

Helen Norton



Perilous Journey's

Broome is a destination that is often referred to as the gateway to the Kimberley. It's a beautiful and sleepy destination that is set between a vast red desert and azure blue sea. Broome is a quaint little town that was founded as a pearling port over a century ago and it lies alongside a pure white beach that is beautiful during the day and breathtaking during sunset. It was on a mid-winter break to this warm get-a-way that I stumbled on an art gallery whose artworks grabbed my attention and pulled me through the door to inspect the them more closely.



Mad Dog



Roasting



Motherboard



Lone Journey



Pack



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As seen on *A Current Affair* and *Sunrise*. Guest speaker at the 2006 Australian Veterinary Conference.

Many of the paintings capture the colours of the local landscape with vivid blues and bright reds. But more than just luring me in with the local colours was the subjects—dogs. Dogs on their own, dogs peering curiously, mad dogs, dogs sniffing each other, dogs floating in boats in seemingly dream-like surroundings. Of course there were other subjects like people, birds and cows, but it was the artworks depicting dogs that attracted me.

The artist, Helen Norton, has had a long relationship with dogs both real and within her art as she explains, "I have I think thousands of images of dogs I have painted in various processes and poses over the years and before I was a painter, my various dogs were my emotional and physical lifelines in some very unusual and difficult situations.

Dogs, in particular a sort of mongrel cross between a white unknown breed and a working dog, seem to have been the meditative stable recurring object in my paintings for over 20 years. I have many thoughts on the spiritual purpose of the mutt in my life.

Dog is a great teacher and when we lose faith and hope in the journey, Dog reminds us (whether he knows it or not), that the secret to happiness is actually quite easy. We can thus have a little rest from our questing and longing and take a leaf or a bone out of Dog's book. Dogs book of instructions is hidden in the long green grass where his nose is drawn like a magnet, and where he leaves his own little messages by cocking his leg in just the right place with his replies. His universal calling card messages are far too instinctively sophisticated for us to understand, as are our bibles, universities and policies for him and so where is the wisdom of the dog/human relationship found?

It seems we have to be content with what he shows us and evokes in us, when we have no words and have to revert to just pure 'relationship'. We throw words and commands at him and he obeys as best he can. He doesn't particularly care about the words it seems; he just wants to see us happy."

Even if most of our readers can't get to visit Broome, we hope that these artworks take you on a journey where the sand is warm underfoot, the water is refreshing and dogs can run freely.
– Lisa Treen

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