

# ASTRID DE LA FOREST

## ET LES OISEAUX RÊVENT AUSSI



At Chaumont-sur-Loire, I drew from life, in ink, on the paths that wind across its grounds, sketching the outlines of tall trees and birds in flight. On a night I spent there, I dreamt that my body gradually discarded its borders and I turned into a tree and a bird at the same time, as if two ancient forces had agreed to whisper the same story.

It was from this intimate metamorphosis that my exhibition was born. Where tree and bird meet. As if the verticality of those great trees naturally invoked the momentum of flight.

This work is resolutely sentimental. It results from close observation of Chaumont-sur-Loire's landscape and a dream that sought to reconfigure it. Here, nature no longer appears as a simple environment, but as an active force to negotiate with. It acts on me, slowly settling on me until it becomes inner structures.

Back in the studio, almost somatically, the lines I had sketched *in situ* took on a new scale. In ink, on large formats, I let the trees unfurl as if I had become a tree myself, rooted and vibrant, and then a bird ready to take flight. The ink allows this duality: sometimes dense, sometimes almost transparent, it replicates my action, its momentum and hesitation alike. Each sheet becomes a place where the memory of forests encounters my own experience.

When the inks are ready, I start making carborundum prints based on my *in situ* drawings, big steel plates with the same format: once printed, black tree trunks reveal and reinforce the blues and greens of the foliage. The matrices record the memory of the tree in the very heart of the images. *What remains of reality composes the dream itself.*

I also made prints of birds, as well as a wolf imagined on the grounds' night-time pathways. Their outlines contrast with the trees' stable verticality. Printed on transparent Japanese paper, they become diaphanous figures deposited on the inks. The birds, light and almost separated from the paper, seem to be hovering between three states: call of movement — opening — flight.

The exhibition unfolds around fragments of my dream: the tree remains motionless while the bird seems to be moving freely. Here, nature is not a backdrop: it has become a partner. I hesitate between staying and leaving, rooting myself or raising myself.

Then, in the little gallery in the adjoining courtyard, I'll be exhibiting my evolving fresco *Forêt (3)* [Forest (3)], started in 2023 and now with 2 more panels produced in 2026 especially for the Chaumont-sur-Loire exhibition. This printed fresco composed of nine 1 x 2-metre panels, created in 2023 for the Jenisch Museum in Vevey and then for the Château de Fontainebleau, has grown over the course of time, to become what it is today. It's a huge carborundum print, a celebration of living things and the strength of trees at a time when nature is so seriously threatened. The branches brush by each other in continuous motion, like a dance.

A few words about carborundum printing:

Carborundum printing doesn't involve "excavating" the metal plate with acids; on the contrary, what you do is partially cover it with carborundum grit, a powerful abrasive made by heating carbon and silicon, which you fix to the plate with the help of a pasty mixture that sticks to the metal. Once fixed, it's the grain, which is composed of a multitude of asperities, that holds the ink, somewhat the opposite of the hollows formed by intaglio. By playing with the various grades and their density, you can obtain effects going from the deepest to the most gradient black. The technique allows for great spontaneity. For me, it's like the painter's brushstroke: I work the paste as I would work on a painting, but what I really like is the mystery of the drawing revealed by the passage through the press as well as that incomparably deep black.

**Astrid de La Forest, November 2025**