

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Dianne Longley

Although Dianne Longley was born in Sydney and received her art training in Newcastle, she has been associated with Adelaide for about three decades. She is an artist who finds her identity through her art, creating 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.

In 1992, while teaching at the South Australian School of Art, Longley started to employ digital technologies in her art practice. In the summer of 1994/95 she became a pioneer of non-toxic photopolymer printmaking technology and published an influential book on the subject in 1998, which appeared in a second edition in 2003.

Most recently she has been working on what she terms 'digital wood engravings'.

Earlier this year she explained the technique. 'In my recent work I have explored new processes where there is an overlap/ intersection between printmaking, and commercial signage, printing and photographic industries. I have made "digital wood engravings" incorporating a CNC routing machine from a

sign writing business the digital wood engravings ... are multiples, made in editions, but the actual "print" is an engraved wooden panel, created from a digital file. The digital file is the matrix (as opposed to the more traditional use of a block or metal plate).

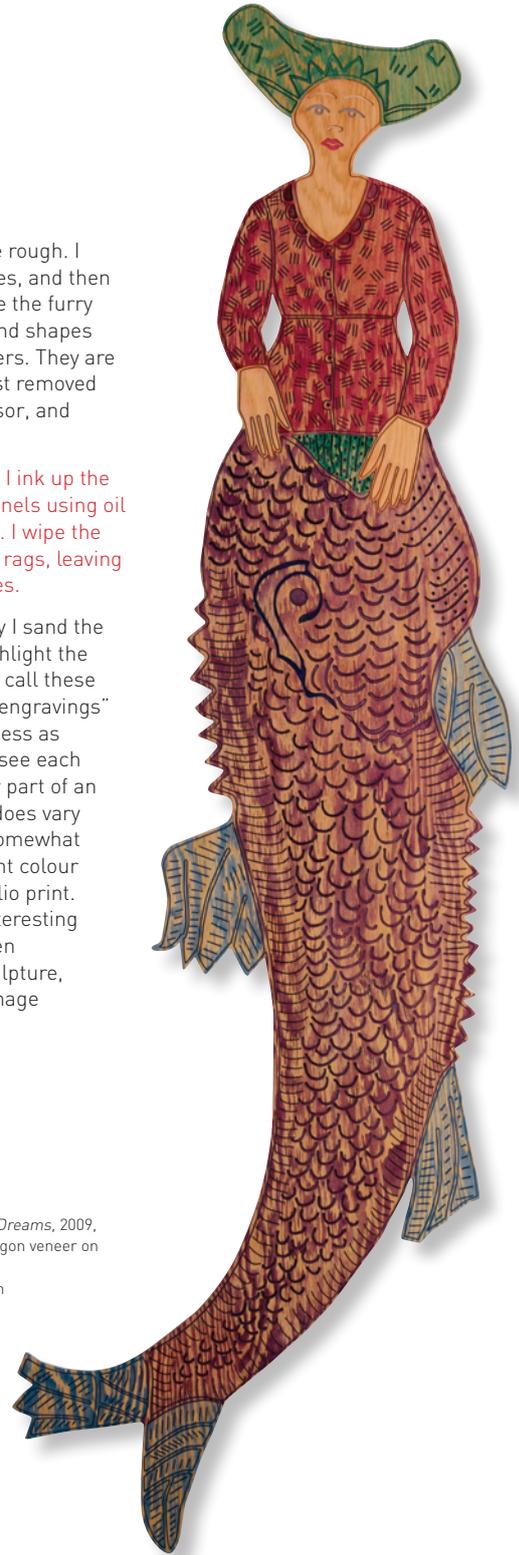
The initial process involves intensive work on the computer. My line drawing is scanned and a vector (as opposed to a bitmap) file is created. I clean up this vector file using Adobe Illustrator, removing excess vector points, and simplifying and joining lines and shapes. The more complicated the line drawing, the longer it takes to clean up the vector file. I use layers in Adobe Illustrator to create different types of cutting patterns. One layer is the line work, another layer is the shaped areas, and there is also an outline layer. The Illustrator file is returned to the commercial sign writing business, where the file is imported into the software that runs a CNC routing machine. The files are grouped together to gain maximum use of a 2400 x 1200mm sheet of Oregon veneer on a hoop ply wooden panel. I have the Oregon veneer panels specially made using a "crown cut" veneer, which has a very interesting grain pattern. The panels are engraved on the CNC routing machine. The line work and shapes are cut using particular routing drill bits. Finally all the outlines are cut and the pieces can be removed from the panel. At this stage they need a lot of hand finishing. They are filled with sawdust, and the line

and shape edges are rough. I lightly sand the pieces, and then painstakingly remove the furry edges on the lines and shapes using bamboo skewers. They are brushed, the sawdust removed with an air compressor, and sanded again.

Then the fun begins. I ink up the engraved wooden panels using oil paints and mediums. I wipe the excess paint off with rags, leaving colour in the recesses.

When the paint is dry I sand the surface again, to highlight the grain of the veneer. I call these works "digital wood engravings" (to describe the process as precisely as I can). I see each one as a multiple, or part of an edition. The edition does vary in colour, which is somewhat like adding monochrome colour to a traditional intaglio print. I think there is an interesting overlap here, between printmaking and sculpture, and commercial signage processes.' •

Dianne Longley, *Fisher of Dreams*, 2009, digital wood engraving, Oregon veneer on hoop ply, oil paints, Danish varnish, 210 x 50 cm



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