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**Fashioning Liminal Space: The Meaning of *Things* and  
Women's Experience in the Practice of Domestic Shrine  
Making in Aotearoa/New Zealand**

A dissertation presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements  
for the degree of  
Master of Arts in Social Anthropology  
at Massey University

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*The author asserts her moral right in the work*

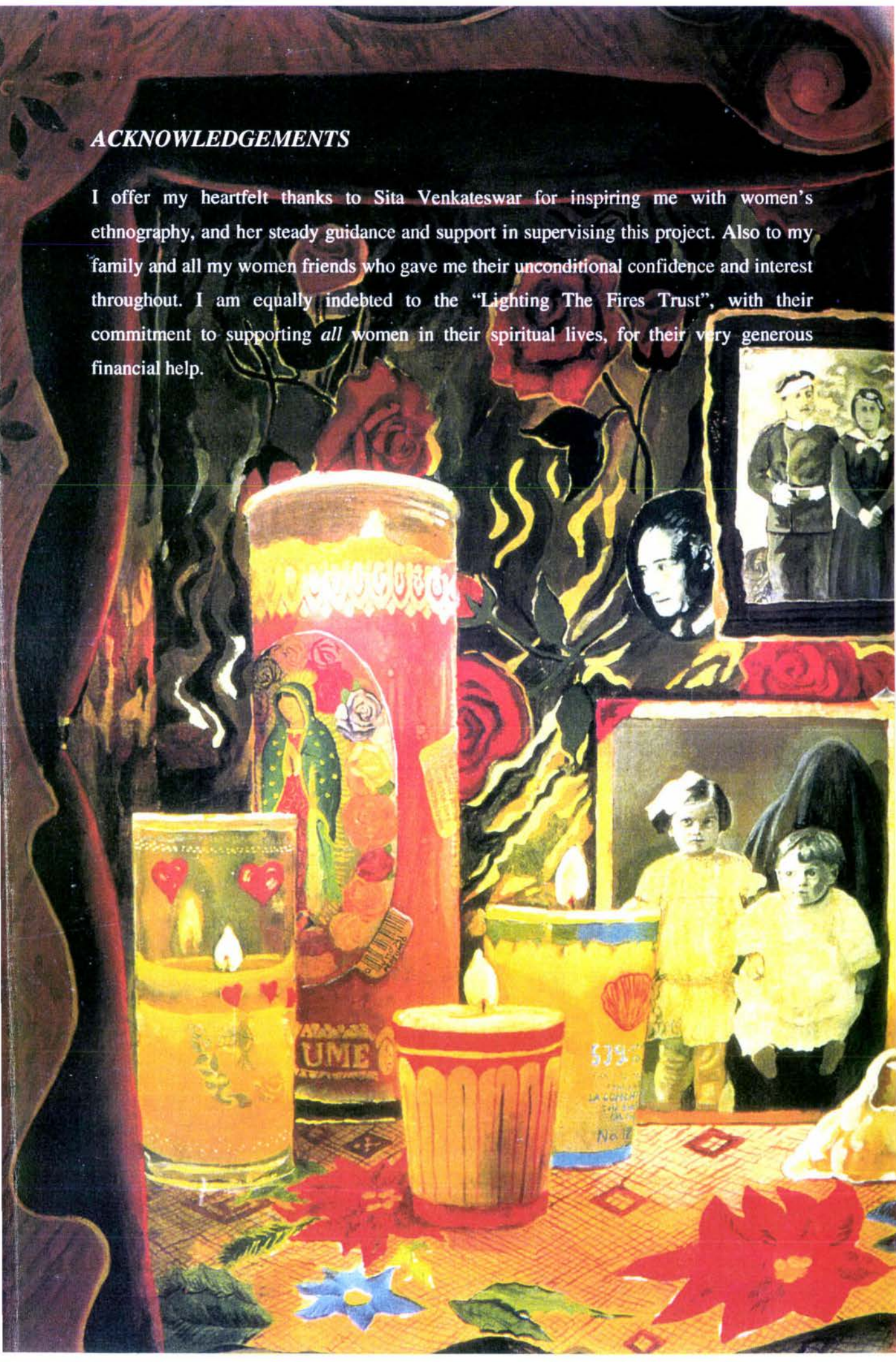
## **ABSTRACT**

This paper aims to bring together two lines of analysis that converge upon the specific spaces that are women's domestic shrines. One line examines the material culture of the spaces and objects on the shrines of ten different women and seeks to reveal the "agency" of these *things* in themselves. The other line is a phenomenological one and responds to the shrine as a site in which issues of practice, embodiment and intentionality in the daily life of the subjects is explored. The material culture of the shrine is investigated as part of the intersubjective experience of its creator and scrutinized as a fruitful place in which to develop an ethnographic understanding of the truth of life-as-lived. This study strives to give voice to ordinary New Zealand women and their precious things within their own homes.

**Key Words:** Domestic Shrines/Altars, Feminist Ethnography, Material Culture, Objects, Spaces, Phenomenology, Practice, Intersubjectivity, Embodiment, Agency, Women's Experience, Liminality.

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