of the English *avant-garde*, it was only after the outbreak of war that Frances Hodgkins won critical recognition and a limited popularity. The first sign that she had at last achieved her cherished objective was the unexpected success of an exhibition held in April 1940. From that time onwards her paintings were much sought after, especially the small gouache landscapes which are the distinctive works of this final period. Unhappily ill health and failing strength made it impossible to meet the insistent demands of her dealers, and she often suffered from a sense of frustration. Wartime restrictions oppressed her, but more than other deprivations she missed the continental excursions which had revived her spirits in the past. Nevertheless, she continued to paint until the last months of her life, finding subjects in the Victoriana familiar since childhood (no 96) or in the surroundings of her last home, Corfe Castle (nos 94, 98 and 99), or finally in 'The Croft' (no 101), a favoured retreat in the war years. She received some measure of official recognition during her lifetime. In the spring of 1940 she was one of the painters chosen to represent Britain at the Venice Biennale, and in 1942 she was honoured (rather than enriched) by the award of a Civil List pension. The retrospective exhibition of her work held at the Lefevre Galleries in November 1946 marked the peak of her career. Six months later, on 13 May 1947, she died at Herrison near Dorchester, Dorset.

1939

90 CIRCULAR BARN
gouache 22½ x 17½
Mr Eardley Knollys

c1940

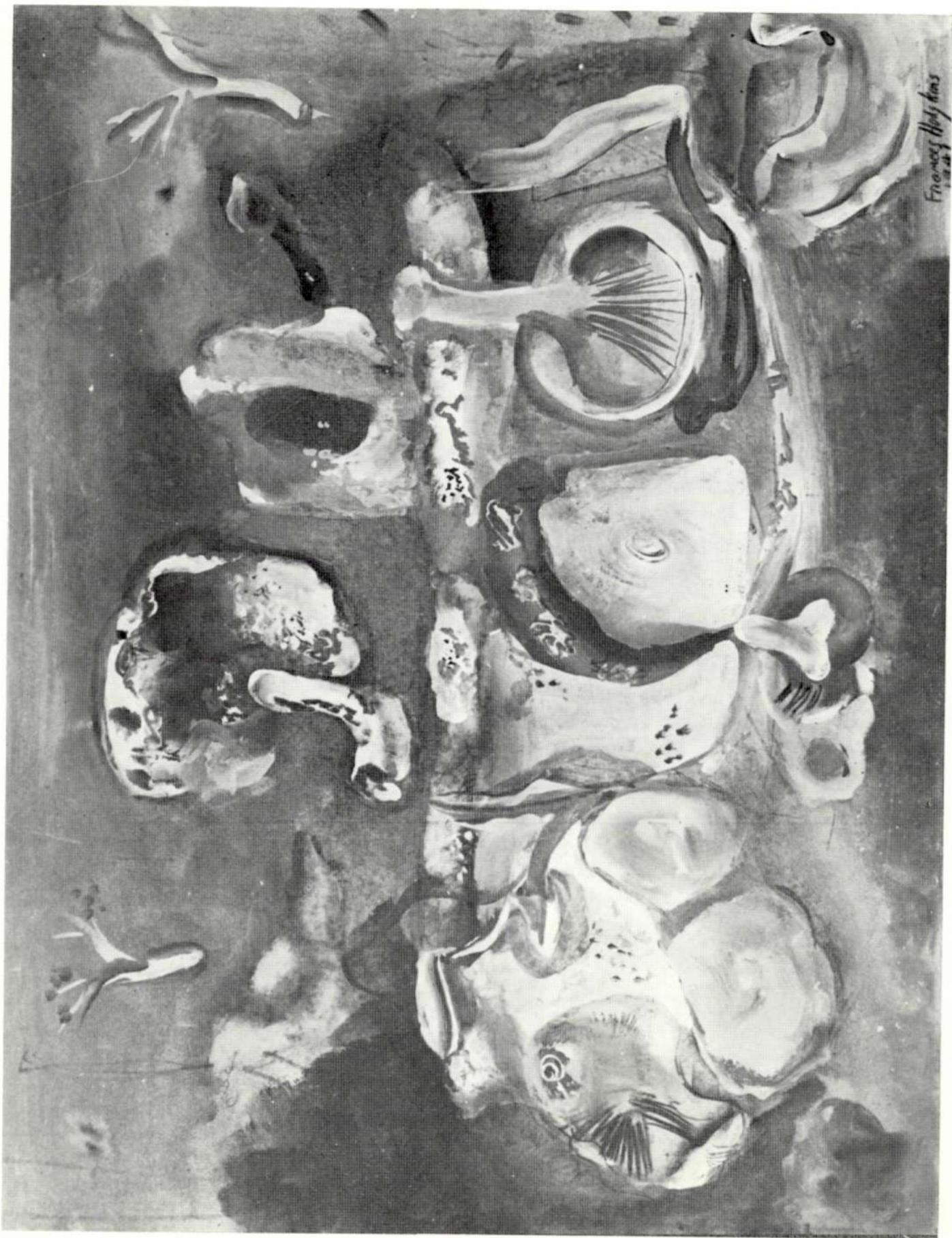
91 WINDOW PIECE
gouache 19 x 26½
Mrs M. K. Frankenburg



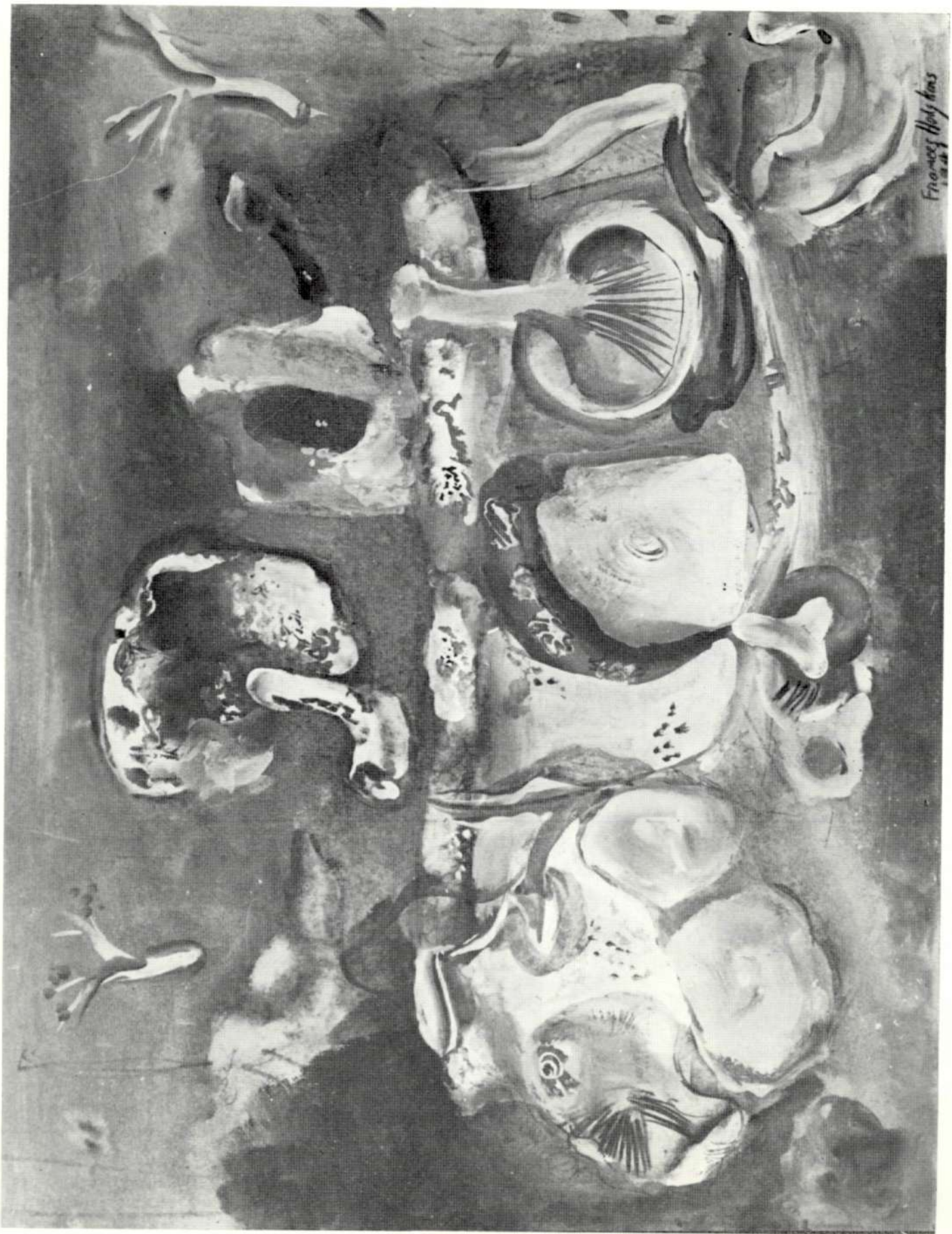
90

91





Francis Holykins
1924



Enormous Holy Sites

1941

92 MUSHROOMS

gouache 15 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 19 $\frac{7}{8}$

Cecil Higgins Art Gallery, Bedford

93 SELF PORTRAIT: STILL LIFE

oil 30 x 25

Auckland City Art Gallery



1942

94 CHURCH AND CASTLE, CORFE

gouache 17 $\frac{7}{8}$ x 22 $\frac{7}{8}$

Ferens Art Gallery, Hull

During the thirties Frances Hodgkins paid several visits to Corfe Castle in the Isle of Purbeck, usually staying with her friend and ex-pupil, Amy Krauss. In the late summer of 1941, while convalescing after an operation, she settled in the village which became her final home and the subject of many of her last works, painted in the studio she mentions in the following extract from a letter to her dealer.

'I was feeling very much under the weather both physically & otherwise but have picked up wonderfully since coming here and am now doing quite good work under the spell of the place & general atmosphere of calm & simplicity: boredom, of course for anyone but a fool artist waiting believably for inspiration Corfe cannot in any way be called Stimulating - I could leave it without regret But I am making it "do" - And marking time till we get some weather worth calling good weather when I can get about & explore the neighbourhood. I have a Studio - . . . a large one time Chapel - central heated - very convenient - The high walls are hung with canvasses of a long past Academic School - not so convenient - A quaint galère to find my self in!'
To A. J. McNeill Reid, 20 December 1934

95 THE NEW RICK

gouache 17 $\frac{1}{8}$ x 22 $\frac{1}{8}$

Mr Eardley Knollys



96 ORNAMENTS WITH FLOWERS

gouache 18 $\frac{1}{8}$ x 20 $\frac{1}{4}$

Victoria and Albert Museum, London

1943

97 THE FARPOND

gouache 19 x 26 $\frac{3}{4}$

Mr Peter Millard



1944

98 THE COURTYARD IN WARTIME

oil 24 x 30

Mr Eardley Knollys

Frances Hodgkins described this work to Mr Knollys as an attempt to express her feelings during an air-raid. He acquired the 'problem picture' while he was attempting to purchase the studio and ensure for the artist greater comfort and security than she had then enjoyed.

'I propose to give & hand over to you as an asset to the Firm the problem picture you like fate-like as you say - Courtyard by Night I call it -' To Eardley Knollys, 23 November 1944



99 PURBECK COURTYARD

oil 28 x 24

Southampton Art Gallery



99

c1945

100 CHRISTMAS TREE

oil 50 x 40

Dr Leonard Hamilton

This painting was a conspicuous feature of the artist's studio during the war years. Dr Hamilton and his wife first saw it in July 1945 when they met Frances Hodgkins at Corfe Castle and were invited to the studio.

1946

101 THE CROFT HOUSE

gouache 26½ x 20½

Mr Geoffrey Gorer

After meeting Geoffrey Gorer in the late twenties, Frances Hodgkins often stayed at 'The Croft', his country cottage in Bradford-on-Tone, Somerset. She was there in the spring of 1946 when she painted this, her last completed work.



100

101



CATALOGUE OF AN EXHIBITION

Public Art Gallery, Dunedin
April-May 1969

Robert McDougall Art Gallery, Christchurch
June 1969

National Art Gallery, Wellington
July 1969

Auckland City Art Gallery
August 1969

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
October 1969

Commonwealth Institute Gallery, London
February 1970