



MAX PELLEGRINI (b. 1945)

Presepio

oil on canvas

59 1/4 x 59 1/4 x 1 in.

150.5 x 150.5 x 2.54 cm

2010-2011

9208

In an abstracted image of St. Peter's basilica in Rome, Pellegrini returns to religious narratives to express his "anti-ideological and anti-pauperist" impression of the church and its relationship with faith (Antonio Monda, "Interview with Max Pellegrini"). In the lower half of the painting, the birth of Jesus is the central focus, while the life of the church is highlighted in the upper half. According to Pellegrini, he depicted the birth of Jesus in the style of a baroque 18th century Neapolitan nativity scene that can be interpreted "as a feast for the birth of faith." This faith is conceived of as "the material support for the Popes' power and of the Church's glory," represented in this painting by the Pope clutching the moon in his hand.

- Partial text adapted from Max Pellegrini, July 2015, in conversation with Curator Chip Tom

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.

The information and material herein represents Gallery's best efforts and understanding of the current history and scholarship with respect to the provenance of the Work(s) of Art described and is not part of any warranty.

















