

# MICHEL PELLUS: LARGER THAN LIFE

*The Artist Paints Everyday Images With A Hyperrealistic Eye*

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PHOTOGRAPHY Carmelo Cunsolo, Fort Lauderdale, FL



ABOVE: "The Gallery 2" elicits a sense of isolation with its unrelated figures who seem to look away from both one another and the viewer. The painting depicts the entrance hallway of the Gallery Center in Boca Raton, and the pieces on display are works by Michel Pellus painted in perspective.

"Painting will be my life," decided artist Michel Pellus at the age of 27. Little did he know how telling his words would be. Working in oils on canvas, Pellus reveals himself as a gifted technician. Although his style has evolved over the 30 years he's been painting, his subjective realistic approach remains constant. Ambiguous, imaginative settings frequently commingle with realistic forms, conveying a raw sensuality that is unmistakably Pellus.

"There is no moral lesson to be learned. I give you the suspense, the tension between two objects, but no story," he explains. "My work is a visual poem of one particular moment in time. The before



ABOVE: Known for his larger-than-life, hyperrealistic paintings, Pellus captures "moments in time" on canvas. His body of work comprises more than 30 years of painting.

and after, the where and why, is up to the viewer." Cherries drop from a bowl or a woman turns, and Pellus captures the moment on canvas.

Born in Montreal in 1945, Pellus began his career as a painter in Canada in 1972 without any formal training. Originally, he set his sights on becoming an Olympic champion, and later, a pilot. Matured through experience, he reconnected with the art world that had been an integral part of his childhood.

Pellus comes from a long and distinguished line of French artists and craftsmen. His grandfather, Guillaume Ernest Pellus, was an artist and restorer of stained glass in the Cathedral of Reims after World War I. Guillaume immigrated to

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ABOVE: "Yellow Cherries in a Teacup" illustrates Pellus' fascination with texture and scale. Painted in 1998-99, this oversized still life pops off the canvas with its true-to-life forms and bold colors. The mere size of the cherries gives this composition its power.

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Canada and became a master artist in stained glass. Pellus' father, Raymond, was a professor at the *École des Beaux-Arts* in Montreal for 35 years, and his mother, Tina Roy, is a painter in Miami.

His early works flawlessly present the human figure suspended in a world of childlike wonder. Stylized greenery and trees, pastel plants and young girls portrayed as flowers filled his imagination. These whimsical paintings explored the inner tension between the reality of adulthood and the naive perceptions of youth.

Recognizing the need to change his surroundings in order to progress as an artist, Pellus moved to the Bahamas in 1983. Moving away from fantastical subject matter, he developed a new style that surprisingly did not rely on the tropical landscape that surrounded him. On the contrary, Pellus began traveling to New York to photograph scenes in the city. He used these photographs as inspiration for a body of realistic work that poignantly examines contemporary life. In them, he reveals the anguish and loneliness of the average person going about his or

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ABOVE: "The Stroll," which measures 55 by 144 inches, showcases Pellus' love of subjective realism. This snapshot of life in the city, photographed in an ambiguous setting, allows the viewer to create his or her own narrative.

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her everyday routine. The common scenes of pedestrians passing each other on the street, a woman sitting alone in a café, or a man standing on a street corner reading a newspaper evoke a mood of solitary sadness. Pellus captures the

essence of both the individual experience and the realities of modern existence. One can profoundly feel the urban tension of the big city in pieces from this period.

In 1988, Pellus moved to Hollywood, Fla., where he currently lives and works. Here, he began painting close-

ups of figures and objects on oversized canvases, much like they would appear under a magnifying glass. In this style, called hyperrealism, Pellus exploits contrasting scales and textures. A face or fruit enlarged to an outlandish size becomes an eye-catching image — popping off the canvas with incredible detail.

Many of Pellus' pieces are on display in museums throughout Canada, including the Museum of Contemporary Art in Montreal and the Museum of Quebec in Quebec City. His paintings can also be seen in prominent galleries in Baltimore, Los Angeles, Miami, Montreal, New York, Philadelphia, San Francisco, Toronto and Quebec City.

One of the early collectors of Pellus' work is famed director Robert Altman. The appearance of Pellus' paintings in several of his movies as well as in Altman's home led to an established celebrity following — with the likes of Pierre Cardin and Paul Newman among his many private collectors. As his exclusive representative, Caesarea Gallery in Boca Raton recently staged an exhibition of his work.

Regarding the future, Pellus plans to "explore the dualities in life — the contrast between simple and complex, distant and close and real and unreal," he says. Ever evolving, his phases of work typify facets of his personality and display his technical virtuosity.



"The Shoe 2" 56 x 40"