



**MAX PELLEGRINI (b. 1945)**

**La Sagra**

Signed lower right, "Max Pellegrini 1988".

oil on canvas

59 1/4 x 59 1/4 in. (59 5/8 x 59 5/8 x 1 1/8 in.)

150.5 x 150.5 cm (151.45 x 151.45 x 2.86 cm)

1988

9191

Mirror images of a cloaked figure embrace a bare-chested and bearded man, who is almost child-like in his relative stature. Their embrace mirrors that of Michelangelo's *Pieta*, and the many similar depictions of Christ and the Madonna. A dark shade of blue casts a shadow over the composition, assuredly a temporal indicator, but possibly a reference to Picasso's blue period as well, a major influencer on Pellegrini's artwork. The wall panels behind the figures depict religious scenes, and remind the viewer of stained glass walls in churches and chapels. Light shines from windows in the city below, also illuminated by a full moon peaking over mountainous scenery.

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.

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