

Penelope Richardson
SHELTER

'... a sanctuary for the dispossessed, or alternatively a sacred space salvaged from the rubble...'

Artist Statement:

In the making of *Give Me Shelter (in moments of madness)* my thoughts were about both sanctuary and chaos. I wanted to make a sanctuary for the dispossessed, or alternatively a sacred space salvaged from the rubble, or a home for a recluse.

In the final work, a clad 'skin' constructed of materials from demolished buildings, sets up an opposition with the warm inviting interior of the hut. It is like an echidna with its protective shell. You have venture beyond the exterior and your initial perception to find what is inside. One crosses a threshold on entering the hut into a quiet, nurturing, warm space.

While making this work I was looking at media images of people sitting on piles of rubble and wondering what they would salvage to make themselves feel at home and safe. Also, while collecting materials for my project I found a couple of local squatters dens where the entrance to their 'dwelling' had been set up to look so frightening to stop intruders coming in (except me because of my curiosity). I noticed that once I had passed through 'gate', inside was a home of sorts, albeit abandoned (because police had moved the squatters on) and demolished everything.

On a more personal note, perhaps the hut can be read as a metaphor for the self

– myself and how I see myself in the world. Especially considering that the image of the home in dreams is often taken to be a metaphor for oneself. Maybe this reading can be applied to this work too.

While I was making the work I enjoyed how the materials I collected all came with their own histories and resonances. For example, the piece of seagrass matting was like that found in so many homes in the 1970's, especially in sunrooms (often reclaimed parts of the verandah or an old garage) and other liminal spaces of the house that were on the verge of being drawn into the internal infrastructure of the 1980's home. Or the 50's lino from an old house still impregnated with the pungent smell of lamb chops cooked on a griller. And the floral carpet that reminded me of the cloistered feeling inside the 1940's suburban bungalow that my great aunt lived in.

Placing the work in the gallery completely aestheticised all the fragments which was a surprise for me because when I was building it the fragments looked a lot more like rubbish. Using an artists eye for combining objects through shape and colour I think I have made the fragments live again.

There is definitely an influence of Arte Povera in this as well.

August, 2005.



Back cover: *Give me Shelter (in moments of madness)*. Installation at Counihan Gallery, mixed media, 330 x 210 cm, 2005.

Front cover: *Give me Shelter (in moments of madness)*. Installation detail, mixed media, 2005.



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An Art Project
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Give me Shelter (in moments of madness). Exterior: mixed media; interior: cedar panels, gold jaquard cushion, mirror, light, 330 x 210 cm, 2005.



Give me Shelter (in moments of madness). Exterior installation, 330 x 210 cm, 2005.



Top: *Give me Shelter (in moments of madness)*. Interior detail, cedar and perspex. Below: Installation detail with photographic and billboards works at Counihan Gallery, 2005.