

*EXHIBITION NEWSLETTER*

*In the Garden of Eve*

*Etchings by Filomena Coppola*

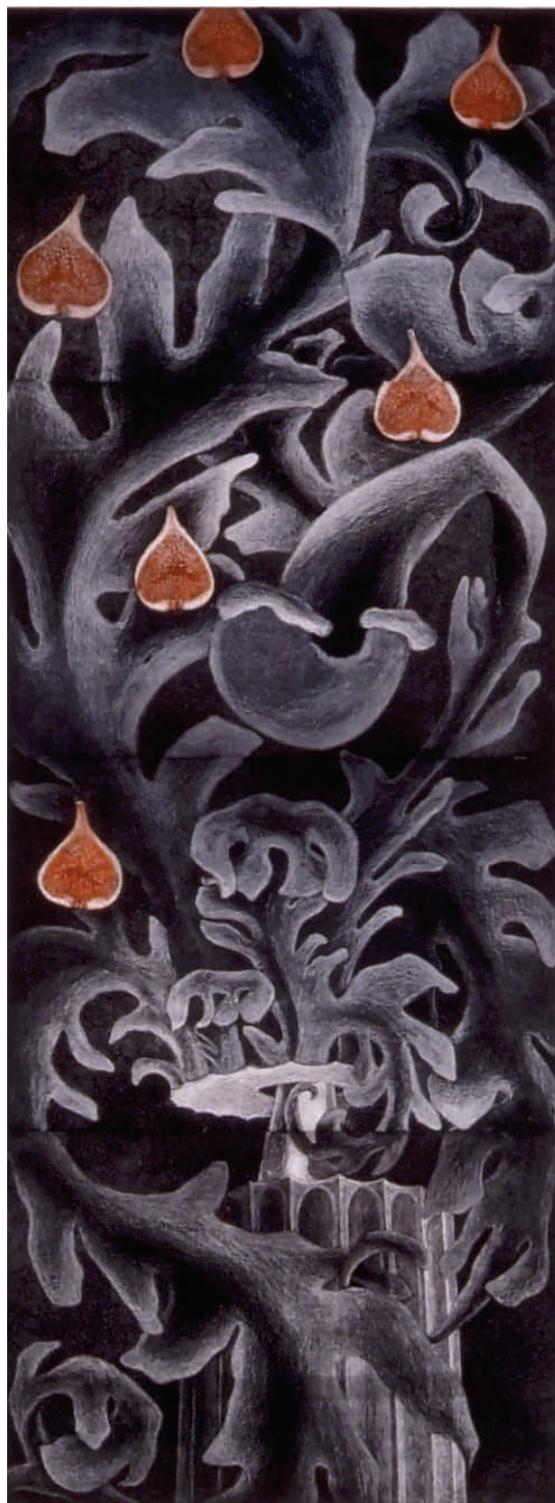
*Thursday 24 August to Wednesday 13 September 1995*

c o p p o l a

*In the Garden of Eve*

This is the way Filomena Coppola pictures Eden. It is not that serenely uneventful garden inhabited by a man and a woman who needed nothing and so had nothing to desire. Coppola's paradise is an obscene jungle, whose nature writhes in the exaggerated gestures of a ravenous appetite. It has no sky and it has no horizon. There are no clearings, only dark and moist recesses: it is close to you, everywhere you look; it surrounds you like the lips of a monstrous mouth. It is a venus trap. But, ultimately, it is indifferent to its viewers. This nature is bent on one thing; its own satisfaction. It consumes itself, engorged in a luxury of self-love. And so, it is not a generative nature. Or rather, when this nature reproduces itself it does so by multiplication and repetition of its parts rather than by procreation. Nature multiplies itself through a delirium of vanity and narcissism.

At first glance these scenes might seem to refer vaguely to Arcadian architecture in ruin, its fragmented classical columns overgrown by an idle vegetation. But it can't be. No such nostalgia or melancholy here. There are no relics to testify to a poignant memory of a golden age. No wistful shepherd or shepherdess would survive in this dark tangle. This is Eden which has convulsed in temptation and already devoured Adam and Eve. Only their body parts are left: obscenely and even comically assimilated into the forms of a voracious nature, and left only so that they can be made to perform.



*Under the Canopy of Eve*  
*Coloured etching and aquatint*  
*240h x 90w cm (plate)*  
*1995*



*Nubile #3*  
 Etching and aquatint  
 90h x 180w cm (plate)  
 1995

In the smaller works the archaic column is amusingly phallic, and it fractures into sections not in order to depose its phallic vigour but to unlock another obscenity as its broken parts become male and female organs caught thrusting at each other. Leaves and fronds envelope, caress and tease this column as it breaks up, and as it simultaneously pushes through the foliage. This column is absorbed by nature to become the trunk of Eden's tree: the Tree of Man, and the tree bearing the forbidden fruit.

But Coppola's fruit is the fig rather than the apple: a fruit swarming with sperm-like filaments in a gluey core. Nature bestows its demonic grace on the shaft of the column as it turns into a tree trunk by crowning it with a Corinthian capital: a swirl of acanthus leaves, sprouting from its neck like a comic ejaculation. These are the very leaves, the spill of pleasure, that curl around the column's shaft or trunk and that entice it to expose its parts. These are the leaves that, in her large "wall paper" series, overwhelm the tree of knowledge and swamp the eye. Nature here, for Coppola, has released its "juice" as the smear and stain of ink that spreads indiscriminately over the wall as the image it draws becomes decoration replicated to infinity.

Edward Colless



*Nubile #2*  
 Etching and aquatint  
 90h x 120w cm (plate)  
 1994