



NICOLAS PARTY (B. 1980)  
Landscape  
signed and dated 'Nicolas  
Party 2021' (on the reverse)  
pastel on linen  
43 x 36 in (109.2 x 91.4 cm.)  
Executed in 2021.



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### Provenance

Courtesy of the artist

Unquestioning Love: An Auction to Benefit  
the New York City AIDS Memorial

## NICOLAS PARTY (B. 1980)

Landscape

Price realised

**USD 3,270,000**

Estimate

USD 300,000 - USD 500,000

Brought to you  
by

[acelis@christies.com](mailto:acelis@christies.com)

### Post Lot Text

This lot is being sold by a charitable organization with proceeds intended to benefit New York City AIDS Memorial and a US taxpayer may be able to claim a deduction for any amount of the purchase price paid in excess of the mid-estimate.

*"I'm trying to work with subjects that are not original. Subjects that have been, and still are, painted all the time. Like a portrait, or a cat. What fascinates me about these topics is their capacity to regenerate themselves at any period of history, and still be relevant to us. I also believe some subjects are always painted because they are an infinite source of meaning and inspiration."*

Nicolas Party

**K**nown for his bold reinventions of traditional genres,

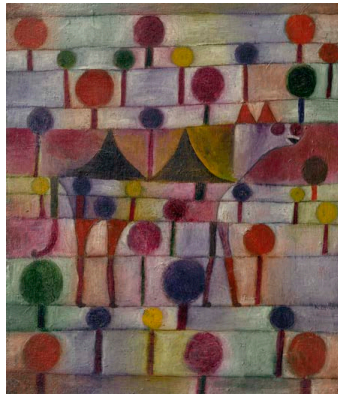
Swiss artist Nicolas Party merges new visions with time-tested media. Having spent time in the past as a three-dimensional computer animator, the artist translates his experience of digital illusions into compositions shimmering with surreal depth. Landscape is a particularly striking example of Party's ability to harness the smooth intensity of oil pastels to create alien vistas that beckon to the viewer. "I'm trying to work with subjects that are not original. Subjects that have been, and still are, painted all the time. Like a portrait, or a cat. What fascinates me about these topics is their capacity to regenerate themselves at any period of history, and still be relevant to us. I also believe some subjects are always painted because they are an infinite source of meaning and inspiration" (N. Party, quoted in F. Tattoli, "Talking with the Swiss painter Nicolas Party," *Fruit of the Forest*, December 2016). By focusing on landscapes, portraits, and still lifes, Party is able to experiment and explore in a familiar visual realm. Citing the works of Picasso, Giorgio Morandi, and others as his guides through this creative journey, Party crafts a far-reaching conversation on the intersection between familiar subjects and surreal renderings that extends throughout the art-historical timeline.



Gustav Klimt, *Roses under the tress*, circa 1905. Musée d'Orsay Paris. Photo: Bridgeman Images.

Realized in deep, rich tones, *Landscape* offers an otherworldly take on a more traditional scene. Much of the composition is taken up with crisply-rendered trees on impossibly straight trunks, bulbous green shrubbery, and an ombre sky that moves upward from pink to crimson. Instead of individual leaves or other details, Party creates a forest of smooth, shaded plants that resemble spoons, spatulas, and trowels more than deciduous foliage. A red-orange sun in the top center of the work is echoed by the circular trees and a shockingly green shrub positioned at the water's edge. The scene treads the line between the cartoon and the surreal, with echoes of René Magritte or Giorgio de Chirico's impeccable stylings. The foreground is filled by a reflective plane dotted with white rectangular strokes that recede into the distance and end at the far shore. As these orderly shapes travel further from the edge of the picture plane, they shrink in size until they resemble an extremely orderly grouping of whitecaps on an otherwise mirror-still pool. "I want to grab the audience directly and 'lock' them in the work as long as possible. When the viewer is inside the painting, my hope is that its complexity can be revealed.

You stay inside it because you feel that there is still something there that you don't see." (N Party, quoted in J. Lee, "Nicolas Party", *BOMB* Issue 152, May 27, 2020). Using illusionistic tricks learned from a deep study of art history and his previous experience in 3-D rendering, Party creates an attractive force within his works that gives the feeling of space begging to be occupied.



Paul Klee, *Kamel (in rhythm. Baumlandschaft)*, 1920. Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, Düsseldorf Photo: bpk Bildagentur /Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen / Art Resource, NY

At once acidic and extraterrestrial while also warmly inviting, *Landscape* reads like a travel brochure for an undiscovered planet. Depicting and altering fantastic spaces is at the core of Party's working methods. His exhibitions frequently employ murals created by the artist that interact with sculptural elements and the illusory qualities of his painted forms. This interest in creating a complete, encompassing experience translates to his two-dimensional work as well. Drawing comparisons to artists like Henri Rousseau, pieces like *Landscape* are mysteriously still while also exhibiting a charged potential energy that vibrates just below the surface. The scene is recognizable, but the subjects are decidedly alien.



René Magritte, *The Empire of Light, II*, 1950. Museum of Modern Art, New York. © 2021 C. Herscovici, London / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York. Photo: © The Museum of Modern Art / Licensed by SCALA / Art Resource, New York.

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Nicolas Party





Henri Rousseau, *Le Rêve*, 1910. Museum of Modern Art, New York. Photo: Archivart / Alamy Stock Photo.

Party's work often centers around his medium as much as the subjects he chooses to depict. Works like *Landscape* highlight the artist's mastery of oil pastels and their sumptuous qualities. "I love pastels so much", he asserts. "I came to them because at one point I was doing oils, and my main problem was that I couldn't stop editing the painting. Oils allow you to endlessly retouch. With pastels it's kind of the exact opposite. You can layer and layer, but you can't start over. The nature of the medium is much more direct. Nothing dries or is wet – it stays exactly how it is" (N. Party, quoted in T. Loos, "Artist Nicolas Party Revives the Language of Pastel", *Cultured Magazine*, March 17, 2019). The artist's interest in the medium was first piqued when he saw Picasso's 1921 *Tête de femme*, a masterful rendering of form with pastels on paper.

The manner in which Picasso translated the smooth, voluptuous mass of Roman and Greek marble statuary into his composition particularly interested Party. He went on to apply these ideas to his own portraits, still lifes, and landscapes in a manner that separates them from realism but grounds them in physical reality.



Nicolas Party in his studio, Brussels, 2017. Photo: © Alexia Antsakli Vardinoyanni.