

Daniel Ballesteros

Gold Leaf Forest



October 6 - November 12

Reception: October 16, 6-8 pm



Daniel Ballesteros (1980)

Gold Leaf Forest No. 124, 2020

Gold leaf and imitation gold leaf
applied to archival inkjet print

34.5 x 20 inches: image

87.6 x 50.8 cm

39 x 24 inches: frame

99.1 x 61 cm

Edition 1/3

\$7,000



Daniel Ballesteros (1980)

Gold Leaf Forest No. 110, 2020

Gold leaf and imitation gold leaf
applied to archival inkjet print

22 x 12.75 inches: image

55.9 x 32.4 cm

26 x 16 inches: frame

66 x 40.6 cm

Edition 1/3

\$3,000



Daniel Ballesteros (1980)

Gold Leaf Forest No. 099, 2020

Gold leaf and imitation gold leaf
applied to archival inkjet print

30 x 20 inches: image

76.2 x 50.8 cm

34 x 24 inches: frame

86.4 x 61 cm

Edition 1/3

\$6,500



Daniel Ballesteros (1980)

Gold Leaf Forest No. 113, 2020

Gold leaf and imitation gold leaf
applied to archival inkjet print

22 x 12.75 inches: image

55.9 x 32.4 cm

26 x 16 inches: frame

66 x 40.6 cm

Edition 1/3

\$3,000



Daniel Ballesteros (1980)

Gold Leaf Forest No. 125, 2020

Gold leaf and imitation gold leaf
applied to archival inkjet print

34.5 x 20 inches: image

87.6 x 50.8 cm

39 x 24 inches: frame

99.1 x 61 cm

Edition 1/3

\$7,000



Daniel Ballesteros (1980)
Gold Leaf Forest No. 118, 2020
Gold leaf and imitation gold leaf
applied to archival inkjet print
22 x 12.75 inches: image
55.9 x 32.4 cm
26 x 16 inches: frame
66 x 40.6 cm
Edition 1/3

\$3,000



Daniel Ballesteros (1980)
Gold Leaf Forest No. 123, 2020
Gold leaf and imitation gold leaf
applied to archival inkjet print
34.5 x 20 inches: image
87.6 x 50.8 cm
39 x 24 inches: frame
99.1 x 61 cm
Edition 1/3

\$7,000



Daniel Ballesteros (1980)
Gold Leaf Forest No. 122, 2020
Gold leaf and imitation gold leaf
applied to archival inkjet print
34.5 x 20 inches: image
87.6 x 50.8 cm
39 x 24 inches: frame
99.1 x 61 cm
Edition 1/3

\$7,000

Press Release

Daniel Ballesteros • *Gold Leaf Forest*

October 6–November 12

Reception: October 16, 6–8 pm

Richard Levy Gallery is pleased to present ***Gold Leaf Forest***, a solo exhibition of eight gilded photographs by **Daniel Ballesteros**.

Inspired by the resiliency of his Filipino ancestors, Ballesteros is drawn to the adaptability of one of the largest and oldest species on the planet, the redwood. The trees become metaphors for lineage, ancestry, and survival. Covering up the sky and ground, Ballesteros follows a tradition used in religious art by applying gold leaf to his composite photographs as a way to honor these awe-inspiring trees. The matte surface of the exposed photograph provides contrast with the reflective quality of the gilding. The artist's heritage of Animism also influences this work.

Daniel Ballesteros has been an artist-in-residence at the Woodstock Center for Photography, the Camera Club of New York, Bose Pacia, The Luminary, and Kala Institute. He has been awarded grants from the Magenta Foundation, En Foco, and the National Endowment for the Arts. Ballesteros currently resides in Oakland, California.

We currently require proof of COVID-19 vaccination to view this exhibition in person, and gallery visitors must wear masks in compliance with the Governor's mandate. Images, a virtual walk-through, and catalog for this exhibition will be presented on [ARTSY.net](https://www.artsy.net) and levygallery.com. High-resolution images are available on request. Follow us on Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube: **@levygallery @ballesterosprojects #goldleafforest #danielballesteros #richardlevygallery**

Exhibition Dates: October 6–November 12, 2021

Reception: October 16, 6–8 pm

Gallery Hours: Thursday–Saturday, 11 am–4 pm

Location: 514 Central Avenue SW, Albuquerque, NM 87102

Contact: 505.766.9888, info@levygallery.com, www.levygallery.com

Artist Statement

I am a third-generation Filipino-American from a family that began assimilating with U.S. culture in 1945. Never feeling like I belonged with the Southern-Midwest-Anglo culture I was raised in, and being estranged from the Filipino culture my ancestors carried, I found myself lost in the middle. Photography became a natural outlet for me to explore and record my surroundings, family, and environment in an attempt to find my place among them.

Legacy and survival reoccur as themes in my work. How does one generation prepare the next? What is left behind for the next generation to build upon? And what is withheld? Jose Rizal, one of the Philippine's renowned scholars and writers, is often quoted with his take on a common sentiment among people healing a trauma: "He who does not know how to look back on where he came from will never arrive at his destination."

*Photography is the record of moments past. Through the accumulation of images a history is created. Looking at pictures is the act of looking back. I have used photography throughout my career to build and affirm my identity as a Filipino-American. Where there were no records or memories of my family's Filipino ancestry, I have used images to create new ones. In the series *Midwest Filipino* I made pictures of objects, foods, clothing, and other tchotchkes that were normal sightings in the home I was raised in though it was absent of anything Filipino. A picture of banana bread, a stack of twill work slacks, a mechanical pencil, etc. These were the commonalities that came to represent for me what it was to grow up an assimilated Filipino in the Midwest, my cultural inheritance.*

In my recent work I have turned my camera on the forests of Northern California and found similar narratives of lineage, ancestry, and survival. The redwood is one of the largest and longest living species on the planet. They lived 250 million years ago when dinosaurs walked among them. Redwoods propagate most successfully through shoots springing from their burls (knobby growths of bud tissue commonly located at the base of the trunk and often underground), genetically identical to their fallen parent. When an old tree dies, burns or is felled new life grows from its remains. This next generation, or second growth, grows in a ring around its ancestor known as a cathedral or fairy ring. The cavity between them representing the tree that once stood, their past. One genetic line may live on up to 20,000 years. Their root systems, like that of 90% of the forest intertwine with neighboring trees, plants and fungi creating networks where the transfer of water, carbon and other nutrients occur. In addition, warnings of harmful insects and disease are passed from tree to tree causing trees in the network to put up their defenses increasing the chances for survival. Within the networks are hubs called mother trees acting as distribution centers for nutrients and information.

Throughout these systems are parallels to the fluid intelligence commonly associated with insects, animals, and humans. The survival of the forest is based on this communion which scientists are still learning about.

The use of gold in art and religious objects dates back millennia to ancient Egypt. It has adorned Islamic manuscripts. It was used by the Incas for plates, cups, masks and other religious objects. The Middle Ages saw the proliferation of gold used in Christian altarpieces and paintings depicting Christ and the saints. In the 11th century on the islands the Spanish would later name the Philippines gold was used by various tribes to create belts, sashes, jewelry, and religious iconography. Civilizations throughout history have used gold to illuminate those it has deemed most holy, most pious, thereby describing the path toward redemption and salvation for those less worthy of golden adornment.

The indigenous tribes of the Philippines were predominantly Animists before Spanish imperialism found them. Animism is the belief that all objects in nature, trees, rocks, rivers, have a spiritual essence and are animated by a life force. When the Spanish began their invasion and takeover of the islands, they brought Christianity with them and wiped out the majority of tribal religions. Today the Philippines contain the 3rd largest population of Catholics in the world while just 0.2% of the total population adhere to the tribal religions of their ancestors.

All of these influences—my assimilation, my Catholic education, the many lives and spirits of the forest, and the history of the Philippines—have led me to this project. On one level the pictures speak to themes of immigration, survival, and family. On another they are about time, patience, and the power of community.

I use multiple digital captures to create composite images resulting in an extremely sharp, high resolution pigment print on watercolor paper. I then add a layer of red paint as a ground for the gilding size (adhesive) followed by a layer of gold leaf and imitation gold leaf by hand to illuminate the forest and further separate the trees from their environment. The hours, days, and weeks of work put into gilding a single print have replaced that same time once spent in a darkroom working over trays of chemicals. The result is a matte surfaced print with select areas of reflective gold that shifts based on the light falling and the viewer's perspective giving each print a “living” quality. The final prints are dry-mounted to an archival board and framed to museum standards behind a UV protective acrylic glazing. A suite of 3 image would be ideal to communicate the conceptual ideas of the series.

– Daniel Ballesteros