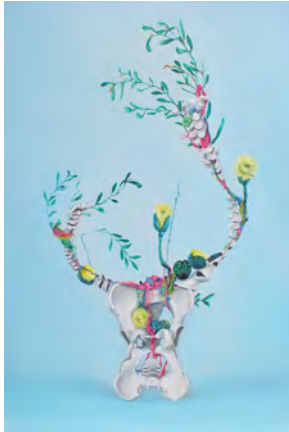


Imperfect Bloom

December 2011

Level17 Artspace, Victoria University



Offshoot 2011

oil on linen

91 x 60cm, Private collection

Imperfect Bloom comprises a series of painted images which were first constructed as digital montages or assemblages of flora and non-plant material in the guise of floral arrangements.

As a platform to explore the expectations that underpin our ideas of aesthetic beauty, Kalabishis's artworks combine an array of mythological and domestic narratives around interests such as the constructed nature of Ikebana, Australian flora, female sexuality and the domestic role of motherhood. In this sense her works reflect on what it is to be a modern woman and mother, with different responsibilities and obligations to previous generations of women (such as her own mother) whose lives were often shaped around societal expectations of dependability and what was 'proper' or 'right'. Such expectations were exemplified by instructional books of the 1950'-60's, when floral arranging was for many wives and mothers a form of art that could be displayed in their own homes.

Norman Sparron's 1967 book, "The Beauty of Australian Wild Flowers - creative ideas for Japanese _flower arrangement", is an example that provided a springboard for a number of Kalabishis's paintings. Not satisfied with the simple arrangements it contained, she reworked them by digitally manipulating motifs and symbols and incorporating various found and scanned objects from her own collection to construct what she feels more closely represents the modern human condition. By incorporating emblems of deformed human anatomical forms with oceanic and land formations and domestic items such as sewing needles, embroidery thread, rope, human hair and floral samples from her own garden into her paintings, Kalabishis' images become seductive and fertile critiques of "traditional" arrangements that demonstrate "perfection".

Kalabishis's works are derived from her idea that while perfection is not possible, we can maintain a balanced view of the imperfect world we live in by being considerate of the many complexities it gives rise to. And only through the constant state of flux that this entails can we achieve any sense of "perfection".

Hamish Coates 2011