

Anita Ophoven

Exhibition Curator | Dr Ewen Jarvis

Drawings and Watercolours

26 May — 1 July (Yering Station Art Gallery / Main Gallery)

Exhibition Launch: Saturday 26 May 3.00 — 4.00 pm



Moreton Bay Fig: Three Red Fruits and One Green, Coloured pencil, 36 x 63 cm

Like produce harvested from a forbidden garden, there is something unearthly about the seeds, fruits and foliage depicted in Anita Ophoven's latest exhibition *Drawings and Watercolours*. Almost exclusively isolated against white backgrounds, Ophoven's carefully selected subjects appear to be floating in a void within which their effusive life forces and startling individuality are mysteriously enhanced: the pigmented skin of fruit becomes a liminal space both absorbing and reflecting light, imperfections are invested with a heightened meaning and significance, while subtleties of colour, having been observed and given full expression, produce an air of unreality created with techniques generally specific to realist art. A transformation is effected as everyday objects become lenses inviting viewers to explore new ways of seeing.

Trained as a painter at the National Gallery School in Melbourne and at the Victorian College of the Arts, Ophoven has nonetheless, like many Australian artists before her, discovered unique possibilities inherent in pencil drawing: 'I have been working mostly in coloured pencil on paper for

some years. I like the directness of the process, and the degree of precision and control it affords. Learning to paint or draw is, as much as anything else, about learning to see. Most of these images derive from familiar objects. I'm interested in the ambiguity achieved by looking at ordinary things in a new way, and in the somewhat uneasy place between realism and abstraction.'

'For a long time I avoided subjects from nature, preferring the ambiguity of images derived from man-made things, manipulated or distorted almost beyond recognition. In the past few years I have become increasingly interested in the various plants and seeds I come across during morning walks, and eventually I began to draw them. I now find treasures wherever I go: seed pods in a gutter, shrivelled pears hanging over the fence, a weed in an alley, an endless supply of Moreton Bay figs under the trees in the park. Trips to the market have also become extremely distracting, as I find myself thinking more about what I might draw than about what I might make for dinner. Even the produce aisle at the supermarket can be overwhelming. What I find so compelling is the beauty and intricacy of the plants, and the intense pleasure of the drawing process.'



Rainbow Chard, Watercolour and watercolour pencil, 60 x 75 cm