



MAX PELLEGRINI (b. 1945)

Psiche e Amore

Dptych

Signed lower left, "Max Pellegrini '01"

oil on canvas

51 1/4 x 127 in.

1998-2001

9209

Pellegrini returns to Classical Mythology to paint an adapted narration of the love story of Cupid and Psyche. Traditionally, Psyche was a young princess who was hailed for her beauty and unfortunately caught the eye of a jealous Venus. Venus entrusted Cupid to punish Psyche by making her fall in love with something hideous. Cupid accidentally scratched himself with his amorous dart, by which he immediately fell in love with Psyche. As a result, Cupid disobeyed his mother's orders to punish Psyche. Ultimately they married, but not before Psyche completed a number of painstaking and nearly impossible tasks at the behest of Venus.

Pellegrini's interpretation of this myth is cast over two canvases with different chromatic palettes, oscillating on a spectrum of abstraction and representation. This creates a disorienting temporal effect that creates a sense of mystery surrounding the passage of time between two lovers.

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.

















