



MAX PELLEGRINI (b.1945)

Sogni di Gloria

oil on canvas

70 3/4 x 70 3/4 in.

1982

9186

Pablo Picasso paints a portrait of his sitter Giorgio De Chirico in a room filled with classical antiquities, neoclassical sculptures and impressionist paintings. The artist dreams of his own glory, which is symbolized by the masterpieces in the room – the statue of Victory by Michelangelo, an Impressionist artwork leaning in a corner, and the painting behind the sitter that symbolizes human knowledge. Yet, this is all meant ironically. De Chirico only sits in for Pellegrini himself, who mocks his own fears and phobias, by sitting in a room in which every person and artwork in the painting have already achieved their glory.

“Yes, irony is one of the elements of my painting. I make fun of myself and my neurotic fears and phobias and I turn the situation with ironic if not at times hilarious details. I placed a cat, for example, with phosphorescent eyes in a bucolic scene, or in the subject of Carnival I mix death, ridicule and joking.” (Antonio Monda, “Interview with Max Pellegrini,” in Max Pellegrini, ed. Danilo Eccher, 2014)

Max Pellegrini’s paintings are a flashback in classic and pop culture — a trip in time with poignant narratives embedded in symbolic references. For the better part of 50 years, the Turin-based artist has used photography and painting — and a visual vocabulary of trippy landscapes, beautiful people, and meaningful symbols — to compose his stories. Pellegrini’s work embodies the culture of the 20th century, drawing on the ideas of the Masters and giving them new context and relevance. His psychedelic works often reference music, literature, fashion, and iconography. With his dynamic style of layering and superimposing image fragments over the background, narrative clues surface and then seem to disappear. The artist has said his way of painting springs from an earthly attempt to attain something transcendental.

Born in 1945, Pellegrini attended the Accademia Albertina di Belle Arti and was professor of urban sociology at the Polytechnic University of Turin. He mounted his first solo exhibition in 1966 at Il Punto gallery in Turin, where his paintings depicted urban landscapes, cars, and the city. A year later, beautiful young women populated his canvases, reflecting the experimental counterculture but ever mindful of literature and art history, particularly 18th century painting and the early work of Caravaggio. Pellegrini is an independent, exerting a distinctive style of figuration that is almost surreal performance art in its execution. Ultimately, his paintings assert a conceptual way of thinking—assembling relevant elements as one might in Adobe Photoshop, and composing images that might be personal in conception but almost universal in experience and meaning.



