

An abstract painting with a layered, textured appearance. The top section features a dark blue and purple pattern with yellow and red accents. Below this is a prominent, wide band of vibrant red, which is the background for the title. Underneath the red is a layer of dark green and black, followed by a yellowish-brown band. The bottom section is a mix of dark green, black, and brown tones with some red and blue highlights. The overall effect is one of depth and complexity, with various colors and textures visible throughout.

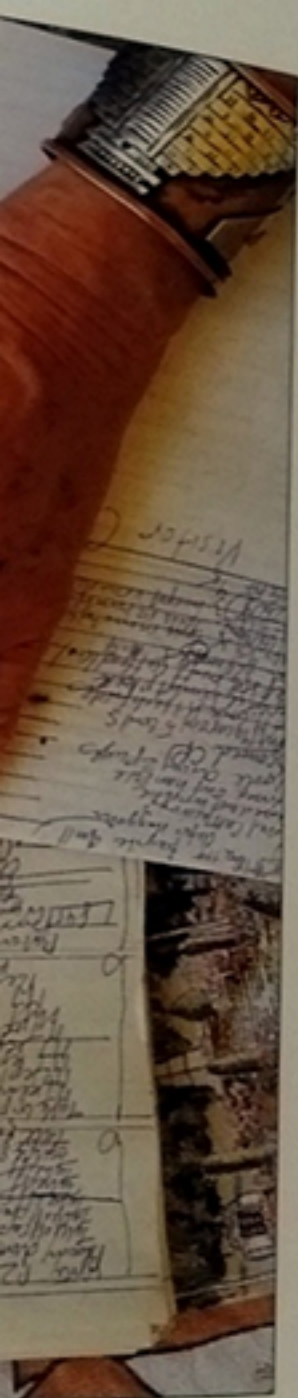
# LOCAL COLOUR

TRAVELS IN THE OTHER AUSTRALIA

PHOTOGRAPHY AND TEXT BY BILL BACHMAN

ADDITIONAL TEXT BY TIM WINTON





HELEN NORTON AND BLOOD FROM STONE • BROOME, WA

Born in Melbourne in 1961, Helen Norton left home at 16 and spent the better part of the next ten years knocking around the back blocks of South Australia and the Territory, living on stations and in isolated bush camps and doing everything from professional shooting to fencing, cooking and road building. In 1986 her travels took her to the Northwest, where she married and settled in Broome.

Hands that once worked with wire and blood now wield brushes and paint. With them, Helen creates prize-winning paintings and sculptures based on her own bush experiences and on her exploration of the much-edited history of conflict between Australia's white settlers, the Aborigines, and the land itself.

Despite a lack of formal training, Helen paints with

great imagination, wit and style, and her work is held in collections all over Australia. The paintings range from the sublime to the shocking. Many are darkly comical, even surreal, with ironic references to significant events and personalities.

In many ways she believes the romantic notion of the Outback Hero is a dubious myth. "We've built our image on some mixed and motley foundations," she notes. "We want to be a nation but we continue to stumble over our past and our shady heroes."

"Blood from Stone" (part of which is pictured here is based on the Durack story. In the early 1880s Patrick and Michael Durack drove more than 7000 head of cattle from southwest Queensland to the Ord River, in the northeast corner of WA. The wives and children followed later.

"My focus here," says Helen, "is on both the spirit of the women, and their naive innocence as they followed their men to the harsh and lonely Kimberley wilderness, bringing with them implements of fine life and rural domestication that were quite irrelevant in this world."

PAINTING © HELEN NORTON 1991