

Renowned artist holds exhibition

RENOWNED Broome artist Helen Norton is holding a 'Blood from Stone' exhibition at the Kimberley Creations Gallery in Broome.

The exhibition was inspired by her recent expedition in the Kimberley where she was greatly touched by not only the power and beauty of the landscape, but also by the characters and history of the area.

It is an impression of the impact, and sometimes the irony, of the white settlers coming into the Kimberley with their sheep and cattle around the 1880's and attempting to tame the land and the people.

"I have focused on the story of 'Jandamara', later to be named 'Pidgeon' because of his cheeky and charming personality," Mrs Norton said.

She said his tribe was the Bunuba which occupied the Napier, Oscar and Leopold Ranges before white settlers moved in and took over the low lands in the West Kimberley and began their great battle with the elements.

Their sheep and cattle grazed where the Bunuba once hunted. The Bunuba began spearing sheep for food and began the battle

to protect their waterholes and sacred sites.

It was a losing battle and many families took to working on the stations to provide 'hard tack' for their families.

Thus Pidgeon came to station life and "white mans world and ways.

Mrs Norton said the story was one of a constant clash of cultures with desperate attempts by both to hold onto all they believed in.

Pidgeon became a legend, a product of the two cultures overlapping into one confused being, whose final loyalty to his people took him to a white bullet ridden death.

The Duracks came to the East Kimberley in the same era. These outback

cattlemen with an eye for opportunity, "rich and beautiful country of the Ord, drove thousands of head of cattle all the way from central Queensland, the largest cattle drive of its kind, to take up residence in this vast wilderness.

She said it was a tale of great physical endurance as these men and their Aboriginal stockmen fought drought, disease and disasters along the way.

The new breed of Australian, the pioneer Patsy Durack then built his homestead from the earth and stone around them, and then the brides and children came.

"My focus is on the spirit of the women and their

innocence and comfort making skills," she said. "They followed their men into harsh, and lonely country bringing with them all the implements of fine life and domestication."

Mrs Norton was born in Melbourne in 1961, but left that city at the age of 16 to spend the next 10 years in the outback of South Australia, and the Northern Territory, on stations and in bush camp outposts.

She participated in all fields of station work, including shooting, fencing and being 'chief cook and bottle washer'.

Her travels brought her to Broome in 1986 and it was then that she found the time to put her acquired experience and

love of the bush on canvas.

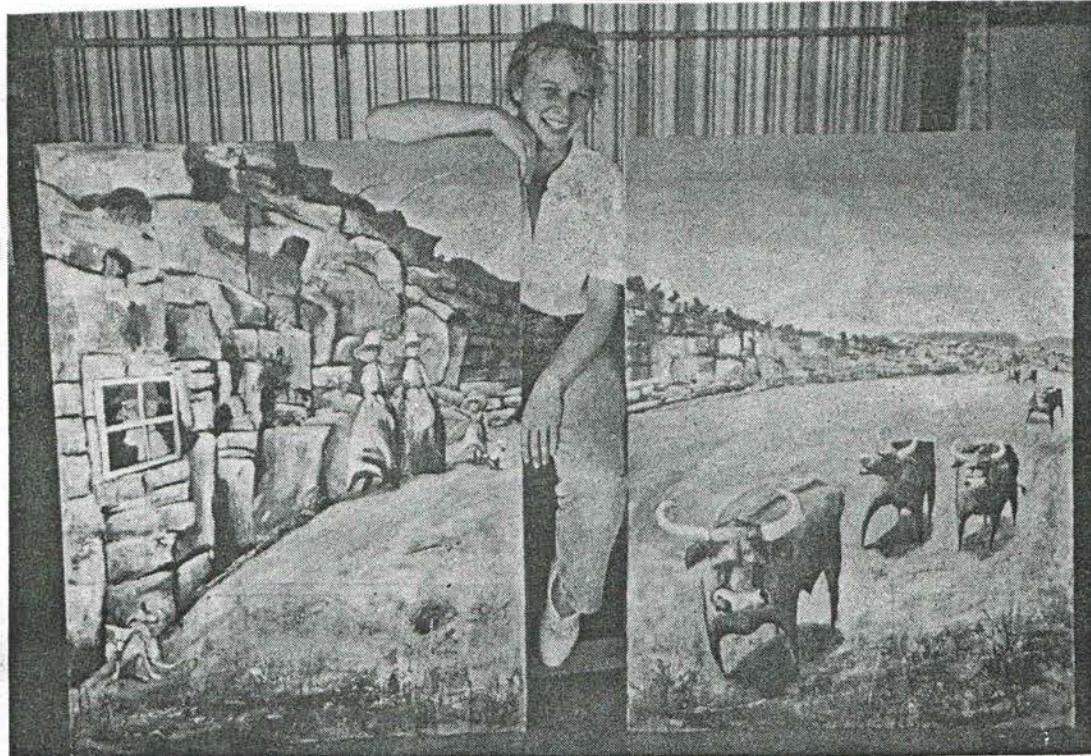
She had no formal training in art, with 'life, loving and experimenting' being her teachers.

Mrs Norton has had exhibitions since 1986 and is currently represented in Broome, Darwin and Perth in various galleries.

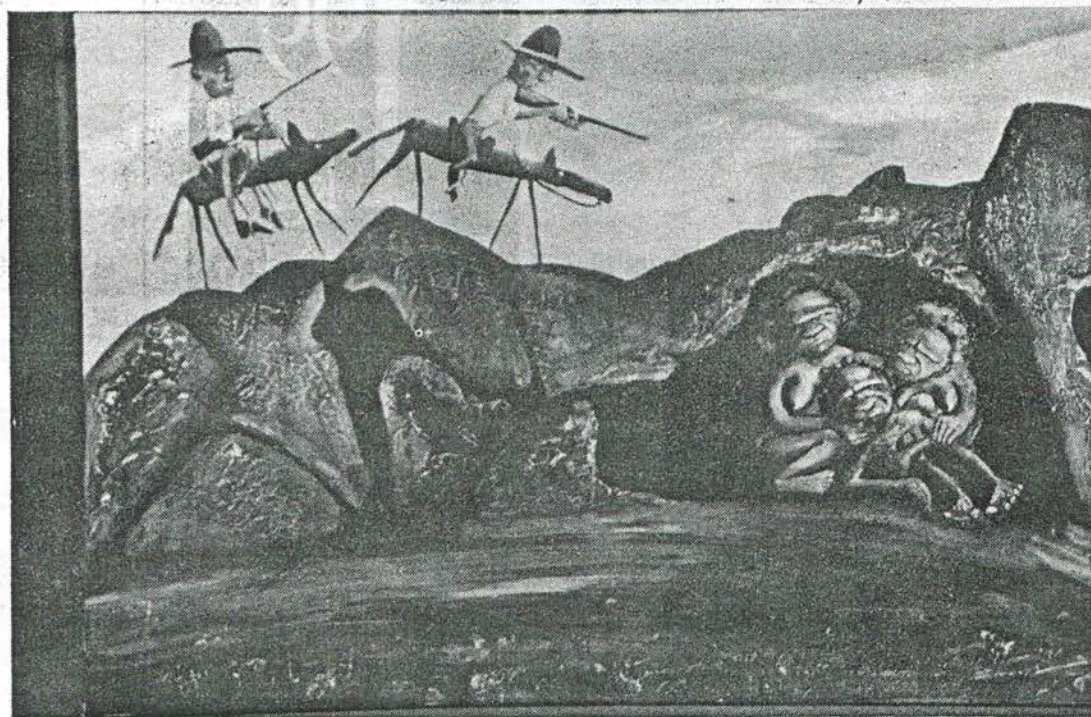
She is also represented in collections interstate and overseas and has won prizes in numerous competitions, including the Kimberley Art Prize in 1988 and 1990, four first prizes Broome Shinju Art Competitions in 1990 and 1991.

The exhibition runs until October 1, although may be extended.

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BROOME artist Helen Norton with two of the pieces from her 'Blood from Stone' exhibition.



ONE of Helen Norton's paintings which depict the story of Pidgeon.