

Sylvia Martins

Fragments



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EMPTY & MARVELOUS

THE PERFECT WAY IS WITHOUT DIFFICULTY, SAVE THAT IT AVOIDS PICKING AND CHOOSING. ONLY WHEN YOU STOP LIKING AND DISLIKING WILL ALL BE CLEARLY UNDERSTOOD.

A SPLIT HAIR'S DIFFERENCE AND HEAVEN AND HELL ARE SET APART. IF YOU WANT TO GET THE PLAIN TRUTH BE NOT CONCERNED WITH RIGHT AND WRONG . . .

THE CONFLICT BETWEEN RIGHT AND WRONG IS THE SICKNESS OF THE MIND.

(SENG-TS' AN, HSIN-HSIN MING)





Sylvia Martins became my friend from the first days we met. It was 1978 and she had just arrived in New York from her native Brazil, where she was born. She was studying with Richard Pousette-Dart at the Art's Student's League on 57th Street and quickly fell in with the whole neo-expressionist art scene in New York. She then traveled through Asia for a year, settling in Bali.

If Brazil is her soul, and New York is her studio, then Bali is her Tushita heaven, her celestial dreamscape.

Sylvia's work has always been a unique mix of the primitive and the sophisticated.

In the late 70's, it was very two dimensional, whimsical, and very colorful, with a touch of sadness not far beneath.

Constantly moving, Sylvia took studios in an abandoned whore house on the docks of Port Townsend, Washington — in a small room above the bar in Vera Cruz, Mexico — in a hut on the beach in Bali. She's been lost in the highlands of Borneo and danced with the returning Candomblé Gods in Bahia, always dragging along painting supplies.

By the mid 80's Sylvia's work had taken on much more complex emotional material.

In the late 1980's, her work became more skilled and adventurous, employing techniques she had absorbed from Tibetan sand Mandalas, cave paintings, Indian miniatures, Jackson Pollock and from the full range of Balinese Arts. She started working with sand, glass, wax and anything else lying around the studio. The result was reminiscent of French stone age cave paintings fueled by the rich imagery of her eclectic spiritual interests. This was new stuff. The images seem to have been cut and released from the layers of paint and wax — half formed and half remembered dreams —. Deeply beautiful — seductively tactile-expressed with the freedom and spontaneity previously seen only in her drawings and water colors. She had truly found herself. The successful solo shows in New York and Los Angeles that followed were liberating and very moving.

Richard Gere