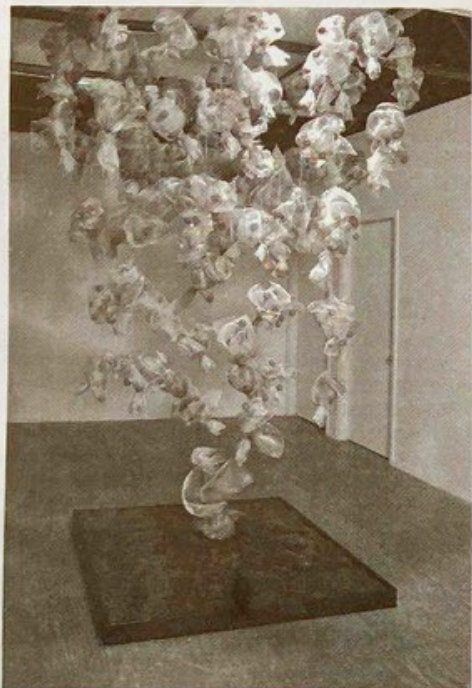


## Art In Focus

### The Lotus Sutra

By Milagros Bello

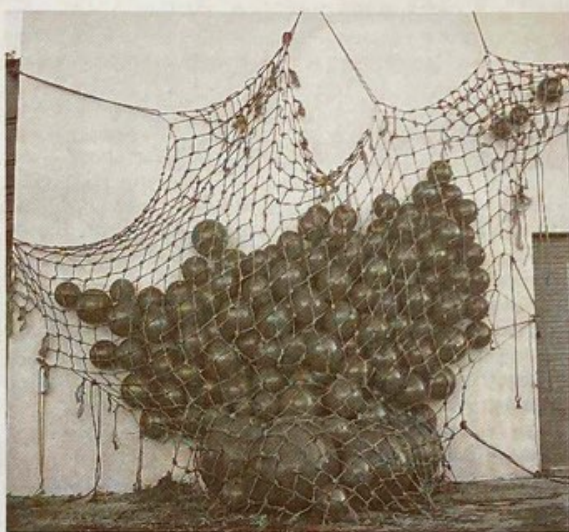


"Pulse of The Lotus Sutra" Installation, 9'h x 6'w x 5'd  
Wire mesh, balls & mud 2004 Courtesy of Marina Kessler Gallery

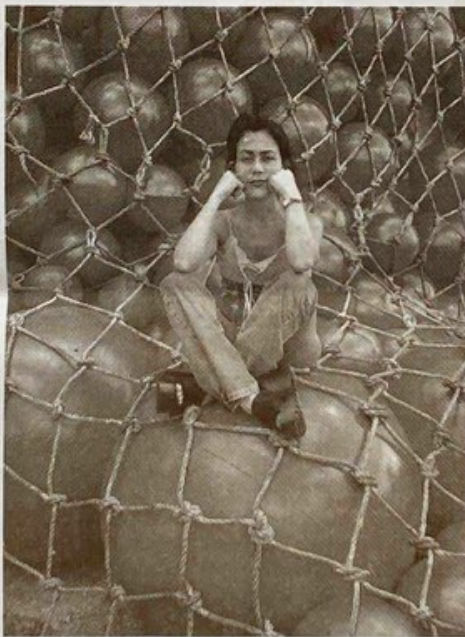
This exhibition questions the concept of sculpture in its modernist sense. An aerial quality and a strong expansiveness throughout the empty space substitute the three-dimensionality and the mass that traditional sculpture always proposes. Sylvia Riquezes's sculptures propose a radical mutation from traditional language. Her works are made in multiple pieces, which are linked through a constructive asymmetrical pattern. They appear as atomized constructions, as aerial and floating pieces, spread out in the gallery space. They are made with industrial materials such as wire netting, together with small balls made of polymers, which enhance their strange "allure" and their aseptic industrial quality. Contorted, polymorph and translucent compounds have replaced the traditional solid body of the sculptures. The works show a net of clustered metallic forms coiling centripetally upon themselves and hanging down from the ceiling or emerging from the ground. Each installation forms an ensemble of pieces tied up by nylon strings. The artworks are reminiscent of flowers, of small shrubs or of vegetal growths, all coexisting in a hectic installation. The wire netting coils in several layers, giving shape to voluptuous and zigzagging veils, enveloping and self-contained. The balls are placed in different parts of these structures as bright and chromatic red dots, which symbolize vitality and life as opposed to the gray values of the metallic net that allude to gray zones of life or death.



"Coco Palma" Urban Intervention at Merrill Lynch arteamericas Miami 2004, Plastic Balls.



"The Blob"  
Urban Intervention at Damien B. Art Center, Miami, Florida.  
40'h x 22'w x 5'd. Rope net and inflated balls, 2004



Sylvia Riquezes

The ever-changing deconstructive effect of the pieces breaks through a disrupted linearity. The traditional solid structure of the modern sculpture breaks down into a complex system of disseminated poles. There is a chaotic composition in the installations-chaotic in the sense proposed in the Theory of Chaos - where attractors and fractal forms intertwine. The pieces form a decentralized net of multidirectional forces, which reverberate in peripheral fractal rhizomes.

Riquezes uses repetition as a way of destroying a narrative language, and binds the pieces of the ensemble together along a dialogic line in which the idea of nature is crucially called into question. It is a system composed only by pure signifiers, -fragmented frameworks for a de-naturalized and de-constructed nature where instead of facing the fantasy, beauty and calmness of a bucolic landscape or of a blossoming garden, we are con-

fronted with a nature-like ensemble dispossessed of its substance and proposed as its simulated counterpart. We see a vegetative florescence that has been deprived of its original content and displaced towards its de-constitution and loss. Has nature been sacrificed for the sake of industrial materiality?

A nostalgia for a bucolic poetics hides in Riquezes' work. The pieces resemble "flowers", "bouquets", "hanging gardens", which are the fictional representation of and the longing for a return to the origin. The works, which straddle reality and fiction, are purely optical structures that establish themselves as a melancholy evocation of nature. Riquezes's flowers are powerful visions evoking "Babylonian gardens" of a futuristic society.

Riquezes's artworks juxtapose multiple discourses way beyond a univocal narrative. At another perhaps more intimate level of reading, the work of Riquezes is a meta-reflection on her Buddhist experience. In a deeper sense, these works allude to the perpetual transformation and re-transformation of matter, which constantly re-constitutes itself. The title of the series - "The Lotus Sutra" - makes reference to the title of the millenary writings of the Shakyamuni Buddha, as

well as to the underlying knowledge and wisdom contained in these "sutras" or extracts of supreme knowledge.

In a comprehensive and metaphorical sense, it is an allusion to the impermanent and evolutionary stages implicit in all phenomena. The light and dynamic structure of each installation enunciates the subtlety of matter and its implicit phenomenonic fluidity. The installation "Pulse of the Lotus Sutra" features an aerial assemblage of hanging "flowers" and underneath this a mud pit from which there emerges an ascending "flower". In terms of Buddhist philosophy, the work is an allusion to the transformation and evolutionary path walked by the human being who, like a lotus flower, ascends from its darkness and shadows towards enlightenment and wisdom. In "The Ceremony in the Air", featuring three main hanging pieces and three subsidiary ones, Riquezes alludes to the abstract presence of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, demons and luminous beings, gathered around Shakyamuni, in a great assembly taking place in the air. The work is a metaphor for the transmission of supreme knowledge and the intrinsic relationship of the human being with mystic wisdom.

The installations are proposed as "sculptures of the expanded field" (Rosalind Krauss) in which the solid body of the sculpture has disintegrated into a new compound of disrupted non-narrative elements. The artist opens a window of multiple interpretations that set new patterns and approaches for contemporary sculpture. 1



"Rosa jardin" 5'h x 50'w x 8'd. Wire mesh and balls, Merrill Lynch arteamericas Miami 2004.

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