

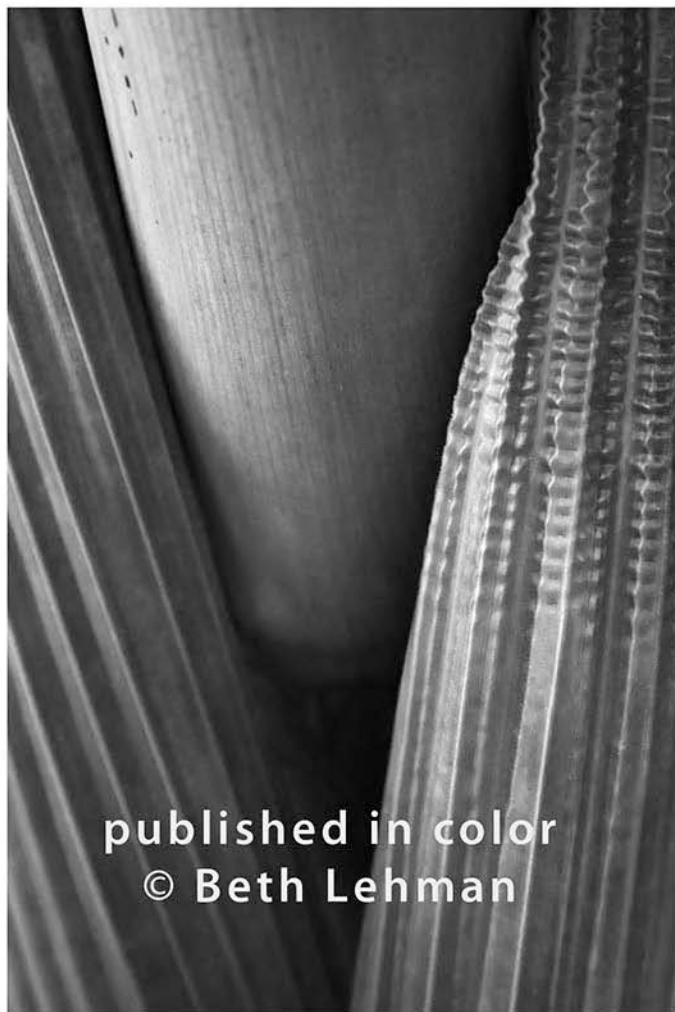
The “Natural Abstractions” series explores the intimate architecture of living things. Looking close-up and close-in, I respond to the patterns and textures of plant forms as “visual music.” At times, the structural dynamic is majestic, expressed with a thrusting line or bold color. Elsewhere, the rhythm rises softly from a delicate edge or subtle gradation in palette. Taken as whole, these photographic meditations transform mundane botanical specimens into something far more ethereal and archetypal. I hope the viewer sees more than strong visual design within these abstractions. My goal is to spark fresh appreciation for nature’s sensuous and lyrical geometry.

My photographic “eye” has been honed by years of training as a musician. Early on, appreciation for the structural elements of music became intertwined with my visual aesthetic. In these images, the interplay between tempo, harmony, and rhythm has been transposed upon my understanding of form, line, and pattern. By extension, I am sensitive to the relationship between images, and I relish occasions when one frame seems to initiate a natural conversation with another; I believe that short sequences from within the series, in diptych or triptych format, often present a more eloquent impression than a single image. Not surprisingly, I encourage viewers to compose their own photographic melodies with these lush “visual notes.”

The images you see here are part of an on-going body of work. As I build and expand this series, I take inspiration from the work of several photographers: Imogen Cunningham, for the dramatic use of light and perspective in her early work; Olivia Parker, for the vitality she imparts to collections of objects; and Jan Groover, for the mystical quality she communicates through her unique spatial constructions. These artists look at the commonplace and reveal something unexpected. Similarly, I hope these ‘plant portraits’ will prompt viewers to look at the familiar and see things new.

All of these images were shot with a hand-held DSLR in natural light within a glass dome conservatory. The blurred effects were created entirely in-camera, using a combination of on-camera flash and subsequent camera movement during the exposure (shutter-dragging).

Beth Lehman



published in color
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Lipstick Palm.

opposite page: Living Steel.