

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

Une exposition organisée par



En collaboration avec



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In 2024 the Hermitage will celebrate its 40th anniversary!

In 2024 the Fondation de l'Hermitage will host two exhibitions of exceptional scale and quality, enabling visitors to celebrate its 40th anniversary in the best possible way. The fascinating Nicolas de Staël retrospective (9 February–9 June) will be followed by *Chefs-d'œuvre de la collection du Musée Langmatt* (28 June–3 November), featuring a group of extraordinary Impressionist and post-Impressionist works, in a tribute to the exhibition with which the Fondation de l'Hermitage first opened its doors in June 1984: *L'impressionnisme dans les collections romandes*.

CÉZANNE, DEGAS, MONET, RENOIR... IMPRESSIONISM IS THE HEART OF THE HERMITAGE

This major exhibition will also enable us to celebrate 150 years of Impressionism, a revolutionary art movement that emerged in 1874 with the first exhibition by a group of young independent artists whose “new painting” sought to convey reality in the moment, and in all its modernity.

OPENING TIMES

Chefs-d'œuvre du Musée Langmatt. Boudin, Renoir, Cézanne, Gauguin..., 28.06 – 03.11.2024
Tuesday–Sunday 10 am–6 pm, Thursday open till 9 pm