

Drawing Down Desires: Women, Ritual and Art in Tamil Nadu

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1. Introduction

The kolam (Fig. 1), a threshold ritual art form practiced extensively by millions of Tamil women, is the focus of this paper. This paper will explore the multiple sites in daily life in which the kolam plays a significant role. Theoretical categories from the fields of anthropology, cultural studies, art history, and environmental studies will be set in the context of a form of ritual geometry. Design forms will be the sites of exploration of this paper. Indigenous terms, women's voices, their own narratives of their own ritual forms will be the primary research focus (NAGARAJAN, 2001).



Fig. 1. A 14 years old girl finishing a giant labyrinth Kolam in Tamil Nadu. Beginning with a grid of dots, she takes one and a half hours to complete the continuously lined kolam. Photo by the author.