

MASI Lugano

Museo d'arte
della Svizzera italiana,
Lugano

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Nicolas Party Rovine

27 June 2021 – 09 January 2022

Museo d'arte della Svizzera italiana, Lugano
MASI | LAC

A Project by Nicolas Party
Curated by Tobia Bezzola and Francesca Bernasconi

PRESS RELEASE

Lugano, 1 June 2021

From 27 June 2021 to 9 January 2022, the Museo d'arte della Svizzera italiana presents "Rovine" (Ruins), the first major monographic exhibition of Nicolas Party (Lausanne, 1980) ever to be displayed in a museum in Europe. This immersive project allows the artist to give life to a rather uncanny universe, complete with bold contrasts of colour, enveloping architectural forms, and startling *trompe l'oeil* decorations. Against this backdrop, his magnetic artworks are staged: large site-specific murals, intriguing polychrome sculptures and luminous pastel paintings.

This ambitious exhibition is in fact a project conceived by the artist, on the basis of the specific structure of MASI largest exhibition hall. Here, on an imposing scale, his soaring, centrally planned architecture, is divided into five distinct environments, each dedicated to a recurring motif in Nicolas Party's work: still life, portrait, rocky views, caves, and landscape.

On the outside of this structure, Party has created four large pastel murals, inspired by four works produced by Swiss painter Arnold Böcklin (1827-1901), a leading representative of symbolism, all depicting enigmatic views of the decaying buildings evoked in the title of the exhibition. These monochromatic, decadent scenarios usher visitors into an environment that contrasts sharply with the chromatic explosion of the works and environments that feature inside the architectural space itself. As is the norm for the artist, Party has further transformed the exhibition space with backgrounds painted in contrasting colours and polychrome marble *trompe l'oeil* decorations, created in collaboration with Sarah Margnetti. Indeed, this manner of displaying his work is at the core of Party's

belief: exhibitions always represent an opportunity to stage his paintings and sculptures in an environment capable of sparking further possible interpretations of his art, by placing his pieces not simply in relation to one another, but also within their setting.

The display features about thirty pastel paintings and four painted sculptures (one large-sized piece is actually located outside the museum): the works were all created between 2013 and today, here some of them are presented to the public for the first time. This well-thought-out selection highlights Party's penchant for extremely vibrant colour palettes and simplified figuration. His subjects are outlined by circumscribed and contrasting coloured fields, based on a method which can be partly traced back to a specific phase in Party's artistic training, namely the creation of graffiti.

Party's compositions do not find their origin in the direct observation of reality (he does not use models and does not paint *plein air* landscapes): instead, they exclusively arise from his imagination. Characterised by an extremely simple approach, they do not carry references to time or their surroundings. Although his subjects have no direct relationship with reality, their simplified forms' essential features allow the observer to associate them with clearly recognisable entities such as faces, fruit or trees. Indeed, the possibility of elaborating a universal and timeless language is precisely what fascinates Party and drives his artistic research.

Party's creative universe features continuous references to the history of art, a field which is indeed systematically and relentlessly explored by the artist. In his paintings, the echoes of surrealist painting's uncanny or fauve chromatic choices manifest themselves. However, the artist's own allusions range still further: from classical art and its search for ideal perfection, to the scientific minutiae of a Seventeenth Century Dutch still life. In addition, Party is passionate about the work of famous artists such as Georgia O'Keeffe (1887-1986) and Ferdinand Hodler (1853-1918), as well as of lesser-known figures, such as Belgian symbolist William Degouve de Nuncques (1867-1935) and portraitist Rosalba Carriera (1675-1757), whose name is inextricably linked to the history of pastel, Nicolas Party's favourite medium.

The Artist

Born in Lausanne in 1980, Nicolas Party currently lives and works in New York. His unique artistic path began in his early teens, when he first became obsessed with graffiti, a means of expression he has continued to explore for the following decade. After turning his interest towards 3D animation, he subsequently completed his training by obtaining a Master's in Fine Arts from the Glasgow School of Art. Over the past ten years, Party's artworks have been greeted with both critical and public acclaim and have been displayed in renowned institutions, including Musée Magritte (Brussels, 2018), the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden (Washington DC, 2017), Dallas Museum of Art (2016), Centre Culturel Suisse (Paris, 2015) and Swiss Institute (New York, 2012).

The Catalogue

The exhibition is accompanied by a catalogue published by Scheidegger & Spiess and Edizioni Casagrande, featuring contributions by Tobia Bezzola, Michele Robecchi and Francesca Bernasconi. All the artworks on display have been photographed on site and are reproduced in the publication, along with views of the installation which reveal the exhibition concept as a whole; the catalogue will be available during the month of July.

Graphic design by Studio Marie Lusa

Trilingual edition (Italian, English, German).

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Exhibition venues

MASI | LAC

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MASI | Palazzo Reali

Via Canova 10

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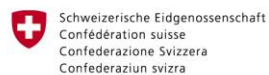
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Founders



Institutional Partner



Dipartimento federale dell'interno DFI
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Press Images

01.
Nicolas Party
Rocks
2014
Soft pastel on linen
150 x 180 cm
The Collection of Donald Porteous
Photo by: Michael Wolchover
© Nicolas Party



02.
Nicolas Party
Still Life
2014
Soft pastel on linen
100 x 150 cm
Collection Migros Museum für Gegenwartkunst
Photo by: Christophe Coënon
© Nicolas Party



03.
Nicolas Party
Landscape
2014
Soft pastel on linen
150 x 100 cm
Private Collection, Bern
Photo by: Christophe Coënon
© Nicolas Party



04.

Nicolas Party

Portrait

2015

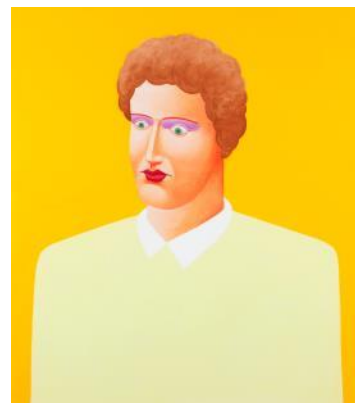
Soft pastel on linen

170 x 150 cm

Gherardo Felloni

Photo by: Andrea Rossetti

© Nicolas Party



05.

Nicolas Party

Portrait

2017

Soft pastel on linen

140 x 110 cm

Courtesy the artist

Photo by: Isabelle Arthuis

© Nicolas Party



06.

Nicolas Party

Still Life

2017

Soft pastel on linen

140 x 110 cm

Museo d'arte della Svizzera italiana, Lugano

Extended loan from Associazione ProMuseo

Photo by: Isabelle Arthuis

© Nicolas Party



07.

Nicolas Party

Head

2018

Acrylic and Oil on fiberglass and polystyrene foam

200 x 90 x 115 cm

Collection of Iris & Adam Singer – Promised gift to the Hirshhorn Museum & Sculpture Garden

Photo by: HV-studio, Brussels

© Nicolas Party



08.

Nicolas Party

Sunrise

2018

Soft pastel on linen

160 x 180 cm

Courtesy the artist and Xavier Hufkens, Bruxelles

Photo by: Isabelle Arthius

© Nicolas Party



09.

Nicolas Party

Still Life

2020

Soft pastel on linen

150.3 x 120 cm

Courtesy the artist and The Modern Institute/ Toby Webster Ltd., Glasgow

Photo by: Adam Reich

© Nicolas Party



10.

Nicolas Party

Portrait

2020

Soft pastel on linen

170 x 150 cm

Private collection

Photo by: Adam Reich

© Nicolas Party



11.

Nicolas Party

Cave

2020

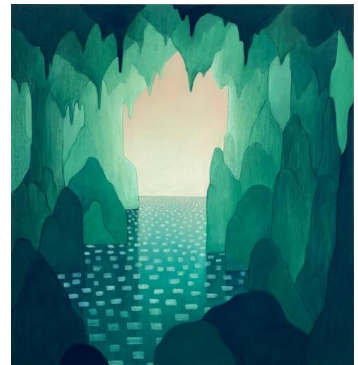
Soft pastel on linen

134.8 x 142.5 cm

Collection of Carolyn and William Wolfe

Photo by: Adam Reich

© Nicolas Party



12.

Nicolas Party

Landscape

2020

Soft pastel on linen

150.1 x 130.4 cm

Courtesy the artist and Hauser & Wirth

Photo by: Adam Reich

© Nicolas Party



13.

Nicolas Party

Creases

2021

Soft pastel on pastel card and faux marble mat
border

99.5 x 79.5 cm

Fillistorf Collection, Zürich

Photo by: Adam Reich

© Nicolas Party



14.

Nicolas Party in his studio

Photo by Axel Dupeux

Courtesy the artist and Hauser & Wirth

© Nicolas Party



Current exhibitions

Sentiment and Observation. Art in Ticino 1850-1950

The MASI Collections

From 09 May 2021

MASI | LAC

Masterworks of Modern Photography 1900-1940. The Thomas Walther Collection at The Museum of Modern Art, New York

Until 01 August 2021

MASI | LAC

Luigi Pericle. Ad astra

Until 05 September 2021

MASI | Palazzo Reali

"Terre" dalla Collezione Olgiati

Until 06 June 2021

Collezione Giancarlo e Danna Olgiati

Upcoming exhibitions

Salvatore Vitale. Displaying Security

Bally Artist of the Year Award 2020

06 June – 18 July 2021

MASI | Palazzo Reali

Plattform21

22 August – 05 September 2021

MASI | Palazzo Reali

Albert Oehlen – "big paintings by me with small paintings by others"

05 September 2021 – 20 February 2022

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Pietro Consagra

11 September 2021 – 09 January 2022

Collezione Giancarlo e Danna Olgiati

Antonio Ciseri

03 October 2021 – 27 February 2022

MASI | Palazzo Reali