

Thursday Arts

From Earth to Heaven

THIS is a week of ladders. By coincidence or by virtue of some Jungian principle, ladders feature as emblems in a number of exhibitions in Auckland.

The most powerful of these ladders is *The Cicada Tree*, an installation by Shona Rapira Davies at the Fisher Gallery in Pakuranga. The ladders in this powerful work are made of stripped and sharpened branches of manuka woven together with flax cords. They mediate between Heaven and Earth, between Rangī and Papa.

These ladders begin where the poet W. B. Yeats said all ladders start, "in the foul rag-and-bone shop of the heart."

Strewn across the floor between these mythic pathways to the spiritual world are prone figures and pieces of limbs moulded on human forms in flax pulp.

The forms vividly recall the cast-off cases of cicadas but also evoke times long past, resembling figures caught in the eruption of Tarawera or Vesuvius.

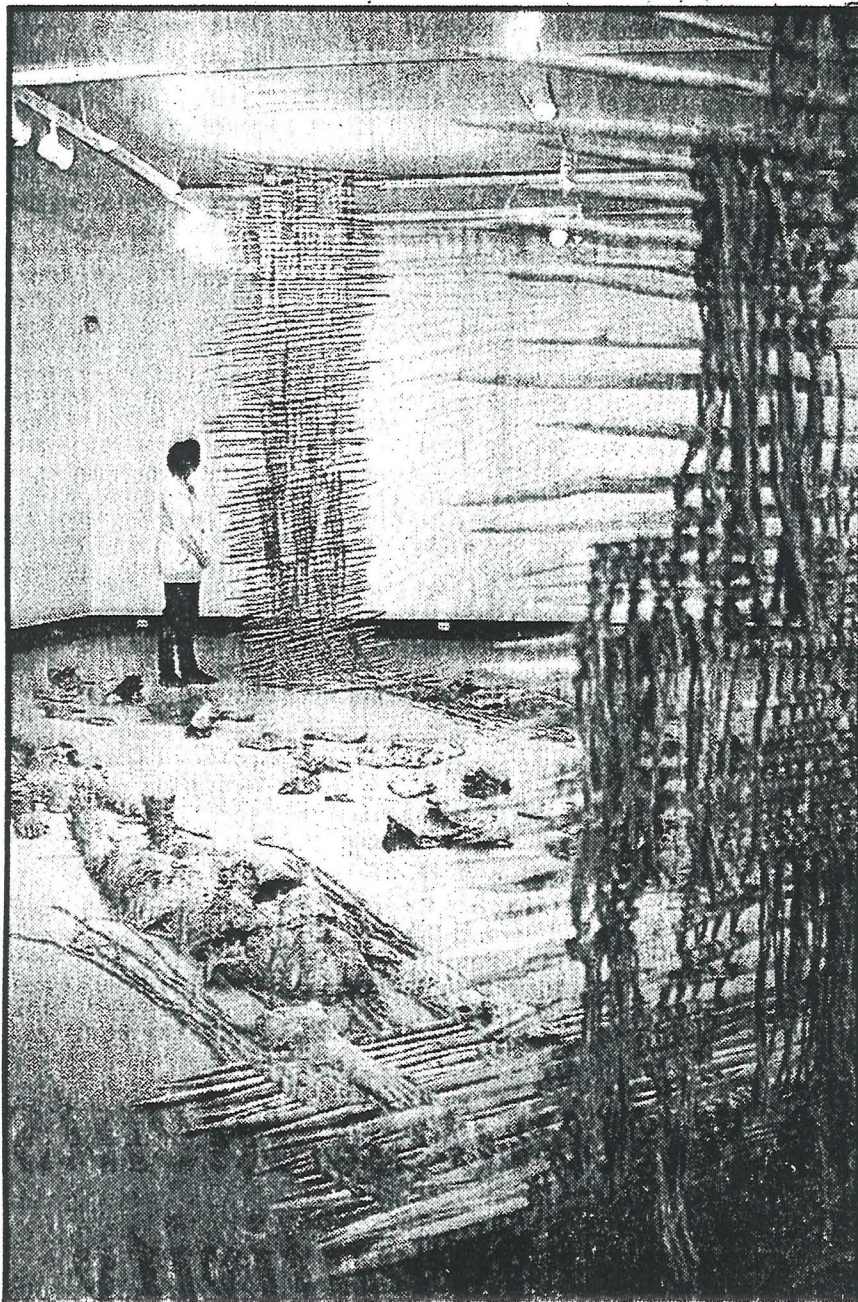
BECAUSE the forms are laid out in two directions there is strong cyclic feeling to the work, a sense of an endless round of life and death.

The cyclic feeling is reinforced by four wall hangings in ink on linen which accompany the work. These feature the imprint of a multitude of hands as well as the discarded cicada cases and they too show a strong upward movement.

The ensemble has a sombre, even grisly, aspect since the prone bodies look dessicated and mummified. Its materials have a strong Maori context but it speaks to all races about the mythic power of regeneration.

Myth is also part of the second installation at the Fisher Gallery but in this case the technique and materials are European. The work by Nancy de Frietas is on three sheets of plate glass. On these sheets of glass are three figures in thinner glass, opaque and crazed with fractures.

One figure is an athlete in a moment of exhaustion. Another is a dancer in a moment of grace. The third figure is at the moment of death. The glass is supported by a heap of black sand from which the figures emerge.



● *The Cicada Tree* ... powerful work by Shona Rapira Davies.



Perspective on Art

by T. J. McNamara

IN the dimly lit room there is a soundtrack with the beating of a human heart overlaid with items about violence taken from the world news.

The whole speaks eloquently of the way many moments of human life and death are seen only as transparencies or visions on a tube yet maintain their fascination and, to some extent, their dignity.

These are powerful works that are worth a trip to Pakuranga but the same, alas, cannot be said of *Stupid Blue* which is hardly worth the effort of finding parking near Artspace in Quay St.