

MAY to AUGUST 1999

STATE OF THE  
**a**rts

AUSTRALIA & NEW ZEALAND

GALLERIES

MUSEUMS

FESTIVALS

MUSIC

DANCE

OPERA

THEATRE

FILM

Venice Biennale

New Director for the NGV

Monet to Moore in Canberra

Melbourne International Biennial

International Works on Paper Fair

Swan Lake

Indonesian Gold

Queensland Biennial

Sydney Writers' Festival

Contemporary Craft to Japan



# The texture of my world

## Helen Norton

**H**ELEN Norton came to her art late, but with what she describes as "limitless" subject matter which has seen her work featured in nearly 50 exhibitions across Australia and now in London. Her work is characterised by a striking use of ochre reds and cobalt blues, with an intriguing cast of characters – duckshooters posing as God; angels and butterfly men, Mona Lisa languishing in the outback and moose-style neighbours in front of a white picket fence. Her recurring use of images of dogs – usually white – add a magical quality to her paintings coupled with a mixture of whimsy and hope. The Melbourne-born artist has lived in Broome since 1985. Before being lured to the pearling centre, she travelled the outback for almost 10 years working as a cook, game shooter, jillaroo, stationhand and truck driver. She began to paint in 1984. Speaking about the impetus for her work, Helen Norton says:-

"Life is my impetus – it is the longing to understand the human condition – the daily process of growing, dying, birthing, crying, learning.

Inside her studio – the Cockatoo Gallery at Broome – Helen agrees that there are certain themes that predominate in her work – redemption, ritual and release. "For me, themes are always journeys. The old adage of the destination not being as important as the journey has real truth and I would hope to evoke a sense of shared journey, a shared right of passage and struggle with those who view my work.

"I would like to encourage people's re-connection to a sense of personal empowerment to change the world to a better place by seeing some new 'heroes' amongst ourselves.

"To see that each one of us can 'act' upon our instinctual sense of moral values and bring others along. That we don't have to live a suppressed existence of feeling useless against the powers that be.

The result of this reflection is a charted journey of painting that Helen has produced over the years.

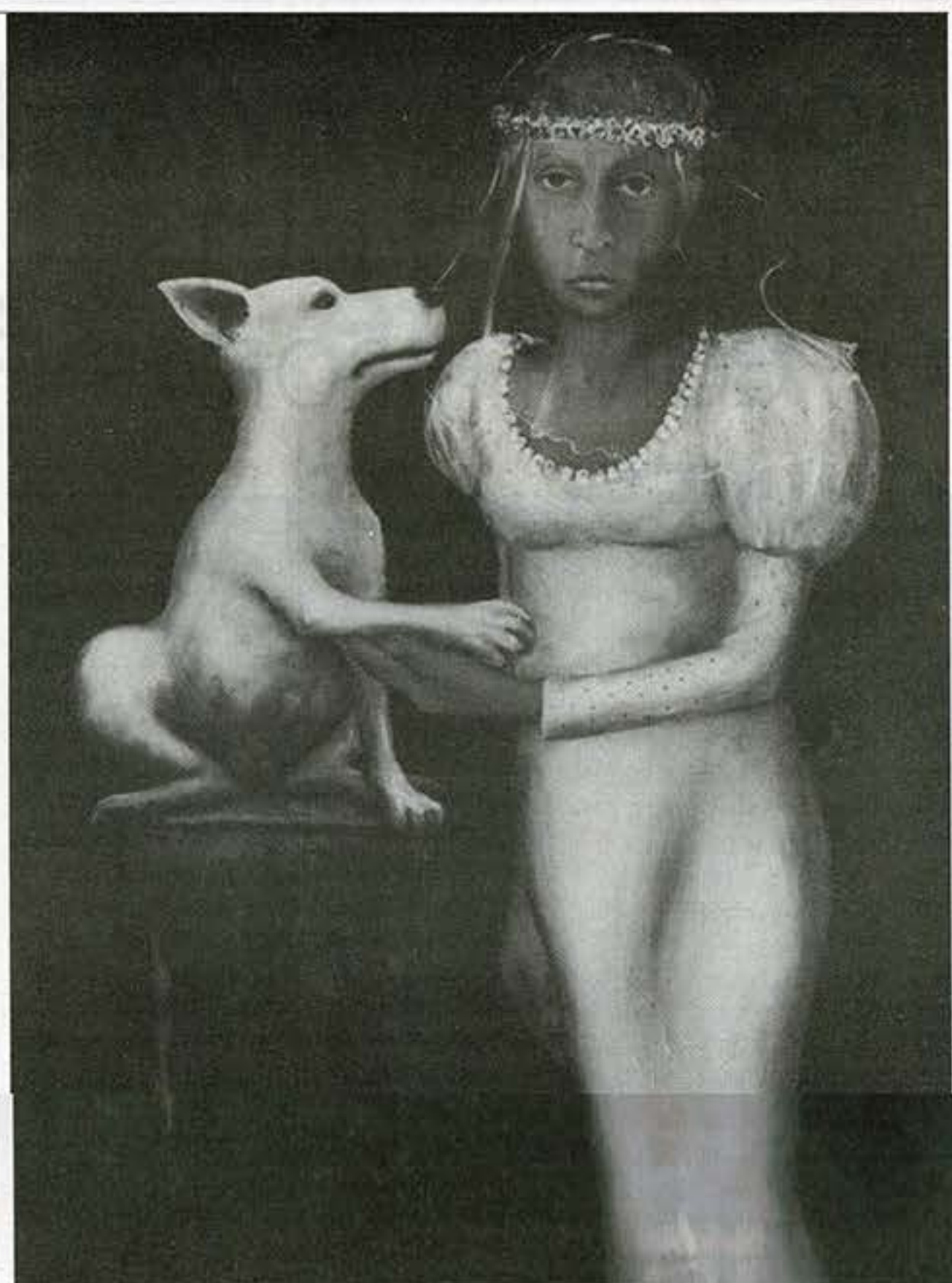
From her earlier work depicting such scenes as Aboriginal women and their role in raising children on remote stations to the *Dark Knights of the Soul* exhibition for London and, more recently, the *Angel and the Butterfly Man* series that was presented at exhibitions in Perth, Melbourne and Adelaide.

"The journey of imagery has been a course of finding confidence in my symbols and expression," Helen says. Archetypes can dress in any costume – realised in the London series. They can visit any country and talk any language. They are universal citizens."



In discussing the process of developing her *Dark Knights of the Soul* exhibition for a London audience, Helen says:

"I realised that the only way I could do this series of paintings was to express my feelings on what I experienced in London by using archetypes to depict



the spirituality of the Australian outback. So what I decided to do was to place British archetypes in an Australian setting."

The result is a series of paintings that reveal scenes of London cabbies confronting knights rearing up before them; the Queens guard in the Australian outback, complete with cockatoo nipping at one of the guards, a lone London guardsman, in full attire a reporter of the human condition," she says. "I see similes and paradigms in everything.

"While I live in Australia, I use the archetypes of Australia – such as my painting of the *Outback Mona Lisa*. "I think the problem is we've empowered our past so much that we've denied our

present. We need to create modern myths that are relevant to our time. "We need our heroes – something we can romance and dream about now." Helen is now seeking to extend the message and influence of her work by accompanying many of her works with poetry.

And she is exploring the possibilities of using film to present her characters and imagery.

"When you are working with social awakening, the most effective route is the one you should take."

left to right:

*Harry's Dream* oil on Belgium linen, 120 x 120 cm;  
*Woman marries a dog* (detail).



MAGGIE SHEPPARD *Dreams of a Fish*, etching, 53cm x 69cm

## greenhill galleries adelaide

140 Barton Terrace West  
North Adelaide SA 5006

Gallery Hours:  
Tuesday to Friday 10am to 5pm  
Saturday & Sunday 2 to 5pm

Telephone: (08) 8267 2933  
Facsimile: (08) 8239 0148

Representing:

SILVIO APPONYI / JANET AYLIFFE / ANDREW BAINES / ANTONIO & SUSAN BALLETTA / DOROTHY BRAUND  
PETER COAD / JASON CORDERO / SABINE DEISSEN / GUY DE TOT / JILL DINGLEY / JILL DIXON  
ELIZABETH DOIDGE / DIETER ENGLER / GEORGE GITTOES / IAN GREIG / PRO HART / NIGEL HEWITT  
PATRICK JELK / PAUL LACEY / ALAN LINNEY / CHRISTINE MCCARTHY / JUNE MOLAN / HELEN NORTON  
LEON PERICLES / SUSAN PODERESKI / CHRISTOPHER POPE / DAVID ROSE / SABINO / MARGIE SHEPPARD  
PETER THOMPSON / FRAN TOMLIN / RUTH TUCK / WINNIE WONG