

Nicolas de Staël

09.02 —
09.06.2024

Exposition organisée par

MAM MUSÉE
D'ART MODERNE
DE PARIS

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Nicolas de Staël
Abris (détail), 1953-1964
Huile sur toile, 60 x 81 cm
Basile, Collection particulière
© 2023, ProLitteris, Zurich

Photo: Thomas Hennricque
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Lausanne

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Appendices on the [press page](#) of our website, fondation-hermitage.ch :

- list of works
- link to the audio guide
- to view the documentary film, please contact us at: medias@fondation-hermitage.ch

Nicolas de Staël

9 FEBRUARY–9 JUNE 2024

The Fondation de l'Hermitage is partnering with the Musée d'Art Moderne de Paris / Paris Musées to stage a major retrospective of Nicolas de Staël (1914-1955), a key figure in post-war art. The exhibition will feature a selection of around a hundred paintings, drawings and sketchbooks from many public and private collections in Switzerland and the wider world. The iconic *Parc des Princes* (1952) will be shown alongside a large group of works that are seldom, if ever, put on public display, offering a new perspective on de Staël's work that highlights certain little-known aspects of his career.

The retrospective will be arranged in chronological order, reflecting the successive evolutions of de Staël's art, from his early figurative works and the dark impasto paintings of the 1940s to the works he painted shortly before his premature death in 1955. Although his most important creative period spanned no more than a dozen years, de Staël constantly reinvented his art and explored new directions. His "inescapable need to break everything when the machine seems to run too smoothly" drove him to create a remarkably rich and complex body of work, "with no pre-existing aesthetics". Impervious to fashions and to the quarrels of his day, he deliberately undermined the distinction between abstraction and figuration, in a seemingly urgent pursuit of ever greater density and concision. He wrote, "Life is so sad without paintings, so I push on while I can".

The retrospective will enable visitors to retrace the steps of de Staël's unusually intense artistic research, starting with the travels of his youth and his early years in Paris, followed by his move to the south of France, his famous trip to Sicily in 1953 and his final months in Antibes, in a studio overlooking the sea.

From the start de Staël created a myth around his art. From his exile as a child after the Russian Revolution to his suicide at the age of 41, his life endlessly influenced the interpretation of his art. While not ignoring this mythical dimension, the exhibition will focus on de Staël's graphic and pictorial explorations to offer a presentation of a painter at work, whether out in the landscape or in the silence of his studio.

EXHIBITION THEMES

After an early life as an orphaned exile, de Staël became a tireless traveller. He was fascinated by all that the world had to show him, from the sea to a football match or a piece of fruit on a table, with all their different qualities of light. Endlessly varying his tools, techniques and formats (from small paintings to compositions on a monumental scale), he liked to create several paintings at once, working with superimpositions and making successive alterations. Drawings were key to these explorations, and the exhibition will illustrate their experimental nature with a rich selection of works on paper.

EXHIBITION LAYOUT

Visitors to the exhibition will pass through eleven rooms, each illustrating one or more years of de Staël's work in strictly chronological order. The presentation will end with an extract from a new documentary by François Lévy-Kuentz and Stéphane Lambert, co-produced by Temps Noir and Arte France (2023): *Nicolas de Staël, la peinture à vif*.

LENDERS

The exhibition will benefit from loans from international public and private collections, notably including: Centre Pompidou MNAM/CCI, Paris; Fondation Gandur pour l'Art, Geneva; Henie Onstad Kunstsenter, Høvikodden; Kunst Museum Winterthur; Los Angeles County Museum of Art; Musée des Beaux-Arts de Dijon; Musée Unterlinden, Colmar; Tate, London and The Phillips Collection, Washington, DC.

CURATORS

Charlotte Barat, Exhibition curator at the Musée d'Art Moderne de Paris

Pierre Wat, Independent curator, art historian, Professor at the Université de Paris I Panthéon-Sorbonne

Marie du Bouchet, Scientific advisor, Coordinator of the Nicolas de Staël Committee

Fabrice Hergott, Curator, Director of the Musée d'Art Moderne de Paris

Sylvie Wuhrmann, Curator, Director of the Fondation de l'Hermitage

FILM

Nicolas de Staël, la peinture à vif, directed by François Lévy-Kuentz, written by François Lévy-Kuentz, Stéphane Lambert and Stephan Lévy-Kuentz. Co-producers: ARTE France, Temps noir (2023, 52 mins)

CATALOGUE

In conjunction with the exhibition, the Fondation de l'Hermitage and Éditions Paris Musées will co-publish a richly illustrated catalogue featuring several essays on the artist and his work. The catalogue will also contain:

- an interview with the artist's eldest daughter Anne de Staël
- the full and previously unpublished text of the *Journal des années Staël* by Pierre Lecuire, writer, publisher and close friend of the artist.

ACTIVITIES

Visitors of all ages will be invited to further explore the themes of the exhibition through a range of activities including art workshops, lecture series, guided tours and special menus. Online programme available at: fondation-hermitage.ch/activites

OPENING TIMES

Nicolas de Staël, 09.02 – 09.06.2024

Tuesday–Sunday, 10 am–6 pm, Thursday open till 9 pm

Tickets available online at fondation-hermitage.ch

PARTNERSHIPS

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Exhibition Visuals

Visuals solely for media use can be downloaded from the “Press” page on the Fondation de l’Hermitage website (fondation-hermitage.ch).

Below is a list of illustrations exclusively intended for media use in the context of this exhibition. Modification, cutting, partial reproduction or overprinting of these images is not permitted in any form. When reproduced they must always appear with their captions, credits and copyright information.



Coin d'atelier fond bleu, 1955
 Huile sur toile, 195 × 114 cm
 Paris, Centre Pompidou, Musée national d'art moderne / Centre de création industrielle
 Dation, 2014
 Photo © Centre Pompidou, MNAM-CCI, Dist. RMN-Grand Palais / Georges Meguerditchian
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Nu couché bleu, 1955
 Huile sur toile, 114 × 162 cm
 Collection particulière
 Photo © ImageArt / Claude Germain
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Arbre rouge, 1953
 Huile sur toile, 46 × 61 cm
 Collection particulière
 Photo © Christie's
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Le Lavandou, 1952
 Huile sur carton, 12 × 22 cm
 Collection particulière
 Photo © Jean-Louis Losi
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Marine la nuit, 1954
 Huile sur toile, 89 × 130 cm
 Collection particulière
 Photo © Thomas Hennocque
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Les Mouettes, 1955
 Huile sur toile, 195 × 130 cm
 Collection particulière
 Photo © Thomas Hennocque
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Parc des Princes, 1952
 Huile sur toile, 200 × 350 cm
 Collection particulière
 Photo © Christie's
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Composition, 1951
 Huile sur toile, 157 × 74 cm
 Collection particulière
 Photo © Ben Fink Shapiro Studio, New York
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Agrigente, 1954
 Huile sur toile, 60 × 81 cm
 Collection particulière/ courtesy Applicat-Prazan, Paris
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Agrigente, 1953-1954
 Huile sur toile, 60 × 81 cm
 Suisse, collection particulière
 Photo © Thomas Hennocque
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Agrigente, 1954
 Huile sur toile, 73 × 92 cm
 Collection particulière
 Photo © Jean-Louis Losi
 © 2023, ProLitteris, Zurich



Mer et nuages, 1953
 Huile sur toile, 100 × 73 cm
 Collection particulière/ courtesy Applicat-Prazan, Paris
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Curators' Preface – Extracts

“Life is so sad without paintings that I do a lot while I still can.” Nicolas de Staël

It quickly became clear that it was possible, and would be salutary, to reunite Nicolas de Staël, a young painter – we recall that he died at the age of forty-four – transformed by posterity into a kind of heroic figure, with the one thing that mattered to him: his work when he was painting, drawing or engraving. Because throughout his abruptly truncated life, he viewed his output (over 1100 paintings and as many drawings) as work. So we have revisited his oeuvre piece by piece, striving as far as possible to avoid any preconceived ideas and to stay as close as possible to the work itself, trying to maintain a distance from the myth – the image distilled in the famous photographs by Denise Colomb, the lofty figure of an artist overtaken by a tragic destiny. While Staël the man had a short life that came to a violent end, we believe that to read the work in the shadow of its creator's suicide is to lessen its importance. Until his final days, whatever the anguish felt by Staël the man, as a painter he remained dazzled by the spectacle of the world and its beauty, which he endlessly sought to capture as if for the first time. He had something of the child's way of seeing, intact. [...]

So we have sought to show Nicolas de Staël at work, looking at the landscape or in the silence of his studio, and as a tireless experimenter, engrossed by the tension of his quest. Although most of his work was produced in the space of a dozen years, he endlessly renewed his art, taking it in entirely new directions. His “inevitable need to break everything when the machine seemed to be running too smoothly” led him to create a remarkably rich and complex body of work, “without a-priori aesthetics”. Untouched by the fashions and quarrels of his time, he deliberately transgressed the separation between abstraction et figuration, seemingly on an urgent quest for art of ever greater density and concision. Staël was a man of paradoxes: a painter who worked at breakneck speed, constantly creating works although his aspiration was always to slow down, to make “as few paintings as possible” that were “simpler and simpler”. Such was his quest, his utopia. [...]

Though Staël's intransigence is apparent to his very last moment, throughout his life as a painter he was nonetheless moved to joy, whether by the sea, a football match, a concert or the Velasquez room at the Prado. Taking his enthusiasm for the world as our guide, we have sought to go beyond the myth to uncover the man at work, both in the great outdoors and in his studio, that vital space of retreat.

Charlotte Barat
Pierre Wat

Presentation

Born in St. Petersburg, Nicolas de Staël was three years old when the Russian Revolution broke out. Forced to flee with his family, and orphaned at an early age, this exiled artist would never cease looking for new horizons, new sensations, and new ways of painting. If most of his production was executed within a time frame of fifteen years, he nevertheless constantly renewed his work. His “inevitable need to break everything when the machine seemed to be running too smoothly” led him to experiment tirelessly.

His practice as a painter developed in post-war France, where the dispute between the partisans of abstraction and advocates of figuration was in full swing. Indifferent to the quarrels of his time, de Staël hated labels and refused to choose, preferring to paint “without a-priori aesthetics”. The result was free and personal work, which demonstrates the painter’s constant sensitivity to his surroundings: whether confronted by the sea, a football match, or a piece of fruit placed on a table, he was captivated by the various spectacles of the world and its ever-changing light.

Abruptly ended by his suicide at the age of forty-one, with hindsight de Staël’s trajectory appears as the urgent pursuit of an ever denser and more concise form of art. Whether executed en plein air or in the silence of his studio, his work’s successive evolutions bear witness to a pictorial quest of a rare intensity, whose power remains intact, even today.

The journey of a painter (1934-1942)

Nicolas de Staël’s formative years were made up of journeys and encounters. Although he studied art in Brussels, the young painter quickly sought to broaden his horizons: after two summers spent traveling across the south of France and then Spain, he spent a year exploring Morocco, where he met Jeannine Guillou, a painter who became his companion. He worked hard, drawing constantly, destroying much of his production, and hesitating as to the way forward. “I know that my life will be a continual voyage on an uncertain sea,” he wrote, “all the more reason for me to build a solid boat.” The variations and effects of light became the main focus of his artistic explorations, and remained so until the end.

Comprised of trips and stopovers, these years of development were at once difficult and exhilarating, underpinned by ambition and extreme poverty. The stateless de Staël enlisted in the French Foreign Legion in November 1939 and was demobilized in September 1940. He then lived for three years in Nice before settling in Paris.

Exploring Abstraction (1942-1948)

In 1942, Staël turned to abstraction, a trend then growing in popularity. He explored this new language in works dominated by dark tones, which Jeannine described as “endlessly tortured, repainted, massacred, jostled.” At the end of the war, de Staël exhibited at the Galerie Jeanne Bucher: his career was launched.

By 1946, Jeannine was pregnant and her already delicate health was in decline. In an attempt to save her, the pregnancy was terminated, but she did not survive the operation. Her death marked the end of this first era.

Not long afterwards, in 1947, de Staël, now married to Françoise Chapouton, found a studio and a home for his family in Rue Gauguet, near Parc Montsouris. The studio had a ceiling eight metres high and was

described as “like a well, a chapel, and a barn” by the critic Patrick Waldberg, who noted “its austere whiteness and atmosphere of intense, but reclusive activity”.

De Staël would create several works at the same time, leaning his canvases against the wall and going from canvas to paper and from oil to Indian ink. In the late 1940s, in this place flooded with light, his palette brightened. The dark impulses of the previous canvases gave way to a less violent, more organic way of painting. Gradually, his compositions loosened up: the dynamic and tangled beams gave way to larger, more stable, and lighter forms.

Constantly renewing his practice, de Staël was as wary of repetition as he was of labels. Known as an abstract painter, he declared, going against the times, that “there are no such things as non-figurative tendencies,” affirming that “painters will always need to have before their eyes, whether near or far, the moving source of inspiration that is the sensory world.”

Condensation (1949-1950)

In 1949, de Staël’s work became denser: larger, more condensed masses were arranged on the surface of the canvas. From studies on paper to the painting in its final version, each piece passed through several different stages as the artist worked long and tirelessly on his compositions. The paintings recount their own genesis: layers of colour are superimposed, revealing different underlying colours at the edges of enigmatic shapes, like glimpsed secrets. The paint was spread across the canvas in layers and worked over. “I handle the knife and the brush with great force,” de Staël said. The ambition was clear: “to do better and better and always simpler.”

Although formally abstract, his canvases seem inhabited by the physical presence of the world: de Staël mentioned the “images of life” which he received “in coloured masses,” “following a thousand vibrations.” He proudly remained at a distance from what he referred to as the “front abstraction gang” (“gang de l’abstraction avant”), an ironic allusion to the “Front Traction gang” (“gang des Tractions avant”), a notorious group of post-war criminals.

In 1950, the Musée National d’Art Moderne acquired its first painting by the artist, and Jacques Dubourg became his official dealer, with canvases now beginning to sell in the United States.

Allies of substance

De Staël met the poet René Char in 1951, at a dinner with Georges Duthuit and Marguerite Matisse, daughter of Henri Matisse. The two men formed an intense and stormy friendship fuelled by their common passion for painting and poetry. The most remarkable of their collaborations remains the book *Poèmes*, in which fourteen woodcuts by de Staël are in dialogue with poems by Char. The plates feature powerful contrasts of black and white and are striking in their economy of means. “I do things as simply as possible and that is what is so difficult for me,” wrote de Staël. “Don’t worry,” Char reassured him, “you’ve made something very good out of the poison of creating a deluxe art book.” De Staël’s relationship with Char went beyond simple collaboration; poetry took his art in a new direction and gave it a new impulse. In the poet’s words, Char and de Staël were “allies of substance”, each man feeding the other’s work with his own substance.

Fragmentation (1951)

The paintings from 1951 appear, retrospectively, as a reaction to those from 1950, with de Staël returning to approaches established in the previous year. Condensation is followed by fragmentation: concentrated forms give way to fragmented forms made from coloured tesserae that seem to have been borrowed from

the world of mosaics. This new vocabulary offers the artist great freedom. Sometimes he assembles slab-like shapes into constructions, elsewhere he gives his paintings a new and dynamic, almost aerial spatiality.

The references to the outside world that were latent in the paintings from 1950 now emerge more clearly. Disregarding his era and the critics, De Staël courageously returns to figuration: very early in 1952, a simple tessera, an abstract form if ever there was one, becomes an apple, while a vertical spray of small, coloured blocks suddenly evokes a bouquet of flowers.

In renewing his art, de Staël remains true to himself and to the need to turn painting into an act of exploration and a quest for metamorphosis.

The world as spectacle (1952)

On the evening of 26 March 1952 de Staël and his wife Françoise attended the France-Sweden football match at the Parc des Princes stadium. The painter was fascinated by this experience and used it as the theme for a series of works, culminating in a painting on a heroic scale. In this vast work 3.5 m x 2 m he returns to the vocabulary of his Île de France landscapes, which seem here to attain their monumental destiny. De Staël was fascinated by the world as spectacle, and as a painter he was a keen observer, constantly absorbing new visual, aural and tactile sensations. In 1951 he had said, ““The individual that I am is made up of all the impressions received from the outside world since and before my birth [...]. Things are constantly communicating with artists as they paint, that’s all I know.” In this work the combat between forms becomes one with the combat between players. In April de Staël wrote to René Char, “Between sky and earth, on grass that is either red or blue, there whirls a ton of muscle in complete disregard for self [...]. What joy! René, what joy!”

The painting was shown at the May Salon, where it caused a sensation, dividing the critics with its disregard for the line between abstraction and figuration.

A year in the landscape (1952)

In 1952 de Staël’s references to the sensory world became explicit. He broadened his visual field, leaving the studio to devote himself to landscape and to work in the open air. Animated by a combination of joy and urgency, “hands full of colours in the open sky,” he painted over two hundred and forty works. The majority were small or medium formats on cardboard, painted directly from landscapes in the Paris region, Normandy, and the South. Each place or region generated its own impressions and ways of painting. In Mantes-la-Jolie and Gentilly, de Staël balanced observation with abstraction. In Le Lavandou he painted on the beach and marvelled at the “voracious”, “dazzling” light of the South, which provided him with new sensations: “The sea is so blue, it becomes red.” In Normandy his landscapes were more atmospheric and reflected the subtle nuances of sea and sky.

The light of the South (1953)

“All departures are wonderful for work,” wrote de Staël in May 1953. On René Char’s advice, that summer, the painter and his family settled in Lagnes, a village close to Avignon. This stay in Provence led to two upheavals: the first caused by the dazzling light, and second by the painter’s meeting with a young woman, Jeanne Polge. To describe these two cases of love at first sight, the painter wrote to Char, who had introduced him to both woman and landscape: “What a girl, she sets the earth trembling with emotion, what a unique cadence in the sovereign order. Up there in the cabin, every movement of stone, every blade of grass wobbled [...] at her step. What a place, what a girl.” In the autumn they embarked on a passionate relationship.

Adopting a palette as dazzling as the Provençal light, de Staël painted increasing numbers of studio subjects, including a portrait of his daughter Anne, “nudes in the clouds” and still lifes.

He also returned to landscape painting, describing Provence as “paradise pure and simple, with boundless horizons”. Dreaming of a more permanent base there, in November 1953 he bought Le Castelet, an austere and dilapidated house in Ménerbes.

Sicily (1953-1954)

Having bought a van, in August 1953 de Staël took his family on a trip to Italy, heading for Sicily. With him were his wife Françoise, who was pregnant with Gustave, his children, Anne, Laurence and Jérôme, René Char’s friend Ciska Grillet, and Jeanne Polge.

In Sicily, de Staël drew the ancient ruins of Agrigento and Syracuse with a felt pen. At the time he wrote, “Apart from swimming in every sea, I do nothing, except for a few sketches”. Painting would come later, as a delayed echo of this lived experience. In 1951 he had said, “One never paints what one sees or thinks one sees, one paints what one has been struck by, after a thousand vibrations”. In accordance with this, he executed his Sicilian paintings after his return to Provence alone.

To Jacques Dubourg, his Parisian dealer, he confided: “As atrocious as solitude is, I will keep to it because I [must] take a distance that I no longer have in Paris today and which I want for tomorrow”. The landscapes of Agrigento and Syracuse were the result of this distancing. De Staël invented his own landscape, radicalising his palette and contrasts, reducing his constructions to their most basic elements and using brilliant colours.

Économie de la ligne (1954)

En cette année 1954, faite de voyages et de haltes, le dialogue entre dessin et peinture est à son comble. Une même décision, une même recherche de la synthèse, une même économie de moyens règne dans les aplats colorés comme dans la vitesse du feutre. Staël dessine beaucoup, concevant des séries afin, par la réitération, d’aller au plus près de la structure d’un motif : bateau, fruit, arbre... L’artiste va vers l’épure, donnant toujours plus de présence au blanc du papier, tandis que son trait se fait de plus en plus économe. Désormais, une ligne suffit à instaurer la forme et à faire naître l’espace. Nul besoin de s’égarer dans les détails lorsqu’une ligne, tendue tel un nerf, prend vie le temps d’un geste bref. Toujours, Staël dessinera en même temps qu’il peindra, comme s’il lui fallait explorer en même temps l’abréviation du dessin et l’abondance d’une peinture où formes, couleurs et lumières ne cessent de s’allier.

On the road (1954)

The year 1954 was one of constant travel: always in search of new sensations, de Staël was always travelling. Although he had only just moved into Ménerbes, his daily life was punctuated by various trips to Uzès, Marseille and Martigues, by the Etang de Berre lagoon. These various and frequent excursions generated plenty of drawings and paintings. He also returned to Rue Gauguet: “I started working in the South,” he wrote, “but I come to my Parisian studio regularly, it offers a change of light and renews my conception of things a little”. He also enjoyed drawing on the banks of the Seine, and painting Paris landscapes. He spent some time by the North Sea, drawing outdoors before painting several works that evoked the lighthouse at Gravelines and the beach at Calais.

De Staël was working “more than ever”: his exhibition of February 1954 at Paul Rosenberg’s gallery in New York was a success, and he had to prepare for a new exhibition in June at the Galerie Jacques Dubourg in Paris, his first in three years. This urgency led him to a lighter style of painting, renouncing thickness in favour of fluidity.

Antibes (1954-1955)

In September 1954, to be closer to Jeanne Polge, de Staël moved into a house on the ramparts of Antibes, facing the sea, where he lived alone. Life was organized around his studio and his passionate, overwhelming affair. While Jeanne gradually distanced herself, de Staël worked relentlessly: “The paintings come quickly,” he wrote, “I will have to give them everything I have, the rest is odious to me now”.

Seeking fluidity and transparency, he used cotton and gauze pads to spread colour. Seascapes and still lifes followed in quick succession, de Staël alternately painting the boats sailing on the Mediterranean and the objects in his studio. His paintings were full of life in all its ordinariness, intimacy, and immensity. While de Staël the man was suffering the despair of an impossible love, as a working artist he nevertheless remained intact. The paintings from Antibes bear witness to his ongoing sense of wonder at the world.

On 16 March 1955, de Staël killed himself by jumping from the roof terrace of his studio, leaving behind many unfinished paintings. In the letter addressed to his art dealer Dubourg he wrote: “I do not have the strength to complete my paintings”.

Conversation with Anne de Staël – Extracts

The exhibition's curators interview the artist's eldest daughter

Anne de Staël: When I was at home I sometimes went up to the studio while the little ones (her sister and brothers) were playing downstairs. At the top of the stairs I'd find a man doing his painting. And I would try to be quiet enough to be able to stay there while he was painting. I have to say, it was very slow, painting a picture, and it was really monumental. [...] The painting was a lightning flash painted very slowly. How do you do that? It wasn't painted in two shakes. It was really painstaking. [...]

My father was not a dilettante painter, someone who would pick up a brush from time to time. It was a calling... it was so vital for him to be at work in his studio that I felt that if he hadn't been driven to do it, he'd have been unable to breathe. As though – it was really powerful, in fact it scared me – he was called to express something all the time, not just now and then, or when he was travelling.

What I mean is that he didn't have time. He was living to a different timescale, time was really short, it was an emergency. Why did he never let go of the emergency? He died at the end of the emergency. He used that woman to help him, Jeanne [Jeanne Polge, with whom he had a passionate love affair at the end of his life], who was a kind of key for him: a way of managing to die. He could only breathe in an emergency. You never saw him drift... Staël didn't know how to have enough time.

Charlotte Barat: There was that urgency and at the same time he would always say, "I want to go slower and slower". He was seized by the feeling of urgency, while trying to fight against it.

AdS: My father was never allowed to rest. He had everything in mind. That's exhausting [...] I think it was because of his origins, the life of someone who has lost everything and is left alone in the world. He built himself up on a very harsh foundation. He didn't really have anything left, no language, no parents... He rented that really big studio on Rue Gauguet – I've known painters who couldn't cope with very large studios – and it didn't bother him a bit, he was at home there. He brought in the few little paintings done in Montparnasse, which started to breathe more freely, and he was at home. That ease in occupying places, making them his own, putting a painting in there with no easel, starting to paint, ricocheting to a different form in the painting next to it, that became like a vision. With that laugh, where I could never tell if it was laughing or crying. His laughter cried and his tears laughed. Definitely. Those around him who appreciated him were afraid for him. They told him to take his time, not to go so fast.

Pierre Wat: He was a man who never evoked any memories, but whose painting was layered like a memory... He would put things into his painting that he didn't put into words elsewhere. You were talking about "constriction" in relation to the Parc des Princes, as though something had been put in there, and circled. There's something in there about aspects that are secret, veiled – something romantic.

AdS : Any life that touches real feeling is romantic. Staël passed through the enormous density of the material from his first painting to his last, till in the end he reached the finest petal.

PW : Many people think that, in the Antibes paintings, you can sense the end approaching.

AdS : That's not true. At times his painting in Antibes is the most carefree of all. That's what is so magnificent and unexpected about it. Every great painter makes us adopt a new way of thinking. [...]. Every time you have to go at it anew. In Antibes the painting breathes more freely

and then there we are, just when it was breathing freely, he's gone.... His work will always be that of a young painter.

Biography

January 5th, 1914

Born in Saint Petersburg.

1919

Threatened by the Russian revolution, the de Staël family leaves the country.

1922

Following the death of both his parents, de Staël is taken in by the Fricero family in Belgium.

1933

He begins to study at the Academy of Fine Arts of Saint-Gilles-lez-Bruxelles and at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts.

1936

De Staël leaves for Morocco and meets the artist Jeannine Guillou, who becomes his partner.

1938

The couple settles in France. They both paint with enthusiasm but live miserably.

1939

Following the declaration of war, de Staël joins the Foreign Legion and leaves for Tunisia.

September 1940

Demobilized, he joins Jeannine Guillou who has taken refuge in Nice. He meets many artists who awaken him to the most advanced currents of modern art.

1943

The couple settles in Paris with their daughter Anne.

1944

First exhibition at the Jeanne Bucher Gallery, with Wassily Kandinsky and Cesar Domela.

February 27th, 1946

In poor health, and exhausted by hardship, Jeannine Guillou dies.

May 22nd, 1946

De Staël marries Françoise Chapouton. They will have three children together.

1946: He signs a contract with the art dealer Louis Carré. His financial difficulties lessen.

January 1947: The family moves into a vast studio at 7 rue Gauguier, not far from Georges Braque.

April 10th, 1948

De Staël obtains the French Nationality.

1950

The Musée national d'art moderne acquires a large Composition. In accordance with the artist's wishes, the painting is exhibited away from his contemporaries, and especially from abstract painters, whom he called the "gang de l'abstraction avant".

June 1950

First solo exhibition at the gallery of his new art dealer Jacques Dubourg. Dubourg would remain a key figure for de Staël, tirelessly supporting his work both during his lifetime and after his death.

1951

De Staël meets René Char. A book of engravings and poems will stem from their intense friendship.

March 26th, 1952

De Staël attends the football match between France and Sweden at the Parc des Princes stadium and begins a series of drawings and paintings on this theme. In the same year, he also paints outdoors several landscapes, in the Parisian region, in the South of France, and in Normandy.

Winter 1953

De Staël is in New York for the opening of his exhibition at the Knoedler Gallery.

Summer 1953

On the advice of Char, de Staël stays with his family in the small village of Lagnes, close to

Avignon. There he meets Jeanne Polge, with whom he begins a passionate love affair.

August 1953

He travels to Sicily. Returning to Provence alone, de Staël begins paintings inspired by the trip.

November 1953

De Staël buys a large and austere run-down property called the Castelet in Ménerbes.

March 1954

Exhibition at the Paul Rosenberg Gallery in New York. His sales increase.

1954

He travels incessantly, he draws and paints in the South of France, in Paris, and by the North Sea.

June 1954

His exhibition at the Jacques Dubourg Gallery in Paris is a great success.

September 1954

To be closer to Jeanne Polge, de Staël settles in Antibes and rents a studio on the city walls, facing the sea.

March 16th, 1955

De Staël commits suicide by throwing himself off the terrace roof of his studio.

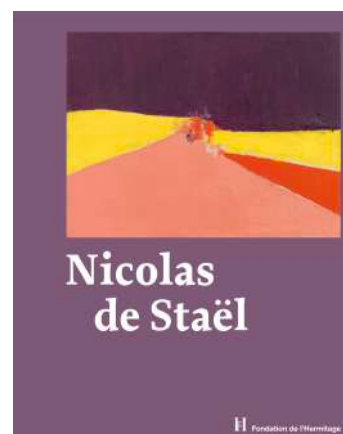
Catalogue

Nicolas de Staël

Edited by Charlotte Barat and Pierre Wat

Co-published with Éditions Paris Musées

280 pages, 24 × 29 cm, 250 colour illustrations, CHF 54.-



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entretien avec Anne de Staël

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**Un peintre « toujours dans la tradition, héritier de la
grande tradition »**, Thomas Schlessler

1948-1949 **Rue Gauguet**

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Pierre Lecuire**, Marie du Bouchet

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Un peintre sans divertissement, Pierre Wat

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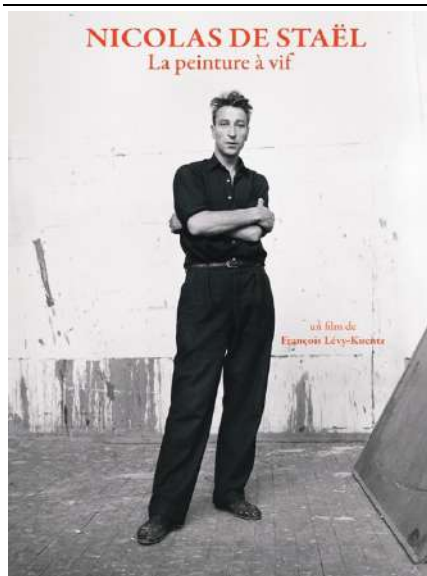
Les choses des garçons qui travaillent dans la nuit,
Laurence Bertrand Dorléac

1954-1955 **Antibes**

Staël après Staël, Charlotte Barat

Bibliographie sélective

Documentary



Nicolas de Staël, la peinture à vif

- Directed by François Lévy-Kuentz
- Written by François Lévy-Kuentz, Stéphane Lambert and Stephan Lévy-Kuentz
- Coproduced by ARTE France and Temps noir (2023, 52mn)

SUMMARY

Nicolas de Staël embodied the entanglement of art and experience more than most, giving his short life a sacrificial aspect. Now recognised as one of the great French painters, he endlessly pursued his obsession with painting as a means to exorcise his exile and the harshness of his life.

Made with the sole support of Staël's family and an exceptional correspondent who has recently emerged, this film provides keys to an understanding of his total devotion to his art, through a life lived at the speed of a frantic race to the abyss.

To watch the documentary in full, please do contact us: medias@fondation-hermitage.ch

Programme d'activités

CONFERENCES

L'Abstraction face à la couleur. Nicolas de Staël, Mark Rothko, Pierre Soulages

Par Michel Pastoureau, historien des couleurs, des images et des symboles

JE 21.03-18h30

CHF 15.-

Gratuit pour les Ami·e·s de l'Hermitage

À la recherche de Nicolas de Staël

Par Pierre Wat, commissaire indépendant, historien de l'art, Professeur à l'Université de Paris I Panthéon-Sorbonne

JE 16.05-18h30

CHF 15.-

Gratuit pour les Ami·e·s de l'Hermitage

EVENTS

Les peintres et les couleurs : visite-atelier en compagnie de Michel Pastoureau

Spécialement organisée pour le jeune public, cette rencontre avec l'historien Michel Pastoureau permet aux enfants de découvrir l'histoire et la signification des couleurs à travers les œuvres de Nicolas de Staël, puis de réaliser une création colorée en atelier.

Dès 10 ans, durée : 2h

ME 20.03-15h

CHF 25.-

ATELIERS

Paysage fragmenté

Visite guidée de l'exposition suivie d'un atelier sur le thème de la peinture de paysage, inspiré par les œuvres de Nicolas de Staël.

Dès 16 ans, sans prérequis

DI 26.05-13h30–17h30

SA 08.06-13h30-17h30

CHF 120.- (entrée au musée, visite guidée, atelier et matériel compris)

Tableau à tartiner

Après une visite interactive de l'exposition, découverte des techniques de la brosse et du couteau à peindre pour créer une composition inspirée des œuvres de Nicolas de Staël.

Durée : 2h

CHF 15.- par enfant

Graines d'artistes (4-6 ans)

SA 24.02-10h | SA 09.03-10h | MA 02.04-10h* | VE 05.04-10h* | MA 09.04-10h* | VE 12.04-10h* | SA 11.05-10h | SA 01.06-10h

Artistes en herbe (6-12 ans)

SA 24.02-14h | SA 09.03-14h | MA 02.04-14h* | VE 05.04-14h* | MA 09.04-14h* | VE 12.04-14h* | SA 11.05-14h | SA 01.06-14h

Matière en jeu

En famille, participez à une visite ludique de l'exposition puis créez ensemble une œuvre inspirée par l'art de Nicolas de Staël, sur le thème du paysage et du voyage.

Durée : 2h

CHF 15.- par enfant | CHF 27.- par adulte

DI 18.02-14h | DI 03.03-14h | DI 31.03-14h* | DI 14.04-14h* | DI 05.05-14h | DI 12.05-14h | DI 02.06-14h

Philo musée !

Animé par Louise Roduit (association Je Pense donc C'est Chouette)

Cet atelier propose aux enfants et aux adultes une initiation ludique à la philosophie, à partir des œuvres de Nicolas de Staël. Rendez-vous dans les salles du musée pour un moment d'échanges et de création ! Sans prérequis, durée : 1h45

SA 16.03-14h (7-9 ans)

SA 13.04-14h* (10-12 ans)

SA 04.05-14h (adultes)

CHF 25.-

*Ateliers proposés dans le cadre de PâKOMUZÉ, pakomuze.ch

VISITES GOURMANDES

En partenariat avec le restaurant L'esquisse, menus disponibles sur fondation-hermitage.ch

Soirées Art & Gastronomie

Dans le musée ouvert exclusivement pour l'occasion, visite guidée suivie d'un dîner au restaurant L'esquisse.

VE 23.02-18h45 | SA 02.03-18h45 | VE 12.04-18h45 | SA 18.05-18h45 | VE 07.06-18h45

CHF 89.- (boissons non comprises)

Dimanches Art & Brunch

Brunch au restaurant L'esquisse, suivi d'une visite commentée.

DI 25.02-10h | DI 10.03-10h | DI 28.04-10h | DI 12.05-10h | DI 02.06-10h

CHF 67.- | CHF 47.- (12-17 ans)

SELF-GUIDED & GUIDED TOURS

Visite De bouche à oreille

En partenariat avec L'Art d'inclure

Cette visite guidée en audiodescription privilégie une approche intime et tactile de l'œuvre de Nicolas de Staël. Spécialement créée pour les personnes en situation de handicap visuel, elle est ouverte à quiconque souhaite découvrir l'exposition autrement.

DI 17.03-11h | DI 24.03-11h

CHF 6.- (en plus du billet d'entrée) | gratuit pour les Ami·e·s de l'Hermitage

Également disponible sur demande pour les groupes.

Visites commentées publiques

Les jeudis à 18h30 et les dimanches à 15h

CHF 6.- (en plus du billet d'entrée) | gratuit pour les Ami·e·s de l'Hermitage

Visites commentées privées

En français, allemand, anglais ou italien

CHF 160.- par groupe (en plus des billets d'entrée)

Audioguide

Sélection d'œuvres commentée par Gustave de Staël, fils de l'artiste, et Pierre Wat, commissaire de l'exposition. À écouter au fil de la visite sur votre téléphone

Écoles

La visite libre du musée avec une classe est gratuite (inscription indispensable).

Pour les enseignant·e·s souhaitant préparer une visite scolaire :

- ME 14.02-16h : visite commentée de l'exposition, sur inscription

- dossier pédagogique à télécharger sur fondation-hermitage.ch

Informations concernant les visites guidées et les visites-ateliers : fondation-hermitage.ch/activites/ecoles

Parcours-jeu (dès 6 ans)

Gratuit, sur demande à l'accueil

Fondation de l'Hermitage

Where art and nature meet

The Fondation de l'Hermitage in Lausanne is a beacon among the museums of French-speaking Switzerland, presenting two iconic and internationally significant exhibitions every year. Focusing on the visual arts, its rich and varied programme explores art history from the Renaissance to the present day, with exhibitions focused on a single artist or theme, or showcasing a prestigious private collection.

The museum is housed in a splendid 19th century residence, surrounded by magnificent mature trees and offering an incomparable view

over the Alps, Lake Geneva and Lausanne cathedral.



FONDATION DE L'HERMITAGE
Route du Signal 2
1018 Lausanne
fondation-hermitage.ch
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+41 (0)21 342 50 72 (dir.)

Adjacent to the Hermitage is a farmhouse containing the Learning Centre and Michel Bugnion Auditorium, where exhibition-related activities take place. The former orangery now hosts the L'esquisse restaurant, where visitors can enjoy lunch or dinner.

The Fondation de l'Hermitage is one of Switzerland's most popular art museums, with an average of 45,000 visitors to each exhibition. Since its opening in 1984, it has already seen over three million people pass through its doors.

Practical Information

Access

TL bus 16 – arrêt Hermitage
 Parking du Signal, place des
 Fêtes de Sauvabelin

Opening hours

Mardi à dimanche : 10h – 18h
 Jeudi : 10h – 21h
 Lundi : fermé
 Ouvert les jours fériés suivants :
 (Lundi de Pentecôte), 10h – 18h
 Vendredi Saint, Dimanche et Lundi de Pâques,
 Lundi de Pentecôte, Fête nationale suisse – 1er
 Août, Lundi du Jeûne Fédéral (10h-18h), Jeudi
 de l'Ascension (10h-21h)

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Adultes	22.-
AVS/AI/AC	18.-
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Forfait groupe (dès 10 personnes)	18.-
Forfait famille (2 adultes + enfants)	45.-
Nocturnes les jeudis (18h – 21h)	50%
11.- (adultes) 5.- (enfants)	
Enfants (jusqu'à 9 ans)	gratuit
Amies et Amis de l'Hermitage	gratuit

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fondation-hermitage.ch

Bookshop & Shop

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Restaurant L'esquisse

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info@lesquisse.ch

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 et bénéficiez de nombreux avantages !

Informations sur : fondation-hermitage.ch

Next exhibition

*Chefs-d'œuvre du Musée Langmatt. Boudin,
 Renoir, Cézanne, Gauguin...*

28.06 – 03.11.2024

