

NICOLAS PARTY @ THE MODERN INSTITUTE, UNTIL 8 MAY

by Adam Benmakhlouf



Nicolas Party: Installation view 'Still life paintings and Landscape watercolours' (2013). Courtesy the Artist and The Modern Institute/Toby Webster Ltd, Glasgow by Keith Hunter

In one of the still lifes alluded to in the misleadingly sober title of Nicolas Party's solo show, *Still Life* oil paintings and *Landscape watercolours*, a strip of green grass lies under a vibrant red area. Though barely touching – meeting only to form a straight horizon – visually they're battering each other.

This is the slippery ground for a vase of the world's most menacing-looking flowers, which took two years of painstaking intuition to imagine and paint. The time it takes to get just right the disarming simultaneity with which every petal turns to face you, the self-conscious spectator.

The still lifes' brightly coloured and economically geometric aesthetic brings to mind in equal measure Hockney, Léger, de Chirico and the OTT three-dimensionality of CAD models. Emphasising this graphic element, a pinched oval motif (see physics textbook illustrations of the double convex lens) repeats itself industriously and hypnotically across almost every wall in the gallery. Following one particular wall's path of sorbet yellows and reds, this enticing trail of lemons and strawberries leads to... the toilet.

Punctuating the flow of the decorated walls downstairs are two dusky charcoal murals of an undulating, otherworldly forest. Upstairs, these nighttime woods shrink and blush spectacularly into the gumdrop spectrum of Party's dark confectionary of watercolours. These neatly rendered, medium scale works on paper are the neon mouth-watering hallucinations of a dehydrated Disney prince, long-lost in an already enchanted forest.

Leave, look up and down. A new habit: floor and ceiling are Party's few designated quiet spaces. What's this renewed pleasure in the intersecting forms of cramped Glaswegian architecture, or that doorway's three leafy spheres of green balancing precariously on a red cubed plant pot? This strange, mild delirium is the invisible souvenir of Party's infectious fervour. Those patterns are a pox!