



R Y M I L L
C O O N A W A R R A

JOHN HINGE



In response to frequent questions about the various grapes from which our individual wines are made, Rymill Coonawarra decided to commission the talented local artist John Hinge to paint a watercolour series comprising our seven major grape varieties. Such a series of paintings, which now adorns the walls of the winery cellar door, is known as an ampelography, from the Greek *ampelos*: vine, and *-graphy*: description.

The ripe bunches of grapes portrayed are, of course, the culmination of a twelve-month growth cycle on the vine. This chronology of development has also been depicted in a second series of paintings, which is illustrated above. It shows our principal variety, Cabernet Sauvignon, starting with a detailed illustration of its dormant winter bud, followed by bud-burst, shoot development, flowering, fruit-set, veraison, and concluding with the fully mature bunch of grapes.

A third series of paintings shows the same sequence of growth but, being set in the vineyard, is on a larger scale. In addition, it depicts the concurrent seasonal work that is in progress, from winter pruning, through spring spraying and summer trimming, to the final autumn harvesting of the ripe grape crop.

Our artist, John Hinge, a native of the Limestone Coast who now lives in Robe, was born near Bordertown in 1957, and remembers growing up in an environment where he was constantly aware of this annual growth cycle of the region's vineyards. Having painted his first successful watercolour at the age of eight, he later studied matriculation art at Saint Peter's College in Adelaide, and subsequently completed an industrial design course at the Underdale College of Advanced Education. He became a professional painter in 1981 at the age of 24, and since then has held exhibitions of his work annually, has won several awards and prizes, and is now represented in numerous private and corporate collections, both nationally and overseas.

Hinge had initially entered the world of botanical painting with his studies of roses, and was aware of the silent influences of past masters, such as Sir Hans Heysen who brilliantly used the effect of light to create the pronounced realism of his 1933 *Autumn Fruits*. However, the present ampelography offered a challenge which required new techniques, particularly the very fine brushwork necessary to attain the great detail required to render total scientific accuracy.

Another aspect of Hinge's preparation was to visit Valmai Hankel, the curator of rare books at the State Library of South Australia, and research the works of previous artists who had painted in the same tradition, one of the most impressive being the 1857 *Ampelographie Francaise* by Anthelme-Eugene Grobon. Excellent though these still-life, classical paintings were, they often appeared almost too good to be true. Hinge decided to emulate nature, and execute his studies with total veracity, depicting the grapes and leaves with such scars from sunburn, wind damage, and even bug-bites as they might show in real life.

The task required a full twelve months of regular visits to the vineyard with our winemaker John Innes, for Hinge to become thoroughly acquainted with the vines' annual growth cycle, and to appreciate that each variety differs not just in the nature of its grapes, but also in the growth and structure of its canes and the morphology of its leaves. He found that one of the most intriguing facets of this field-work was being able to taste the developing flavours in the various grapes as they attained their full, mouth-watering ripeness and then, through some inexplicable synaesthetic process, to transfer these subtleties to his paintings. Not surprisingly, many visitors to the winery, when viewing his finished works, feel tempted to pick the grapes from the frame and savour those same flavours for themselves!