

LA WEEKLY

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Nicolas Party: *Trees* at the Marciano Art Foundation

by Shana Nys Dambrot



(Courtesy of Marciano Art Foundation) Nicolas Party *Trees*, 2019. Courtesy Marciano Art Foundation (Joshua White/JWPictures.com)

Next time you visit the Marciano Art Foundation and you want to view the show in the expansive main gallery space from up on the mezzanine, or perhaps on your way to or from the top floor for your dose of polka-dot infinity, do yourself a favor and take the stairs. The entirety of the four-story north stairwell, to be exact. That's where *Trees*, a brand new site-specific mural by Nicolas Party, transforms flights of stairs into a flight of fancy that is only accessible one way — on foot.

Beginning on the ground floor, just off the MAF lobby, one enters a deep red realm of shadows, pines and beech trees, day-glo shrubbery and cottony willows. It is not dark in a menacing way, but in a seductive, lush palette of oxblood, chartreuse, powder blue, and emerald that recedes and beckons with crossviews and whispers of surprise along each curved segment of switchback corridor, so that before you know it, you've been climbing for a while.

As you ascend, subtle shifts in tint and tone create the effect of gradual lightening, the red mellows into a world of coral-souled pinks, the foliage changes and grows taller. The eye and the body are irresistibly drawn upwards. The top, once reached, is a cool and breezy open sky skittering across cement beams in a pale shade of dawn. Taking the stairs down from above enacts this sequence in reverse; as the colors grow deeper and the botanicals grow thicker, the feeling is very much one of gently descending into a grotto or cave. More somber, equally fairytale-esque. As wondrous as is Party's transformation of a boring industrial stairwell into an organic, epic single seamless painting over four stories in length, perhaps the real feat is getting people to walk up all those stairs on purpose and be happy about it.