

the good life

ΝΕΟΣ ΚΟΣΜΟΣ
SATURDAY 26 MARCH 2016

YOU

&

ME

Acclaimed artist Gina Kalabishis presents a mesmerising exhibition that juxtaposes the individual with their natural surroundings

You &

A mesmerising exhibition by Gina Kalabishis juxtaposes the individual with their natural surroundings

NELLY SKOUFATOGLOU

Gina Kalabishis' latest work celebrates the beauty of life, as it immerses itself like a succulent plant in darkness and light.

Employing a combination of alla prima and glazing in her oil paintings, the artist brings the human element into her visual field.

The human body is hinted at as aspects of folded flesh, it intermingles within the foliage, evoking a tender embrace as a simple display of love and affection.

To describe her relationship with nature Gina Kalabishis recalls a classic Marc Chagall quote: "In our life there is a single colour, as on an artist's palette, which provides the meaning of life and art. It is the colour of love."

Love is always present in Kalabishis' work, she loves bringing attention to detail, in an attempt to draw on universal truths. When looking at her work it is almost as though her flora comes alive, almost as if her 'heroes' are trying to convey emotions. *You & Me* resonates perfectly with *Biophilia*, the artist's ongoing body of work.

"*Biophilia* for me is a very personal attachment to country and its vast abundance of beauty, from its flora, fauna stretching my curiosity and interest from inland to sea," Gina Kalabishis explains.

"I also find great delight in saying the word '*philia*', derived from the ancient Greek word for love. This word summed up my understanding of love as a child, of family, especially of my

parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles constantly showering us with affection of '*philia*' and of course, the dreaded pinch on the cheek."

The body of work for *You & Me* was inspired during Kalabishis' time at a remote and secluded camping ground on the southern coast of NSW in the spring of 2015.

"I have been going up there with my friends for several years, but this time I was struck by the lushness of the vegetation after many years of drought," she tells *Neos Kosmos*.

"The flora and fauna was in abundance, which created an overwhelming pull on the mind and body. I felt totally immersed in this untouched environment, with

a heightened sense of awareness. Art has been my '*Arête*', an ancient Greek philosophy 'to strive for excellence' in all I can potentially create. Art is essential for an artist to provoke a deep evocative experience on the viewers' lives."

Her unidentified plants seem lost yet thrive in imaginary gardens, leaving us uncertain of whether their nature is parasitic or endangered. There is also an overwhelming sense of loneliness.

However, it is this feeling of isolation that is sometimes necessary in order to become aware of our surroundings, of ourselves and, subsequently of each other's needs.

"I thought and felt a personal closeness, an emotional and physical connection that myself and each person has with the

natural world," Kalabishis continues.

"For any relationship to survive, be healthy and sustainable, it starts with just *You & Me*."

After her trip to the national park, the artist documented and formulated the native flora arrangements at the campground, before bringing them back to the studio for the creation and development of the digital images extended to the final paintings. *You & Me* is the culmination of six months of studio work.

In her mesmerising and wild 'nurseries' enters the human form, claiming its place in the physical world in a very intimate and seductive way.

The female body poses as an earthly still-life object symbolising the

celebration of nature, but the colours and textures Kalabishis chooses to dress her background with, give her paintings a supernatural twist.

You & Me is an ode to a beauty natural, desired and envied which accentuates the allegory of the human existence, a philosophical question transcending time.

The *You & Me* exhibition will be on until April 2016.

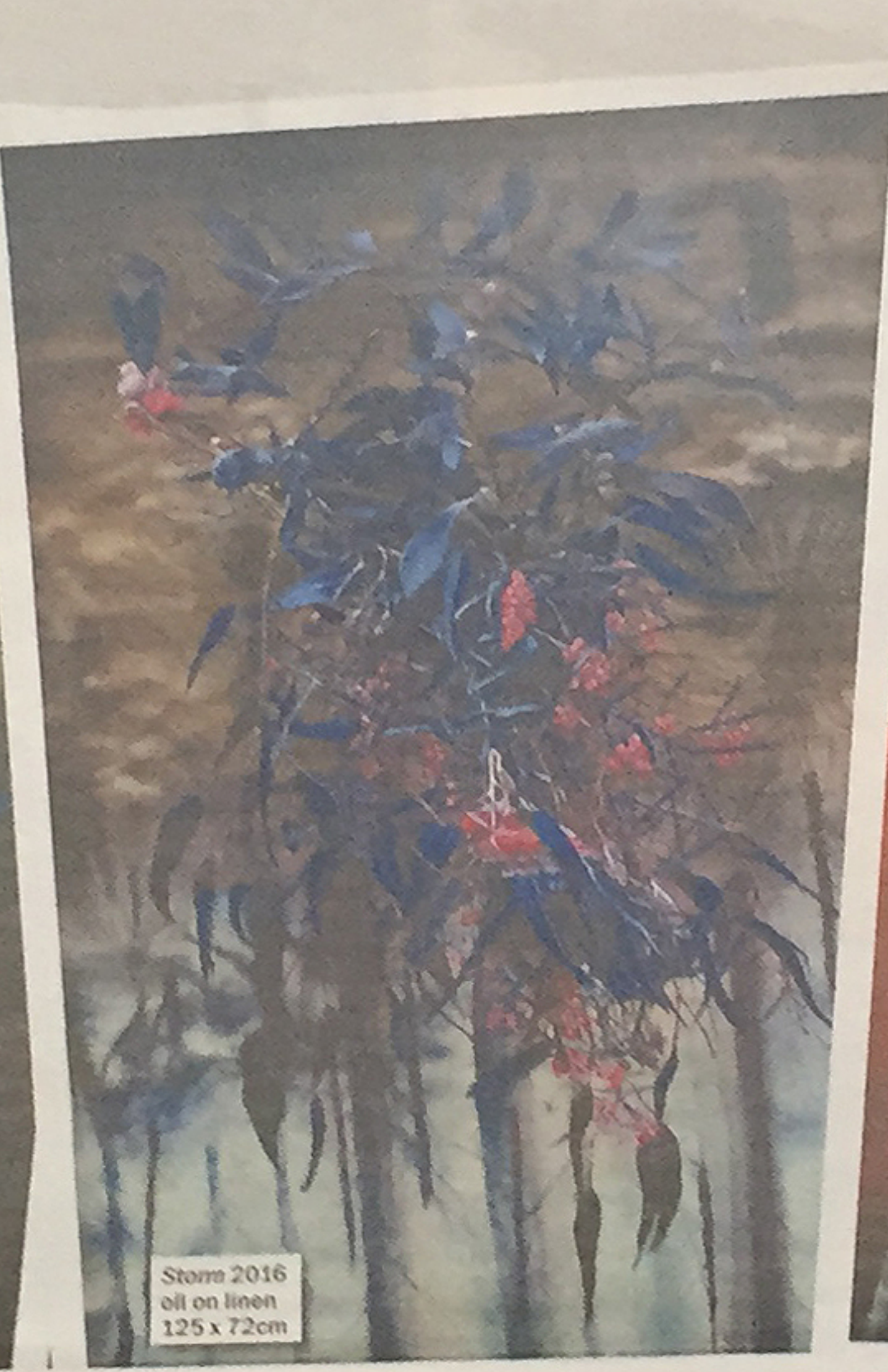
Gina Kalabishis lives and works in Melbourne, she holds a Post Graduate Diploma of Visual Arts, Bachelor of Fine Art (Painting) from the Victorian College of the Arts, Melbourne University and a Advanced Diploma of Arts (Electronic Design and Interactive Multimedia) from Victoria University in 2003. She has featured in

solo and group exhibitions in Australia, Spain and America and has been selected for number of significant national art prizes. In 2014 Kalabishis was awarded the prestigious Rick Amor Drawing Prize from a field of over 450 submissions, as well as being announced a finalist in the Eutick Still Life Award (2015, 2016), and the Adelaide Perry Prize for Drawing.

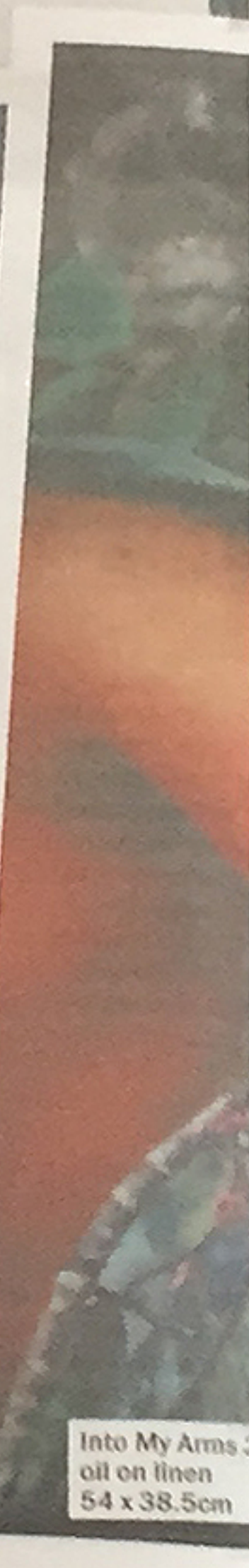
Kalabishis is represented in major collections including the National Gallery of Australia. In August-September 2016 Kalabishis will undertake a residency at the beautiful Bundanon Trust studios, the legacy of Arthur and Yvonne Boyd. The artist will also be going on numerous field trips to The Blue Mountains Range and Wilsons Promontory National Park throughout the year.



Shine a Light 2016
oil on linen
125 x 72cm



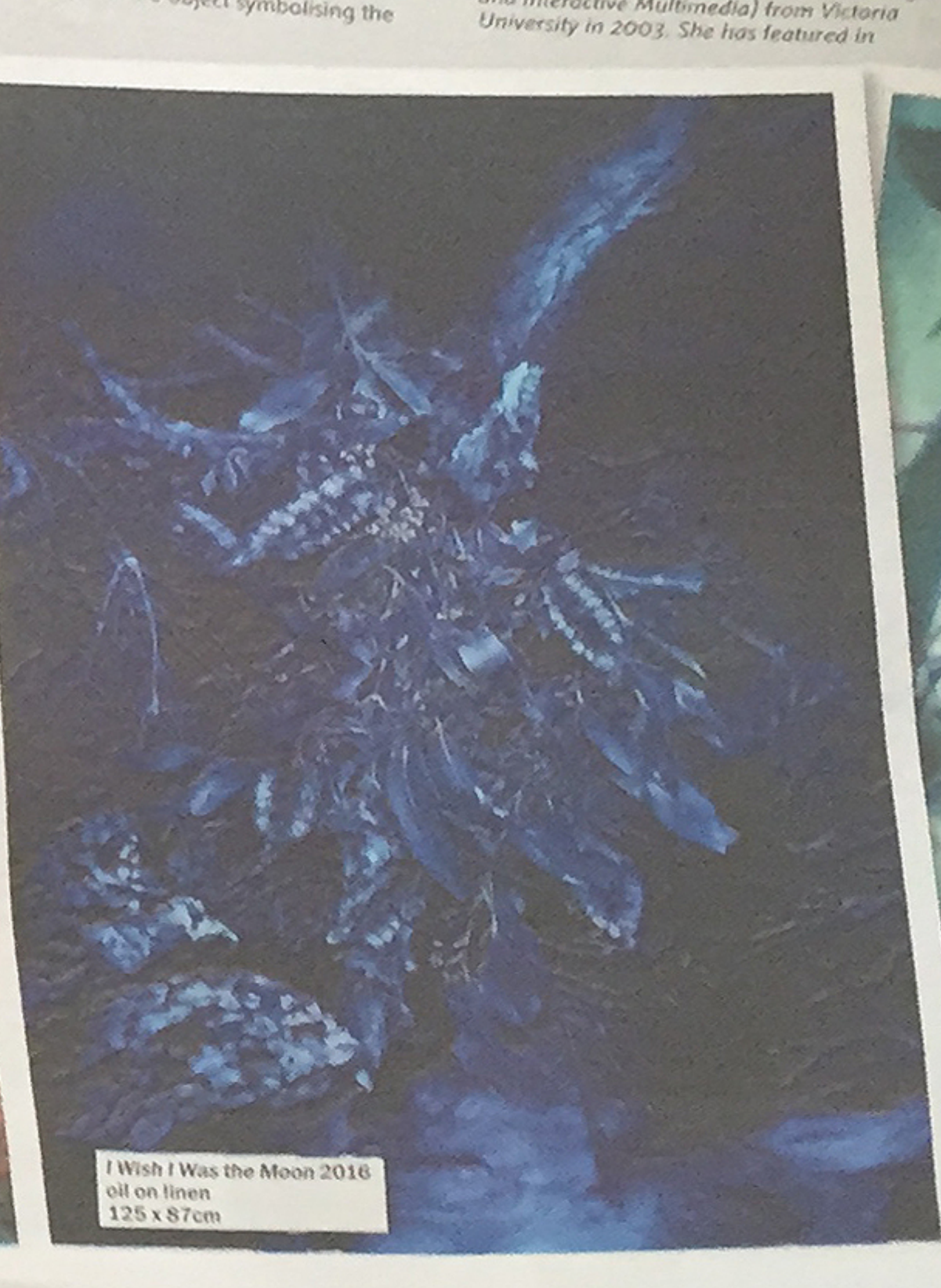
Storm 2016
oil on linen
125 x 72cm



Into My Arms 2016
oil on linen
54 x 38.5cm



I Wish I Was the Moon 2016
oil on linen
125 x 87cm



Push the sky away 2016
oil on linen
54 x 38.5cm

