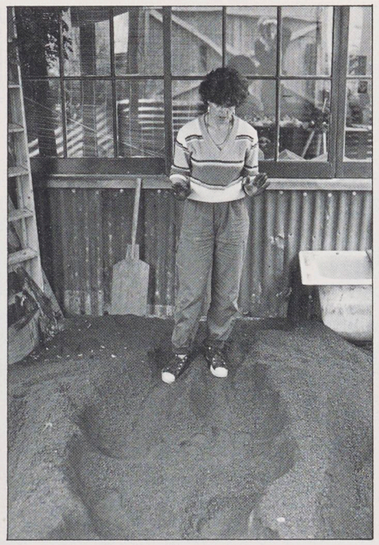
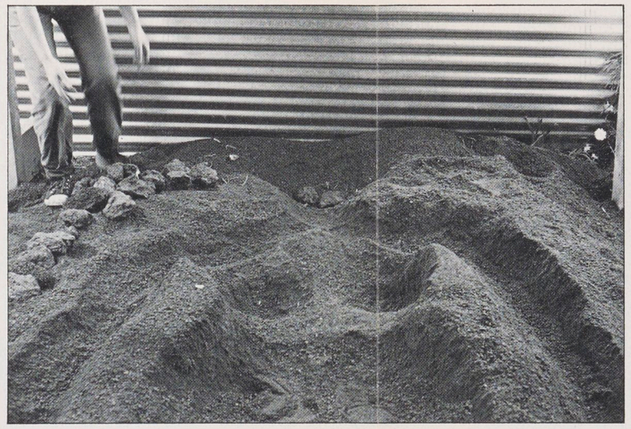
Auckland City Art Gallery
Artist's Project No 5

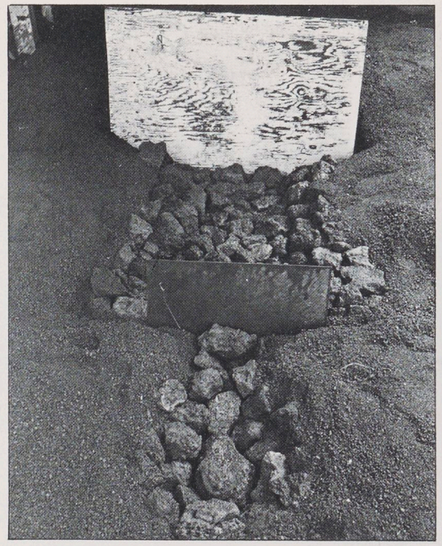
November 1983 — January 1984

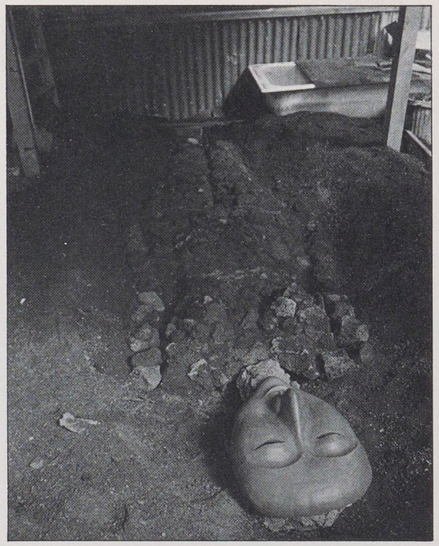
Bronwynne Cornish

Dedicated to the Kindness of Mothers









This work has grown from a variety of sources and conditions, and is the largest and most ambitious of a series of floor sculptures I have made over the past four or five years.
The first 'Mother' was made many years ago and the present one grew from a Sandmother constructed on Onetangi beach in 1981. My original intention for this project was to reconstruct a Sandmother in the Gallery, but I met with a number of technical problems, so turned to another material which was close at hand — Three Kings volcanic basalt.
Although the size of the figure and the rock/concrete construction presented some problems, the most challenging aspect of making this figure was the basic method of construction — in reverse or inside-out. I set the rocks in the hollowed-out scoria mould, then plastered it together — but couldn't see the complete work until it was finished.
An important source of inspiration was Lama Zopa's meditation "Remembering the Kindness of our Many Mothers". The skulls in this installation represent the many mothers of our past lives.
Many thanks to all those who have helped to inspire, gather, fire, erect and curate this work.
Bronwynne Cornish, 1983

Her kindness to us started while we were still in her womb. With great selflessness she underwent many privations and subjected herself to strict discipline in order to protect us from harm and discomfort. She was very careful about what she ate or drank, how she walked and what kind of clothing she wore.
Even though our birth caused her great discomfort and pain, this did not reduce the affectionate care she displayed towards us. When we were infants she looked after us twenty-four hours a day and did everything in her power to keep us from harm. We were not an easy burden for her, always crying and soiling our clothes, but she comforted and cleaned us time and time again. Even when she was eating, her thoughts were concerned with our welfare. If she found a particularly delicious piece of food on her plate she would often give it to us. Even nowadays, we do not take care of ourselves with a fraction of the devotion that she displayed.

As she watched us grow older, her thoughts turned towards our future. It was her fondest wish that we be happy and lead a successful life. She worried a great deal about our education, often teaching us the rudiments of reading and writing herself. In fact, our ability to do many things as effortlessly as we do now owes a lot to her attention and interest. In typically nearsighted fashion we think that our powers and abilities are solely our own accomplishment. "Everything I have I worked for myself," we think. Yet had our mother neglected us for even one day while we were young, we would not even be alive, much less functioning competently. Even now, when we run into problems, there is usually one person we can count on to help us to the extent of her abilities.

Excerpt from *Wisdom-Energy*
by Lama Thubten Yeshe and
Lama Thubten Zopa Rinpoche
(Wisdom Culture/Conch Press, 1976)