

Artist Statement — Sandra Jo Martinez smartinezw@gmail.com

What begins as stream-of-consciousness content transitions into layers of ink, ash, dirt and acrylic washes that reveal human, plant, and shelter forms.

One of my earliest art memories is digging in the sandbox to discover hidden layers of clay which I then shaped into objects. My immediate, obsessive response to this material led to formal study in ceramics. Halfway through my bachelor's degree at University of Wisconsin Green Bay, I discovered a love of meditative drawing that opened new paths for my life.

My wide range of influences included Haitian cut metal sculpture, Harold and the Purple Crayon, Keith Haring, and Surreal and Conceptual artists who broke free from traditional methods and materials. My mentor, David Damkoehler, affirmed my pursuits and encouraged me to develop my own symbolic language to give visual expression to my emotions and ideas.

At age twenty-eight, a friend suggested that my drawings would translate well into weavings. A weaver in Oaxaca named Wenceslao Martinez jumped at the challenge. His woven translation of my drawing sparked a desire to meet this man. At our first meeting in person in 1988, I commissioned fourteen new works, initiating a cross-cultural relationship and artistic collaboration that now spans thirty years.

Working Process

Sandra's symbolist works on paper are intuitive and meditative. Taking inspiration from surrealists, her process begins with loose contour drawings that can be read as abstracted human, plant, and shelter forms.

Often using book pages and antique manuscripts as her blank canvas, Sandra's favorite painting materials are sumi ink, marker, acrylic, dirt, sand, ash, and recycled fragments of earlier paintings. Handwritten text is sometimes present but usually obliterated or obscured.

Gestural washes with a minimal palette build up in her work. Some areas are rubbed, erased, cut, collaged, or laden with dirt. The resulting surfaces range from sparse to thick.

Select drawings are expanded into larger painting series and some become weaving studies. She then draws the full-size cartoon weavers use to mark her design on the loom's warp.