

## STROLL THROUGH THE IMMERSIVE WORK OF NICOLAS PARTY AT THE DMA

by Shelby Gorday



Nicolas Party, Two Men with Hats, 2016, pastel on canvas

In his first solo museum exhibition in the U.S., Swiss artist Nicolas Party has reimagined the Dallas Museum of Art's Concourse in a site-specific mural. Commissioned by the DMA, made possible by funds from TWO x TWO for AIDS and Art, for the next six months the main thoroughfare will undulate with Party's otherworldly Pathway.

Curated by Gavin Delahunty, the DMA's Hoffman Family Senior Curator of Contemporary Art and Nolan Jimbo, Temporary Project Coordinator, Party populated the walkway with mysterious trees, bushes and shrubs on a backdrop of a deep aquatic blue. Having just returned from Europe, Delahunty said, "I came back to see the Concourse gloriously transformed into what I see as an aquatopia. You know what utopia is, but this is Dallas's "aquatopia" which is an immersive space that is going to chill us out in the summer."

For sixteen days, Party and two assistants worked to transform the concourse into a mesmerizing landscape beckoning submariner life. Rather than treat the space like a museum, the artist's mural builds on the fact that it surrounds a walkway. "The people here are moving, they don't stop. That was my main inspiration for the space. Instead of creating an exhibition space, I wanted to create a path and use the real function of the space," Party says of the fluidity of the corridor.

Reinterpreting traditional genres, Party's work combines historical and contemporary techniques. Inspired by the graphic landscape renderings of David Hockney, the bright color planes of the Fauves, and the flat figures found in medieval Christian paintings, Pathway displays Party's vivid and simplified style. At the crux of the mural Two Men with Hats, a large pastel on canvas depicting two androgynous figures, "functions as a signpost of art history but also punctures the mural that immediately reminds you you're in a museum," Delahunty explains.

Party got his start as a graffiti artist in the 1990s. He then earned his BFA from the Lausanne School of Art and his MFA from the Glasgow School of Art. Referring to the mural's proximity

to the entrance of the Center for Creative Connections at the DMA, Party enthused, “Tons of kids are coming here. They come here for the pure idea of creating.”

Gavin Delahunty, tells Patron, “Nicolas has one hand in art history and one hand in contemporary. It seemed appropriate to invite him to come and carry out the mural in Dallas because the concourse is a highly attended spot in the museum and we were looking for someone that could meet every audience that comes into the museum and offers something very direct but something also something very immersive. We had no idea that Nicolas would ask to paint every surface, including the ceiling, but you are immediately submerged into the world of Nicolas Party when you step into the Concourse. I think that he has achieved that transcendent experience and it has been very successful.”

Party lives and works in Brussels, Belgium. Nicolas Party: Pathway will be on view August 19, 2016 through February 5, 2017.