



SKETCHES

*A Chapbook Series by
Brooks Jensen*



Hilo Palms

JBrooks Jensen

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We humans are creatures that yearn for order wherever we see chaos. How else could we explain those constellations in the night sky—our projection of pattern onto the chaos of the stars? We crave order so strongly that we will *create* it, even if it means we plot mythical Greek figures in the night sky that don't really exist there.

But when order *does* exist, we find it perfectly seductive. Perhaps this is why trees and the world of nature attract us so strongly. There is a pattern in a tree or in a leaf that satisfies our soul on a spiritual level—an amazing feat for something supposedly unintelligent. (How can we see such wondrous life and doubt the intelligence of existence?) A walk in the woods has soothed many a worn worrier.

Order in the chaos is welcome, but pattern in *overwhelming detail* is the ultimate aphrodisiac. Listen to any bit of music you are inclined to enjoy and you'll find there is such complexity! Mozart was right—there were not “too many notes” as the Sovereign claimed. It is the very complexity in abundance that we enjoy.



And in precisely this combination is the dance of life—abundance of detail in patterns of grace, uncountable strands of DNA in concert, performing a pig, a whale, a tree, and me. In my youth I cursed the cowlick in my hair; now I see an Archimedes spiral that rivals the forms in so many delightful shells. The Nautilus and I have something in common!

I have never been a great fan of palm trees. In my limited experience, palms were stick-like weeds with crudely-formed, tufted tops found along the freeways of southern California. Clearly, I had never been to Hawai'i. Recently, during my first visit to those balmy islands, I learned how limited my experiences had been. There they were—the palms!—overflowing with life in a ravine near Hilo. What complex beauty! They were jazz brought to life in an explosion of jiggity details and repeating, graceful arcs that make a chord of wonder for a photographer's eye. No, not a chord—a *forest* of chords. I was entranced. I did not need to project an imaginary constellation onto the fronds; they were true constellations in biology. Limitless details held in wondrous, repeating, and detailed patterns that can only come from living logic.













As I photographed, I discovered I was not just breathing, but breathing *deeply*. Unconsciously, the sea breeze and the forest breath were refreshing my soul. I tried to stay focused on the photography at hand, but I could not let go of the impression that the palms were gesturing to me—waving a greeting and welcoming me to the islands. Of course, I knew I was simply projecting a different form of constellation. Nonetheless, for an hour or so, the palms of Hawai'i and I had the most pleasant conversation—one complexity of ordered pattern to another. 🌿

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