



Panoramic view of *Navigations* at the Barratt Galleries, Alstonville (NSW). Photographer: Doug Spowart



## Dianne Longley

### NAVIGATIONS: artist books and folios, and mixed media works

Dianne Longley with *Remember to Die, Remember to Live* 2008, concertina artist book made with inkjet prints on Hahnemühle Photo Rag 188gsm paper, book closed 21 x 21 x 1.5 cm, book open 21 x 378 cm, edition: 12. Photographer: Doug Spowart

As one encounters Dianne Longley's work there is undoubtedly a feeling of being drawn into a story. Characters emerge, symbols and images appear — they demand interpretation, their sequential flow forms language, creating the syntax within a narrative. Her works seem to connect with the childhood wonderment of things mysterious, sometimes scary and yet seductively alluring. But they also cross over into deeper intellectual abstract concepts of existence, journey, experience, love and loss — a life lived and one's own mortality. No single image is simple for Longley. Each is layered in such a way that the physical techniques embed the communiqué, locking it in place — each fragment of meaning awaiting its release by the viewer's deeper engagement.

Dianne Longley's latest exhibition *Navigations* at Barratt Galleries in Alstonville, northern New South Wales, presents work that spans a twenty-year period. In the front two rooms of the gallery the diverse scope of Longley's oeuvre is revealed: prints of various techniques, on-glaze porcelain, small-scale bronzes, poker-worked paintings and artist's books.

Whilst her practice and media may be diverse, Longley's themes, symbols, iconography and density of meaning make up a cohesive whole. A catalogue designed by Longley supports the show and provides, through an essay by Farley Wright, an insight into a more intellectual appreciation for the work.

The exhibition was opened by Jan Davis, Associate Professor at Southern Cross University, who spoke of Dianne Longley's significant history within Australian art, the special nature of her work and how its presentation at Barratt Galleries enabled a regional connection.

Preceding the opening Longley presented an artist's talk that was largely centred on the

production processes behind her practice. This was of great interest to the gathered audience of around twenty-five, many of whom were students from the nearby Southern Cross University.

One discussion topic related to the use of digital technology and her integration of it into her work. As an early adopter of image creation/manipulation/enhancement software like Adobe Photoshop in the early 1990s, the computer and its output devices have been interwoven into Longley's practice. She has also used photopolymer processes to integrate images or fragments of a real object or pattern into her work. As the technology edged forward Longley has moved with it, incorporating newly available outcomes to finesse her communication.

While Longley's print, paint, sculpture and ceramic works on show have titles that frame a universal interpretation, her more complex works are artist's books. These are communiqués originating from the artist's personal life experience and, while the art production process may represent a kind of catharsis for the artist, it also enables connection and sharing of similar, sometimes equally personal, responses from viewers. Works such as *Remember to Die, Remember to Live* are dense with a visual symbolism that transcends the page.

Other works such as *Compass of Change, Night Sea Crossing* and *Theatre of Embarkation* represent an investigation into the workings of the mind, the journey of life and their relationship to the inner-self.

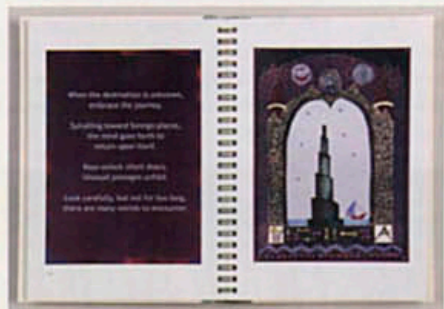
Of particular interest is the artist's reworking of earlier books into new editions. The original works were often grand forays into the fine art object and by the nature of the processes and materials used, as well as the low edition number, created an expensive and therefore exclusive product. Re-

engineering the books using contemporary technologies has enabled Longley to share her work with a wider audience. At the recent Freestyle Books symposium at the State Library of Queensland, Peter Lyssiotis commented 'that no book is ever finished' and Longley confirms this by the reconfiguration of her books to refine and update the earlier messages.

Ultimately, of course, all books transcend the lives of their makers. The exhibition *Navigations* presents Dianne Longley's work in the public space of Barratt Galleries — viewers of her works will find them within the private space of their own life experience.

**Doug Spowart**, photographer, lecturer and artist's bookmaker

Dianne Longley *Compass of Change* 2007  
laser printed images and text on Saxton Chardonnay  
100 gsm, wrap around coil binding, 21 x 16.5 x 1.5 cm



*Navigations* was shown at Barratt Galleries, Alstonville in northern NSW from 20 September – 19 October 2008.