

STEPHEN ONGPIN FINE ART



Brigid EDWARDS (London 1940 -)

Heliconia, Tjampuhan, Ubud

Watercolour, over an underdrawing in pencil, on vellum.

762 x 608 mm. (30 x 23 7/8 in.)

This very large sheet depicts one of the species of the genus of tropical flowering plants known as Heliconia, which are sometimes more commonly known as 'lobster-claws' or 'toucan beaks'. Most of the nearly two hundred species of Heliconia are indigenous in the tropical Americas, but a few are found in some western Pacific islands and in Indonesia, where Brigid Edwards studied the plant depicted here. She appears to have seen the plant on the grounds of the Hotel Tjampuhan in Ubud, on the island of Bali, which was opened in 1928 as the royal guesthouse of the Ubud Palace.

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.'

Exhibitions

New York, Beadleston Gallery, 2000.

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.