

DIANE DE POLIGNAC

# NICOLAS DE STAËL (1913-1955)

Nicolas de Staël is a major personality of Post-War abstraction, although he always refused to be connected to any group of artists. His career, which swung between figurative and abstract art, is concentrated into a period of fifteen years, from 1940 to his tragic death in 1955.



## BIOGRAPHY

### NICOLAS DE STAËL'S CHILDHOOD: BETWEEN IMPERIAL RUSSIA AND BELGIUM

Nicolas de Staël was born on January 5<sup>th</sup>, 1914 (according to the Gregorian calendar) in Saint-Petersburg, into a well-to-do family of White Russians of the Staël von Holteim family. His father, a major general, was vice-commander of the Peter and Paul Fortress in Saint-Petersburg. With the 1917 Revolution, Nicolas and his family fled to Poland. Orphaned at the age of 8, he and his two sisters were entrusted by his godmother to a family of friends in Brussels, Emmanuel and Charlotte Fricero, who had already hosted another Russian exile: Alexander Bereznikov.

Nicolas de Staël grew up and studied in Brussels. Contrary to his adoptive father's aspirations, Nicolas de Staël turned very quickly to painting. He visited museums, galleries and during a trip to the Netherlands in June 1933, he delved into Dutch painting. In October of the same year, he entered the Brussels art school. He attended classes on drawing from the antique held by Henri van Haelen and met Madeleine Hauptert who became a friend and who introduced him to abstract painting.

He also attended the Académie des Beaux-Arts of the Saint-Gilles suburb of Brussels, where he joined both the architecture classes given by Charles Malcause and the decorative painting course held by Georges de Vlaminck (called Géo de Vlaminck). Staël was asked to assist Vlaminck in the creation of murals at the Agriculture Pavilion of the 1935 Universal Exposition.

### THE PAINTER NICOLAS DE STAËL'S ARTISTIC EMANCIPATION: TRAVELS AROUND EUROPE

Nicolas de Staël travelled around Europe several times during 1934 to sharpen his eye and discover new horizons. He visited the south of France. In Paris, he discovered Paul Cézanne, Henri Matisse, Chaïm Soutine and Georges Braque. The painter also travelled around Spain for four months, by bicycle with his friend Benoît Gilsoul. During this study trip, Nicolas de Staël took a lot of notes and made many sketches. Spain enchanted him and he continued his journey to Andalusia alongside Emmanuel d'Hooghvorst. Nicolas de Staël painted watercolours that he sold in Barcelona at that time.

In July 1936, Nicolas de Staël left for Morocco, supported financially by the Baron de Brouwer, a collector, to whom he promised to send the works he made. At Marrakech in 1937, he met the painter Jeannine Guillou and her cousin the artist Jean Deyrolle. Originally from Brittany, Jeannine was married to the Polish painter Olek Teslar and was living with their son Antek – the future writer, poet and playwright Antoine Tudal, in a sort of community in the south of Morocco.

Nicolas was attracted to this established painter whose talent was already recognized. He was still looking for his own style. Jeannine supported Nicolas in his search. Nicolas and Jeannine became closer and the Teslar couple separated.

After Morocco, Nicolas and Jeannine went on a voyage of discovery to southern Italy in 1938. At that time, the links with the Fricero family weakened. They were worried for Nicolas's artistic career.

### FIRST ARTISTIC YEARS: NICOLAS DE STAËL'S MOVE TO PARIS WITH JEANNINE

After Italy, the painter Nicolas de Staël moved with Jeannine and her son Antek to Paris. They lived a bohemian life, in a very precarious situation. Staël was still searching for his style. He attended the Académie Fernand Léger for a time and copied works at the Louvre. At this time, Staël met the art historian Pierre Courthion who would later write about his art. Lacking money, Nicolas de Staël returned for a while to Belgium to work on the frescoes of the French Pavilion for the International Exposition on the Technique of Water at Liège in 1939.

Two months before war broke out, the painter Nicolas de Staël met the gallerist Jeanne Bucher who appreciated his work particularly. Jeanine fell seriously ill and spent her convalescence at Concarneau. Staël produced a large number of figurative portraits of Jeannine. He confided later: "When I was young, I painted the portrait of Jeannine. A real portrait is after all the summit of art". Arno Mansar added: "He is both a Picasso of the blue period and also a souvenir of El Greco's elongations that he had admired in Spain."

### NICOLAS DE STAËL DURING THE WAR: BETWEEN MOBILISATION AND SETTLING IN NICE WITH JEANNINE

From January to September 1940, Nicolas de Staël was mobilised and joined the Foreign Legion. He was sent first to Algeria and then Tunisia where he was placed in the army's geographic service and worked on updating the maps of the military staff of the protectorate.

In September 1940, he was reunited with Jeannine who had moved to Nice, in the Zone Libre. Another bohemian life began under the Mediterranean sun. Nicolas de Staël continued his artistic studies: the artist's first works combine Cubism and Fauvism. The de Staëls surrounded themselves with a circle of artist friends: Alberto and Suzie Magnelli, Henri Goetz and Christine Boumeester, Sonia and Robert Delaunay, Fred Klein and Marie Raymond - Antek and the little Yves Klein also became friends. All this community of artists saw each other regularly, inviting each other to their homes and gathering at the Matarasso bookshop where they met the poets Jacques Prévert and Francis Carco.

Jeannine got an exclusive contract with the Nice dealer Mockers, but Nicolas de Staël still had difficulty selling his works. His friend, the painter Félix Aublet suggested then that he do some decorative work to meet the family's needs, in a difficult climate of penury and rationing. In February 1942, a little girl was born, Anne, who fascinated her father. He abandoned landscape for a while to return to portraits, especially of Jeannine.

Gradually, Nicolas de Staël's style established itself. He locked himself up for entire days in his studio: he painted a lot, but destroyed as much as he produced. Very close to the older Alberto Magnelli, whom he regularly visited at Plan de Grasse, the painter Nicolas de Staël continued his artistic development. From 1942, his painting became abstract. His backgrounds were grey, uniform, from which would emerge: ellipses, grids. Little depth in these compositions. He also began to have his first collectors.

### **THE RETURN TO PARIS: THE FULL ARTISTIC AFFIRMATION OF THE PAINTER NICOLAS DE STAËL**

After three years in Nice, the couple and two children settled again in Paris in 1943. During the occupation, these bohemian years in Paris were very difficult. Through Jeanne Bucher, they were able to settle in the 17<sup>th</sup> arrondissement in a townhouse belonging to Pierre Chareau, who had left for the USA, which was lent to them.

In Paris, Staël met César Domela, who became a close friend. He exhibited alongside him with Vassily Kandinsky at Jeanne Bucher's Gallery in February 1944. The exhibition was appreciated by major artistic personalities such as Pablo Picasso, Georges Braque and André Lansky, but the general critical reaction was not good at a time when abstract art was perceived as degenerate. A second exhibition, *Peintures Abstraites Compositions de Matières* was then mounted at the Galerie L'Esquisse in Paris, with Jeanne Bucher as intermediary, and it brought together works by Kandinsky, Magnelli, Domela and Staël.

In May 1944, the Galerie L'Esquisse organized Nicolas de Staël's first solo exhibition. A few drawings were sold. At this time, a solid friendship developed with Georges Braque who appreciated his work a lot. The two painters became close and inspired each other. Staël often visited him at his studio in Varengeville in Normandy while in Paris, they had neighbouring studios in the 14<sup>th</sup> arrondissement of Paris.

In April 1945, Nicolas de Staël exhibited again at the Galerie Jeanne Bucher. Among the buyers, the industrialist Jean Bauret is noteworthy. He became one of the most important collectors of Nicolas de Staël, and also a friend.

The family's financial situation continued to be catastrophic and Jeannine's health deteriorated seriously: she died in February 1946. Although profoundly affected

by Jeannine's death, Nicolas de Staël married Françoise Chapouton a few months later. She had been looking after Antek and Anne since the age of nineteen. The new couple had three children: Laurence born in 1947, Jérôme born in 1948 and Gustave born in 1954. Still mourning Jeannine's death, the year 1946 was an especially dark period in the work of the painter Nicolas de Staël.

Seeking commercial solutions, Nicolas de Staël decided to work with the art dealer Jacques Dubourg, an expert on the Impressionists and dealer of 20<sup>th</sup> century painters, based on the boulevard Haussmann. Afterwards, he would favour this dealer, who was less well-known, to the Galerie Louis Carré, although he had signed a contract with this second gallery in October 1946. In preferring Jacques Dubourg, Nicolas de Staël made a strategic decision: to be the star painter of a small gallery instead of an artist among several in a more prestigious gallery.

Living with his family in the large studio at 7 rue Gauguet in Paris, near the Parc Montsouris, the painter Nicolas de Staël met Theodore Schempp, an American dealer and broker who offered to show his work in the USA.

At that time, the poet and publisher, Pierre Lecuire wrote *Voir Nicolas de Staël*, a book-poem in a collaboration with the painter that included two engravings on copper. It was published in 1953.

Refusing to belong to any artistic movement, Nicolas de Staël refused to exhibit in the first exhibition of the Salon des Réalités Nouvelles held in 1946, which focused on a strict form of abstraction.

In 1947, Nicolas de Staël exhibited at the Dominican convent of Le Saulchoir at Étioilles, with Georges Braque, André Lansky and Henry Laurens, through the intermediary of Father Laval. A great admirer of de Staël's art, Fr Laval also bought one of his paintings from him for the refectory of the convent of Saint-Jacques in the 13<sup>th</sup> arrondissement of Paris.

At that time, Nicolas de Staël's palette evolved, became brighter. The painter ardently pursued his study of colour. The succession of births had an impact on the painter's inspiration. His daughter Anne has emphasized: "de Staël's joy at the time of a birth was a very highly placed note of emotion (...) it was the reminder of the "birth", reminder of a moment when "light" is poured over you" In April 1948, Nicolas de Staël was naturalized French.

Although he started many paintings, Nicolas de Staël had difficulty finishing them. His perfectionism forced him to reach the "supreme masterpiece" to use the words of Pierre Lecuire. He continued his development towards more airy compositions, more coloured, marked by successions of layers of impasto.

## THE PAINTER NICOLAS DE STAËL'S INTERNATIONAL FAME AND GREAT SUCCESS IN THE USA

In 1949, invited by the art critic Léon Degand, works by Staël were included in the inaugural exhibition of the Museu de Arte Moderna de São Paulo in Brazil. This same year, Nicolas de Staël participated in two group exhibitions: at the Musée des Beaux-Arts of Lyon and at the Galerie Jeanne Bucher in Paris.

The year 1950 marked the first signs of fame for Nicolas de Staël. Reviews were good and favourable, especially those by Christian Zervos. In June, the solo exhibition organized by Jacques Dubourg was a success.

Works by the painter Nicolas de Staël entered American collections, especially museums. The Boston Museum of Fine Arts bought the painting *Rue Gauguet* of 1949 from him and MoMa in New York acquired *Peinture 1947* in 1951.

It was at this time that he met the poet René Char though the historian Georges Duthuit. From this encounter was born a deep friendship and wonderful collaborations between the poet and painter on illustrated books, such as *Poèmes de René Char - bois de Nicolas de Staël* published in 1951.

Between this work on wood and his work on paper exhibited by Dubourg during the month of May 1951, the painter Nicolas de Staël gradually turned towards a smaller format to create little still lifes: apples or his series of paintings of *Petites Bouteilles* (Small Bottles). An admirer of the work of Van Gogh, he also began to paint flowers.

## NICOLAS DE STAËL BETWEEN ABSTRACTION AND FIGURATION: LANDSCAPES, FOOTBALLERS AND MUSIC

The final four years of the artist's life were marked by "continual renewal" to use the words of the critic Daniel Dobbels. They were also especially prolific years: in 1952, Nicolas de Staël painted as many as 240 paintings "you have to work a lot, a ton of passion and a hundred grams of patience" the painter claimed. Nicolas de Staël returned then to landscape, inspired by the Île-de-France and the South.

In 1952, an exhibition was devoted to Nicolas de Staël at the Matthierson Gallery in London, but was a failure: his painting was not understood. Staël was troubled by this strange welcome and began to doubt his painting. He donated at this time his picture *Les Toits* of 1952 to the Musée d'Art moderne de Paris.

On March 26<sup>th</sup>, 1952, Staël and Françoise attended a France-Sweden soccer match at the Parc des Princes stadium in Paris. This event stunned the artist, impressed

by the shock of colours and movement on the pitch. This sensation, this sudden inspiration was to animate Staël for several days. He created multiple sketches, paintings in oil on canvas and on card, in large and small formats. This is the series of *Footballeurs* in which colour explodes, with as its apotheosis the huge canvas *Le Parc des Princes* (200 x 350 cm), now in a private collection. But when he exhibited his flagship composition at the Salon de Mai the same year, it was met with general incomprehension: critics and friends lamented his work, criticizing him for a return to figuration, which was perceived as been retrograde by those who supported abstraction, such as Jean Hélion and Jean Arp. To which Staël responded: "I do not oppose abstract and figurative painting. A painting should be both abstract and figurative. Abstract as a wall, figurative is the representation of a space."

If the painting was hardly appreciated in Paris, it impressed the New York dealer, Paul Rosenberg who took on the painter Nicolas de Staël with an exclusive contract as early as the following year and he then promoted his work in the USA efficiently. In March 1953, the solo exhibition of Nicolas de Staël at the Knoedler Gallery in New York was also successful.

Music then became a new source of inspiration for Nicolas de Staël. During a concert organized in the home of his friend the socialite Suzanne Tézenas, who held a salon in Paris, Staël was struck by the "colour of the sounds". He then turned to contemporary music: Pierre Boulez, Olivier Messiaen and jazz, especially Sidney Bechet whom he admired and to whom he paid homage in *Les Musiciens, Souvenir de Sidney Becket*, now at the Musée national d'Art moderne in Paris (one version) and *Les Musiciens*, now at the Phillips Collection in Washington. Other paintings are inspired by music, such as *L'Orchestre* of 1953, a large canvas now at the Musée national d'Art moderne in Paris and *Les Indes Galantes* of 1952-1953 (private collection), inspired by the eponymous opera-ballet by Jean-Philippe Rameau.

## THE CALL OF LIGHT: THE PAINTER NICOLAS DE STAËL AND THE SOUTH OF FRANCE

In search of brighter and still more intense colours, Nicolas de Staël moved to the south of France. First, he rented a silk farm at Langes, and then he bought the house known as Le Castelet at Ménerbes in the Luberon. This new place inspired a series of paintings *Ménerbes*. Enthusiastic, he produced abundantly. In the south of France, Nicolas de Staël met Douglas Cooper, an English collector of avant-garde art and art historian who was based in the Gard.

At that time, he left with his entire family and two friends Ciska Grillet, a friend of René Char and Jeanne Mathieu, on a voyage around Italy in a van. In Sicily the town of Agrigento inspired very brightly coloured paintings in him.

In February 1954, Paul Rosenberg organized a solo exhibition of Nicolas de Staël: *Recent Paintings by Nicolas de Staël*, in which the paintings done in Ménerbes, still lifes and flowers were shown, among others. This was a real success. Romain Gary, at the time a French diplomat in New York, was transported by Nicolas de Staël's work and wrote to him: "You're the only modern painter who gives genius to the viewer."

A great dealer, an established value among his colleagues, Paul Rosenberg proved to be an efficient promotor of Staël, both among private collectors and with American museums. This is why the work of Nicolas de Staël is so abundant today in American institutions.

Regarding matters of the heart, Staël fell madly in love with another woman: Jeanne Mathieu, whom he had met at Lagnes. Fascinated by this woman who accompanied him and his family on their trip around Italy, she inspired an entire series of nudes. Despite a trip to Spain where he admired the art in the Prado, he could not abandon his passion for Jeanne. This woman obsessed him and in October 1953, he separated from Françoise.

In June 1954, a new exhibition of Nicolas de Staël was held at Jacques Dubourg in Paris where works inspired by the Mediterranean regions were shown. The critics' reactions were mixed: Léon Degand remained perplexed while Alain Jouffroy appreciated his work.

Living alone in Paris during the summer of 1954, Nicolas de Staël produced new paintings of still lifes and new landscapes of Paris and landscapes of the North Sea, with a gentler palette.

Jeanne Mathieu was married and living near Nice. Nicolas de Staël, mad with love, then moved to Antibes in the Autumn of 1954 where he organized his studio to be closer to her. He spent all winter there, painting very productively: the port, the sea, the studios, still lifes... and nudes.

#### **FINAL WORKS OF A TORMENTED PAINTER NICOLAS DE STAËL**

The painter Nicolas de Staël intensified his production of paintings. His work evolved, as did his technique. He abandoned the impasto worked with a palette knife and spatula for a more diluted colour, applied with cotton or gauze on the canvas. This new style disturbed some collectors and critics, which shook Staël. "I'm worried for the difference in light, light from Antibes to Paris. It's possible that in Paris the paintings don't have the resonance that they have in my studio in Antibes. This is a worry." He wrote to his friend Suzanne Tézenas.

Shortly before he died, Nicolas de Staël made the painting *Les Mouettes* (1955, private collection) as a tribute to the painter Vincent van Gogh: another

anguished personality, who had created his *Weatfield with Crows* shortly before committing suicide. Bernard Heitz also wrote: "in his frenzy to paint, he continuously approached the depths, finding harmonies that nobody before him had ever dared to try. A tense, nervous painter, always on the edge, like the final painting of Vincent van Gogh whom he joined in suicide."

The final painting of the artist Nicolas de Staël is inspired by music. On a gigantic canvas, six metres wide, he painted a work that is an apotheosis: *Le Concert*. Tormented by the criticisms and his relationship with Jeanne which was faltering, Nicolas de Staël painted this colossal composition feverishly. A highlight of his creative work, this painting is today in the Musée Picasso at Antibes.

After this final ultimate effort, he wrote two letters: one to his dealer and friend Jacques Dubourg, the other to his daughter Anne, and then threw himself off the roof of the building of his studio. It was March 16th, 1955. He was 41 years old.

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Translation: Jane Mac Avock

## SELECTED COLLECTIONS

Aichi (Japan), Menard Art Museum  
Aix-en-Provence, Musée Granet  
Antibes, Musée Picasso  
Boston, MA, Museum of Fine Arts  
Buffalo, NY, Albright-Knox Art Gallery  
Chicago, IL, Art Institute  
Colmar, Musée Unterlinden  
Dijon, Musée des beaux-arts  
Düsseldorf, Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen  
Edinburgh, Scottish National Galleries  
Fort Worth, TX, Modern Art Museum  
Fukuoka (Japan), Fukuoka Art Museum  
Geneva, Fondation Gandur pour l'Art  
Grenoble, Musée de Grenoble  
Hanover, Sprengel Museum  
Houston, TX, The Museum of Fine Arts  
Karlsruhe (Germany), Staatliche Kunsthalle  
Le Havre, Musée d'Art Moderne André-Malraux (MuMa)  
Lille Métropole, Lille Métropole Musée d'Art Moderne, d'Art Contemporain et d'Art Brut  
London, Tate  
Los Angeles, CA, Los Angeles County Museum of Art  
Los Angeles, CA, Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art  
Lyon, Musée des beaux-arts de Lyon  
Madrid, Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza  
Marseille, Musée Cantini  
Martigny (Switzerland), Fondation Gianadda  
Melbourne, National Gallery of Victoria  
Milwaukee, WI, Milwaukee Art Museum  
Montpellier, Musée Fabre  
New York, NY, Metropolitan Museum of Art  
New York, NY, Museum of Modern Art (MoMA)  
Oslo, Sonja Henie and Niels Onstad Foundation  
Paris, Musée d'Art moderne de Paris  
Paris, Musée national d'Art moderne - Centre Pompidou  
Rennes, Musée des beaux-arts  
Rotterdam, Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen  
Saint-Ives, Tate  
Toledo, OH, Museum of Art  
Troyes, Musée d'Art moderne  
Washington D.C., Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden  
Washington, D.C., National Gallery of Art  
Washington, D.C., The Phillips Collection  
Zürich, Kunsthaus

## SELECTED EXHIBITIONS

Group exhibition, "Dietrich" Room, Brussels, 1936  
*Peintures et gouaches de Kandinsky, Trois tableaux-objets de César Domela, Peintures et dessins de Nicolas de Staël*, Galerie Jeanne-Bucher, Paris, 1944  
*Peintures abstraites, Compositions de matières, Domela, Kandinsky, Magnelli, de Staël*, Galerie L'Esquisse, Paris, 1944  
*Nicolas de Staël*, Galerie L'Esquisse, Paris, 1944

Salon d'automne, Paris, 1944, 1946, 1951, 1952  
Solo exhibitions, Galerie Jeanne-Bucher, Paris, 1945, 1958, 1979, 1981  
Group shows, Galerie Jeanne-Bucher, Paris, 1945, 1949  
Salon de Mai, Paris, 1945-1947, 1949, 1951-1955  
*Fransche Kunst van Bonnard tot Heden*, Gemeentemuseum Van's-Gravenhage, La Haye ; Kunstneres Hus, Oslo ; Nykytade Nutvikonst, Helsinki, 1947  
*Adam, Lansky, Laurens, Nicolas de Staël*, couvent des Dominicains, Étiolles, 1948  
*Les grands courants de la peinture contemporaine, de Manet à nos jours*, Musée de Lyon, Lyon, 1949  
*Do Figurativismo ao Abstracionismo*, Museu de Arte Moderna, São Paulo, 1949  
*Contemporary Art: Great Britain, United States, France*, Art Gallery of Toronto, 1949  
*Nicolas de Staël*, Galerie Theodore Schempp and Co., New York, 1950  
Solo exhibitions, Galerie Jacques Dubourg, Paris, 1950, 1951, 1954, 1957, 1958, 1969  
*Foreningen Fransk Kunst: Levende Farver, Udvalgte Malerei og Billedtoepper af Nulevende Fransk Kunstnere*, Charlottenburg Kunstakademie, Berlin, 1950  
*Young Painters from U.S. and France*, Sidney Janis Gallery, New York, 1950  
*Modern Art to live with*, The Phillips Gallery, Washington, 1950  
*Französische Malerei und Plastik 1938-1948*, Berlin, 1950  
Mostra Internazionale del Disegno Moderno, Bergamo, 1950  
*Modern French Masters*, Galerie Louis Carré, New York, 1951  
*Advancing French Art*, travelling group exhibition in the USA: Louisville, Bloomington, San Francisco, Chicago and Washington, 1951-1952  
*Poèmes de René Char, Bois de Nicolas de Staël*, Galerie Jacques Dubourg, Paris, 1951  
*Nicolas de Staël, Exhibition of Paintings and Drawings*, Galerie Matthierson, Londres, 1952  
*La Nouvelle École de Paris*, Galerie de Babylone, Paris, 1952  
*Paintings by William Congden, Nicolas de Staël*, The Phillips Gallery, Washington, 1952  
*Malerei in Paris Heute*, Kunsthaus, Zurich, 1952  
*Young Painters: École de Paris*, Royal Scottish Academy Galleries, Edimbourg, 1952  
*Europe, the New Generation*, Museum of Modern Art, New York, travelling group exhibition in the USA, 1952  
*Nicolas de Staël, Paintings, Drawings and Lithographs*, Knoedler Galleries, New York, 1953  
*An Exhibition of Paintings by Nicolas de Staël*, The Phillips Gallery, Washington, 1953  
*The Classic Tradition in Contemporary Art*, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, 1953  
*Ile Biennale de São Paulo*, São Paulo, 1953  
*Recent Paintings by Nicolas de Staël*, Galerie Paul Rosenberg and Co., New York, 1954  
*L'École de Paris*, Galerie Charpentier, Paris, 1954 – 1955  
*Tendances actuelles de l'art français*, Kursaal, Ostende, 1954  
*XXVIIe Biennale*, Venice, 1954  
*Nicolas de Staël*, travelling retrospective: Norton School of Art, Palm Beach ; Minneapolis Institute of Art, Minneapolis ; Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center, Colorado Springs, 1955

*Loan Exhibition*, Galerie Paul Rosenberg and Co., New York, 1955  
*Nicolas de Staël*, Musée Grimaldi, Antibes, 1955  
*Nicolas de Staël*, travelling exhibition 1955-1956: Fine Arts Museum; Houston ; Kalamazoo Institute of Arts, Kalamazoo (Michigan) ; De Cordova Dana Museum, Lincoln (Massachusetts) ; The Phillips Gallery, Washington D.C. ; Fort Worth Arts Center, Fort Worth; Rockefeller Center, New York ; Cornell University, Ithaca ; Memorial Art Gallery of the University of Rochester, New York, 1955  
*Art in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century*, San Francisco Museum of Art, 1955  
*Nicolas de Staël 1914-1955*, Musée national d'Art moderne ; Palais de Tokyo, Paris, 1956  
*Nicolas de Staël 1914-1955*, White Chapel Art Gallery, London, 1956  
*Hommage à Nicolas de Staël*, Arthur Tooth and Sons Ltd., London, 1956  
*Nicolas de Staël*, Rétrospective, Kunsthalle, Bern, 1957  
*Loan Exhibition of Paintings by Nicolas de Staël*, Galerie Paul Rosenberg and Co., New York, 1958  
*Nicolas de Staël 1914-1955*, Retrospective, Musée Réattu, Arles, 1958  
*Nicolas de Staël*, Retrospective, Kestner-Gesellschaft, Hanover ; Kunstverein, Hambourg, 1959  
*Nicolas de Staël*, Galleria Civica d'Arte Moderna, Turin, 1960  
*Loan Exhibition of Paintings by Nicolas de Staël*, Galerie Paul Rosenberg and Co., New York, 1963  
*Nicolas de Staël*, Galerie Beyler, Basel, 1964  
*Nicolas de Staël 1914-1955*, Musée Boymans van Beuningen, Rotterdam, 1965  
*Nicolas de Staël*, Retrospective, Kunsthau, Zürich, 1965  
Travelling exhibition: Museum of Fine Arts, Boston ; The Chicago Art Institute, Chicago ; The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, 1966  
*Nicolas de Staël, 1914-1955, Painting from Collections in Britain*, Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, Edimbourg, 1967  
*Staël*, Fondation Maeght, Saint-Paul-de-Vence, 1972  
*Nicolas de Staël*, Galerie Jiyugaoka, Tokyo, 1973  
*De Staël*, Musée d'Unterlinden, Colmar, 1977  
*Nicolas de Staël, l'œuvre gravé*, Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, 1979  
*Nicolas de Staël*, Retrospective, Galeries Nationales du Grand Palais, Paris, 1981  
*Nicolas de Staël*, Retrospective, The Tate Gallery, London, 1981  
*Nicolas de Staël*, Ginza Art Center, Tokyo, 1982  
*Nicolas de Staël, Peintures et dessins*, Musée de Peinture et de Sculpture, Grenoble, 1984  
*Nicolas de Staël, 1949*, Musée des beaux-arts, Rennes, 1986  
*Nicolas de Staël à Antibes, septembre 1954 – mars 1955*, Musée Picasso, Antibes, 1986  
*Nicolas de Staël in America*, The Phillips Collection, Washington D.C., 1990  
*Nicolas de Staël in America*, Cincinnati Art Museum, 1990  
*Nicolas de Staël*, Retrospective, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Madrid, 1991  
*Nicolas de Staël, Rétrospective de l'oeuvre peinte*, Fondation Maeght, Saint-Paul-de-Vence, 1991  
*Nicolas de Staël (1914-1955)*, travelling retrospective in Japan: Museum of Art Tobu, Tokyo ; Musée d'Art Moderne, Kamakura ; Museum of Art, Hiroshima, 1993

*Nicolas de Staël, peintures et dessins*, Hôtel de Ville de Paris, Paris, 1994  
*Nicolas de Staël*, Retrospective, Fondation Magnani Rocca, Parma, 1994  
*Nicolas de Staël*, Fondation Pierre Gianadda, Martigny (Switzerland), 1995  
Solo exhibition, Astrup Fearnley Museet for Kunst, Oslo, 1997  
*Nicolas de Staël*, retrospective, Musée national d'Art moderne, Centre Georges-Pompidou, Paris, 2003  
*L'Envolée lyrique, Paris 1945-1956*, Musée du Luxembourg, Paris, 2006  
*Nicolas de Staël 1945-1955*, Fondation Pierre Gianadda, Martigny, 2010  
*Les Sujets de l'abstraction, Peinture non-gurative de la Seconde École de Paris (1946-1962)*, group show, Fondation Gandur pour l'Art, Musée Rath, Geneva / Musée Fabre, Montpellier, 2011  
*L'Art en guerre, France 1938-1947*, Musée d'Art moderne de la Ville de Paris, Paris, 2012, travelling show: *Arte en guerra, Francia 1938-1947* ; Museo Guggenheim, Bilbao, 2013  
*Staël, la figure à nu, 1951 – 1955*, Musée Picasso, Antibes, 2014  
*Nicolas de Staël. Lumières du Nord. Lumières du Sud*, Musée d'art moderne André Malraux, Le Havre, 2014  
Solo exhibition, *Château Kairos – Cueillir l'éternité dans l'instant*, Château de Gaasbeek (Belgium), 2017  
*Nicolas de Staël en Provence*, Hôtel de Caumont, Aix-en-Provence, 2018

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