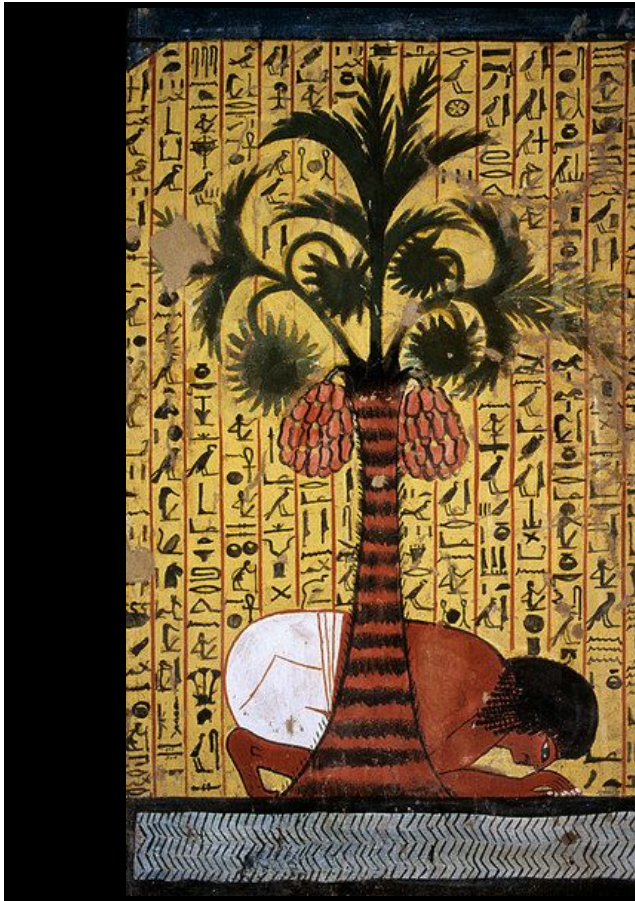




The Art of the Palm

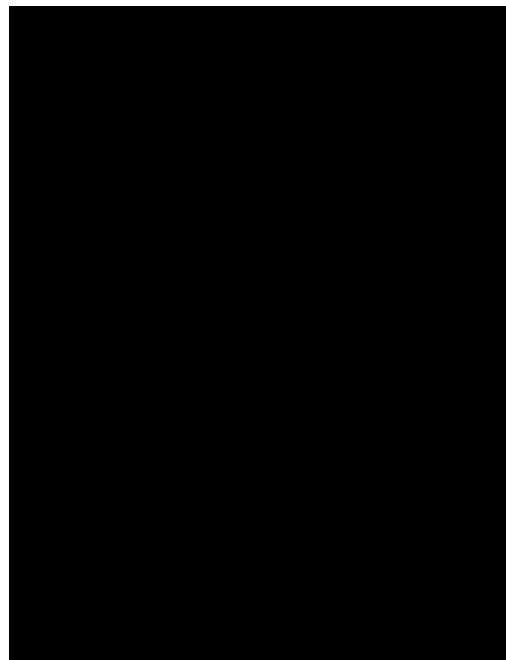
By Bradley McCarson

Palms have a fascinating beauty seldom matched elsewhere in nature. Their beautiful fronds swaying in the wind and their unique trunks provide an artistic and architectural balance to any garden. Palms have many different textures and colors while providing winter interest. With all these elements palms possess it's easy to see why they're often depicted in art. Palm art has been around for centuries, from places like ancient Greece, Egypt, Rome and other parts of the world such as Easter island.



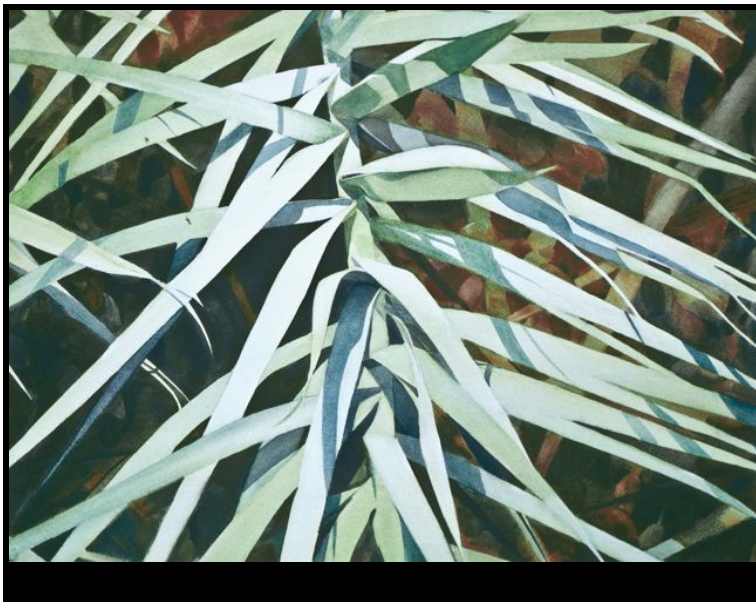
Tomb of Pashedu, Deir el-Medina Necropolis, 13th c. BC, touregypt.net; right, "Shadow Drama" by Edith Bergstrom, watercolor, 21st century

Not only have palms astonished ancient cultures and artists, but they continue to affect modern artists as well. Today, palms can be seen in all types of art such as paintings, sculptures, murals, wallpaper and even building architecture. Human civilization appreciates and cherishes palms all across the globe, and now with the help of Edith Bergstrom, a palm enthusiast and artist, we can peek into the realm of palms in modern art and see how palms have changed and inspired her life much like how they've inspired people for centuries.



*"Palm Patterns," watercolor
Edith Bergstrom*

Edith is a modern artist who is so fascinated by the beauty of palms that she almost always includes one in her paintings. Edith's mother was a painter who helped influence her work as a child, and her artful beginning all started when she was a young girl. As long as she can remember she has created art like drawings of her horse and grade school watercolor paintings, followed by oil paintings during high school and college. Painting was second nature to her and she demonstrated early talent. Eventually she went to Spain and studied the master works in the Prado. The following summer she traveled through Europe and the British Isles visiting major museums. As an undergraduate she majored in art at Pomona College in Southern California. She received her master's at Stanford and studied under Richard Diebenkorn, who was a well-known and respected artist. With a strong background in art education, training, oil paintings, water color, and abstract style art, Edith has created some extraordinary work.



"Date Palm Leaf" right, "Old Trunk Base" Visit Edith's [art website](#) and her [palm information website](#).

The inspiration for Edith's first palm painting came from a palm trunk highlighted by the warm glow of some sunlight. The trunk appeared abstract and yet it was real, allowing her inner artist to wreak havoc on some canvas.

...continued next page

At that point on Edith felt a deep impulse to keep creating paintings of palms with the hope of changing one's mind on how palms are viewed. She hoped that her art could be transformative and open one's eyes to something once overlooked or missed. She wanted to express her view of the palm itself in extraordinary shape and color combinations so that the viewer would see what she saw. She wanted to somehow awaken and unlock that beauty for everyone to enjoy. Edith not only paints palms but she grows them too; with a garden of over 150 species of

palms, she isn't short of material or artistic flair.

Left, "Musical Rhythms"



Glancing at Edith's paintings will draw you in and captivate you, hopefully inspiring you to realize what beauty is all around you and maybe spark your inner artist to paint some wonderful works of art yourself. Include a palm in your painting just as people have been

including palms in their artwork for millennia because of their magnificent ambiance.

Below, "Sunset Grove," right, Edith Bergstrom palm hunting at the IPS Biennial in Costa Rica, photo: Chris Stevens.



© 2008 Edith Bergstrom

Update: Palm Study on the Isthmus of Panama

from Ángela Cano

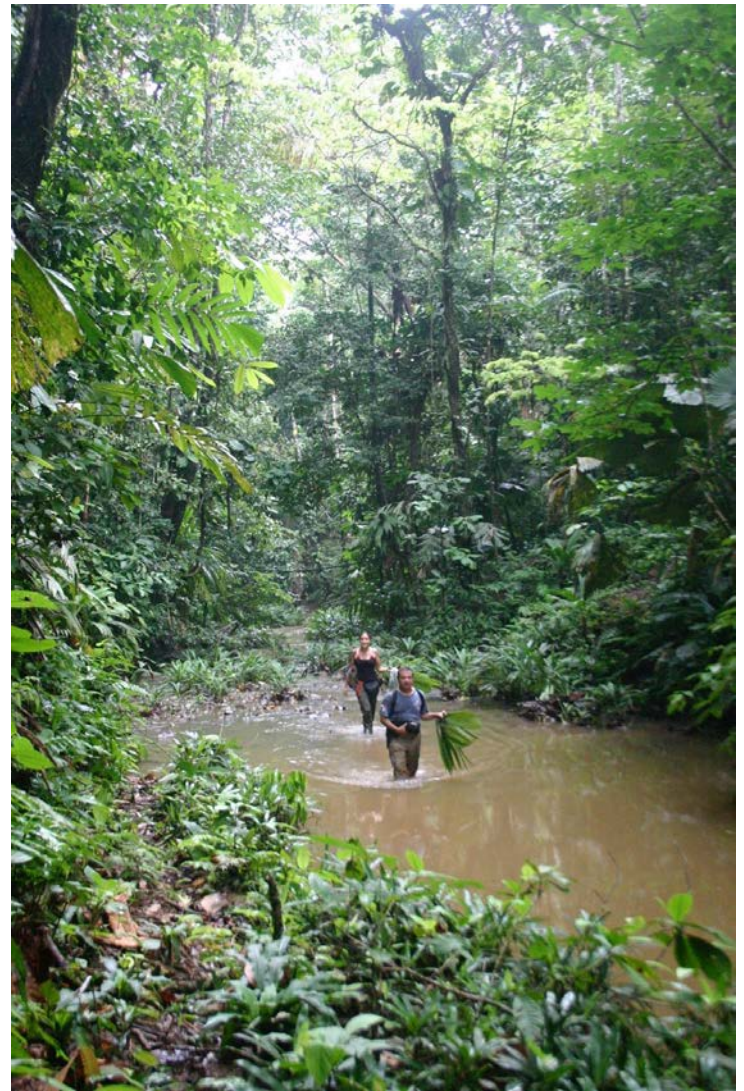
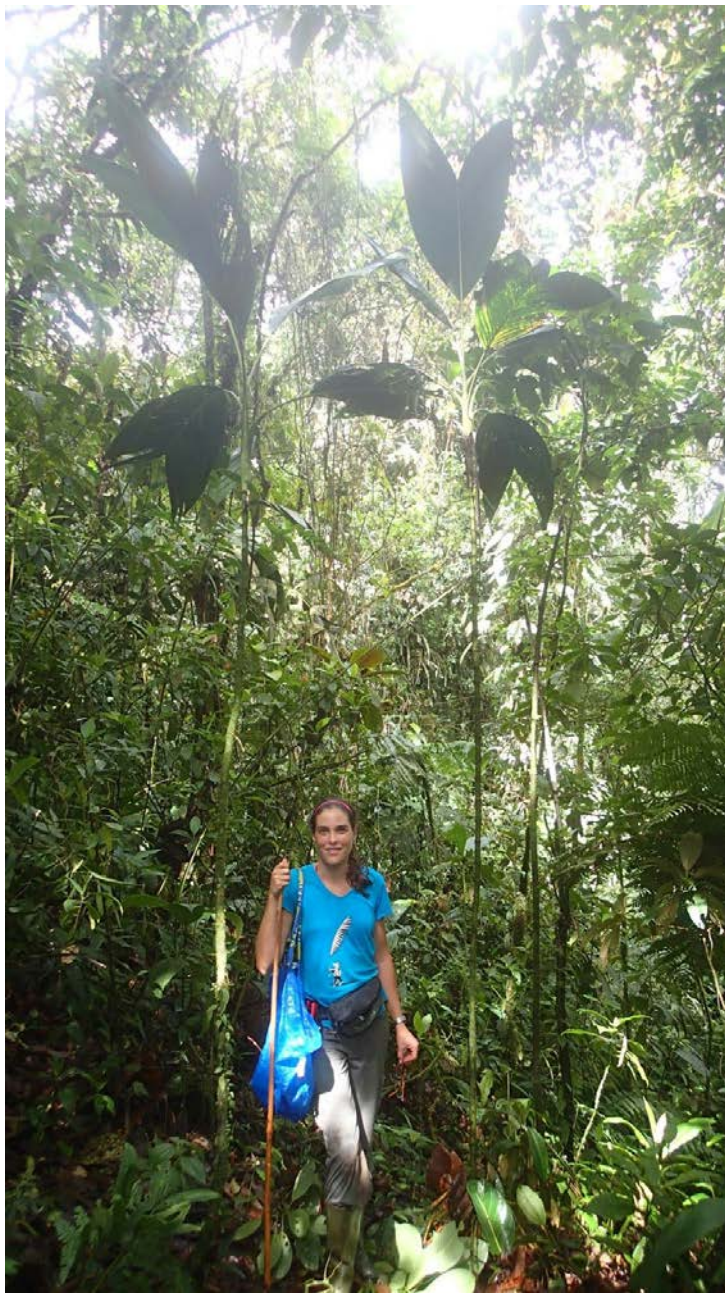
Ángela Cano's project, entitled *Biogeography And Phylogenetic Structure Of Palm (Arecaceae) Communities On The Isthmus of Panama* was awarded a grant from the IPS Endowment in May, 2014. She reports the project is in an advanced stage, having accomplished two essential tasks: sampling and laboratory work. After seven months in the field, exploring 17 localities of the Panama Isthmus and visiting several private collections*, 641 silica-gel samples belonging to 439 palm species were gathered for DNA extraction and sequencing. She writes:

The Panama Isthmus, that land bridge that joins the Americas, hasn't always been there. However, since its formation about ten million years ago, species colonized it, evolved in this area and used it as a migration route between continents. In this project we use palms as a model to understand how, from where and when plants occupied this outstanding region that is in the top five of global centers of plant diversity. We explored the Isthmus (see photos) collecting palm samples and data and we combined different sources of information – palm fossils, DNA, palm ecology and distribution – with the ultimate goal of understanding how the Panama Isthmus became a megadiverse habitat.



Juvenal Batista and Ángela Cano next to a group of individuals of *Geonoma monospatha* in Santa Fe National Park, Veraguas, Panama. Photo: Mathieu Perret

*Fairchild Tropical Botanical Garden, Montgomery Botanical Center, Jardín Botánico del Quindío, Botanic Garden of Geneva



Left: Ángela Cano next to two magnificent individuals of *Chamaedorea ponderosa* in Cerro Pirre, Darien National Park, Panama. Photo: Marcos Gonzalez

Above: Rodrigo Bernal and Ángela Cano carrying freshly collected palm samples in the pristine forests of El Brillante, Chocó, Colombia. Photo: Saúl Hoyos

IPS members enjoy getting a glimpse into palm research, and will certainly look forward to hearing more from Ángela Cano and other grant recipients in the future. Thank you, Ángela!

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Oncosperma tigillarum in Bako National Park, Sarawak, Malaysia
Photo by Mike Lock

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