



SYLVIA MARTINS

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Malas

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AFP Galleries

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Throughout history, people have strung flower heads together to make head, neck, wrist, and other ornaments composed of flowers. The form in widest use is the garland, or flowers necklace, generally referred to by the Sanskrit term *mala*.

In India there are many different kinds of *malas*. They are worn in weddings as a good luck symbol, as offerings to a temple deity, or to welcome or honor someone.

Fresh-flower garlands are always of prime importance in Indian rituals. Hindus and other religious groups consider flowers in any form to be ritually and sacrificially pure. In their belief, good spirits reside in the garlands, making the flowers favored as offerings to the Divine.

The famous Indian manual on the art of love, the *Kamasutra* (from the Sanskrit meaning "love's string of rules"), refers frequently to the use of flowers for personal adornment and to stimulate erotic arousal.

Wearing a flower garland is said to impart an intoxicating feeling or mood of contentment and pleasure in its wearer.

1. **TANZANIA**, 2008
50 x 70 inches
oil on linen



2. **MANDALAY (morning)**, 2009
60 x 60 inches
oil on linen

