



DOMESTIC ISSUES: A work called *KR(s)ch(ick)en* by Megan Ruth Hansen-Knarhol.

PICTURES / KENNY ROOZE

Crafty artists turn to reminiscence

CRAFT: Objectspace makes its debut with an exhibition of contemporary textile works, as Hanna Scott writes

Kicking off a new craft arts initiative, Te Tuhi-The Mark is hosting the first exhibition and publication project by a new collective, Objectspace. The exhibition, *Handycrafts: At Home with Textiles*, presents 22 artists and their work with contemporary textiles.

Textiles are a girl thing, or so the stereotype goes, and this show revels in its gender bias, stacking up high fashion next to aprons, waranga along with embroidery. It is women's work, laced with reminiscence, with more than a backward glance to magazines like *Stitch* and *New Zealand Woman* or the early *New Zealand Woman's Weekly*.

"The show looks particularly at the influence women's magazines have had on the things we make," says curator Rose Griffin. "The works were commissioned for a hypothetical New Zealand women's magazine."

There is one male artist in the show, Karl Chitham. His artist comment in the accompanying publication (with foreword by Warwick Freeman) states, "*Handycrafts* is a project which invites 'blokes' to express their creative sides and move away from the stereotypes they are normally associated with. A group of 'blokes' were asked to communicate their masculinity through the medium of cross-stitch."

The works are all contemporary but the exhibition is ripe with nostalgia. Two works by Dana Pratt epitomise the way *Handycrafts* presents a historical and contemporary view at the same time. Pratt has reworked a pair of knee-high leather boots by covering them with found tapestries. The standout works in the show, four handbags by Viti Cochran, are also made from found materials. Her sleek, black felt bags are covered with a magpie's melange of dress-



HOME COMFORTS: A rag rug by Elizabeth Andrews at Te Tuhi-The Mark.

making items. One bag is decorated with buttons in almost every hue, another bag is snaked with a rainbow spectrum of zips. Cochran's bags are exquisite fashion accessories, underscoring the connection textiles have to the body.

Diana Paricos' all-white tyvek apron has two front pockets and is stitched with simulated cutwork embroidery. Well known as a building paper material, tyvek is also used in disposable freezing-worker garments. Using an industrial material with a decorative lace-like technique creates a wry comment on the domestic division of labour, especially as the apron is disposable.

Handycrafts is a debut curatorial effort from Nelson-based Griffin, which means that Objectspace is living up to its aim of helping object-based curators to test ideas. The exhibition is packed with subplots and covers a lot of territory.

The role of technology plays a part in several works, including an imac made of

» Exhibition

- What: *Handycrafts: At Home with Textiles*
- Where & when: Te Tuhi-The Mark, Paikurangi, to November 23

came by Lauren Lysaght. Indigenous fibre art is represented in several works, and contemporary politics is also woven into the fabric of the exhibition with a suite of jacquard woven tea towels.

Fran Allison's work draws out the domestic theme of the show succinctly. Inspired by a *Woman's Weekly* article on "How to Make a Rabbit from a Sock", Allison instead made "A Lei from a Frock". Drawing on the thrifty war generation "who made peg bags out of old tea towels and re-used old worn sheets by putting sides to middles," says Allison, "this 1950s frock was once beautiful, now it is shredded to a shell, and from it I have made another decorative object, full and large and labour-intensive, ceremoniously speaking of both welcome and farewell".

Jeweller and Art Laureate Warwick Freeman is the chairman of the newly formed Objectspace board, and he says Objectspace is interested in "the idea of the objects' place in our culture — not as the bit player in some colour magazine idealised interior, a dislocated product from a consumer driven market place", but objects as the witnesses to daily life.

■ Curator Rose Griffin will give a floor talk at the gallery on November 9 at 3pm.