

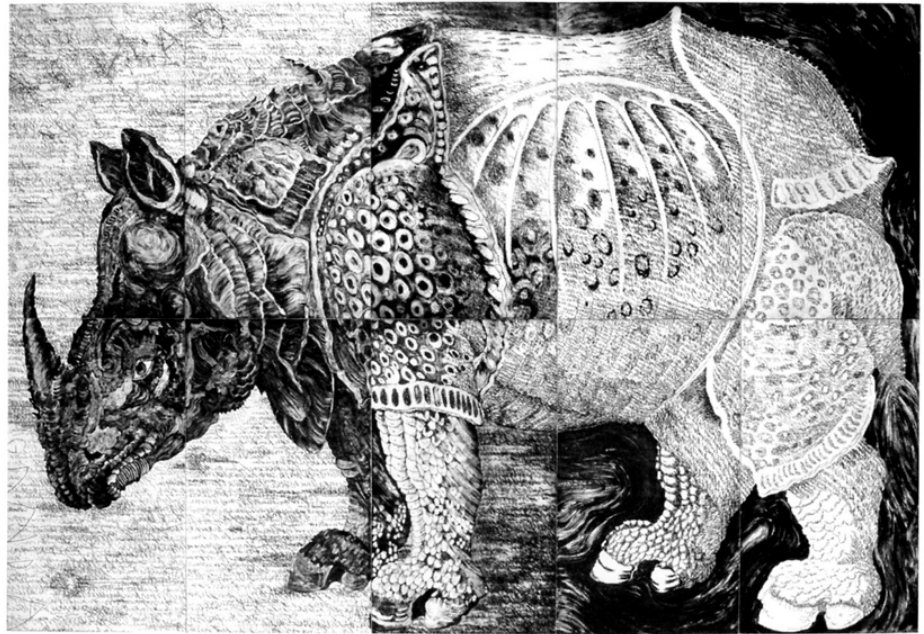
TENET AND PRINTED MATTER

Robert Steele Gallery
Adelaide

At the Robert Steele Gallery, Adelaide, from February 17th to March 14th were separate exhibitions by two of South Australia's most respected printmakers. The exhibitions, 'Tenet', by Olga Sankey, and 'Printed Matter', by Dianne Longley, dealt with quite different themes, and yet sat harmoniously in the gallery's open space.

In terms of technique, Longley and Sankey have chosen in their respective exhibitions to challenge certain notions of what constitutes a print. Both artists are continuing to push the boundaries of their chosen mediums and in doing so have produced mixed media works as well as prints on paper.

The central work in Olga Sankey's 'Tenet' is the eponymous Tenet; a re-interpretation of Dürer's rhinoceros in what could only be called a post-modernist perspective. The artist has used Dürer's well-known image as a structure through which to explore issues surrounding an object's depiction and its reality. Dürer made his famous image without ever seeing a rhinoceros in the flesh, basing his depiction on a Portuguese sketch and on written accounts. Subsequently, the animal depicted bears only a loose relationship with the real animal. Separating the image into ten A2 tin plates, Sankey sectioned the image in such a way that the work can be read from left to right, the viewer extracting meanings from the work's formal properties. The actual plates, etched, inked, and varnished, are exhibited together to re-form Dürer's image. Next to the plates are



Olga Sankey TENET 1999 etching 130 x 380 cms

prints made from them. Thus we are presented with two huge rhinos facing off; the matrix and the resulting object displayed as a single work. A 'tenet' is something to be believed. The exotic nature of the African rhino meant it was almost bound to be mis-represented in 16th century Europe, however, what about contemporary ideas? Sankey says that ideas seem to develop a certainty, or a substance, when they are committed to print. Her etching, *Testimonial*, explores this. A minimal, restrained piece, it shows what appears to be layers of text floating above the indications of a landscape. In this print, interestingly, there is little certainty, only questions.

Sankey's other works in 'Tenet' include prints and mixed media works of metal and perspex. The series, 'Classic Decline' is particularly intriguing as it dissects language. Together and separately, the works explore the artist's concerns in what is a sustained and focused exhibition.

Dianne Longley's imagery is largely concerned with existential issues. Longley sees life as a journey, and to some extent, her work could be seen as a document of that journey. Something that appears time and again in her work is the impact of chance upon the various events of life. It is appropriate then that one of the artworks in 'Printed Matter' is a set of playing cards.

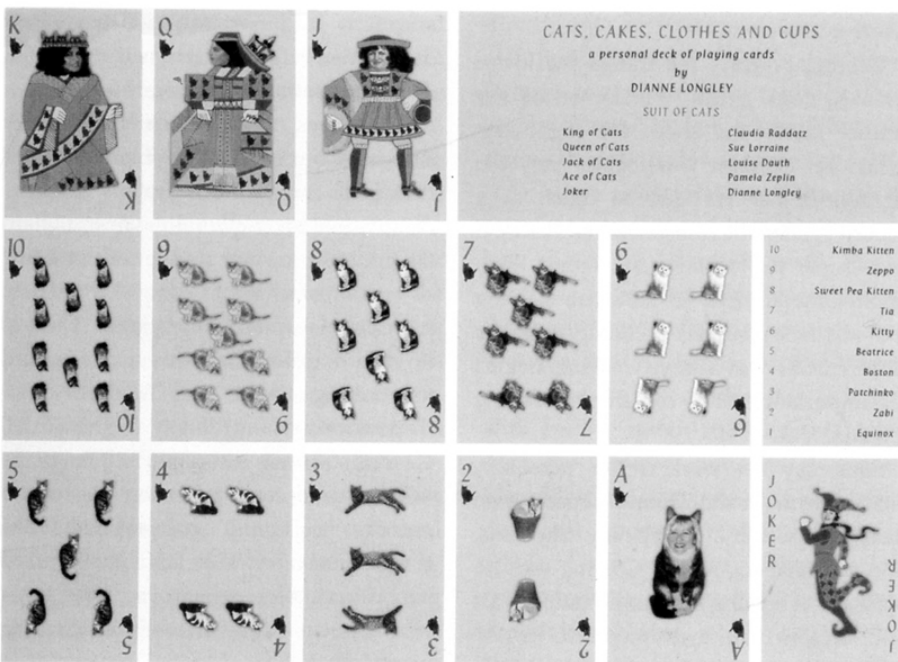
Longley's playing cards are exhibited as a complete set, boxed with a printed booklet, and also as framed proof sheets of each suit. The suits, 'Cats', 'Cakes', 'Clothes', and 'Cups', are artefacts of a feminine world. No clubs and spades here. The court cards feature a number of the artist's female friends, many of them members of the Adelaide art community. In elevating objects of the everyday to fine art status, the artist has introduced a game within the game of cards, and this is the game of philosophy.

The set of cards and the works on the wall are part of a general philosophical argument. Longley expends considerable effort on the aesthetic aspects of her work to seduce the viewer, to encourage the extended gaze, in order that deeper meanings might be discovered. In a number of works, Longley (the author of 'Printmaking with Photopolymer Plates') has combined traditionally etched tin plates with contemporary photopolymer plates in the one print. These technically complicated prints depict surreal, or dreamlike, events. There is a strong sense of narrative running through the images, but then, there is also an ambiguity that allows for multiple interpretations.

Longley has also included her artist book produced last year during her residency at the Visual Studies Workshop in Rochester, New York. 'Sensory Memorandum' consists of digital prints and overlays that create, for the viewer, a synaesthetic expedition into sensory data. Of course, none of the issues in art, or the artist's concerns, will have much currency if there is not aesthetic appeal. Sankey and Longley never lose sight of the fact that their art is visual. 'Tenet' and 'Printed Matter' provide an engaging and rewarding visual experience.

Shaw Hendry, Adelaide-based printmaker and mixed media artist

Exhibition ran from 17 February — 14 March 1999



Dianne Longley Suit of Cats from CATS, CAKES, CLOTHES and CUPS 1999
digital inkjet print 28 x 38 cms