

Press Release

## Nicolas Party. Swamp

7 September – 21 October 2023

Hauser & Wirth New York, 22nd Street



**New York...**For his first solo exhibition with Hauser & Wirth in New York City, Nicolas Party will transform the first floor of the gallery's 22nd Street building. New oil-on-copper paintings, cabinet compositions, signature pastel paintings and two monumental site-specific murals will immerse visitors in Party's practice, which simultaneously celebrates and challenges longstanding and cherished conventions of representational painting through his uniquely singular, subversive style.

Internationally admired for his uniquely adroit use of soft pastel, bold yet delicate, as a primary painting medium, Party created many of the works in this exhibition, including the striking site-specific murals, in pastel. He first began working in this medium over 10 years ago and has since become a master at exploiting the pigments' versatility, immediacy and saturated color.



Upon entering the exhibition, visitors will encounter the first of two expansive pastel murals—a forest in flames. Party is known for conceiving his exhibitions as comprehensive environments, incorporating architectural interventions and extending the palette of his paintings across the gallery's white walls. Heightening the powerful effects—formal and psychological—of his subject matter, Party has chosen to steep the surrounding walls in a rich maroon. Just beyond the pastel mural hangs a group of portraits featuring enigmatic figures paired with an animal that obscures their body. These creatures were inspired by the work of radical 19th-century French realist painter Rosa Bonheur, an icon of women's independence who put the living world at the heart of both her life and work, placing animals at the center of her practice.

Created directly on the gallery's 37 1/2 foot wide rear wall, Party painted an immense swamp mural, full of endless tree trunks submerged into a marsh. A pair of alpine vistas inspired by the artist's Swiss homeland flank the scene, hung atop deep green walls. These landscapes echo those of Ferdinand Hodler, one of the most renowned and innovative Swiss painters of the 19th Century.

In contrast to the large-scale, enveloping pastel works on view, intimately scaled cabinet paintings sit upon marble trompe l'oeil pedestals and oil-on-copper paintings hang throughout both rooms of the exhibition. Here Party once again contemporizes all but forgotten classical mediums; just as his signature pastels achieved the height of popularity in the 18th Century, oil on copper was a fashionable and prevalent alternative to canvas during the mid-16th Century, while cabinets were most commonly made as altarpieces in medieval and Renaissance art. Party uses these mediums to express his recent fascination with pre-historic creatures of the Mesozoic Era, the second-to-last era of Earth's geological history, in the oil-on-copper paintings and one cabinet. Drawn to the architectural, three-dimensional quality of the cabinet's multi-panel format, the jewel-like works point to the latest developments in the artist's formal experimentations, which continue to illuminate the timelessness of art historical figures, movements and techniques by reinventing their application in the present.



'Swamp' coincides with Party's major site-specific installation 'Nicolas Party and Rosalba Carriera,' commissioned for The Frick Collection on Madison Avenue, on view through 3 March 2024, and his participation as one of three contemporary artists featured in the exhibition 'Exemplary Modern. Sophie Taeuber-Arp with Contemporary Artists' opening 6 September at Hauser & Wirth's 69th Street location in New York City.

#### **About the Artist**

Born in Lausanne in 1980, Party is a figurative painter who has achieved critical admiration for his familiar yet unsettling landscapes, portraits, and still lifes that simultaneously celebrate and challenge conventions of representational painting. His works are primarily created in soft pastel, an idiosyncratic choice of medium in the 21st Century, and one that allows for exceptional degrees of intensity and fluidity in his depictions of objects both natural and manmade. Transforming these objects into abstracted, biomorphic shapes, Party suggests deeper connections and meanings. His unique visual language has coalesced in a universe of fantastical characters and motifs where perspective is heightened and skewed to uncanny effect.

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**Caption and courtesy information:**

All images:

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Swamp

2023

Soft pastel on linen

Left: 175.1 x 55 cm / 68 15/16 x 21 5/8 in

Center: 175 x 110 cm / 68 7/8 x 43 5/16 in

Right: 175.1 x 55 cm / 68 15/16 x 21 5/8 in

Photo: Adam Reich

Portrait with an Eagle

2023

Soft pastel on linen

150.1 x 110.1 cm / 59 1/8 x 43 3/8 in

156.2 x 116.4 x 9.2 cm / 61 1/2 x 45 7/8 x 3 5/8 in (framed)

Photo: Adam Reich

Portrait with a Donkey

2023

Soft pastel on linen

150 x 110.2 x 3.2 cm / 59 x 43 3/8 x 1 1/4 in

156.2 x 116.4 x 9.2 cm / 61 1/2 x 45 7/8 x 3 5/8 in (framed)

Photo: Adam Reich

Mountains

2023

Soft pastel on linen

155.1 x 185.1 x 2.7 cm / 61 1/8 x 72 7/8 x 1 1/8 in

161.9 x 192.1 x 9 cm / 63 3/4 x 75 5/8 x 3 1/2 in (framed)

Photo: Adam Reich