

EXHIBITION NEWSLETTER

1996 Poets and Painters Group Exhibition

Margaret Scott and Filomena Coppola

Friday 15 March to Wednesday 3 April 1996

c o p p o l a

Fig was inspired by the sensuous drawing of Coppola's print *Under the Canopy of Eve*, Eve and sensuousness being themes Gwen was also fond of and often wrote about. *Roman Poet* relates to the etching *Nubile #1* and was partly inspired by translations of Horace's odes about attitudes to death and the loss of friends. These translations were recently sent to me by American poet David Ferry. The odes also deal with preserving the name of friends in verse, and death by water or the sea, which reminded me of Gwen's love of water.

Filomena Coppola (Margaret Scott)  
*The Dance - A. Loves E.*  
Pastel on paper  
112h x 76w cm  
1996



**Fig**

To Gwen Harwood

You sometimes wrote about gardens, fruit and flowers – your comely Edwardian garden; pippins and grapes; spreadwell, waxflower, musk on a springtime hill – and often your eye ran back through leaf and colour to the shape of a lost friend in a net of shadows. Here at Impression Bay in a convict garden a fig tree spreads its hands over snaking limbs, a maze of leafy hollows. Its fruit hang down like hearts drawn on a wall – A. loves E. – or winking lamps hung in a green twilight. Their juice is crimson, warm, irresistibly sweet. Forget the apple. This is the fruit Eve plucked and gave to Adam. Imagine him stroking its nubile curve with a finger, sniffing, nuzzling, engorging this luscious sap welled from the earth, this rush of noon-day – until on his hot tongue he feels the roughness of hundreds of tiny seeds and sees these figs are shaped like falling tears, sees loss in the shadow cast by an act of love. On the tree of knowledge of good and evil grow Fruit that ripens as summer comes to an end, Instants of sweetness defined by a net of darkness.

**Roman Poet**

Horace was chary of venturing out in boats, of sudden African squalls, seamonsters, turbulent waters and frightful cliffs, of dangers masked by some obvious source of dread. Once he was nearly brained by a falling tree. So he lived on his Sabine farm, enjoying his wine, eating chicory, mallow and olives for his supper and digested talk of the Queen of Egypt's navy foundering with blazing sails in a sea of fire. At night when the autumn rains came battering down with the roar of barbarian armies and the river rose, he dreamed of a ravenous ocean swallowing cities, pillars strangled by kelp, palaces drowned, tyrants betrayed in the sinuous arms of lovers like black lilies – and all their names dissolved in a drift of shadows. But at dawn he was up, composing another ode or urging his lyre to pray for a new song that would carry his lovers and friends to a safe harbour beyond the clamorous wreck of the high and mighty and the ambush that even a Horace can't escape.

Margaret Scott