

## **Gina Kalabishis**

### **Ikebana and associated works**

Ikebana is the Japanese tradition of flower arranging that dates back more than 500 years. It is a strongly disciplined practice that requires the artist to identify the beauty of the plant well beyond the obvious bloom and looks to shape, line, form and minimalist principles to achieve the aesthetic.

Gina Kalabishis is a Melbourne artist who has fused the ancient Japanese form with a skilful use of brush and oil and provided an underlying theme of life in all its permutations; life, death, sexuality and associated mythology.

Gina's work is deliberately evocative, causing the viewer to stop and study the infrastructure. Bones provide the literal skeleton from which the delicate blooms rise and shape themselves into elegant representations of minimalist beauty. Each work is perfectly balanced between the splendour of the intricate arrangements and the exquisite use of colour that creates bright, clean backgrounds and completes the sense of harmony, even when the subject matter is somewhat uncomfortable such as it is in *Fearless*; with the sharp realisation that to be fearless requires a certain aptitude for being feared.

From 2009's *Special Beauty* through to 2012's *Agony* there is a clear evolution in Gina's work where the complexity of the subject matter is increasingly hidden by the apparent simplicity of form. But that simplicity is an illusion as Gina has chosen complex issues and complex methods with which to explore them. There is no essential feminine and Gina represents the diversity of the feminine, with all its strength, beauty and vitality.

## **Monica Cronin and Beth Humphries**

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