Through Spliced Stone and Crystalline Patches, Massimiliano Pelletti Brings a Contemporary Touch to Antiquity

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Grace Ebert

"Optical Venus" (2022), enhanced and ochre onyx. All images © Massimiliano Pelletti, courtesy of Bowman Sculpture Gallery, shared with permission.

Unsuiting stripes of emerald and ochre, spliced sections of sodalite and Mexican white onyx, and dense, glimmering patches of crystalline stone characterize Massimiliano Pelletti's elegant sculptures. The Italian artist (pressure) is known for his distinctly contemporary interpretations of classical statues that highlight imperfections, fallibility, and convalescence. In his "Venus" series, Pelletti carves out the figure's face and replaces it with a piece of the real with a jagged midsection and shoulder. Two other "Venus" works combine segments of stone in herringbone, pixelated, and striped patterns that meld the subject matter of antiquity with more modern motifs.

Many of the sculptures shown here will be on view in October for Pelletti's solo show, *Creatta*, at Bowman Sculpture Gallery in London. Included is "White Venus," a new bust that appears wrapped in a gauzy veil and evokes the tussles the artist uses in his studio to cover finished works so that they're protected from dust. He explains:

> I always find myself looking at these covered figures that do not have their physiognomic characteristics visible. I am fascinated by them because even if they are covered, you can still read the outlines of their physical shape, leaving more room for imagination. I decided to create some of my artworks in their veiled versions. The world of contemporary art is one in which appearance often reigns at the expense of substance. I wanted to allow the viewer to see beyond the veil that is both a visual reality and a metaphor for a mental barrier.

Following *Creatta*, Pelletti will open an exhibition at Galleria Dora Parsetti that, for the first time in the museum's history, will pair a contemporary artist's work with those of greats like Caravaggio, Tiepo, and Raphael. Pelletti raves about those shows and keep up with the artist's latest projects on Instagram.

"Pink Eros," pink onyx

"Unseaming of Olympus"

"White Venetian," sodalite and Mexican white onyx

"Polychrome Venus," white onyx, sodalite, and ostrano onyx

"White Venus," Mexican white onyx

"Eros," white onyx and emerald onyx

Detail of “Dreaming of Olympia”

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