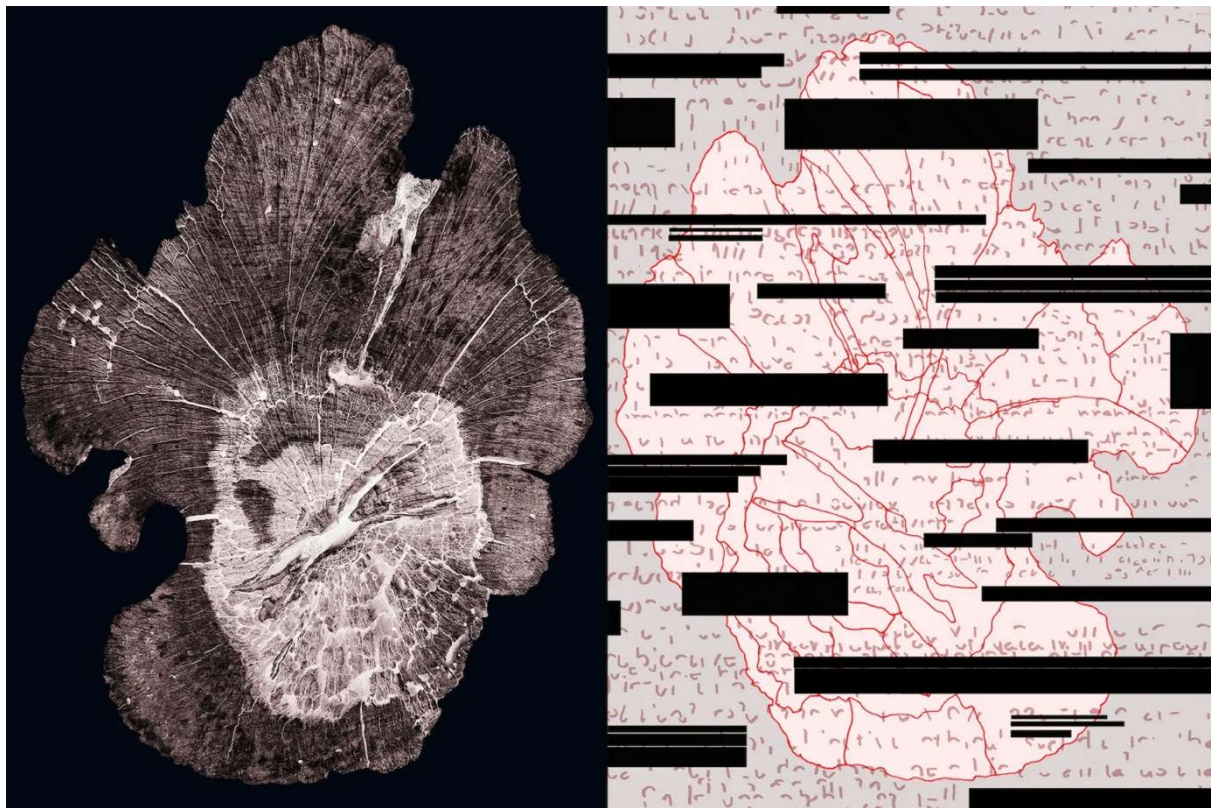


Review: REDUX - Dianne Longley and Olga Sankey

A joint retrospective of Dianne Longley and Olga Sankey's careers traces the pair's parallel evolution over 45 years, from fantastical iconography to darkly enigmatic digital works.



Olga Sankey, *Falsereading#2*, 2021, digital print. Photo: Supplied

When Dianne Longley and Olga Sankey met in Adelaide in 1979 as newly minted young printmakers it was at a watershed moment for contemporary art in Adelaide. At the tail end of the burst of activist prints produced by Adelaide's Progressive Art Movement, postmodernism was starting its two-decade dominance of the art world. Taking up the challenge to move beyond the limitations of the framed print on paper, printmakers started making monumental unframed wall works; they started making three-dimensional objects that were extensions of their printmaking techniques; and they started deconstructing visual and written language.

Today Longley and Sankey are esteemed senior artists with long careers exhibiting both in Australia and internationally, and with work in many major collections, including the Art Gallery of South Australia and the National Gallery of Australia. Their joint retrospective exhibition, *REDUX* at Praxis Artspace, reflects both the formative influence of postmodernism, and the more recent impact of digital technologies as their practices have evolved across 45 years.

Unusually for a show in a commercial gallery, *REDUX* has been selected by a guest curator Dr Thomas Middlemost, in close collaboration with the two artists. The result is an impressive overview of their differing creative journeys as each has established respected reputations at the pinnacle of printmaking in Australia.

REDUX is a visual delight, with the expansive gallery spaces at Praxis filled with over 150 exhibits. These range across not only framed prints on paper, artist books and boxes of portfolios, but also artworks in a wide range of other three-dimensional media that are extensions of each artist's exploration of printmaking. This is art that entices the intimate gaze to admire each artist's technical finesse and to probe the intricacies of imagery and mark-making.



Dianne Longley, *Folly*, 1988, installation view

Dianne Longley initially trained in printmaking at Newcastle College of Advanced Education before arriving in Adelaide in 1979. Across more than three decades she played an active role in this city's art scene as an exhibiting artist and a lecturer in printmaking, until she departed in 2014 to establish her studio in Trentham, Victoria. *REDUX* is a testimony both to her virtuosity as a printmaker and to the remarkable consistency of her thematic and stylistic preoccupation across her career.

She has stated, "My work depicts dreams and fantasies, weaving real and imagined figures and landscapes into curious and absurd narratives". Using primarily intaglio processes augmented with drawing, painting, pokerwork, digital photography and all manner of applied mixed media, Longley creates miniature figurative scenarios within intricately decorated mounts and frames. In her most ambitious works, including *Folly* (1998) and *Reflection* (2025), she has constructed ornate cases on decorative stands, holding miniature proscenium theatres where mystical and fantastical dramas are enacted.

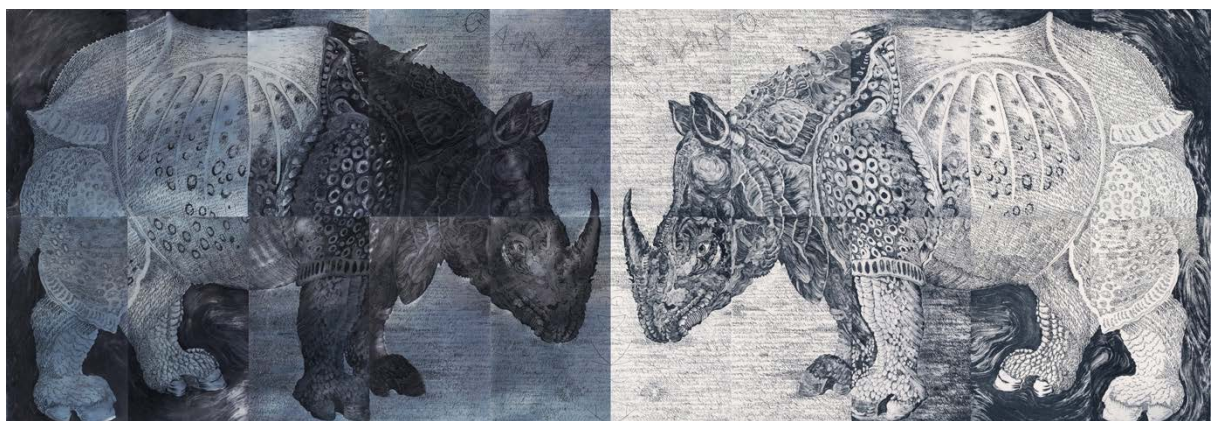
Longley's iconography is often cryptic, suggesting a private symbolism that may not necessarily be accessible to the casual viewer. Playful whimsy abounds, with an occasional undertone of dark, querulous voids. There is a delight here in sheer decorative excess that recalls one facet of postmodern design. The pleasure of her work lies in appreciation of her technical bravura, her fabulous ornamental sensibility and her unhinged imagination. "The pleasure of her work lies in appreciation of her technical bravura, her fabulous ornamental sensibility and her unhinged imagination."



Dianne Longley, *Talismanic T teapot*, 1988, Ceramic teapot, metal tea cosy.
Photo: Supplied

Olga Sankey, who is the daughter of [noted Czech émigré religious artist Vojtěch Marek](#) (d. 1999), was born in Adelaide shortly after his arrival in Australia as a refugee fleeing the Communist invasion. She trained at the South Australian School of Art and lectured in printmaking there from 1989 until her retirement in 2016. Her early intaglio, lithographic and relief prints in this exhibition are understated and quietly meditative, with simple gestural marks and floating abstract shapes. By the 2000s she had started working with digital processes. Her repertoire involved manipulating imagery, expressive mark-making and textual fragments to create multilayered, darkly enigmatic works that intrigue the eye while resisting interpretation.

Sankey's postmodernist philosophical mistrust of notions of truth in both language and visual media is manifest especially in her monumental etching, *TENET*, 1999, based on a famous early 16th century print by Dürer of a 'Rhinoceros' whose confabulated appearance was constructed from verbal accounts, before photography existed. During the exhibition this work was reserved for potential acquisition by AGSA. Another more personal influence is the glossolalia associated with the rituals and chants of her deeply religious upbringing. This left an enduring impact on her prints, particularly in the rhythmic, densely unreadable texts of her major two metre digital print, *Indulgence*, 2002.



Olga Sankey, *TENET*, etched metal and Intaglio print, 1999. Photo: Supplied

While there is at present only a small leaflet produced by Praxis for *REDUX*, there are five major publications planned, with a substantial catalogue to be published by the Print Council of Australia, artist books by each artist and individual monographs on Longley and Sankey by Sasha Grishin.

[REDUX: Dianne Longley + Olga Sankey](#) continues at Praxis Artspace until June 14



Margot Osborne, June 05, 2025, updated Jun 05, 2025

<https://www.indailysa.com.au/inreview/visual-art/2025/06/05/review-redux-dianne-longley-and-olga-sankey> Accessed June 23, 2025