



NAVES  
DE GAMAZO

13.06.2024 - 22.09.2024

José Manuel  
Ballester

*De arboris perennis*

© José Manuel Ballester. At the Lingyin Temple, Hangzhou. 2011



# *De arboris perennis*

**José Manuel Ballester** has photographed throughout his artistic life, urban environments and natural landscapes. Spaces and places, sometimes in full evolution and development; others abandoned or in ruins, mysterious. He captures the landscapes that surround and captivate him, those that connect with his intimate world, as his work involves an intense inner search. An infinite curiosity that leads him to incessant investigation.

In this diversity, a recurring element appears within the production of this essentially urban artist: the tree, a metaphor for the relationship between humans and nature. The tree as a protective element, the tree as a witness to time, as an identity marker, and as cultural heritage.

The exhibition *De arboris perennis* aims to be a tribute, a show of respect, a reconnection with nature. It is a proposal through which the artist seeks to draw attention to our relationship with the environment. He does so through different scenarios.

The *Hidden Spaces* are images of masterpieces of painting that, stripped of the inhabitants that populate them, highlight the landscape backgrounds that remained in the background.

The journey continues through trees in different landscapes: metro exits, red wooden courtyards of oriental houses, monastery cloisters, historic buildings, skyscrapers, old crumbling walls, orchards, gardens, palaces, churches... Contexts that highlight the universality of the tree, images taken around the world that create a map that transcends borders, because wherever we go, there is always a tree.

Magnificent trees that make us aware of our weakness and insignificance. Beings deeply connected to the earth where they sink their roots, while their branches expand and rise to the sky.

This exhibition, held on the occasion of the awarding of **Fundación ENAIRE 2023 Artist's Career Award**, becomes a clear and almost urgent invitation: we must reflect on how the urban world relates to nature. It also proposes a new and urgent reconciliation for survival. This is dictated by ancestral wisdom, the sap of millions of trees that inhabit with us, and despite us. This is certified by Ballester's works.

Lola Durán Úcar | Exhibition Curator







## *Giotto's Forest*

At the age of 51, Rubens made a copy of Tiziano's painting *Adam and Eve* during his second trip to Madrid (1628).

He had already made other copies of the same artist before, which shows his interest and admiration for Tiziano throughout his life, both in his early years and in his maturity.

In my case, this interest and admiration of the classical world led me to delve into the work of other artists and materialized in the series *Hidden Spaces*.

From the interventions I have been making on a set of masterpieces of the history of painting—some of which are present in this exhibition—Giotto inspired me to take another step forward.

What initially consisted of altering the temporal sequence and spatial perception of each work by eliminating the characters, this time, with the series I have titled *Giotto's Forest*, I have created a group of new compositions based on the artist's craftsmanship, color, and chiaroscuro.

The result is a series of digital works that, having its starting point in photographic material, reconnect with painting in a clear tribute to the figure of such an important artist at the dawn of the Renaissance as Giotto.

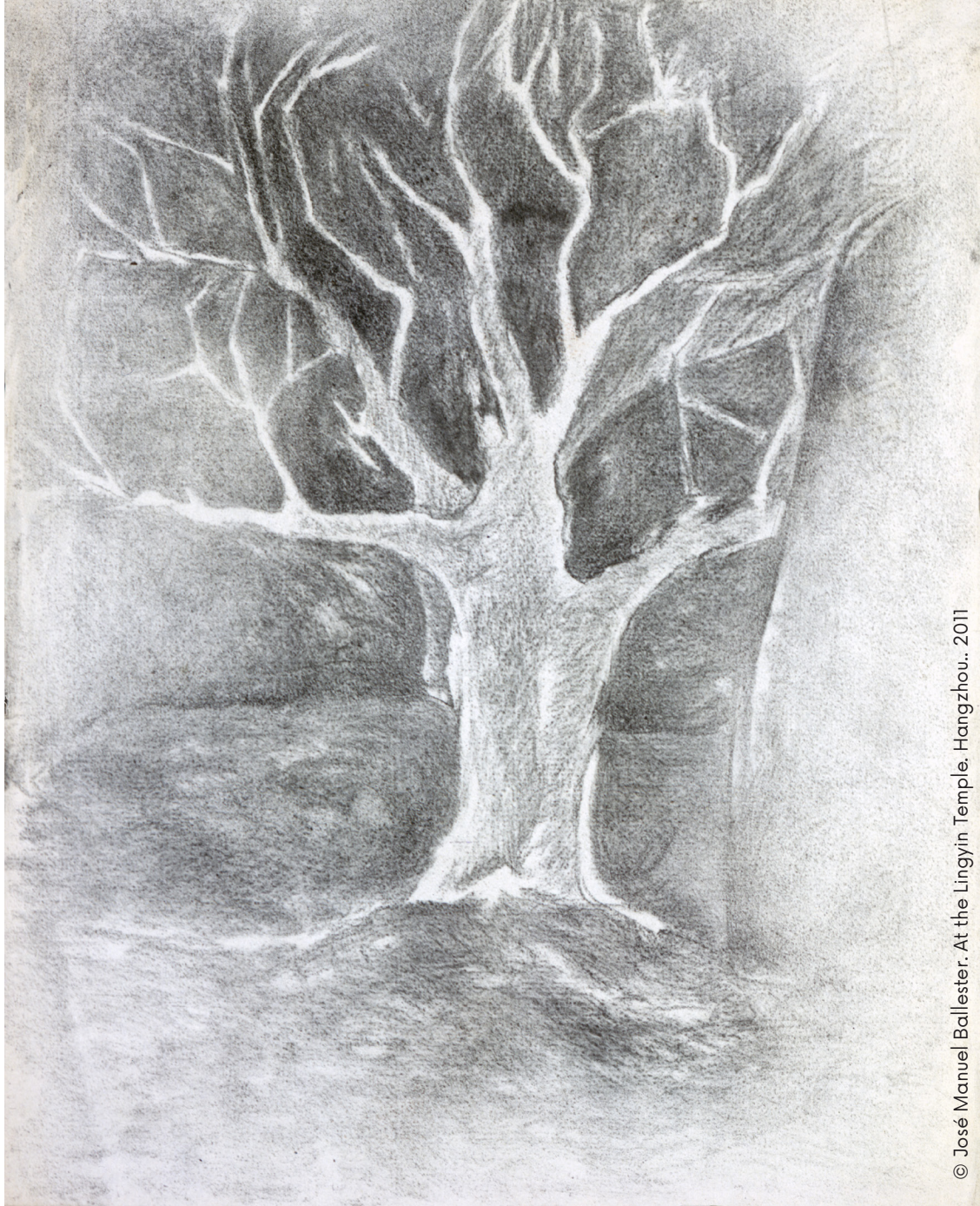
José Manuel Ballester



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If we asked a child to draw a landscape, the first thing their pencil would do is draw a vertical stick with a circle on top and color it in different shades of green. If we then told them to transform that landscape into a jungle, they would almost certainly fill those innocent trees with strange creatures with big eyes that watch us, vigilant and fearful. What a child would do is what Rousseau did over a century ago, and what initially could have been negative is perhaps his greatest achievement.

The tree is the beginning of many things; a place without trees is a child without imagination. A mutilated tree is a defeat, a scar, a lost opportunity, a story that will no longer be told, one less place to climb and seek refuge. The fiercest wind, the cruelest hurricane may be unable to knock them down, yet a slight breeze or our hand can break them in a fraction of a second.

Rousseau had not traveled much and was able to paint remote jungles inhabited by strange animals. A young child, without leaving home, will draw a tree with their eyes closed. Let's be Rousseau for a while in this exhibition; let's be children again. Let's hide in the garden.

Carlos del Amor



# NAVES DE GAMAZO

## +INFO

**FREE ADMISSION**

### **DATES:**

13 JUNE - 22 SEPTEMBER 2024

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### **Summer hours (July, August and September):**

Tuesday to Sunday from 11 am to 8 pm

### **Winter hours (October to June):**

Tuesday to Saturday from 11:00 am to 2:00 pm  
and from 4:00 pm to 8:00 pm.

Sundays and holidays from 11:00 am to 3:00 pm.

Closed Mondays, 24 and 25 December

and 1 and 6 January.

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## **FREE GUIDED TOURS**

### **Winter Schedule**

Tuesday to Friday, at 5:00 pm and 6:30 pm.

Mornings reserved for groups (associations,  
schools, etc.).

Saturdays at 12:30 pm, 5:00 pm and 6:30 pm.

Sundays at 12:30 pm.

### **Summer Schedule**

Tuesday to Sunday at 12:30 pm, 5:00 pm and 6:30 pm.

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**Telephone number:** 942 502 013

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### **Organized by:**



Fundación

**ENAIRe**

### **Collaboration with:**



**Puerto de Santander**

Autoridad Portuaria de Santander

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