

BY CHRISTY HERON

Spirit of the earth

Two Grover Beach artists find true meaning in their craft



LOVE AKILA LOVE

The photographers captured their own beloved dog in this photo—just a taste of their incredibly beautiful and poignant pet photography.

Meet the artists

On August 12, Heather Craig and Jenn Lawrence will have a booth at Day With Creative Women in Mission Plaza in San Luis Obispo. On August 19, they'll be at the SLO Arts Festival at Mitchell Park. Don't miss either of these opportunities to meet these prolific artists, have a laugh, talk pets, and peruse their gorgeous gourd art and pet and fine-art photography. Want to contact Ondago directly to set up a photo shoot for your feline? Info: 459-2771, 550-0508, www.OndagoArts.com, or info@ondagoarts.com.

Feel the spirit at their current exhibit at Earth Spirit Gallery in Morro Bay, 699 Embarcadero. Info: 772-1321.

Heather Craig and Jenn Lawrence are gourd artists and photographers, and—as anyone who walks into their Grover Beach condo can see—these two vibrant, genuine women are animal lovers. One of their beloved dogs recently waited patiently on the veranda for this *New Times* writer to leave (and before she did, said dog pounced and kissed her sloppily on the mouth). The other dog, Akila, laid low in the garage. These animals, along with a cat, are family, and so much of the inspiration behind the artists' latest venture: pet photography.

This aspect of their business is fresh—just a few months old—and was born from their absolute love of animals. Craig and Lawrence have an intense energy in what they do, and their tendency to feed off one another during the creative process is beautiful. They are talented, have a

SPIRAL GOURD A gourd may take 30 hours to transform into something you would want on your mantle—and it's a crapshoot for the artists, because it may not turn out how they imagined it. But that's the beauty of this art phenomenon.

great respect for each other, and keep things light with a lot of laughter.

As if a booming photography business weren't enough, these nature lovers also create impressive and rare gourd art. The process of turning a dry, dirty plant into a work of art is a labor of love. Craig and Lawrence buy the natural gourds from a farm in Southern California, soak them, scrub off the gunk and mold (toxic stuff, by the way), carve out the insides, and sand them.

A gourd in its final artistic stages might involve beadwork, leather dyes, woodcarving, painting, weaving, and carpentry. Think power tools in the backyard. The final products form personalities and even a sense of gender—a true identity amid all of that beauty. Δ

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PHOTOS COURTESY OF ONDAGO ARTS



RED ANTLER GOURD HALF MASK

This started out as a mistake in Craig's mind's eye. Key words: "started out." The end result was this thought-provoking masterpiece.