

STEPHEN ONGPIN FINE ART



Brigid EDWARDS (London 1940 -)

Chinese Cabbage

Watercolour over pencil on vellum.

487 x 347 mm. (19 1/8 x 13 5/8 in.) [sight]

Brigid Edwards almost always paints her watercolours on smooth, prepared vellum. As she has stated of her working methods, 'I get my vellum from William Cowley Parchment and Vellum Works who also mount and stretch the skins on board to my specific dimensions. A white gesso ground is applied which smoothes the surface but inevitably because it is a natural skin there remains an irregularity of texture and pigment. In the past I have made my own boards but it is very time-consuming and expensive if things go wrong... So far there have been no problems with splitting or cracking. I think I decided to "anchor" them because I found the wavy edges rather distracting... I choose vellum rather than paper because I have always found paper too absorbent and difficult to rectify. I use ophthalmic surgical blades to remove paint from vellum where necessary.' Like many botanical artists, Edwards works very slowly. As she has explained, 'A large painting (and I mean volume and painted area as opposed to large but unpainted surface) can take up to twelve weeks to complete.'

The noted collector and scholar of botanical art Shirley Sherwood has recently stated that 'Brigid Edwards has already been recognized as a painter of the most potent images which have an arresting yet subtle impact.' As Sherwood has further noted of Edwards, 'In 1994 she had a remarkable show at Kew Gardens Gallery where the critics compared her work with that of Rory McEwen, one of the standard-bearers of today's renaissance in botanical painting. Like McEwen she often works on vellum, painting with a glowing, quiet brilliance, sometimes framing her pictures like medieval treasures... Brigid Edwards is undoubtedly one of today's finest botanical artists and I am particularly attracted to

her work on vellum.'

Similarly, in the catalogue of an exhibition of watercolours by Edwards at a London gallery, Ian Burton noted of her work that 'The fine painting of the detail on the vellum is uncanny, but when these single objects are arranged and suspended in a contemplative space, they achieve their greatest power, and as a result of this creative act of attention, they have an almost religious intensity.'

The present sheet was drawn in 2016.

Exhibitions

London, Thomas Gibson Fine Art Ltd., Brigid Edwards: New Works on Vellum, 2016, unnumbered.

Artist description:

Born in London, the botanical artist Brigid Segrave Edwards studied illustration and graphic design at the Central School of Art in London and enjoyed a successful career as a television producer and director before turning to botanical illustration in the mid-1980s. She first exhibited her work at the Summer Exhibition of the Royal Academy in 1990 – an unusual honour for a botanical artist - and has also had her work shown at the Linnean Society in London, the Hunt Institute for Botanical Documentation in Pittsburgh and the Kew Gardens Gallery, as well as at commercial galleries in London and New York. Early in her career as a botanical artist, Edwards was commissioned to paint 115 watercolours of species of primulas from life as illustrations for the book *Primula* by John Richards, published in 1993; the watercolours for the project were later exhibited at Kew Gardens. Edwards has won a number of gold medals for botanical illustration from the Royal Horticultural Society, and in 2005 her work was included in the exhibition *A New Flowering: 1000 Years of Botanical Art* at the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford. She also paints watercolours of insects (some of which were exhibited at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. in 2003) and takes black and white photographs of plant forms. In 2018 Edwards was commissioned to design a postage stamp as part of a series featuring endangered species for the United Nations, and also designed the cover for the novel *El ala izquierda* (*The Left Wing*) by the Romanian writer Mircea Cartarescu. She lives and works in the town of St. Just in Cornwall. Watercolours by Edwards are today in the Hunt Institute for Botanical Documentation in Pittsburgh, the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew and the Shirley Sherwood Collection of contemporary botanical art.