

Stretchmarks:

**Towards a grounded pedagogy
of body/place knowing**

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Abstract

In this thesis I explored the question of how we can put ourselves in the picture of place. I have identified an absence of the body in discourses available to women to represent themselves and this is particularly so for rural women working in traditional visual arts. I developed and examined ways in which rural women, including those coming to artwork for the first time, retrieved and named their embodied experiences of place and put them to work critically and aesthetically as artworks in the public domain.

Research methods included a series of workshops, a performance and an exhibition, in all of which a group of sixteen rural women explored collaborative ways of developing and presenting their individual expressions. This involved working with voice, body and the materials of place (which included domestic and environmental materials and objects).

Data collection came from documentation of the community arts project *Expressions of Place* which formed the main study of my thesis. It also included autobiographical material relating to practices of place, practices of making and learning experiences. Material from the project took many different forms - documentation that was visual and conversational: that came from group and individual scrapbooks and journals, workshops exercises, works in process, performance script and audio/visual recordings, visitors books, photographs and exhibition artworks.

Our findings were expressed as the development of a grounded pedagogy of body and place. This was elaborated using the layered metaphors of bridging, voicing, gathering, stretching and performing that structured the process of the workshops and their representations. Although these findings are specific to this group of women it is likely that the conclusions of the process could be applied to similar groups, and more broadly to women's artmaking and representational practices.