

**Dr. Ron Southern**  
**Historian**

Gina Kalabishis' work stares in stark wonder at the excess of nature, whether it be the glory of the watchful flower, the eye of which is the engulfed embodiment of our humanity, or a laughing cat's guileless enjoyment of a catty joke that pokes fun at the seriousness of our endeavour, and opens our sophistication to ridicule.

She enfolds us in our own tumour growing unknown in our bodies, turning our words into the flowers of memory, and our memories into a history of the interchange of decay and generation, in which terminal blood stains are also the buds of erotic longing. She takes us into the deep pathology of our wanton neglect, culpability and guilt, to a place where dead vines threaten to strangle the isolated garden and loneliness are the brief blooms overarched by tendrils weaving tight the darkness of the night, and where the truncated and stoppered tree, the parasitic plastic teat, and grafted skin become the futile dreams of reassimilation into a garden of the mind now as lost as that of the soul. And yet she is the archaeologist's delight, for out of her dead, with their vulva mouths in the act of last screams, giving birth, support and succour to myriad forms of budding, she captures a life balanced tenuously on dry-stick bones floating magically in air with the aid of a few wires, our technological umbilical into the lives of others, into other worlds.

This is History in bone and paint made out of the strict discipline of Japanese flower arrangement, and the extreme formalism of western still life, hinting always at the pathology of these forms without denying their rapturous suppleness and fecundity. There is the clinician's eye operating too, the perception of a scientific illustrator seeking art in description. She creates a visual field which is both very specific and filled with a painful joy of the moment, as if apprehension and understanding coincided sublimely; and allegorical and general, as if there is a commonality in the intense ritual formality of a painted flower inscribing the after words of the dead. By these wires we hang in our history in nature, and in these ways Gina Kalabishis creates an art of the witness looking for beauty in his or her passing.

Gina Kalabishis delicately interlaces the structures of the human body, as represented by medical illustrations, and the extreme formalism of the still life. Kalabishis cleverly hints at the pathology of both kinds of formalism without denying their beauty and seductive qualities.