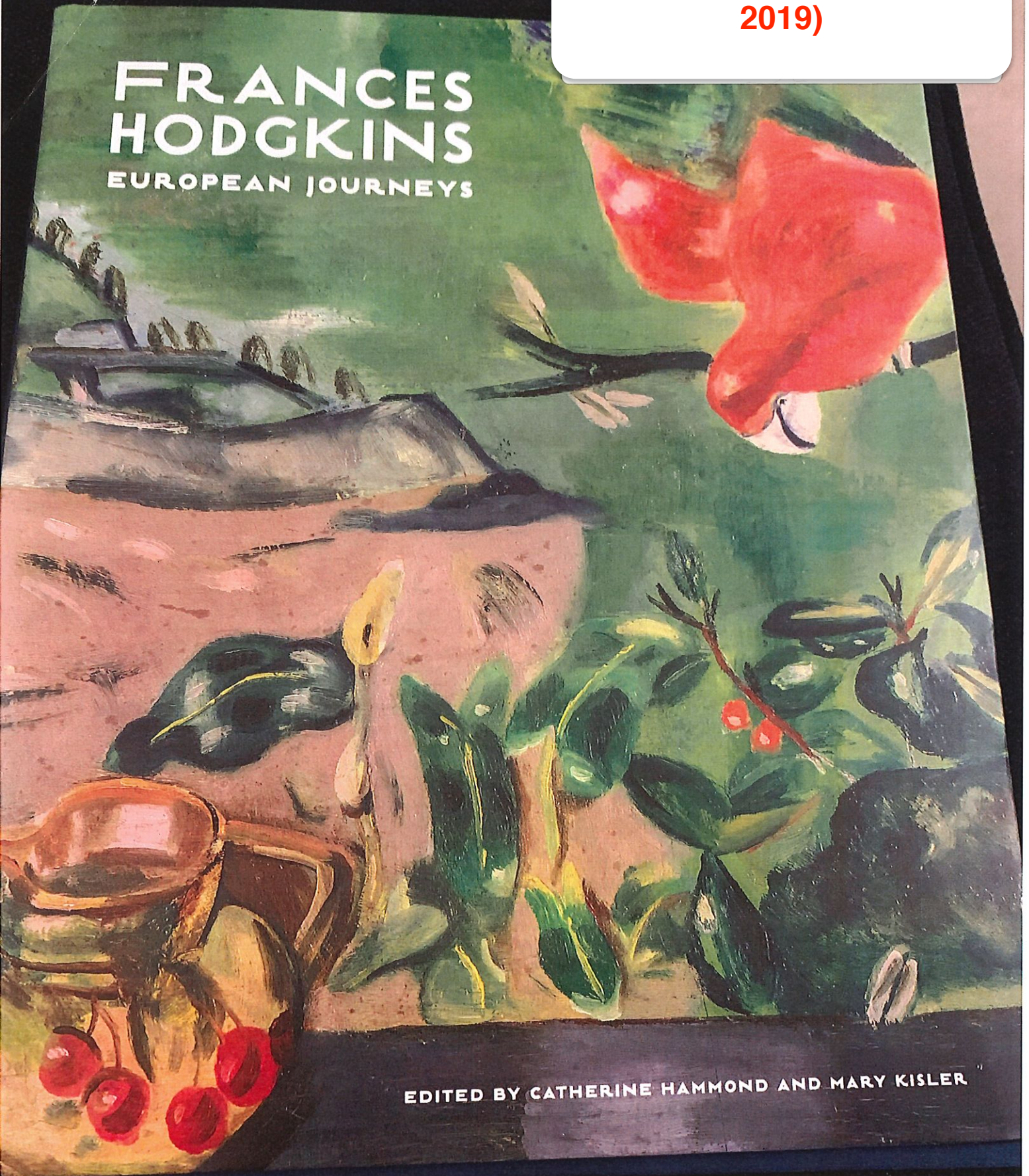


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FRANCES HODGKINS

EUROPEAN JOURNEYS



EDITED BY CATHERINE HAMMOND AND MARY KISLER

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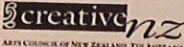
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Frontispiece: Rosamond Marshall, Dorothy Kate Richmond and Frances Hodgkins in Rijsoord, Holland, 1903.
Jacket: Frances Hodgkins, *Wings over Water*, 1931–32, oil on canvas, 686 x 965 mm.
Leeds Art Gallery, Leeds Museums and Galleries, gift from the Contemporary Art Society, 1940.
Photo © Leeds Museums and Galleries (Leeds Art Gallery) UK / Bridgeman Images.
Endpapers: Frances Hodgkins, *Untitled [Textile Design no. VII]*, c. 1925, gouache, 305 x 433 mm. Museum of New Zealand
Te Papa Tongarewa, purchased 1998 with New Zealand Lottery Grants Board funds.

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Purbeck of 1945. M. H. Middleton of the *Spectator* described her as 'one of the most remarkable woman painters of our own or any country, of our own or any time'.²⁷ Although Duncan Macdonald knew she wouldn't attend the opening, on the last day of the exhibition she arrived in London accompanied by Amy Krauss. She was taken round the gallery by Macdonald and unexpectedly met Jane Saunders, who had weaved in and out of her life for almost forty years. Hodgkins was now old, frail and tired, but she could look around at her paintings, some of which she hadn't seen for a long time, and trace her many journeys.

Cora J. Gordon, in her review of the Lefevre exhibition, observed perceptively how Hodgkins 'has let her mind take charge . . . [she has] a power of fusing subjective and objective. She is able to feel and suggest third dimension while playing with unrealistic arabesques.' Gordon described the general effect of Hodgkins' use of colour as 'overpowering. It is so balanced and blended that one can only use that overworked word "beauty". . . . Earlier, when Nature and technique held her more tightly in control the work was less lovely than in her present hey-day of freedom and splendour.'²⁸

A few weeks after her seventy-eighth birthday, on 13 May 1947, Frances Hodgkins died at Herrison House, a hospital near Dorchester.



Frances Hodgkins generated huge loyalty among many people. She had been sustained – financially, professionally and emotionally – by neighbouring villagers, friends, students and fellow artists, and many of them in turn felt that their lives had been changed through contact with her. They loved her work, but they also loved her wit, simplicity, determination and courage. If she served as a role model for younger women, she also encouraged the next generation of artists to become professional.

Ultimately, she was admired by critics and fellow artists who singled her out for her highly individualistic use of colouring, pattern and motif. Success came late to Hodgkins, but it was none the sweeter for that. In the 1930s she became recognised as one of England's leading modernists, culminating in her being selected as one of the artists to represent Britain in the 1940 Venice Biennale. Indomitable to the last, she never lost the sense that a new location, or one favoured in the past, might provide her with new inspiration. In 1945 she wrote to her young friend Barbara

Coombs, 'I am not to be trusted on a Railway Station – the longing to board the train & be off is irresistible'.²⁹

After her death, a number of the dealers, artists and friends who had known and admired Hodgkins wrote, and some were recorded talking, about her and her work. Shortly before her Penguin Modern Painters volume on the artist went to press, Myfanwy Evans referred in *Vogue* to Hodgkins' past and her achievements since coming to Europe all that time ago, imbued with the pioneering spirit of her father, William Hodgkins, while 'making herself free of the past. The present affected her transitorially – she shook the cocoon threads of influence off steadily, year by year, until, at about sixty, she emerged as a butterfly, unlike any known species of butterfly save in her brilliance and her delicacy.' Evans went on to note:

But England was beginning, in spite of herself, to grow upon her and when the second world war forced her once more to remain here, she was able to bring all the intensity of France and Spain, all the brilliance of that New Zealand light and all the boldness of her Parisian-learned colour to glow within the subtleties of an English mist. She had only to paint the broken implements in a deserted farm-yard or the moss-grown curve of a mill-wheel, to say all that she needed to say about herself and about England.³⁰