# Nicolas Party reclaims grand museum walls with vibrant reinterpretation of historical murals



Nicolas Party's journey from street artist pursued by police to celebrated muralist continues to unfold in grand settings, with his latest installation at the Holburne Museum in Bath marking a significant milestone. This piece, a large mural drawn from historical influences, embodies Party's unique artistic vision while allowing him to grapple with the legacies of great painters.

The mural, prominently displayed in the museum's gallery, is an adaptation of Benjamin Gerritsz. Cuyp's 17th-century painting, "A Brawl Between Peasants," while also showcasing the influence of 18th-century British master George Stubbs. As Party worked over four days to bring this ambitious piece to life, he transformed not just the gallery wall, but the very atmosphere of the museum itself with his vibrant pastel dust.

Party reflected on his excitement in having his work hosted in such a prestigious location, a building steeped in history and home to notable artworks by Thomas Gainsborough and George Stubbs. “It’s great to be in a grand place like this,” he remarked, highlighting the importance of context in his work. Notably, the mural features a striking juxtaposition; layered atop the tumultuous scene from Cuyp's painting is a supplementary work portraying two horses and a spectral human face, inspired by Stubbs's iconic representations. This second piece, “Portrait With Two Horses,” obscures parts of the original mural, prompting Party to assert that his artistic expression materializes when both elements coexist. “I think my work becomes my work when I put the two together,” he stated, further emphasising his creative process.

The installation process involved meticulous preparations, including the creation of a special chamber to contain the pastel dust — a necessity given the medium's inherent messiness. The wall had to be treated with acrylic paint, water, and sawdust, creating a suitable texture for the pastels to adhere. This element of installation underscores the tactile and physicality of Party's art; applying pastel by hand not only showcases his commitment but also evokes a sense of traditional craftsmanship in a contemporary format. Party described the physical demands of his technique, noting, "It’s quite tiring so I use both arms," which illustrates the labour-intensive nature of his artistry.

This exhibition, titled "Nicolas Party: Copper & Dust," also features an array of smaller works that further illuminate his creative breadth, including landscapes and still lifes executed in oil on copper. Chris Stephens, director of the Holburne, expressed enthusiasm for showcasing Party's work, remarking on the artist’s deep understanding of art history, particularly his engagement with 17th-century Dutch painting and 18th-century pastels, both of which resonate within the museum's own collection.

Nicolas Party's mural not only stands as a testament to his artistic evolution but also invites viewers to reflect on the dialogue between the past and present. His ability to weave humour through "grim, funny" subject matter offers a fresh perspective, challenging traditional interpretations of historical art and reshaping cultural narratives within contemporary space. Through this monumental work, Party not only reclaims the gallery walls but also bridges the gap between the street and the museum, redefining the spaces that art can inhabit.

### Reference Map

1. Paragraphs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 - [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2025/may/11/the-art-of-making-a-little-mess-brings-nicolas-partys-showstopper-to-bath)

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## Bibliography

* <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2025/may/11/the-art-of-making-a-little-mess-brings-nicolas-partys-showstopper-to-bath> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
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