

### NICOLAS PARTY: BOYS AND PASTEL, INVERLEITH GALLERY, EDINBURGH

Most art gallery walls are covered and recovered in layers of paint, the shade changing with every new exhibition.

But few walls are subject to quite the exuberant level of repainting that comes with a Nicolas Party exhibition. Known for his brilliant colour-saturated canvases, Party takes the concept of exhibiting beyond the rectangle mounted on the wall to encompass the wall itself. In the past, he has painted gallery walls in exuberant zings of geometrical pattern.

For this major solo show at Inverleith, he re-imagines the space in piled-up pinks and custard camouflage. Intensely black spots bounce over delicately re-coloured walls while, at the heart of the exhibition, abstract charcoal trees cluster the walls on deep forest pattern-repeat, echoing the garden setting outside. Amongst it all the art-historical forms of still life, portrait and landscape are carefully placed, creating an exhibition that is less of an installation, more a re-imagination of the gallery itself. This is art as total immersion, colour, line and texture.

Nicolas Party was born in 1980 in Switzerland, moving to Glasgow for the MFA programme at the School of Art after teenage years spent daubing the walls of Lausanne in graffiti. Now living in Brussels, his bright, colour-soaked forms are familiar to Scottish audiences through shows such as Still Life Oil Paintings And Landscape Watercolours (2013) at Glasgow's Modern Institute, his first major UK solo exhibition.

Inverleith curator Paul Nesbitt first came into contact with Party when he was invited to one of the artist's 'Dinner' performances. Over the succeeding years, Nesbitt kept an eye on Party's work until his Modern Institute show, which so impressed him that he immediately asked Party to create an exhibition for Inverleith.

Boys And Pastel is the result and it is, at heart, just that, although there is much more to it too. Party works in art-historical tropes. If his application is bold and semi-abstract and his subject matter the things one might find in the everyday world, from trees to coffee pots to people, his vehicles are the traditional modes of art history, from portrait to still life. The 'Boy' portraits are stylized and square-jawed, the turquoise-lidded eyes bore-holed with the circular dead-gaze of a classical statue, popping as if startled by the boldly re-imagined space around them. They gaze wide-eyed at us and our world, the custard walls a foil for Party's reworking of the ideas of classical portraiture.

Elsewhere, his still lifes wear their nods to Magritte and Morandi with a certain delight. There are coffee pots with personality in endless iterations. Brightly coloured, the spouts curved jauntily up or stubbily straight, handles curved, angles carefully positioned, the pots cluster anthropomorphically, as if caught awkwardly in still life. Here and there, huge pears lounge curvaceously, perhaps a little stick stalk propped up against the shape, the cast shadow defining the curve of the pear and the straight of the rod in one fell trigonometrical swoop.

It is all done with an intensity, yet lightness, that matches Party's recent choice of medium, the chalk pastel, inspired by Picasso and reworking the very slow process of his own previous oils - paintings might take up to a year and a half to complete - into something much

faster and vibrantly intense.

Downstairs, idle fish dawdle across anonymous reefs and computer-generated models morph into mountains in short films backed by a deliberately clunky soundtrack - an anti-soundtrack, if you will. There is an enjoyment and a wit to these artistic re-inspections that is as refreshing as the trompe l'oeil apple-stone placed in the pond outside the door. Don't miss.

Nicolas Party: Boys And Pastel, Inverleith Gallery, Royal Botanic Gardens of Edinburgh (0131 248 2971/2849 at weekends; [www.rbge.org.uk](http://www.rbge.org.uk)) until June 21, Tue-Sun, 10am-5.30pm