ROBERT INGPEN:
FROM SCIENCE TO WONDERLAND

Robert Ingpen was born in 1936 and grew up in Geelong. He studied art and design under Harold Freedman at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, graduating with a Diploma of Graphic Art in 1958. Early in his career, Ingpen worked as a designer and illustrator for the CSIRO and (in Mexico and Peru) the United Nations. His work for these organisations saw Ingpen develop a cerebral and meticulous approach to his art.

In the 1970s, Ingpen began a series of illustrated books on historical subjects. They featured accurate and naturalistic images of heritage buildings, ships and streetscapes. In that decade, Ingpen also began illustrating children’s books, and it is in that sphere that he has most strongly made his mark.

Ingpen’s reputation as a children’s book illustrator is now international. He is the only Australian to have been awarded the prestigious Hans Christian Andersen Medal for Children’s Literature (for illustration, in 1986). In recognition of his contribution to children’s literature, Ingpen was also awarded the Dromkeen Medal (in 1989) and was made a Member of the Order of Australia (2007).

In 2004, Ingpen was invited to illustrate the Centenary Edition of Peter Pan and Wendy (published in association with the Great Ormond Street Hospital, Foreword by David Barrie). Following the success of that production, Ingpen illustrated the Centenary Edition of The Wind in the Willows, and a series of other classics for Palazzo Editions (issued in Australia by Walker Books) including Treasure Island, A Christmas Carol and Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland. These books were widely acclaimed, and display vividly Ingpen’s mature style, which uniquely blends reality and fantasy.

Ingpen’s work has been exhibited in Taipei (1999), London (1999), Bologna (2002), New York (2002) and Geelong (2005). In 2002, Ingpen’s work was also featured at the inaugural exhibition of the Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art in Amherst, Massachusetts.

Ingpen is presently down-sizing to a smaller home, and has decided to reduce his holdings of his own copies of his books. We are therefore pleased to be able to offer our customers books from the artist’s own collection (marked in the catalogue with an asterisk), including foreign editions not often seen in Australia.

Other books and a selection of original artwork – including two full-page pencil and watercolour illustrations executed by Ingpen for the Centenary Edition of Peter Pan and Wendy (items 2 and 3) – are also included in the catalogue. The illustrations exemplify the atmospheric and ethereal style that Ingpen has developed. All the illustrations and the great majority of the books in the catalogue are signed by Robert Ingpen.

As a children’s book illustrator, Ingpen aims to start readers on a journey, rather than deliver them to a pre-conceived destination. As an artist, Ingpen’s own journey has taken him to many unexpected places.

Fiona Kells & Stuart Kells
1. Robert Ingpen

*Elder Hall*

Pencil and watercolour on paper
30 x 31cm; tipped to board
Signed: Ingpen 84
Illustration for Robert Ingpen and
Michael Page, *Colonial South Australia*, 1985, p. 79

$800

Thomas Elder encouraged music, as he did so many colonial activities, by founding a Chair of Music at Adelaide University. Graduates might apply for an Elder scholarship at the Royal College of Music, London.

The school made do with temporary premises until Elder’s will provided £20,000 for a Conservatorium of Music, now also known as Elder Hall. It was opened in September 1900 and was only the second building on the campus. Colonists were enraptured by the Gothic design, carried out in fawn sandstone and ornamented with buttresses, pointed windows, and Scottish baronial corner turrets.

*Colonial South Australia, J. M. Dent, 1985, p. 78*
Look closely...and you may note that there are here seven large trees, each with a hole in its hollow trunk as large as a boy. These are the seven entrances to the home under the ground, for which Hook has been searching in vain these many moons. Will he find it tonight?

As the pirates advanced, the quick eye of Starkey sighted Nibs disappearing through the wood...But an iron claw gripped his shoulder.

'Wendy,' [Peter] said, striding up and down, 'I have asked the redskins to guide you through the wood, as flying tires you so. [Then] Tinker Bell will take you across the sea. Wake her, Nibs.'

Nibs had to knock twice before he got an answer, though Tink had really been sitting up in bed listening for some time.

'Who are you? How dare you? Go away,' she cried.

'You are to get up, Tink,' Nibs called, 'and take Wendy on a journey.'

Peter Pan & Wendy, p. 146.
Pinocchio...began to run in order to reach the Fairy’s house before dark. As he went, the pangs of hunger grew so strong that, unable to withstand them, he jumped into a field to pick a few grapes that tempted him. Woe to him!

No sooner had he reached the grapevine than – crack! went his legs.

The poor Marionette was caught in a trap set there by a Farmer for some Weasels which came every night to steal his chickens.

The Adventures of Pinocchio, Purple Bear, 2005
Robert Ingpen
The Tumbler
Pencil and watercolour on paper
11 x 11cm
Signed: Ingpen ’06
Illustration for Charles Dickens,
A Christmas Carol, 2008, p. 156
$600

Straight, in the middle of the room, cramped in the freedom of its growth by no encircling walls or soon-reached ceiling, a shadowy tree arises; and, looking up into the dreamy brightness of its top – for I observe in this tree the singular property that it appears to grow downward towards the earth – I look into my youngest Christmas recollections!

All toys at first, I find. Up yonder, among the green holly and red berries, is the Tumbler with his hands in his pockets, who wouldn’t lie down, but whenever he was put upon the floor, persisted in rolling his fat body about, until he rolled himself still, and brought those lobster eyes of his to bear upon me – when I affected to laugh very much, but in my heart of hearts was extremely doubtful of him.

6. Robert Ingpen  
Holly & Fruit  
Pencil and watercolour on paper  
8.5 x 8cm  
Signed: Ingpen ’06  
Illustration for Charles Dickens, A Christmas Carol, 2008, p. 77  
$300

7. Robert Ingpen  
Holly Leaf  
Pencil and watercolour on paper  
14 x 8cm  
Signed: Ingpen ’06  
Illustration for Charles Dickens, A Christmas Carol, 2008, imprint page & chapter starts  
$300


In 1998 the Grimm Press commissioned Ingpen to design and illustrate their Great Names series of illustrated biographies of people who had a lasting impact on the world. The series includes figures such as Scott, Cook, Gandhi, Mother Theresa and Chief Seattle. This is the series of which Ingpen is proudest; he describes the books as the most simply and effectively presented books he has illustrated (Pictures Telling Stories. The Art of Robert Ingpen. Commentary by Sarah Mayor Cox, Lothian, 2004, pp. 102–03).


In 1992 Ingpen was commissioned to illustrate Stevenson’s Treasure Island (Dragon’s World). For this new edition, he ‘revisited his remarkable interpretation and produced some wonderful new illustrations’ (wrapper blurb).

The accuracy in Ingpen’s work springs from hours of research and preparatory thinking. ‘[Long John Silver] was so surprisingly active for a one-legged man with guns, swords and a parrot to carry that I needed some expert help. I talked to a friend who is an orthopaedic surgeon...From his experience and advice I made these sketches and studies that became the basis for my final illustrations’ (Robert Ingpen, Pictures Telling Stories. The Art of Robert Ingpen, Commentary by Sarah Mayor Cox, Lothian, 2004, p. 17).

Ingpen confronted a dilemma; to make ‘pictures that are convincing without destroying the pictures that are richly established in the mind of everybody’ (Robert Ingpen, Pictures Telling Stories. The Art of Robert Ingpen, p. 41)


*33. Ingpen, Robert: Daniel Defoe. ROBINSON CRUSOE. Pp. 64(last colophon; text in Chinese), coloured pictorial double title-page, coloured text illustrations, coloured pictorial endpapers; med. 4to; coloured pictorial glazed papered boards. Near fine; slight bruising to bottom fore-corners of boards. Taipei: Grimm Press, 2002. First Ingpen edition. Best Classics no. 3. $60


Includes the classic Japanese folk tale, ‘Momotaro, the Peach-Boy’, ‘containing instruction in the virtues of one’s family duty and knowing one’s status in society as a Samurai. Among Momotaro’s constant companions is a dog. I chose to use our family dog, Ben, as the model in this illustration’ (Robert Ingpen, Pictures Telling Stories. The Art of Robert Ingpen. Commentary by Sarah Mayor Cox; Lothian, 2004, p. 46).


For more than a year Ingpen worked with publisher & designer Michael Neugebauer on ‘planning, illustrating and publishing a special book to capture the spirit of Halloween, a book with surprises beyond just the words and pictures’ (Pictures Telling Stories. The Art of Robert Ingpen, Lothian, 2004, p. 84). The design centres on the ‘Ingpen fold’: a backdrop composed of the book’s fold-out endpapers. As the reader progresses through the book, each page-spread amalgamates with the backdrop to form a larger, integrated poster image.


Short-listed for the NSW Premier’s Literary Awards 2007.


The Children's Book Council of Australia Short-listed Book.


Winner of the Scottish Arts Council’s Children’s Book Award.


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