

Juan Carlos Sanz-Briz Quijano

To the Readers of this book,

It is very gratifying for me to address you through these lines.

The first thing I want to do is to explain why my name appears on the cover of this book, when I am a person who knows nothing about botany and even less about palm trees. Besides, the very few photos I have taken in my life are not only usually out of focus, but unfortunately also lacking in interest.

Well, the answer is that I am the person who came up with the idea of making the book.

I confess that since I was a child I have always loved palm trees. Also, the city of Santander, in which thanks to my mother Adela Quijano Secades, (*pro Santanderina*), I have spent many summers of which I keep excellent memories.

The idea of publishing this book arose when I came to live in Santander in 2020 and saw, in my many walks, how beautiful the palm trees were and how they enhanced the beauty of the city in an almost imperceptible way, but worthy of mention and recognition.

I investigated and as I did not find any book of Santander in which they were photographed, I decided to do it myself. I had to get down to work from scratch and gather the right people to make the project a reality.

The first fundamental task was to convince a top-notch photographer to take the photos.

I proposed it to Miguel Soler-Roig Juncadella, one of the best Spanish photographers with international projection. I must have been very enthusiastic because he immediately said yes, since, as he confessed to me, he himself had always been fascinated by palm trees.

In order of appearance in the gestation of the book, I got in touch with the people listed below. All of them turned out to be key and I am very grateful for their efforts, advice and, in many cases, collaboration.

We needed a recognized expert in botany so I contacted Luis González-Camino Meade, a successful landscape designer, and naturally from Santander. Luis agreed to collaborate by writing the foreword and providing technical data. In turn, he put me in touch with Luis Sazatornil, an eminent professor of art at the University of Cantabria and a great connoisseur of the history of Santander's gardens and parks, who also agreed to participate in the book by contributing his own texts.

Mariana Gasset Leyva, a notable editor, explained to me the steps to follow in order to publish the book and encouraged me to do so, alerting me, however, that the process would not be easy or quick.

At my request, José María Peredo Pombo put me in contact with Eva Fernández Ortiz, Director General of Culture of the Santander City Council. Thanks to Eva, the council supported the dissemination of the book and we photographed the palm trees of the Church of the Oblates, which, without her, we would not have located.

César Díaz Maza, first deputy mayor and councilor of development in the Santander City Council, also supported us by providing us with a very valuable map of the city, in which all the palm trees were located. It was of great help to us. So much so that we have included it in the book.

I do not want to forget to mention Antonio Mazarrasa Mowinckel, who put me in touch with his brother Ölav, who had recently published a book edited by Fernando García-Barredo, to whom he introduced me.

Fernando, heir to the know-how of the Santander publishing house Estudio, understood perfectly the type of book we wanted and we commissioned him to edit it. He in turn chose Camus Impresores de Guarnizo as the printer to complete the "Made in Santander".

Finally, we contacted the Hotusa Group, whose Eurostars chain operates the Hotel Real. This spectacular hotel has some of the most beautiful and well-kept palm trees in Santander. It organizes presentations and art exhibitions. Thanks to their patronage, the presentation of the book and the first exhibition of his photos was held in their facilities in July and August 2023.

Taking pictures of Santander's palm trees was very interesting and fun. My role, of indisputable importance, was multidisciplinary. I acted as a photo planner, a transporter, a valet parker in complicated places, a scribe of the photo locations in a notebook, a palm tree spotter, a flash positioning assistant, as well as a polite scare away of people or animals that got in the way of the shots. On some occasions, I also acted as physical support when Miguel, in order to get better angles, climbed on unstable and even dangerous places. We didn't fall to the ground on several occasions by pure miracle.

In the Holy Week of 2022, Miguel made his first trip to Santander to take pictures. He already knew the city and La Montaña because, as a child, he once accompanied his grandmother Mercedes Salisachs Roviralta, author of the novel "La Gangrena", winner of the 1975 Planeta prize, to her home in San Sebastián de Garabandal. By the way, on the way, they always spent the night at the Hotel Real.

During that trip Miguel took more than 500 photos, which, after spending many hours choosing them and preparing them for printing, he saved on a very expensive, state-of-the-art hard disk.

A few months later, the hard drive fell to the ground and all the photos were erased. Miguel sent the hard disk to two foreign companies specialized in recovering data from damaged disks, but, unfortunately, neither of them managed to extract a single photo.

Miguel returned to Santander at the end of February 2023. On this trip he took more than 1,300 photos, during three full days of work, which he stored on another hard disk - even more expensive - also the latest model, but this time indestructible. It is still operational...

Every cloud has a silver lining. The light on the second trip turned out to be much better than the first. In addition, we discovered new locations, palm trees, angles and unstable sites for Miguel and I to put our physical integrity at risk again. Again, no one was hurt.

The result, if I may say so, was optimal. Even better than the first trip.

I am very happy that this book, after so much time and effort, has finally seen the light of day. So is another person who supported me and to whom I am also very grateful: my dear sister Angela. For months, I did not stop telling a stoic Angela each and every detail of the multiple palm trees photographed, the details of the evolution of the book and even the technical problems in the rescue attempts with the hard disks. Such an excess of information almost caused her to start avoiding me.

Objective accomplished. Thanks to this book and to all the people who had something to do with it, the most beautiful palm trees in the city of Santander, like the ones shown in the following pages, will be immortalized forever.

I hope you enjoy the book. Thank you very much.
