



Transcending Palms

Shelley Moen Hoist made her first basket more than 20 years ago, but it wasn't until after four or five years of working with the palm bases that she began to see the material for what it truly was. "I realized that it needed to be honored for what it was. That particular sheath lived a *life* on that tree that is *unique*. Just like we're all unique, they're all unique, and they don't always want to be the same thing." I ran my hand along the grooves of the shaped and hardened material, the curves pulling at my fingertips as Shelley continued. **"I changed my question from 'what do I want to make?' to 'what do you want to be?'"**

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Award winning "Ho'okumu" ("the beginning") incorporates natural elements from Hawaii Island, 36" x 24". Right, "Regeneration" uses natural stone chips to suggest lava flows. The sculptures are made from leaf bases of *Archontophoenix alexandrae*, naturalized on the island.

Shelley's words piqued my curiosity. What caused the palm to grow the curved, instead of straight ridges on the interior of its crownshaft? What forces had left their imprint on that certain leaf? "I know so little about palm trees, but I fell in love with the material," she said. Once the leaf bases are soaked in water, increasing the malleability, "it's like working with leather."

Different palms result in different color or texture. The *Archontophoenix alexandrae* palms dry to a deep, rich brown, like maple syrup, while the *Roystonea regia* palms can result in a pale honey blond. Foxtails? Arecas? "A whole different material!"



Soaking the bases of *A. alexandrae*; "Copper Feather Blast" - Royal palm sheath, paper, feathers (Venerly pheasant, peacock, ringneck and golden pheasant), copper leafing, painted interior, completed with hand-rubbed poly finish; hanging behind the basket, "Wall Passages" to be stuffed with a single exotic bloom or some curling dried twigs. Right, "Standing Tall" sculpture made from *Roystonea regia* leaf bases.



Above l-r: Copper washed "The Three Sisters," canoe of *Dypsis leptocheilos spathe*; below, her father's tools; basket with paper and peacock feathers. Photos (except canoe) Kim Cyr.

Slapping a wet leaf base on her work table, Shelley goes to work, first drying it with a rag, then using a brush to scrub off any clinging debris. She examines the base, turning it in her hands, then trims the edge and crops the length with sturdy scissors. Working deftly while the material remains wet, her knowing hands measure, fold, and stitch a basic basket as I watch, tying knots memorized in childhood deep inside the basket, and using her fingers to measure the distance between stitches made with a sailmaker's needle and *Raphia* palm fiber. As she works, she asks, "What do you want to be...?" Watch her create [here](#).



Shelley has come to see the palm as a connection between the earth and the sky. "It has its roots in the soil and its leaves in the sky, and it bridges the two." The long narrow vessels she creates are called "Passages," meant to be hung on the wall, or stand separately to represent this concept, stunning in their sculptural simplicity.

Finding "intention" in her materials and pieces to help people reconnect to nature; finding deep inspiration and affirmation in the thoughtful sculpting and selection of natural embellishments, taking pride in detail and perfection; what began as a craft is elevated to fine art. ~ End

Above, Shelley Moen Hoist in her studio with the first stage of a basket completed. The basket will

harden and retain the color variations, to be enhanced by a hand-rubbed wax or polyurethane finish, depending on the desired sheen.

Shelly will create a custom piece for you, even use your personal palm materials, jewelry, or other embellishments you bring to her. She can create personalized Memorial Urn Vessels that provide "an organic, natural alternative to traditional urns." Beginning next year Shelley will offer workshops designed for adults. To learn more, visit her website: shelleyhoist.com

Below, cast off palm sheaths loaded into her vehicle; right, Shelley discovers *Bismarckia nobilis*. Photos from Shelley.



Scientists work to define threat from palm pest

By Kevin Hecteman

Southern California, which in recent times ejected the red palm weevil, has a new problem to ponder. It's the South American palm weevil, which has arrived in the San Diego area from Tijuana and likes to dine on palm trees—both the ornamental and the date-growing kind.

Insect specialists, farmers and others gathered in Bonita last week to discuss the problem.

"One of the first things date palm growers should be doing is getting informed about the situation," said Mark Hoddle, an entomologist at the University of California, Riverside. "The second thing they could help with is just to be aware of the risks of how this weevil moves around."



Hoddle described the weevil as a strong flier.

Above, the South American palm weevil, CA Farm Bureau photo

"But movement of live palm material, especially transplants that get moved from potentially infested areas into uninfested areas, could suddenly bring the palm weevil into close proximity to date-growing areas, where currently there are no known breeding weevil populations," he said.

The third thing, Hoddle said, is keeping an eye out for potentially infested palm trees and bringing those to the attention of agricultural officials for investigation. The UC Riverside Center for Invasive Species Research, which Hoddle directs, has a website where people can report palm trees that may be infested, at cizr.ucr.edu/palmarum_survey.html.

Albert Keck, who runs Hadley Date Farms in Thermal and chairs the California Date Commission, attended last week's meeting and described date growers as "very concerned."

"We don't want the weevil to get a foothold in the United States and then leapfrog into one of these interior valleys and come into our growing district," Keck said. "We're hopeful that it's still a situation that can be contained."

A South American palm weevil wreaks havoc by laying eggs in a growing area of the palm tree, Hoddle said; on a Canary Island palm, that would be the apical meristem in the crown, where new fronds grow.

"That's a large, soft, juicy chunk of meat," Hoddle said. "If you're a weevil, it's the most delicious part of the palm you can get into, and it's also the most nutritious." **Read the rest of the article [HERE](#)**

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[Dying *Phoenix canariensis* palms in Baja California were first brought to the attention of agricultural authorities by PalmTalk forum member Cristóbal. You may read the current discussions on PalmTalk \[here\]\(#\) and his original observations \[here\]\(#\) \(scroll down the page a bit\).](#)

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Pseudophoenix vinifera

Photo by Scott Zona

