

23 Lewin Street  
Lyneham ACT 2602

July 16, 1992

Mr Kim Akerman  
Museums and Art Galleries of the Northern Territory  
PO Box 4646  
Darwin NT 0801

Dear Kim,

Re: The paintings of Helen Norton

It was with great interest that I looked at the portfolio of photographs of paintings by Helen Norton. From what you told me about her rather short but productive career as an artist, I have been most impressed. I would like to take up your invitation to make a few comments on her work.

I must say from the outset that I was impressed by the power and conviction of Helen's paintings. She seems to have the gift of using her materials to produce images that transcend literal interpretations and provoke contemplation and a reaction from the viewer. They are not neutral.

Judging as best one can from photographs it seems Helen has a technical facility with the materials she is using and possesses the ability to make forceful and expression-laden images which are hard to forget. I feel her drawing displays very strong and uncompromising qualities which, I must say, are lost in the more decorative works.

I believe Helen's short career as an artist is evident in the range of subject matter and "styles" she employs. It seems to me that she is working through a series of influences, of working 'in the manner of' other artists - Nolan, Tucker and Boyd spring to mind. This, to me, is no bad thing. It is, I believe, important for artists to develop their work, their expertise and their ideas, in such a way. It is a method of learning the inner secrets of any art form and it is common to perhaps all artistic traditions - the Gallery's recent *Rubens and the Italian Renaissance* exhibition showed how much Rubens was influenced by other artists in his formative years (and later!).

My impression of Helen's work is that she is at the point of breaking through these influences, of having gained from them insights into mode of expression

which will be the spring-board for the next stage in her artistic development. This, coupled with seems to me to be a most unique and original vision, should stand her in good stead. She definitely has something to say and the ability to say it in her art.

I would therefore encourage Helen to focus on the style which she feels most accurately reflects her intentions and to develop this, through experimentation and a fair degree of risk-taking (not each painting has to work), not to achieve a painterly originality for its own sake but to emphasize her personal vision through the combination of subject matter, style, technique and materials.

Thank you for bringing Helen's work to my attention. I hope one day soon to see it in the flesh.

With my best wishes,



Wally Caruana