

1982

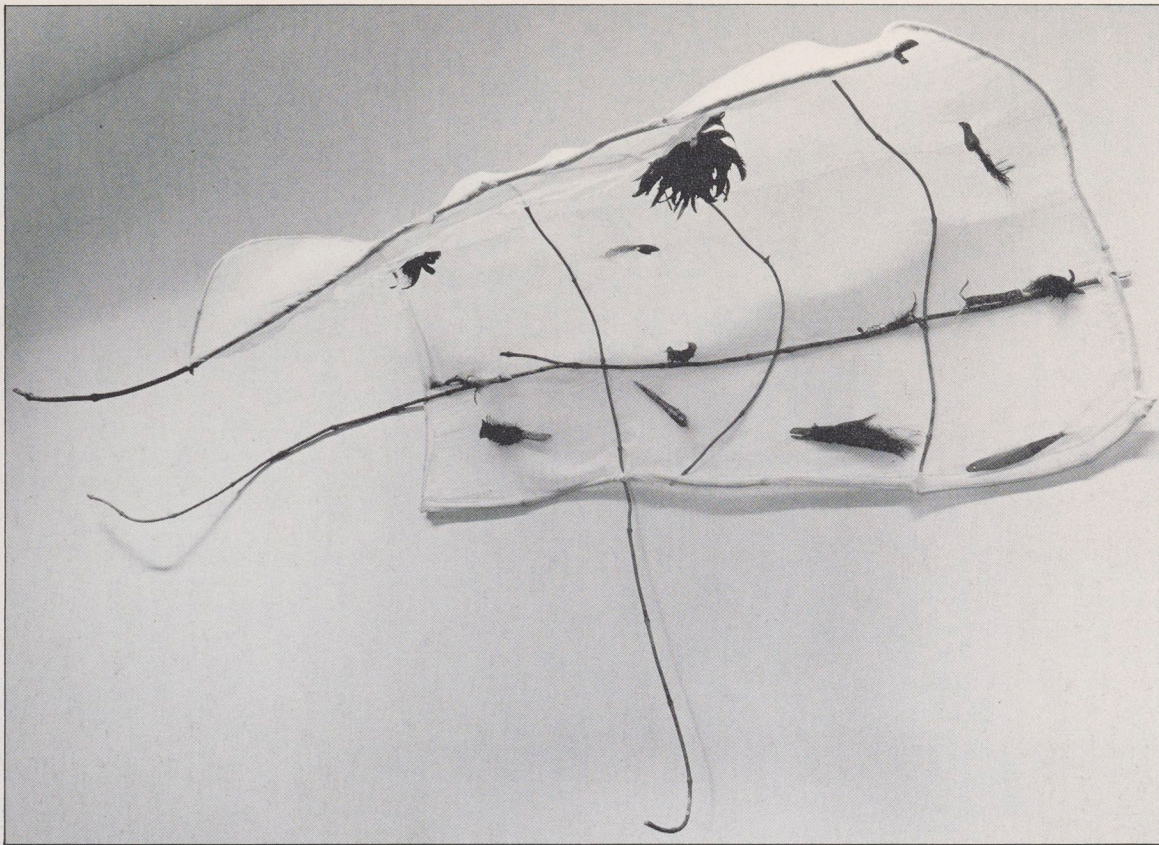


AUCKLAND CITY ART GALLERY  
ARTIST'S PROJECT No. 2  
SEPTEMBER 1982

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CHRISTINE HELLYAR  
SHELTER

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Shelter is a primary need for most living things; and the construction or discovery of shelters — places to live in, to retreat from the elements or from enemies — is a vital activity.

In her installation *Shelter*, the second of the Auckland City Art Gallery's series of Artist's Projects, Christine Hellyar explores the appearance and associations of shelters in the natural world. Shelters can be traps or places for care and nurture; if too solid they can fall and crush their inhabitants; if too fragile, they can leave them exposed.

Hellyar has filled a gallery with shelters constructed from a variety of materials; muslin, flax, supplejack, twigs, matting, wood, cheesecloth — plaited, woven and stitched — visual memories of shelters which she has seen, admired and collected. Some are suspended, tent-like from the ceiling, others lie like traps or nests on the floor, still others hang on the walls, and all shelter small creatures. Hellyar constructs the inhabitants from both hard and soft materials — clay, seeds, feathers, fabric, wood, shells and bark. Their variety of textures recalls the contrast between fur and claws; feathers and beaks; a beetle's hard shell and its filmy wings.

These are sculptures which invite touching. The shelters are fragile, temporary and vulnerable; the small creatures amusing, even endearing; yet there is about them a disturbing menacing quality. As we peer into the shelters, we discover the inhabitants lurking in their hidey-holes; threatening to jump out at us, or scurry away, or perhaps just shrink further into their shells. There are associations with the scary monsters' lairs of childhood.

Hellyar's work embodies something of the unsettling, yet fascinating mystery of the natural world. Her sources are varied, and she has displayed some source material in the adjacent gallery — shells, furs, nests, twigs, butterflies, bones, stones and baskets, as well as photographs of events, objects, human constructions and natural phenomena which interest her.

Hellyar also collects words, phrases and quotations, which she lists among the drawings in her workbooks and these further widen the associations of her sculpture.

This is one of the largest installations Christine Hellyar has ever made. In its associations with the natural world, and our often uneasy relationships with our fellow-inhabitants *Shelter* incorporates the major concerns of Hellyar's recent work.

**Alexa M. Johnston**

Curator of New Zealand Painting and Sculpture

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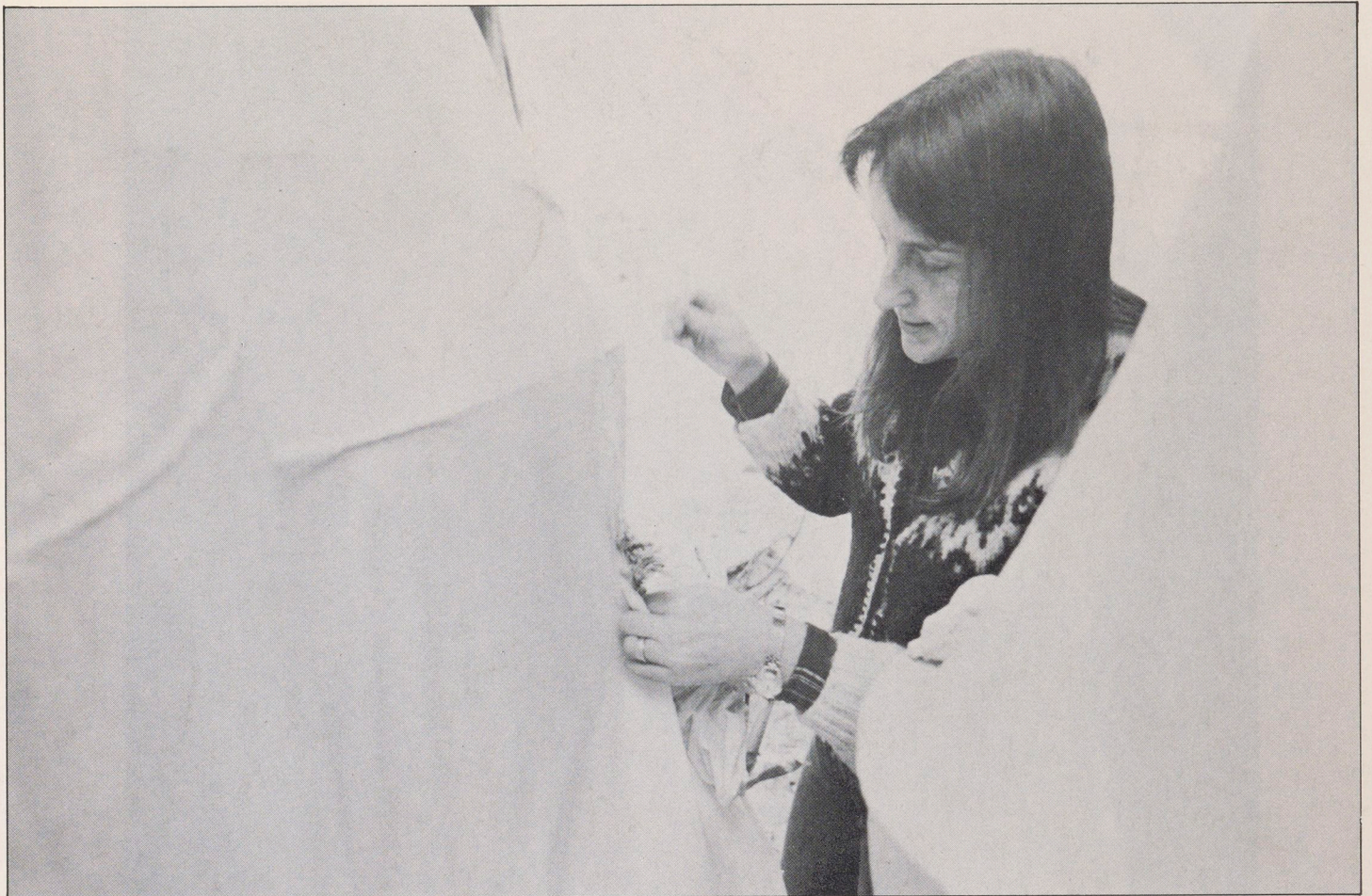


Some lists from Christine Hellyar's workbook

vessels  
 shells  
 seedpods  
 stems  
 roots  
 bones  
 leaf & branch bases  
 organ & body skins  
 nests  
 cocoons  
 webs  
 rock pools  
 sea anemones  
 jelly fish bottoms  
 husks  
 wombs  
 pouches  
 mouths  
 stomachs  
 caves  
 skulls  
 hives  
 baskets & bags  
 pockets & pouches  
 cups mugs jugs

shrink cringe  
 lurk scurry  
 splay stretch  
 scuttle huddle nestle  
 freeze rest  
 burrow alight  
 snuggle bustle settle  
 hideouts & hangouts  
 caves nests  
 holes cracks  
 dens lairs  
 hollows forms  
 hedges sedges  
 trees grasses bushes  
 leafy layers  
 huddles clusters  
 burrows hives  
 tunnels tubes  
 pile pits  
 gaps  
 clearings  
 hairy hides  
 webs  
 cocoons  
 rough surfaces

gloves hats shoes  
 capes coats  
 sacks  
 musical instruments  
 scientific instruments  
 cases boxes  
 tubes tumblers  
 nets traps  
 hoods helmets  
 crinolines stays bustles bras  
 lamps  
 masks  
 tents yurts  
 houses hives  
 canoes kayaks coracles umiaks  
 boats  
 bowls  
 wells fireplaces  
 small animals doings  
 cling slip slide clasp  
 mount hug  
 perch lounge  
 squat spread  
 slither hover  
 bask blend



Christine Hellyar 1982

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Christine Hellyar was born in New Plymouth in 1947. She studied at Elam School of Fine Arts, graduating in 1969. She has exhibited her work throughout New Zealand since then. In 1976, she was awarded a Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council grant and travelled to Europe. Hellyar was one of six artists who represented New Zealand at the 1982 Sydney Biennale.

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