



'Contingent Ambiguity', 2002, folio of hand-printed polymergravure and chine collé prints, letterpress text and colophon, 39 x 38 x 4 cm

Profiles in Print – DIANNE LONGLEY

With growing national and international recognition as an artist printmaker, digital imaging and photopolymer technology have remained significant features of Dianne Longley's present printmaking practice.

DIANNE Longley is an artist who finds her identity through her art. She creates a fantasy world which possesses a palpable reality. She observed recently: 'I'm not an observational worker, the imagery in my prints and artists books is drawn from literature, dreams and the "oddness of being" with its sense of cultural diversity and its grotesques... We are all odd in one way or another and what interests me is how we manage to get on together and create a life for ourselves.'

This quality of "oddness" has been a prevalent note in much of her art. While born in Sydney, to where her mother travelled to deliver each of her four daughters, Longley spent the first decade of her life on the family wheat and sheep farm at Bogan Gate, a small village about 30 km west of Parkes in rural New South Wales. To enable their daughters to carry on their education, the family sold the farm and moved to the nearby town of Forbes where Longley completed her primary and

secondary school education. In retrospect, she noted: 'I felt odd and out of place in Forbes, but when I visited Barbara [her older sister, who died in 1983], when she was studying at the art school in Newcastle, I felt that I belonged in the art school environment. We read the same sort of books, like those by Hermann Hesse, looked at art and listened to the same sorts of music.'

After her schooling in Forbes, it seemed only natural for her to go to an art school and in 1975 Longley enrolled at the Newcastle College of Advanced Education where in 1978 she completed a four-year Diploma in Art. In her choice of courses she ranged widely, including classes in painting, sculpture, drawing, ceramics, design and graphics – which included photography, film and printmaking. For her, Sydney 'seemed too big, when you come from the country', while Newcastle permitted a degree of individuality and creative diversity and it was here that she was introduced to printmaking and commenced a



'Remember to Die, Remember to Live', 2008, concertina book made with Threads 110 gsm paper, inkjet prints on Hahnemühle Photo Rag 188 gsm paper, 21 x 21 x 1.5 cm



'Guardianship', 1989, multiple plate intaglio print, 10 x 10 cm



'Celebration of Kind Deeds' (detail), 2004, intaglio and inkjet chine collé on kozo-backed gampi paper, 21 x 15.5 cm



'Keeper of the Golden Apples', 2004, intaglio and inkjet chine collé on kozo-backed gampi paper, gold and silver leaf, 15 x 21 cm



'Into Darkness' (detail), 1989, intaglio print with hand-colouring, 25.5 x 33 cm

lifelong love affair with etching and artists books.

Longley is a printmaker who made her decisions as to what her art was to be about very early in her career and has then spent a lifetime refining, elaborating and re-articulating that vision within an ever-increasing range of technical strategies and cultural references. Her art was to be about the "oddness of being" – a whimsical surrealist world where dreams and fantasies coexist with more tangible elements of reality. It was a world in which Lewis Carroll's *Alice* could rub shoulders with characters out of manga comics, gargoyles and grotesques and one in which the dream of innocence is surrounded by the semi-visible forces of darkness. Longley from an early age was interested in Carl Jung's theories on psychology, where the psyche is explored through dreams and mythology and visual archetypal forms tap into a collective unconscious. Her art is informed by Jung, rather than serving as an illustration of his theories. Also, during her Newcastle days she found Paul Klee, Joan Miró, Wassily Kandinsky and David Hockney as kindred spirits and sources of inspiration. In her practice they appear more like fellow travellers, rather than sources for quotation.

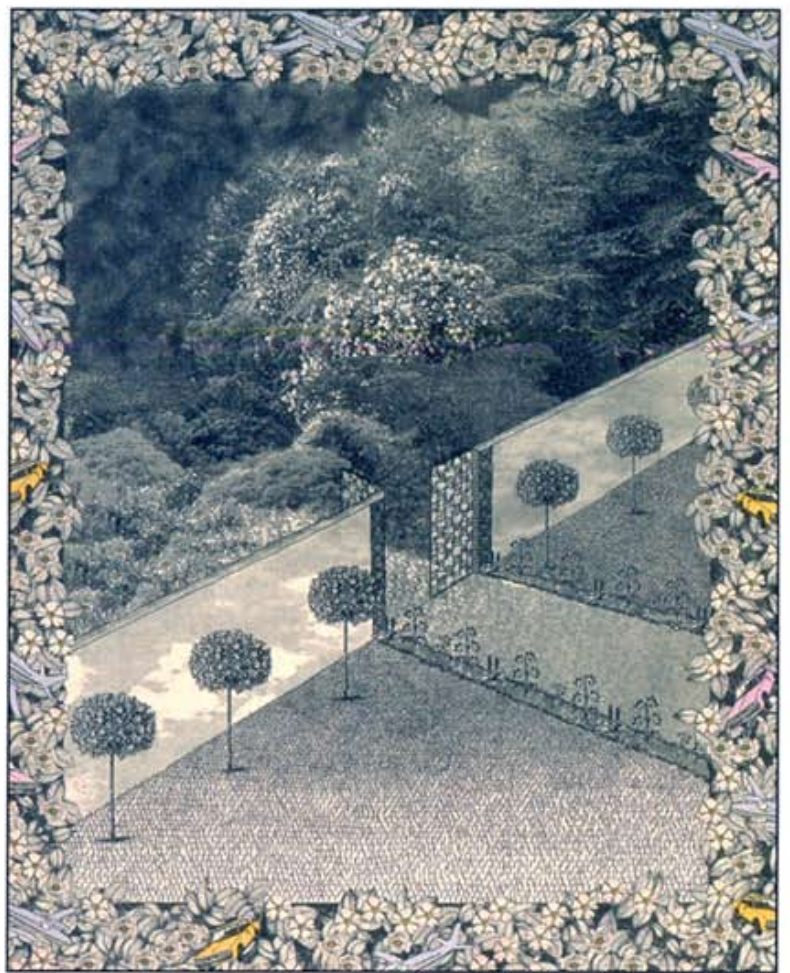
On completing her art school training in Newcastle, in the summer of 1978/79, Longley relocated to Adelaide, another small and manageable city, and one in which she has been based ever since. In some of her earliest prints, such as the small-scale etching *Free spirit*, 1980, many of the elements of her artistic vision are already in place. It is a transcendental image with the quality of a waking dream, where the figure seems to be living on the edge of being and gaining identity through the act of being. The print received an Award of Excellence when shown at the "Korean Miniature Print Exhibition" in 1980. The artist describes this period in her life as one of great risk taking, where somehow she would blindly believe in fate and that all would be resolved not through human intervention, but according to some predestined path. Her marvellous print, *Guardianship*, to some extent reflects this idea of living a life ruled by chance.

In 1984 Longley was successful in applying for a Visual Arts Board travel grant to take up a residency with the Peacock Printmakers in Aberdeen, Scotland. This was



'The Golden Rose', 1995, folio of relief photopolymer prints, glassine overlays and essay, 54.5 x 40 x 2 cm

her first trip outside of Australia and apart from being brought into an international community of progressive printmakers, she also saw on one of her trips to London the extensive exhibition "Hockney paints the stage". While David Hockney had always been an artist with whom Longley felt an affinity, the work which he had done for the theatre encouraged within her the idea that



'Embarkation' (detail), 1995, print from 'The Golden Rose' folio, relief photopolymer print with hand-colouring, 40.5 x 29.5 cm



'Chorus of Trust', 2005, inkjet print on Hahnemuhle German Etching 310 gsm paper, 90 x 120 cm



'Lamentation of Deeds Past and Reluctant Farewells', 2004, intaglio and inkjet chine collé on kozo-backed gampi paper, gold and silver leaf, 15 x 21 cm

much of her art is about placing her figures in a stage-like space with multiple realities revolving around them. Throughout the 'eighties in her prints and artists books she created her poetic abstractions with their enigmatic narratives, while at the same time and in the best Jungian tradition she maintained her personal dream diary. The death of her father, Peter Nigel Longley, in 1985, with whom she was particularly close, and the disintegration of her first marriage around about the same time, marked a certain watershed in the artist's personal life and she became more involved in the part-time teaching



'Convergence', 2007, intaglio and inkjet chine collé with encaustic collage, hand-stitching and gold leaf, 42.5 x 60 cm



'Invocation to Delightful Nonsense and Virtuous Contemplation', 2004, intaglio and inkjet chine collé on gampi paper, 21 x 29 cm

of printmaking in Adelaide, plus a year full-time teaching at the University of Newcastle School of Art in 1989. It was a time when she received growing national and international recognition as an artist printmaker.

In 1990 Longley made her first trip to Japan, where she stayed at the Australia Council studio in Tokyo, and this marked what was to become a serious engagement with Japanese art and culture. It was also at about this time that she met and then married Shaw Hendry. The paper sensibility, the crisp linear quality and the beautifully gradated tonal shifts encountered in Japanese art for Longley echoed qualities for which she strove in her own art. 'I am attracted to the idea of decoration and embellishment as a strategy through which to seduce the viewer – to get them to look at the work long enough for them to enter into a dialogue with it and in this way engage with some of the other dimensions involved. In this regard, I see a parallel with medieval illuminated manuscripts, where decoration and embellishment are



'Steadfastness', 2007, intaglio print with inkjet chine collé on Whatmans 150 gsm paper, 41.5 x 29.5 cm

used with a purpose, other than pure ornamentation.'

In 1992, while teaching at the South Australian School of Art Longley started to employ digital technologies in her art practice, while in the summer of 1994/95 she became a pioneer of the non-toxic photopolymer printmaking technology. She published an influential book on the subject in 1998, which appeared in a second edition in 2003. Digital imaging and photopolymer printmaking have remained significant features of her present printmaking practice. Often she will make a digital collage which is printed through an inkjet printer onto either lightweight cotton rag papers or a kozo-backed gampi paper. Using the *chine collé* technique, she then combines the inkjet collage with a strong linear photopolymer plate onto a heavier paper. These are technically sophisticated prints, but with a strong whimsical quality and, as in her earliest prints, seem to relate to an enigmatic narrative dealing with an innocent girl's journey through a dream-like reality.

Prof. Sasha Grishin