

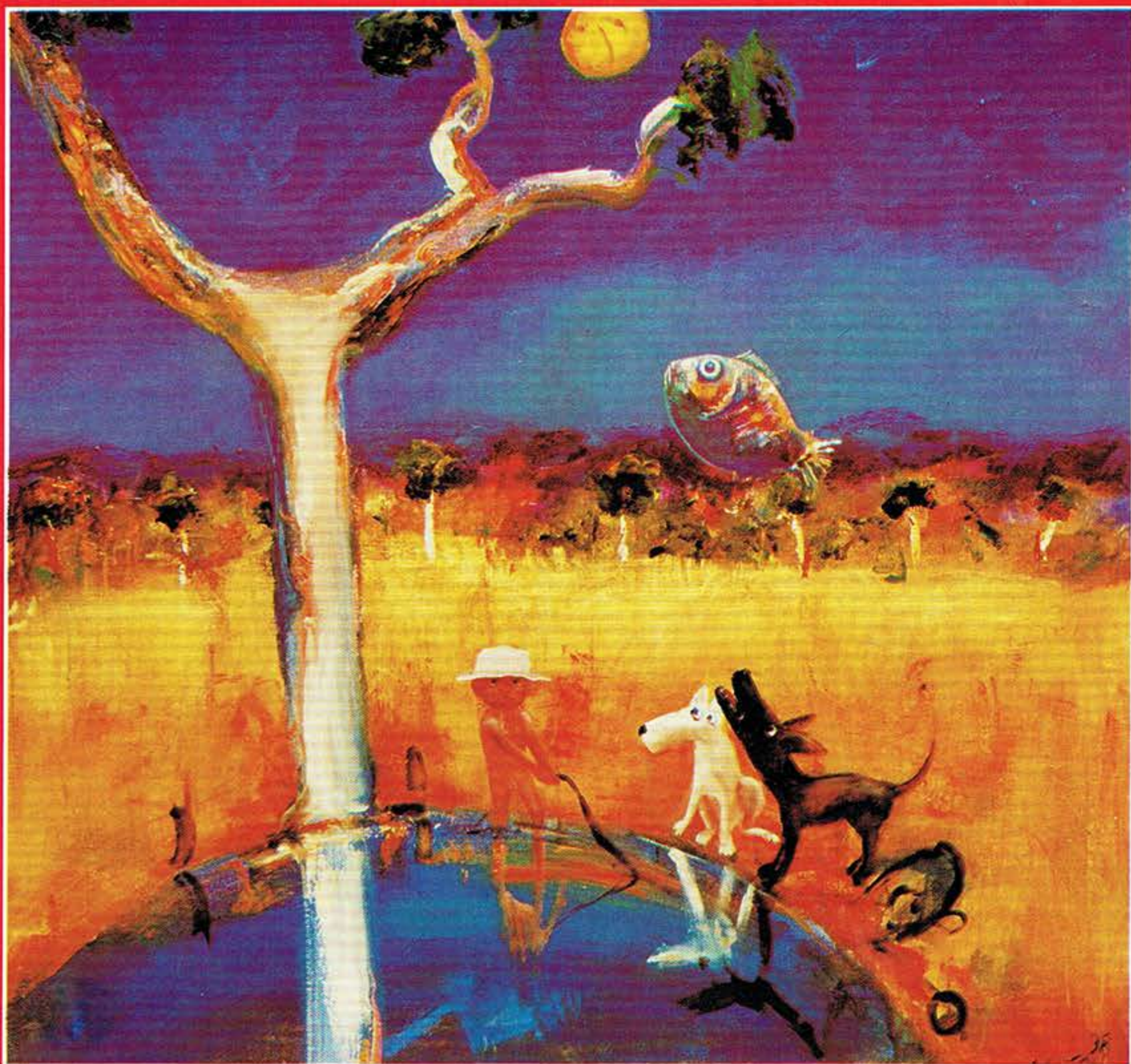
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ARTIST'S CHRONICLE

ART IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA



- *The First Fish*, oil on canvas, Helen Norton 1998

COCKATOO GALLERY ROYAL PERTH HOSPITAL COLLECTION
SPEAKING OF SUCCESS JOY HORWOOD-COOKE
AND MORE!

COCKATOO IN BLOOM

- solely showing the works of Broome artist Helen Norton, Cockatoo Gallery is blossoming into a growing empire.

It's a long way from a knitting factory in Melbourne. It's also a long way from shooting feral animals on the Nullabor, but such is the diversity of the life of Broome artist Helen Norton.

Just recently the Sydney owners of her work *Ship of Fools* were offered \$22,500 by an anonymous Perth businessman hoping to purchase the painting. The Sydney owners were adamant they would not accept the offer, even at \$25,000. The fact that they paid \$5000 for the painting in 1995 at an exhibition in Sydney attests to the sentiment of owners of Helen Norton's work.

In 1995 she first opened her Broome studio and gallery to the public. Four years later, Cockatoo Gallery Shop opened at Chinatown in Broome. The burgeoning popularity of her work saw yet another Cockatoo Gallery Shop open in Montville, Queensland earlier this year. More recently another opened in Perth, located at the King Street Arts Centre in Murray Street.

While Cockatoo Gallery just keeps on growing it has left Helen little time to paint. Enter Paul Gullotti, and an extraordinary story of how from hanging some of Helen's work in his furniture gallery in the same Murray Street location, to then buying both the Broome Cockatoo Gallery, the Perth Gallery, and very soon the Queensland Gallery. Paul soon discovered it was the wrong location for beautifully hand-crafted furniture, but the right location for Helen Norton's work where he sold six of her works in the first week.

Paul visited Broome to meet Helen and to acquire more paintings to sell. They eventually struck a deal of an unusual partnership where Helen retained her interest in producing original works, and Paul developed the production of her works into new markets. Greeting cards and wrapping paper are just the beginning, with Paul aiming to open a Cockatoo Gallery Shop in every major capital city in Australia within two years. Derivatives of her work on merchandise will appear in time when the correct formula has been developed. They will sell through up-market boutique style stores.

If the blossoming aspect of Cockatoo Gallery seems to expand unexpectedly quickly, Paul says this is a result of the amazingly infectious energy of Helen Norton. He is absolutely passionate about her work which he says

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- Broome based artist Helen Norton.



appeals to all people. "I am absolutely honoured to be associated with Helen," says Paul, whose enthusiasm matches his passion for her work.

Paul's family also has a predelection for her work. They purchased seven pieces from her 1999 exhibition at the Windsor Hotel in Melbourne. "If I visit some of my relatives, I can almost see the whole exhibition again," said Paul.



At Cockatoo Gallery there are works to suit any pocket. The most expensive new original work is priced at \$11,000; the least expensive is an unframed print at \$45. The Gallery sells a mixture of original works, limited edition screen prints, collagraphs and etchings, plus a selection of non-edition prints printed on quality paper. All limited editions are embossed with the registered trademark (left) of the Gallery, and all works are framed to museum standards.

As Helen's work became popular, it was a natural progression to produce limited and non-edition prints for those who could not afford originals. The production of prints follows Helen's philosophy of making her art accessible to everyone.

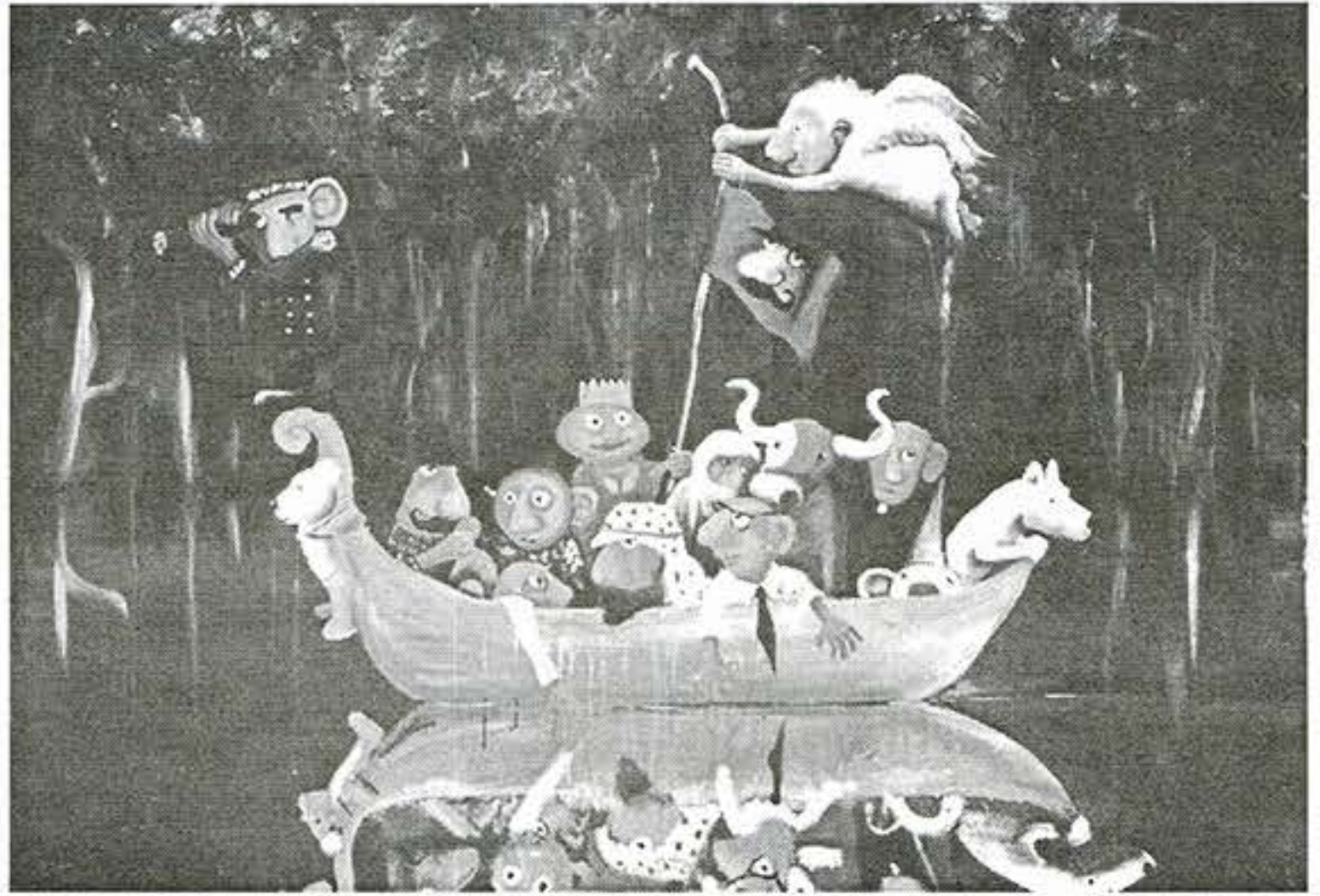
- 'Dream', oil on canvas, 1998 by Helen Norton. This popular image is now available as a non-edition print.



- 'Ship of fools', oil on canvas, 1995 by Helen Norton. Owners of the work recently declined an offer of \$22,500 by an anonymous Perth businessman.

A realist by nature, ask Helen her thoughts on the arts and her answer will swiftly move to target. "A huge farce of overbubbled champagne and smelly fish eggs," and "a plot to separate real people from something that is theirs to have and enjoy every day of their lives. Art!"

It is her ability to cut through the surface of life which appeals to so many. There is always a sense of humour, together with a measure of irony in her work, as she strives to deliver a concept or idea.



Helen Norton was born in Melbourne in 1961. She left home, "as soon as I was legally able at 16," and proceeded to work in a knitting factory, as a cleaner and housemaid while trying to pay her way through school. She then worked as a cook on the Nullabor before spending a number of years working alongside feral animal hunters trapping and shooting feral rabbits, cats and foxes. She also discovered 6,000 ways to trap and cook a rabbit.

She moved further north of the Nullabor at various rabbit shooting camps and also worked as a jillaroo, camp cook, truck driver, a barmaid, and was employed in professional whiting and shark fishing off the Ceduna coast.

In 1984 she met her husband while working at Sandfire in the Great Sandy Desert and began to paint again for the first time since childhood. Many of her early solo exhibitions were devoted to raising funds for the Royal

- Paul Gullotti, proud owner of Cockatoo Gallery in Broome and Perth.

Flying Doctor Service. A commission from Qantas in 1996 saw her travel on the QE2 to depict "The Captain's Table." In 1998 she held her first, highly successful exhibition, in London.



The written word also has a strong pull for Helen with the publication of *Revolution is Slow*, she has also published poetry. It seems the canvas is never large enough to say everything she must convey.

NB Front cover image, 'The First Fish' is now available as a limited edition.



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