



# FRANCES HODGKINS



To mark the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Frances Hodgkins' birth (1869-1947), this past May, the *Auckland Art Gallery* curated an exhibition entitled *Frances Hodgkins: European Journeys*, showing over 150 compositions that over a period of 10 years had been sourced from around the world. In June, the *Jonathon Grant Galleries* in Auckland also held a Hodgkins exhibition of 14 pieces, some painted in the last years of her life.

Coming towards the end of the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations, *The Welcome Swallow Gallery* is pleased to be able to exhibit, for the first time, four important Hodgkins pieces not seen together before, in public.

Shown here are two watercolours and two graphites that span a generation of her time as an artist, from 1907 through to 1935. Within both media, as described in the texts that are attached to each of these works, her development as an artist can be clearly seen.

Frances Mary Hodgkins is arguably New Zealand's leading expatriate artist. Her works capture the spirit of an era greatly influenced by Impressionism, *en plein air* painting, Post-Impressionism and Fauvism - from Matisse to the German impressionists. During her time in Britain she became one of the leaders of the English avant-garde movement. She travelled extensively and evolved her style as seen here, from impressionistic watercolours to her increasingly fluid graphite draughtsmanship. *The Welcome Swallow Gallery* is proud to add to the critical appreciation and history of Frances Hodgkins' life's work.

FRANCES HODGKINS

The Croquet Game, Peaslake, c. 1929

Pencil on Paper

320x500mm

Private Collection NFS



By 1929 Hodgkins had become an established artist with the inclusion of her works in several major contemporary European exhibitions. She spent the summer at Romary Cottage near Hayward Heath, producing several large-scale drawings of the nearby villages and the Peaslake area. Writing to Lucy Wertheim she described, 'taking up her favourite high vantage point so that the houses and fields stretched up and away from her, sometimes filling three quarters of the paper'.

The present drawing, *The Croquet Game, Peaslake* is a fine example of the highly finished exhibition drawings Hodgkins produced during this period. This piece demonstrates her exquisite calligraphic draughtsmanship as seen by the more abstract rendition of the buildings on either side of the composition. Starting from the hill above the village, the eye is led down into the finer detail of the house and figures in the centre where the small croquet hoops can be clearly distinguished. The drawing is characterised by an unpretentious directness and displays Hodgkins skill and bold technique, defined by her vigorous interplay between light and dark.

Eric Newton, in his foreword to Hodgkins' 1946 Retrospective Exhibition at Lefevre Gallery, described her drawings "as being as delicate as cigarette smoke laid gently on paper: others, fierce with velvety blacks imply colour".

*Abridged version written by Jonathan Gooderham & Grace Alty, Jonathan Grant Galleries*



FRANCES HODGKINS

Boys Fishing c. 1907

Watercolour

260x360mm



Private Collection NFS

In late May 1907 Frances Hodgkins undertook her second trip to Holland, remaining there for the next fifteen months, earning a respectable living taking in student lodgers. As written by Hodgkins on the back of this painting, *Boys Fishing* was a gift to one of those students, Theresa Thorp, “the congenial and specially selected companion” with whom she travelled to Paris in 1908.

The three young subjects of *Boys Fishing* are wearing traditional Dutch caps and clogs and reflect Hodgkins’ awareness of the work of British artist Stanhope Forbes (1857-1947), a leading member of the artists’ group at Newlyn, the small Cornish fishing village which she had first visited in 1902. One of its three subjects sits cross-legged on the approaches to a bridge, engrossed in what he is doing, while the two others lean against the rails behind, watching. The trio and the bridge itself are presented simply and directly, with minimal attention to detail, as in the vigorous brushstrokes that define the clumps of trees framing the composition. There is a restrained use of colour in this quiet and contemplative scene, capturing the sense of three young friends lost in their thoughts.

*Abridged version written by Jonathan Gooderham, Jonathan Grant Galleries*



FRANCES HODGKINS

A Cottage Garden c. 1935

Watercolour

630x450mm



Private Collection NFS

It is most likely that *A Cottage Garden*, depicting a country house and landscape, was completed around 1935. Hodgkins' distinctive combination of pinks and greens in this painting is highly characteristic of her unique and 'different palette' that she used during this period. It is probable that the scene depicted is one of a series of paintings that Hodgkins completed of Geoffrey Gorer's cottage in Bradford-on-Tone, Somerset. Hodgkins returned regularly to Gorer's cottage after she met him in the late 1920s.

The painting clearly shows the development of her style from the '20s - the naturalistic content of her work is still present, but the picture surface is more important than an illusion of atmosphere and space. The landscape has been completely flattened and divided into clear segments of contrasting colour. The large tufts of grass, curving trees and small gates combine to produce a semi-abstract pattern and heighten the sense of spatial ambiguity. The success of the painting lies in Hodgkins' mastery of subtle tones and gestural line that unifies the composition and provides an inviting, harmonious aspect.

*Abridged version written by Jonathan Gooderham, Jonathan Grant Galleries*





FRANCES HODGKINS

Montreuil-sur-Mer c. 1924

Graphite on paper

250x310mm



Private Collection NFS

Like many artists, Hodgkins used graphite illustrations as candidates for larger paintings. However, her delicate and exquisite wispy touch enables the viewer to marvel and enjoy these works as stand-alone pieces of art. In this study, Hodgkins' masterful draughtsmanship blends intricate shading that draws the viewer into each individual element of the drawing while creating an unlikely feeling of integration between buildings and vegetation that occupy adjacent spaces. The church, Saint-Josse-au-Val and its distinctive spire quickly emerge to the eye as the central focus, offering a timeless ambience.

Perspective and depth are preserved here whereas her watercolours a decade later (See *A Cottage Garden* in this exhibit) experiment with a complete flattening of the painting leaving the pastel colours to connect the subject. In *Montreuil-sur-Mer*, we witness an easy sense of freedom between objects that each represent still life in a holistic composition. This graphite offers an important glimpse of Hodgkins' work as she transitions to the more vigorous and abstract draughtsmanship seen five years later in *The Croquet Game, Peaslake*.

*Written by Clive Gilson, Welcome Swallow Gallery*



A contemporary photograph shows the Saint-Josse-au-Val church spire that was rendered by Frances Hodgkins in 1924. The angled roofs of nearby houses, adjacent to the spire, in the graphite composition, can also be clearly seen in the photograph. The position that Hodgkins chose for this work was from further back and to the left of where the photograph was taken.

THE EXHIBIT PLATE

# Frances Hodgkins

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*Frances Hodgkins*



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