

Excited by the challenge of restoration

By Peter Watt

Restoring old photographs is one of many labours of love for Katikati art restorer Christa Mandery

CHERISHED hand-coloured old photo of Granddad is covered in mould, the edges scratched and torn.

There's a lovely picture of Mum and Dad, taken in the 70s, but sadly the sun has washed all the colour out and it's now just a pale blue.

That beautiful rush-seat chair was ruined when someone thoughtlessly used it as a stool and put a foot through it.

A couple of old oil paintings, landscapes in fine gilt frames, no longer stand up to scrutiny because they're dark with age, the varnish has run and the frames are badly chipped.

We may think these beloved objects are

beyond repair but Christa Mandery thinks otherwise.

"I've never come across anything yet that I've turned away," the Katikati art restorer says.

Christa has been fixing works of art for 30 years and is as passionate about it now as she was all those years ago as a young woman in Germany.

She came to New Zealand in 1987 - "the Chernobyl thing had just happened and that was the last straw. We wanted a better place for our children to grow up in."

It meant leaving an age-old culture and the

great art it has produced, for a young country with few artistic pretensions. But Christa has still found uses here for her remarkable range of skills.

Restoring an oil painting, let alone any other medium, requires many skills - dismantling and rebuilding frames, cleaning off layers of varnish and old paint, repairing holes in the canvas, repainting to a standard where it is as good as the original, just to state the obvious.

But as an art restorer Christa also repairs the weaving on chairs; she makes her own casein paints for furniture restoration: she can

