



# ALFRED PELLAN

## Life & Work

By Maria Rosa Lehmann

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PELLAN



# Contents

03

Biography

26

Key Works

50

Significance & Critical Issues

64

Style & Technique

80

Where to See

96

Notes

115

Glossary

127

Sources & Resources

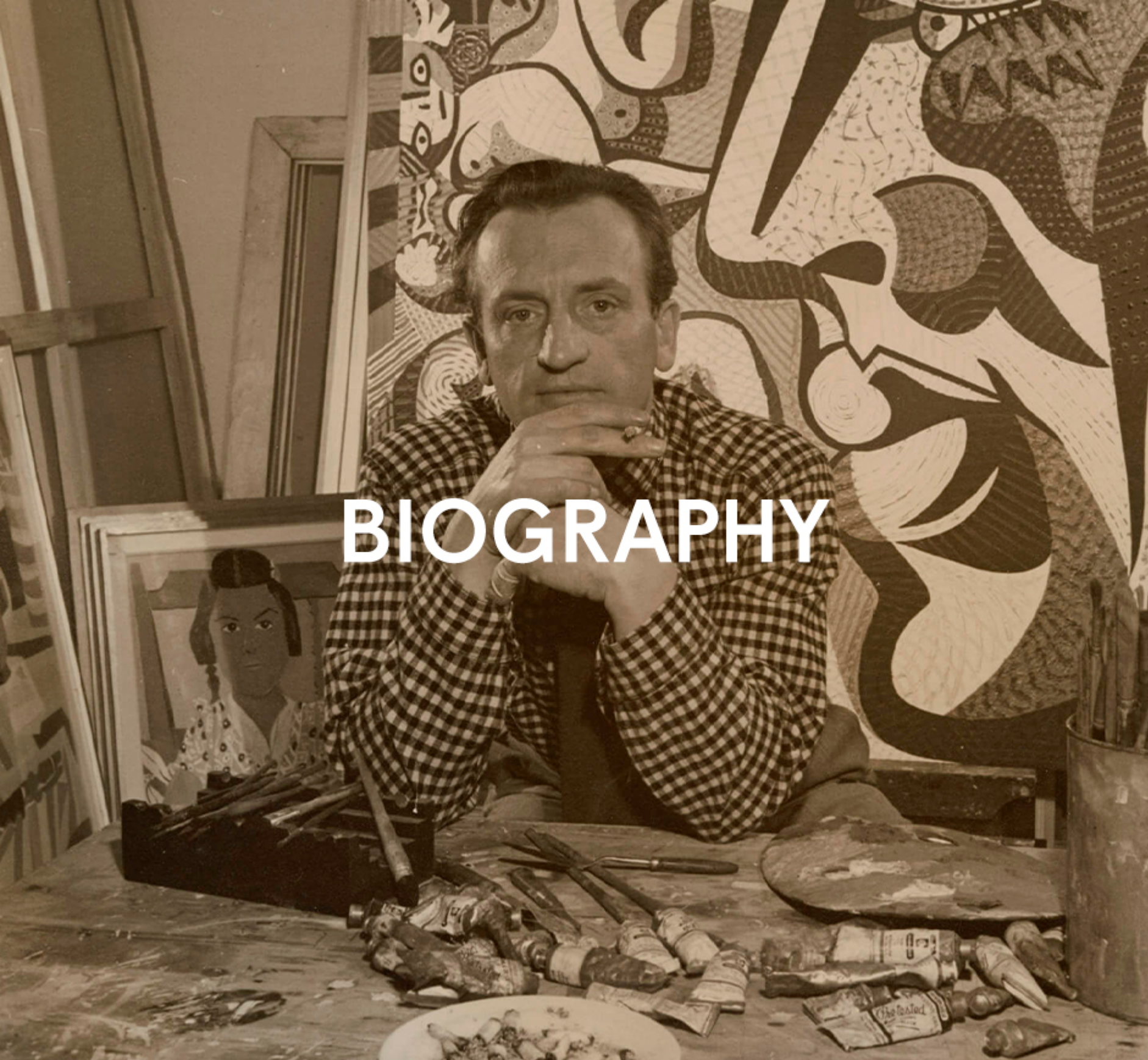
138

About the Author

139

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# BIOGRAPHY

Born in Quebec, Alfred Pellán (1906–1988) spent his formative years in Paris, returning to conservative French Canada in the 1940s with revolutionary ideas about modern art. Influenced by movements such as Cubism and Surrealism, he developed an eclectic approach to painting and fought to free art from dogmatic thinking. While Pellán was an energizing force in Quebec culture, he was also no stranger to conflict, and his life was as daring and colourful as his canvases. His influence can be seen everywhere from gallery walls to city murals; his spirit lives on through the work of creative rebels who defy convention in their art.



### CHILDHOOD AND EARLY YEARS

The artist was born in 1906 in the Saint-Roch quarter of Quebec to Alfred Pelland, a Canadian Pacific railway engineer, and his wife, Maria Régina Damphousse. Pelland—he dropped the “d” from his last name in his twenties—had only vague memories of his mother, who passed away in 1909. His father, who raised Pelland and his siblings, Réginald and Diane, on his own, sought to nurture the boy’s creative talents. Later in life, Pelland would recall moments when he required help to continue with his work, and was deeply grateful that he could always count on his father’s unfailing support.<sup>1</sup>



LEFT: Alfred, Réginald, and Diane as children, date unknown, photographer unknown.  
RIGHT: Alfred Pelland and his father (to the left), 1945, photographer unknown.



Pelland was drawn to the arts from an early age—so much so that he had little interest in other subjects. As he recalled in 1959, “my passion for sketching was so strong that my head stubbornly refused to take in lessons of Latin and Grammar.”<sup>2</sup> At fourteen, Pelland found some paint and brushes his father had bought and abandoned. Intrigued, he created his first paintings—one of which, *Les fraises* (*Strawberries*), 1920, survives to this day.

“The discovery of that box of paint awakened in me an irresistible urge to colour, to bring to life with a brush what I saw,” said the artist in 1939.<sup>3</sup> Convinced of his son’s talents, Pelland’s father drove him to the recently opened École des beaux-arts de Québec. There, the young artist showed his early attempts to the director, Jean Bailleul, who accepted Pelland’s application and declared: “Maybe we’ll make an artist out of you.”<sup>4</sup>



LEFT: École des beaux-arts de Québec, 1923, photographer unknown. RIGHT: Alfred Pelland (in the foreground) working on a sculpture at the École des beaux-arts de Québec, 1923, photographer unknown.



The École des beaux-arts de Québec was founded in 1922 as part of substantial scholarly reforms launched by Louis-Alexandre Taschereau's Liberal government in the 1920s. Provincial leaders were interested in expanding the education system in the wake of the social changes brought about by industrialization; they were also keen to develop a specifically French Canadian culture of intellectual elites.<sup>5</sup> The École stood apart from the trade schools where graphic design was taught, underscoring the fact that studying to be an artist was in its own unique category. Even so, students at the École took workshops where they received practical training, with the intention of equipping the future artists to produce commercial and industrial work.<sup>6</sup>

Pellan enjoyed the loose structure at the École, which offered students greater freedom despite its rigorous academic program.<sup>7</sup> In addition to his studies in drawing and painting, he also explored sculpting and took classes in architecture. These opportunities informed his emerging artistic eclecticism, an approach that later encompassed working across various media. Bailleul, the school's director, allowed Pellan to change classes at will,<sup>8</sup> and told the concierge to let the young artist work in the studios after hours.<sup>9</sup>

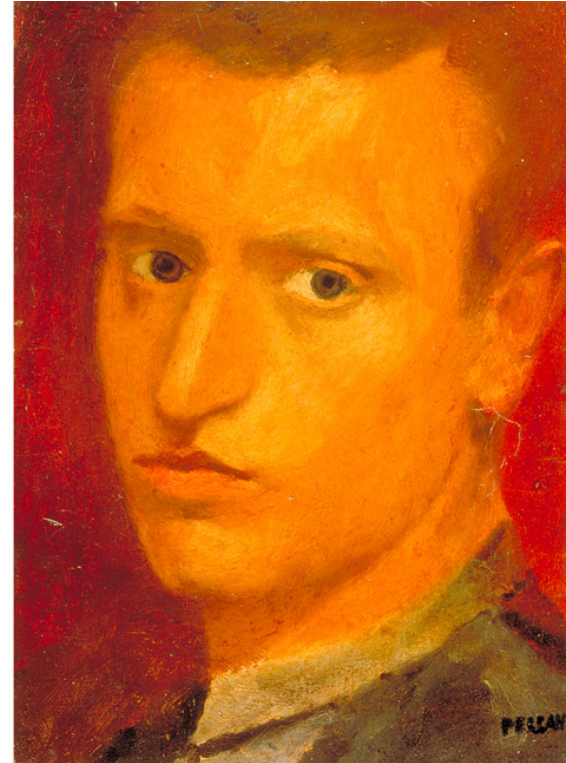


LEFT: Salon de l'École des beaux-arts de Québec, 1923, photographer unknown.



RIGHT: Alfred Pellan, *Coin du vieux Québec (A Corner of Old Quebec)*, 1922, oil on canvas, mounted on cardboard, 62.8 x 58.4 cm, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

Pellan was still a student when his work began to draw attention. At the 1923 Salon de l'École des beaux-arts de Québec, he won first prize in the categories of painting, sculpture, drawing, and decorative arts.<sup>10</sup> The same year, when the artist was only seventeen, the National Gallery of Canada purchased *Coin du vieux Québec (A Corner of Old Quebec)*, 1922. At the school's exhibition in 1925, Pellan came first once again in drawing, painting, and sculpture. The press made special mention of the young artist, noting that his still lifes showed "an outstanding sense of colour."<sup>11</sup> The following year, one of his portraits received accolades for the "quality of the drawing, the depth of colour, the harmony and accurate portrayal of the ensemble."<sup>12</sup>



LEFT: Alfred Pellan, *Nature morte à l'assiette* (Still Life with Plate), 1922, oil on canvas mounted on board, 41.5 x 48.2 cm, private collection. RIGHT: Alfred Pellan, *Autoportrait* (Self-Portrait), 1928, oil on cardboard, 30.5 x 23.3 cm, Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Quebec City.

In 1926, Pellan was awarded the province's first scholarship; this allowed him to move to France, where he continued his studies over the next three years.<sup>13</sup> He left for Paris in August with Omer Parent (1907–2000), his friend and fellow stipend recipient, and lived there until 1940.<sup>14</sup>

### PELLAN IN PARIS

Upon his arrival in Paris in 1926, Pellan enrolled at the École nationale supérieure des beaux-arts, as required by the scholarship he had received from the Quebec government. There he attended classes taught by painter Lucien Simon (1861–1945).<sup>15</sup> Although Pellan was not particularly impressed by Simon's art, which combined principles of Impressionism with the melancholy realism of painters such as Gustave Courbet (1819–1877), he enjoyed the experimental nature of the class. Simon encouraged the young French Canadian to reach beyond the school's strict adherence to tradition and instead develop his own artistic expression. "I loved the freedom," Pellan recalled in 1967. "I wanted to train myself, alone."<sup>16</sup>



Lucien Simon, *A Gust of Wind*, 1902, oil on canvas, 66.5 x 107 cm, Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts, Moscow.

Besides his mandatory classes, Pellan began sitting in on sessions at the Académie de la Grande Chaumière (where Simon happened to be a founding teacher) and the Académie Colarossi. He often walked through Paris, fully



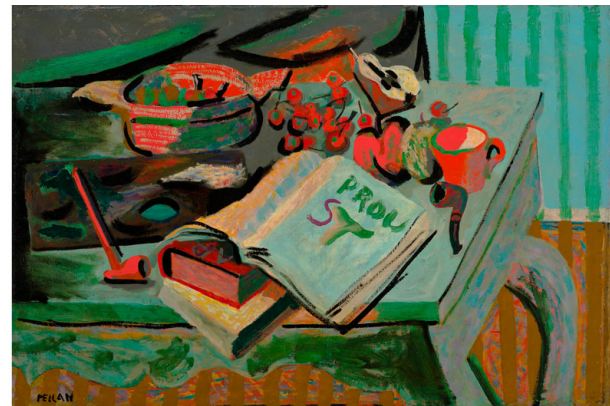
immersing himself in the atmosphere. As Canadian poet Alain Grandbois observed, “there was in Montparnasse my friend Pellan, who dove into art like one would into a swimming pool.”<sup>17</sup> Pellan had encounters with many artists, including Max Ernst (1891–1976), Fernand Léger (1881–1955), Pablo Picasso (1881–1973), and Joan Miró (1893–1983); he became friends with the Surrealist writer André Breton (1896–1966), who would come to play a key role in his career.



LEFT: Le Dôme Café in Montparnasse, Paris, c.1900–30, photographer unknown. RIGHT: Alfred Pellan (top) and friends from the École nationale supérieure des beaux-arts de Paris, 1928, photographer unknown.

In 1932, Pellan visited the Vincent van Gogh (1853–1890) exhibition at the Jeu de Paume, and was impressed enough to return several times.<sup>18</sup> The 1937 Van Gogh retrospective, *La vie et l'œuvre de Vincent van Gogh*, organized as part of that year's World's Fair, wholly entranced Pellan, who later claimed, “I left as if I were drunk.”<sup>19</sup> Pellan was fascinated by van Gogh's daring compositions and powerful use of colour, and admired the artist's efforts to reinvent existing modes of expression.

While Bailleul had accorded Pellan a certain amount of freedom at the École des beaux-arts de Québec, there had been little opportunity to study progressive, contemporary works. In France, Pellan realized the limits and constraints of what he had been taught: previously, he noted, he had “only painted things that were academic and realist,” whereas in Paris, he “discovered modern art; it was love at first sight. From this time forth, it was the only nourishment that could sustain



LEFT: Alfred Pellan, *Portrait de femme* (*Portrait of a Woman*), c.1930, oil on canvas, 55.5 x 45.6 cm, Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Quebec City. RIGHT: Alfred Pellan, *La table verte* (*The Green Table*), c.1934, oil on canvas, 54.3 x 81 cm, Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Quebec City.

[him].”<sup>20</sup> Reflecting on that epiphany in 1967, Pellan said he felt “compelled to start all over,” which was “quite dramatic.”<sup>21</sup> Comparing works like *Coin du vieux Québec* (*A Corner of Old Quebec*), 1922, and *Portrait de femme* (*Portrait of a Woman*), c.1930, with *La table verte* (*The Green Table*), c.1934, or *Hommes-rugby* (*Footballers/Rugby Players*), c.1935, it is clear how quickly his work changed during this period.



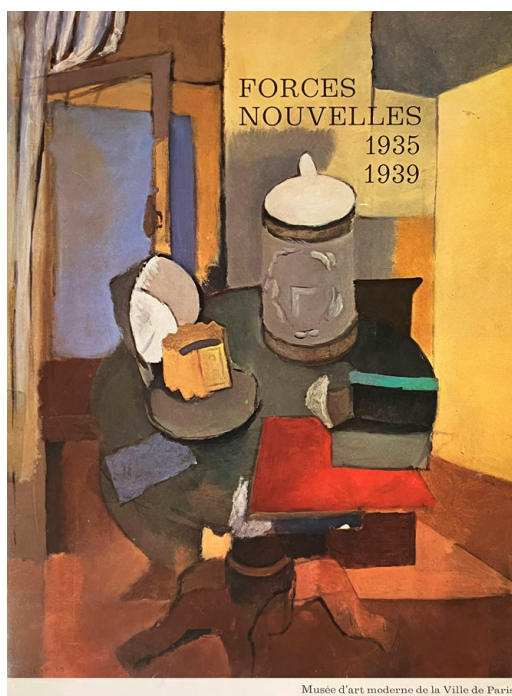
Pellan's painting began to turn heads in Paris. His work earned first prize at a show featuring all of Lucien Simon's students in 1930. In a review of the exhibition, Claude Balleroy criticized Simon's heavy influence on almost all the works being shown, but lauded Pellan's seductive still lifes, which he claimed demonstrated "original talent."<sup>22</sup> In contrast to his teacher's melancholic paintings, Pellan's colourful works, such as *Les tulipes* (*Tulips*), 1934-35, represented a joyful exuberance that connected with critics.



LEFT: Alfred Pellan, *Fruits au compotier* (*Fruit in a Fruit Bowl*), c.1934, oil on plywood, 80 x 119.8 cm, Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Quebec City. RIGHT: Alfred Pellan, *Les tulipes* (*Tulips*), 1934-35, oil on canvas, 55 x 46.2 cm, Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Quebec City.

In 1935, Pellan was part of a group exhibition at the Galerie de Quatre-Chemins, an event French art critic Jacques Lassaigue (1911-1983) called a "remarkable debut."<sup>23</sup> That year also marked his first solo show at the Académie Ranson (founded by French painter Paul Ranson [1861-1909] in 1908, where the art group Les Nabis famously met), which prompted another critic to laud the "robust talent" that distinguished the artist from the rest of his generation.<sup>24</sup>

Pellan was briefly affiliated with Forces nouvelles, the fringe art movement founded in 1935 by artist and critic Henri Hérault (1894-1981). Not satisfied by modern art's experimental ideas and methods,<sup>25</sup> Hérault called for renewed reverence for the order of the past.<sup>26</sup> The group's goal was to develop a living art inspired by tradition; they strove for a form of intensified realism centred on drawing, which they believed was the best technique for understanding and representing nature. However, this approach carried with it the possibility of privileging a new kind of



LEFT: Exhibition catalogue cover of *Forces nouvelles: 1935-1939* (Paris: Musée d'art moderne de la ville de Paris, 1980). RIGHT: Robert Humblot, *Portrait de Sarah* (*Portrait of Sarah*), 1935, oil on canvas, 146 x 89 cm, private collection.



academic art, a danger Parisian critics did not fail to notice. Whether it was because he feared another restrictive approach or perhaps simply out of a desire to continue on his solo path, Pellan left Forces nouvelles after its first exhibition at the Galerie Billiet-Pierre Vorms in 1935.<sup>27</sup>

Pellan was more comfortable at the first Salon d'art mural in 1935, which was open to artists who were able "to link painting with architectural values and uses."<sup>28</sup> He won first prize for his Cubist-inspired *Instruments de musique - A* (*Musical Instruments - A*), 1933. Despite having received critical recognition, it was only in 1939 that he obtained commercial representation from the bold and venerable Galerie Jeanne Bucher, alongside an extraordinary group of big-name modern artists, including Georges Braque (1882-1963), Max Ernst, Wassily Kandinsky (1866-1944), Fernand Léger, Pablo Picasso, Jean Arp (1886-1966), and Alberto Giacometti (1901-1966).

Throughout his time in France, Pellan continued to show his work in Canada. In 1928, he sent a collection of 170 drawings to be included in the seventh annual salon of the École des beaux-arts de Québec.<sup>29</sup> In May 1935, he contributed to the first Salon des Anciens, an exhibition intended to highlight the efforts of the school's alumni. A year later, Pellan's father urged him to apply for a position as a professor at the École des beaux-arts de Québec, an undertaking that required the artist to travel back to Canada. As part of the process, Pellan was asked to produce a number of paintings so that the jury could assess his capabilities. Unfortunately, his modernist-inspired ideas and provocative works (like *Peintre au paysage* [*Artist in Landscape*], c.1935), as well as the company he kept in Paris, were considered undesirable qualities for a prospective teacher.



Alfred Pellan, *Peintre au paysage (Artist in Landscape)*, c.1935, oil on canvas, 79 x 180 cm, Art Windsor-Essex.

Even though there was a significant shift within Canadian art during the 1930s,<sup>30</sup> Quebec institutions were still not open to experimental forms. The education system was controlled by a clergy anxious to avoid anti-Catholic influences, and the paternalistic regime was determined to preserve traditional social and aesthetic values. The jury that assessed Pellan's application felt that he was "too dangerous,"<sup>31</sup> and declared "it was absolutely impossible for him to think he

could become a professor in Quebec."<sup>32</sup> As artist Clarence Gagnon (1881–1942), a member of the hiring committee, noted, "You are modern, you are doomed."<sup>33</sup>

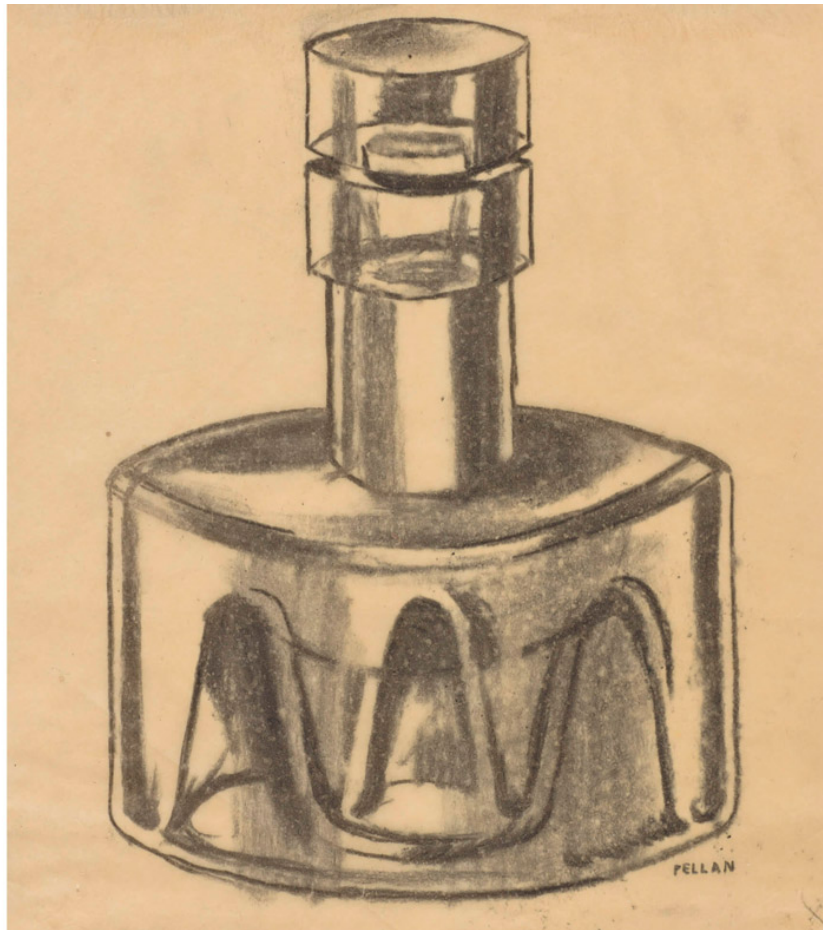
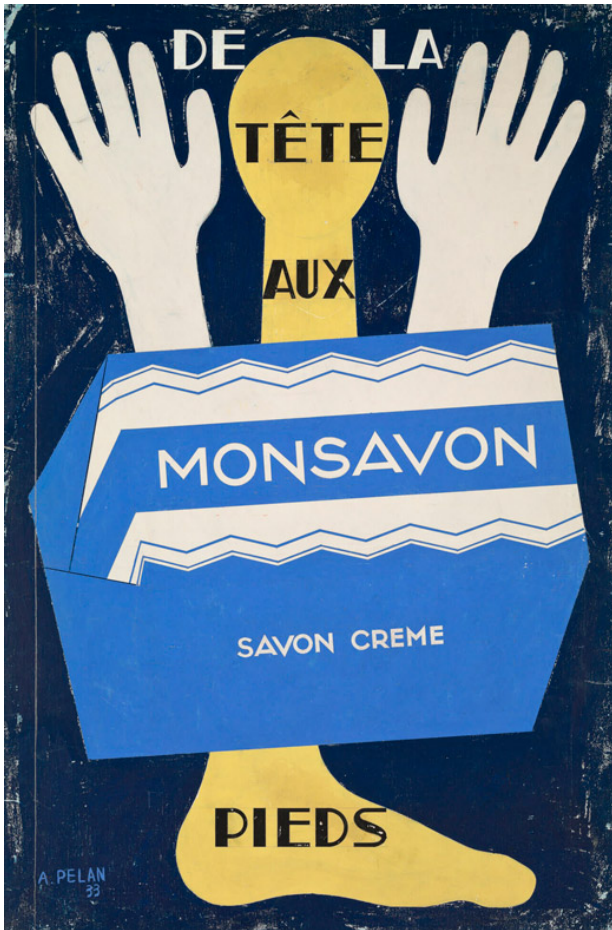
Pellan was disappointed by his closed-minded compatriots and fellow artists, but delighted that he was able to return to France.<sup>34</sup> In 1937, *Nature morte à la lampe* (Still Life with Lamp), 1932, which had been rejected by the hiring committee, was bought by French politician (and future founder of the Cannes Film Festival) Georges Huisman (1889–1957) and art historian Robert Rey (1888–1964) to be included in the French national collection. The work was exhibited in the Jeu de Paume, making Pellan the second Canadian artist to receive that honour, after landscape painter James Wilson Morrice (1865–1924).<sup>35</sup>



Alfred Pellan, *Nature morte à la lampe* (Still Life with Lamp), 1932, oil on canvas, 65 x 81 cm, Musée National d'Art Moderne / Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris.

While Pellan's original scholarship from the Quebec government had covered only a three-year term, the artist found ways to remain in Paris for fourteen years. Sales of his paintings were not sufficient to live on, so Pellan occasionally received financial help from his father, but he mostly took on odd jobs: he worked as a graphic designer and poster publisher, designed a perfume bottle for Revillon, and painted fabric for dresses by Schiaparelli (some of which were bought by the wife of painter Joan Miró). During this time, Pellan lived in parts of the city "where survival was easy with low rents and inexpensive meals aided by a further spirit of camaraderie often in reciprocation of a kind of action of a fellow artist a day or week before."<sup>36</sup> Unfortunately, the Second World War ended Pellan's Parisian dreams. Shortly before the occupation, the Quebec government helped the artist travel home with more than four hundred paintings and drawings, though he had to leave his sculptures behind.



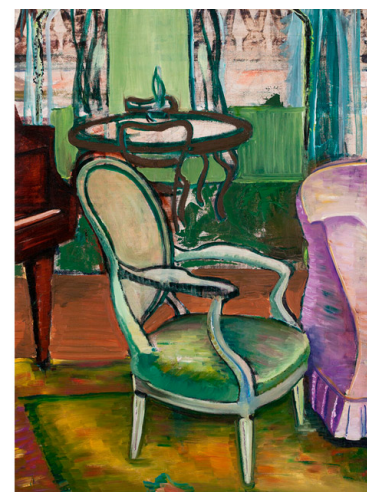
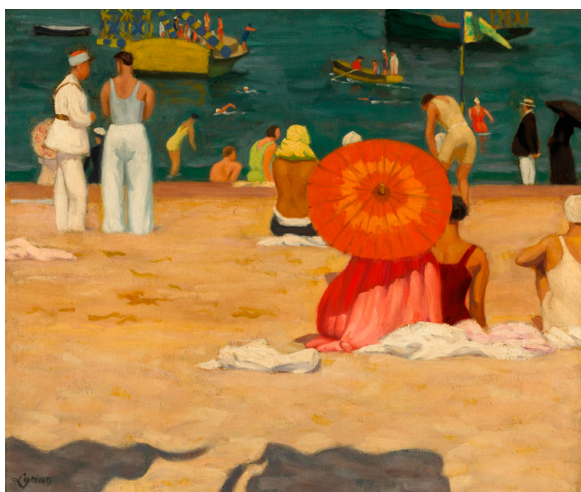


LEFT: Alfred Pellán, *De la tête aux pieds, Monsavon, savon crème* ("From head to toe, Monsavon, cream soap"), 1933, gouache on wood fibreboard, 120 x 79.8 cm, Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Quebec City. RIGHT: Alfred Pellán, *Étude de flacon de parfum pour la maison Revillon, Paris* (Study for a perfume bottle for Revillon, Paris), before 1940, charcoal on tracing paper pasted onto paper, 23.4 x 20.6 cm; 31.1 x 23.4 cm (secondary support), Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Quebec City.

### OUTSIDE THE MONTREAL MAINSTREAM

The Quebec that Pellán encountered upon his return from Paris in 1940 was not the province he had left in 1926. Since the beginning of the twentieth century, Quebecois artists had yearned for change.<sup>37</sup> Many wanted the cultural standards in French Canada to be elevated to the same level as that of other Western countries.<sup>38</sup> Resisting the collective efforts of the Catholic Church and the provincial government to stem the process of cultural modernization, intellectuals fought to cast off retrograde traditions.

This movement included people like painter John Lyman (1886–1967), who founded the Contemporary Arts Society in 1939 to "give support to contemporary trends in art."<sup>39</sup> He united artists who sought "to affirm the vitality of the modern movement,"<sup>40</sup> with the aim of destroying academicism and cultivating living art that encompassed many different styles. The group was open to all professional artists who were "neither associated with, nor partial to, any Academy."<sup>41</sup> In that



LEFT: John Lyman, *À la plage (Saint-Jean-de-Luz)* (On the Beach [Saint-Jean-de-Luz]), 1929–30, oil on paper mounted on canvas, 45.6 x 55.5 x 2.4 cm, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa. RIGHT: Prudence Heward, *Study of the Drawing Room of the Artist*, c.1940, oil on canvas, 66 x 48.3 cm, private collection.



atmosphere of change, Pellan, whose work was the “very embodiment of modern art,” according to art historian Dennis Reid, returned to Quebec a hero.<sup>42</sup>

In June 1940, Pellan exhibited more than 161 works, reflecting a range of techniques from classical to highly modern,<sup>43</sup> and encompassing much of his Parisian oeuvre, first at the Musée de la Province in Quebec City (now the Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec), and later at the Art Association of Montreal. The show included such paintings as *Mascarade* (*Masquerade*), c.1939–42, *La spirale* (*The Spiral*), 1939, *Jeune comédien* (*Young Actor*), c.1935/after 1948, and *Fleurs et dominos* (*Flowers and Dominoes*), c.1940; to critics, this moment represented a turning point in Canadian art history<sup>44</sup> because it triggered a profound “disturbance in the domestic conceptions of art.”<sup>45</sup> Pellan catalyzed new discussions through his “Picasso-like drawings,” his still lifes “that evoked Braque,” his portraits “à la Modigliani,” and his sculptures of “modernist intensity.”<sup>46</sup> The exhibition energized defenders of modernism and encouraged artists who had been trying to cast off established habits to push the boundaries of their work.



LEFT: Alfred Pellan, *Jeune comédien* (*Young Actor*), c.1935/after 1948, oil on canvas, 100 x 80.9 cm, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.  
RIGHT: Alfred Pellan, *Fleurs et dominos* (*Flowers and Dominoes*), c.1940, oil on canvas, 116 x 89.4 cm, Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Quebec City.

After that exhibition, Pellan moved to Montreal, sharing a studio with figurative painter Philip Surrey (1910–1990) until he found his own place a block away at 3714 rue Jeanne-Mance. Many young poets, painters, and musicians lived in the area, and Pellan renewed old friendships and widened his circle of confidantes, all of whom were deeply invested in progressive trends in art. Engaged with dynamic figures in the local art scene and sympathetic to the “idea of a living art



independent of regional or didactic claims,"<sup>47</sup> Pellan became a member of the Contemporary Arts Society, where he was welcomed with "open arms."<sup>48</sup>

Pellan participated in the first Exposition des Indépendants, organized by the refugee French priest Marie-Alain Couturier, in May 1941. Couturier sought to create a progressive art scene in which artists were not left to starve.<sup>49</sup> The event was described by critic Rolland Boulanger as the very incarnation of liberated art<sup>50</sup> and featured the work of eleven participants, including Surrey and Paul-Émile Borduas (1905–1960). Many critics specifically lauded Pellan's paintings, which included *Sous-terre* (*Underground*), 1938, and *Et le soleil continue* (*And the Sun Shines On*), 1959 (first version c.1938). Even so, the lingering

entrenchment of cultural conservatism in Quebec meant that there was still some public resistance to the avant-garde aspects of Pellan's work. As one review pointed out, "Those of us who are not used to modern art and hardly understand the painting of Picasso and the other French celebrities, we cannot yet appreciate the value of the works of our fellow citizen, who is a painter more devoted to the painting than the subject."<sup>51</sup>

Aiming to appease conservative audiences, Pellan exhibited a series of portraits of young children and some startlingly realistic scenes, among them *Maisons de Charlevoix* (*Houses in Charlevoix*), 1941, and *Fillette à la robe bleue* (*Young Girl in Blue Dress*), 1941. These canvases were created during the summer of 1941 in Charlevoix, following an invitation from the artist couple Jean Palardy (1905–1991) and Jori Smith (1907–2005). As Pellan later noted, he was hoping to "build up confidence with a public that started to familiarize itself with [his] works."<sup>52</sup> That he received critical praise for "humanizing" his art may suggest that while these paintings conveyed "a new state of mind or maybe simply a concession to the 'temperature' of the new milieu,"<sup>53</sup> the artist stayed true to himself.



Alfred Pellan, *Et le soleil continue* (*And the Sun Shines On*), 1959 (first version c.1938), oil, silica, and tobacco on canvas, 40.6 x 55.8 cm, Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Quebec City.

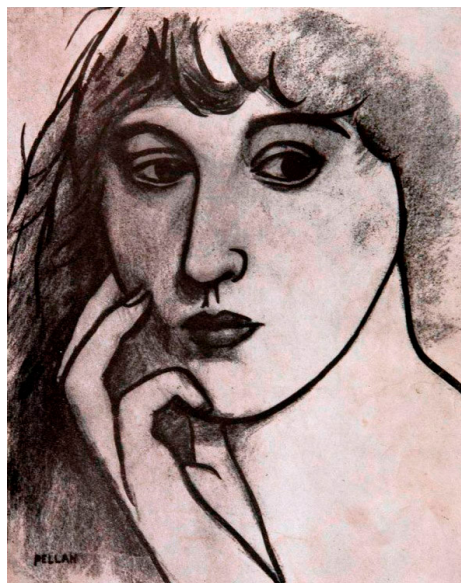




LEFT: Alfred Pellán, *Maisons de Charlevoix* (*Houses in Charlevoix*), 1941, oil on canvas, 63.6 x 91.4 cm, Power Corporation of Canada Art Collection, Montreal. RIGHT: Alfred Pellán, *Fillette à la robe bleue* (*Young Girl in Blue Dress*), 1941, oil on canvas, 58.7 x 43.2 cm, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

In 1942, Pellán displayed another series of realist works in an exhibition at the Palais Montcalm in Quebec City. Once again, this selection was more easily accessible to the public than the “disconcerting” examples of his “non-representative paintings.”<sup>54</sup> Four years later, he published *Cinquante dessins d’Alfred Pellán* (*Fifty Drawings by Alfred Pellán*). This endeavour had a clear purpose: because of Pellán’s distinctly modern sensibilities, there was a public misconception that the painter lacked drawing skills.<sup>55</sup> The publication of this book provided compelling evidence that everything he did was based on a solid technical foundation. “Those who only know of his radiant and troubling eerie scenes,” wrote one of his critics, “can’t imagine the sombre depth and the dexterity of his charcoal, his pencil, or his pen.”<sup>56</sup>

Throughout the early 1940s, Pellán continued to pursue new opportunities. In 1942, Jean Désy, the Canadian ambassador to Brazil, asked him to create a mural of Canada to be hung in the reception room at the Canadian Embassy in Rio de Janeiro. (As it turned out, this work was the first of many murals.) A year later, Pellán accepted a teaching position at the École des beaux-arts in Montreal.<sup>57</sup> However, the relationship between the modern artist and the school’s conservative director, Charles Maillard (1887–1973), was doomed from the start. Rather than imposing a concrete aesthetic, Pellán encouraged his students to go beyond what was taught and find their own way: “When I taught,” he said, “I sharpened the awareness of my students, I



LEFT: Cover of *Cinquante dessins d’Alfred Pellán* (*Fifty Drawings by Alfred Pellán*), 1945. RIGHT: Alfred Pellán painting *Sans titre (Canada Ouest)* (*Untitled [Canada West]*) for the reception room at the Canadian Embassy in Rio de Janeiro, 1942, photographer unknown.



sowed uneasiness, I stimulated research: and the students learned to observe, to question themselves, to make their own discoveries."<sup>58</sup> In 1945, Maillard forced two of Pellan's students to withdraw their paintings from the École's annual exhibition, claiming the work was morally questionable. The subsequent events led to the director's resignation and cemented Pellan's status as an anti-academic artist who defended freedom of expression.

During this period, Pellan further expanded his technical repertoire. In winter 1945, he created "unforgettable"<sup>59</sup> costumes and set designs for the theatrical production *Madeleine et Pierre* (*Madeleine and Pierre*), inventing "a world where harmony of forms and colour evoked real space."<sup>60</sup> The following year Pellan outdid himself, creating one of the "grandest gestures"<sup>61</sup> in Canadian art by designing the costumes and sets for Les Compagnons de Saint-Laurent's production of Shakespeare's *Le soir des rois* (*Twelfth Night*).



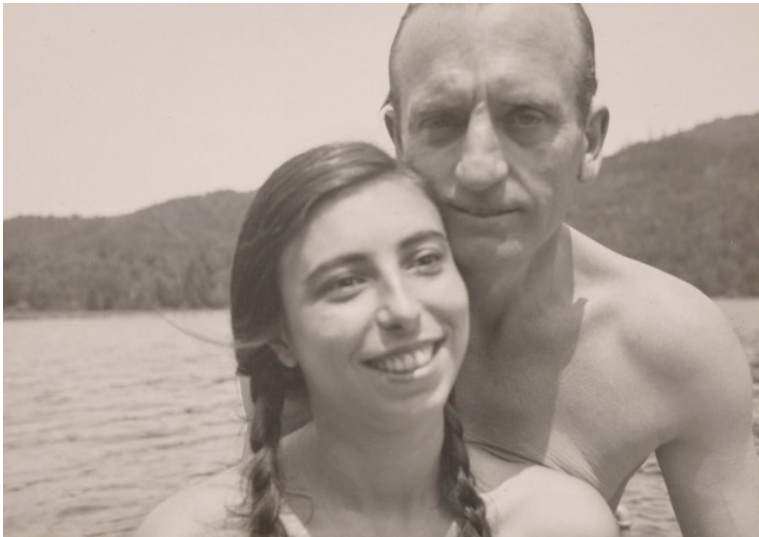
LEFT: Alfred Pellan, cover for the program of *Madeleine et Pierre*, 1945, letterpress printing in colour on paper, 28 x 21.6 cm, Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Quebec City. RIGHT: Alfred Pellan, *Le comédien*, cover for the program of *Le soir des rois* (*Twelfth Night*), 1946, letterpress printing in black and grey on paper, 46 x 29.1 cm, Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Quebec City.

Until the late 1940s, avant-garde artists in Montreal had presented a relatively united public front.<sup>62</sup> But by the end of the decade, tension developed between Pellan and radical painter Paul-Émile Borduas (1905–1960), and the Contemporary Arts Society "became divided into two factions, each of which sought to prevail."<sup>63</sup> The conflict specifically involved Les Automatistes, a group led by Borduas, and members of Prisme d'Yeux, which was founded by Pellan in 1948.<sup>64</sup> Borduas believed that Pellan's presence within the modernist camp endangered the unity of the Contemporary Arts Society and hence its collective



strength,<sup>65</sup> while Pellan contended that Borduas threatened the independent spirit of the CAS.<sup>66</sup> When Borduas was voted president in February 1948, Pellan resigned.

Although he had parted ways with that particular group, Pellan nevertheless maintained his standing in the Montreal art scene, collaborating with others and attending many parties and events. It was at one such party at the home of artist Jacques de Tonnancour (1917–2005) that Pellan met Madeleine Polisenno, whom he would marry on July 23, 1949.



LEFT: Madeleine Polisenno and Alfred Pellan at Lac Clef (Saint-Donat), c.1948, photographer unknown. RIGHT: Wedding Day, July 23, 1949, photographer unknown.

### COURTING CONTROVERSY

Pellan's work received wide acclaim throughout the early 1950s. In 1952, he was selected—along with Goodridge Roberts (1904–1974), Emily Carr (1871–1945), and David Milne (1882–1953)—to represent Canada at the Venice Biennale, where he exhibited several paintings, including *Surprise académique* (*Academic Surprise*), c.1943, and *Les îles de la nuit* (*The Islands of the Night*), c.1945.<sup>67</sup> That year Pellan also received a scholarship from the Royal Society of Canada, which allowed him to spend twelve months in Paris, where he planned to study techniques for murals, illustration, and theatre design while also participating in group and solo exhibitions.<sup>68</sup>



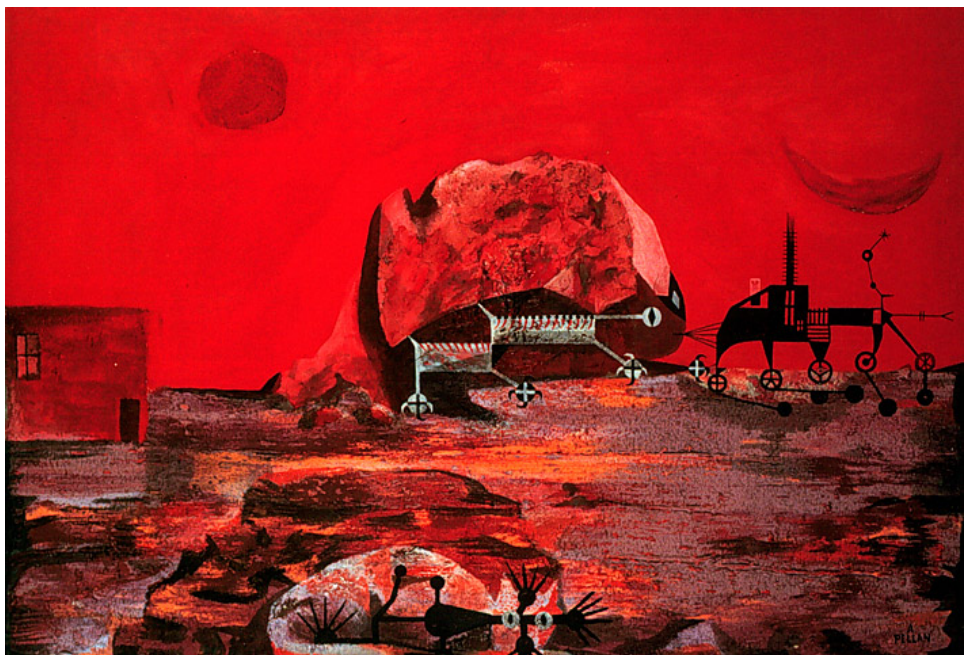
In 1955, Pellan became the first Canadian to have a solo show at the Musée National d'Art Moderne, France's modern art museum. Curator Jean Cassou (1897-1986) assembled eighty-one paintings, drawings, costume sketches, and tapestries that he felt represented an oeuvre "animated by secret reason, tumultuous with mysterious drama and interior myth."<sup>69</sup> These themes are evident in paintings like *La chouette* (*The Owl*), 1954 (acquired by the Musée National d'Art Moderne in 1955), which blends a certain Surrealist mystique with intense sensuality, a combination that is equal parts disturbing and fascinating.



LEFT: Alfred Pellan, *Surprise académique* (*Academic Surprise*), c.1943, oil, silica, and tobacco on canvas, 161.6 x 129.5 cm, private collection, Montreal. RIGHT: Alfred Pellan, *La chouette* (*The Owl*), 1954, oil, sand, and mixed media on canvas, 208 x 166.5 cm, Musée National d'Art Moderne / Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris.

Pellan grew disappointed by Paris during his year in the French capital. He disliked the rivalries between the city's young artists, who vied with one another to capture the attention of the galleries and the press. "We helped each other during the time I was there. That's quite finished," he observed.<sup>70</sup> And after he returned to Canada in 1955, Pellan was no longer welcome at the École des beaux-arts de Montréal, as evidenced in a letter by director Roland-Hérard Charlebois (1906-1965).<sup>71</sup> He was also denied an exhibition by the Musée des beaux-arts de Montréal.<sup>72</sup> This continued resistance to Pellan's body of work may not have been a sign of the artist not being "à la mode,"<sup>73</sup> as he put it in an interview around that time. Instead, it may reflect the fact that institutions were loath to take overt risks with art that could not be easily classified, and were consequently wary of Pellan, whose oeuvre did not seamlessly fit into pre-existing categories.

In spite of these setbacks, Pellan's works were not lost to obscurity. In 1956, with the help of Montreal mayor Jean Drapeau (1916-1999) and secretary of the province Yves Prévost (1908-1997), he was able to exhibit more than one hundred works at City Hall. There he displayed new techniques— influenced by artists he had met in Paris, such as André Breton and Max Ernst—that seemed inflected with what critic Charles Doyon described as "an allegoric surrealism," an unusual approach that is seen in *L'affût* (*The Stalker*),

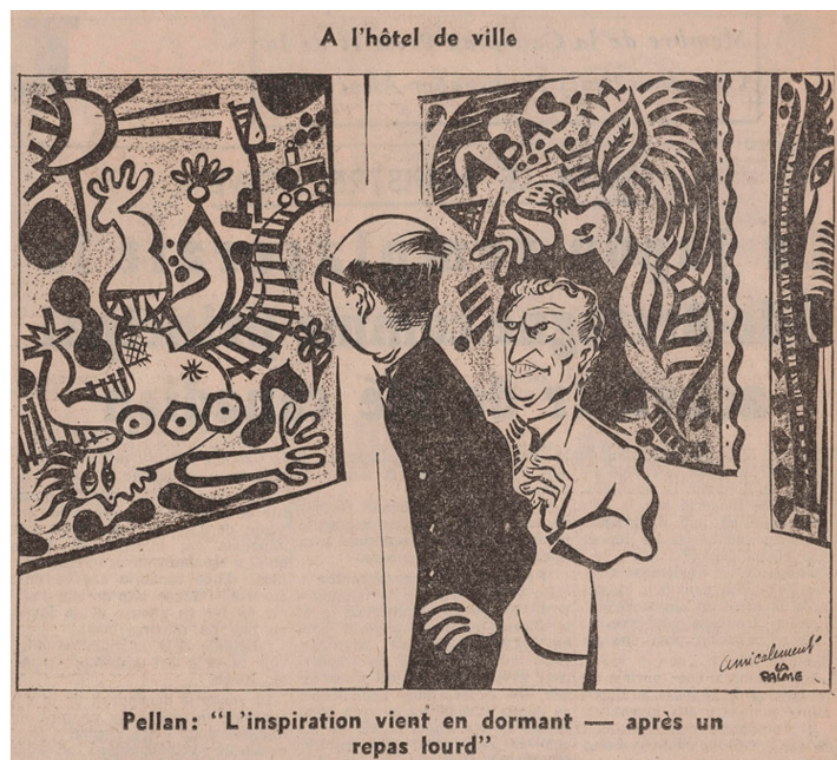


Alfred Pellan, *L'affût* (*The Stalker*), 1956, oil on canvas, 88.8 x 130.2 cm, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.



1956, and *Le front à catastrophe* (*The Disaster Front*), 1956.<sup>74</sup> The exhibition affirmed Pellan's position in Canadian art history, as it exemplified the painter's ongoing commitment to exploring diverse forms of expression and upholding artistic freedom.

After the exhibition opened, city councillor Antoine Tremblay declared himself "disgusted"<sup>75</sup> by the artist's work, calling out paintings like *Sur la plage* (*On the Beach*), 1945, and *Quatre femmes* (*Four Women*), 1944-47, in particular. He maintained that the individuals who worked at City Hall would feel embarrassed by the "obscene" and "immoral" nature of Pellan's art.<sup>76</sup>



LEFT: Alfred Pellan, *Sur la plage* (*On the Beach*), 1945, oil on canvas, 207.7 x 167.6 cm, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.  
RIGHT: Robert La Palme, caricature of Alfred Pellan at City Hall published in *Le Devoir*, Montreal, on November 13, 1956. In the caption, Pellan is quoted as saying, "Inspiration comes while sleeping—after a heavy meal."

Although Pellan had the full support of the press—some mocked Tremblay for his old-fashioned attitude,<sup>77</sup> others for his ability to see obscenities in "semi-abstract canvases"<sup>78</sup>—he was compelled to withdraw three of his works. Two of these paintings were allegedly offensive because they depicted women in "provocative positions." To be sure, Pellan's art was dominated by the nude female form presented in sensual poses—not simply as an object of desire, but as a visual representation of (carnal) pleasure. In a 1960s interview, the artist suggested that many forms of art portray sex as something sacred and insisted that modern art "has the means to reach the same level."<sup>79</sup> The sexuality in his paintings, drawings, and prints echoed his defiance of societal norms in an environment that was still largely dominated by the mores of the Catholic Church.

That influence was apparent when Pellan was told to remove the third painting because it could be interpreted as a "modernist antithesis to a biblical scene."<sup>80</sup> Pellan was amused, as he was typically accused of creating "incomprehensible things."<sup>81</sup> He explained the purpose of the three censored paintings and



declared that the only concession he would make was to turn the canvases to face the wall and that he would clearly identify his censors.<sup>82</sup> It was an act of malicious compliance: Pellan did what he was told, but his approach provoked even more public attention and discussion.

There was one place where Pellan could create at will without fear that his ideas would be suppressed or sanitized. In 1950, he and his wife, Madeleine, moved to an old house in Sainte-Rose, about an hour's drive from Montreal, which he renovated and turned into a studio. The building served as a three-dimensional embodiment of Pellan's oeuvre: its walls were decorated with fantastical creatures, and the inside was painted in vibrant colours. Although the artist created this idyll away from the city, he maintained that he didn't live a hermit life: "I go to see certain exhibitions in Montreal," he explained in 1970. "Especially those of the young ones."<sup>83</sup>

In 1958, a year after he had started teaching at the Centre d'Art de Ste-Adèle,<sup>84</sup> Pellan received a grant from the Canada Council that allowed him to produce his Jardins series of pictures, including *Jardin rouge* (Red Garden), 1958, and *Jardin vert* (Green Garden), 1958. In a climate where an oeuvre could centre on production techniques, he abandoned his strict lines and complicated compositions in order to experiment with plasticity, or three-dimensionality, in his paintings. This series illustrates Pellan's ability to tackle current trends in contemporary art.



LEFT: Alfred Pellan, *Les mannequins* (*The Mannequins*), c.1946, black ink and coloured pencil on paper mounted onto cardboard, 17.7 x 20.5 cm, Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Quebec City. RIGHT: Alfred Pellan, *Collage érotique* (*Erotic Collage*), n.d., coloured pencil, graphite, and colour offset cut and pasted onto cardboard, 40.8 x 32.8 cm, Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Quebec City.



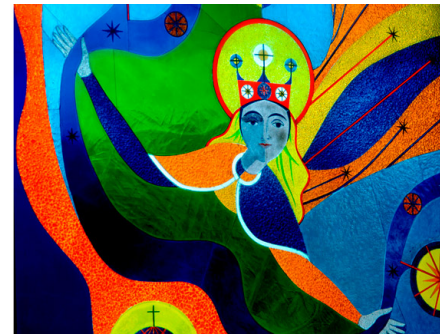
LEFT: Alfred Pellan, *Bestiaire de la cheminée* (*Chimney Bestiary*), 1980, self-adhesive canvas pieces on masonry, 247 x 147 x 12.2 cm, Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Quebec City. The fantastic animals that decorate the outside walls of Pellan's house also invade the interior: here, a bestiary behind the chimney of the wood stove. RIGHT: Alfred Pellan, *Jardin rouge* (*Red Garden*), 1958, oil, silica, and modelling clay on canvas, 104.5 x 187 cm, Montreal Museum of Fine Arts.



## A MAN IN THE SIXTIES

In the late 1950s, a time when many Quebec residents traded rural, agrarian practices for a more urban, industrial lifestyle, there was a belief among artists that painters and sculptors should intervene in public spaces in cities as a way to improve the quality of life.<sup>85</sup> Murals exemplified art production during this period. Pellan, who as a young artist had been interested in combining painting and architecture, found there was renewed interest in his talent. In 1960, he created a mural for the Immaculée-Conception secondary school in Granby, Quebec.<sup>86</sup> Two years later, he oversaw the construction of three compositions for private residences in the Montreal area.<sup>87</sup>

In 1963, he made *The Prairies*, a “lively composition of abstract shapes and colours,” for the Winnipeg Airport.<sup>88</sup> That same year, he created a glass mural for the bar in the new concert hall of Place des Arts in Montreal. He used a new technique that allowed him to eliminate the customary iron framework: separate pieces were fused together, creating one large pane of glass. The effect was astounding: reviewers highlighted the subtle fluctuations of light that cut through the glass as if through a prism.<sup>89</sup>



LEFT: Alfred Pellan, *The Prairies*, 1963, oil on canvas, 6 x 32 feet, installed at the Winnipeg International Airport. The work now hangs in the Montréal-Trudeau International Airport. RIGHT: Alfred Pellan, Stained glass window from the Église Saint-Théophile, 1964, Fonds Antoine Desilets, BAnQ Vieux-Montréal.

Pellan used the same method for the panels of the Église Saint-Théophile in Laval-Ouest in 1964. He also created a stained-glass piece for the École Sainte-Rose and, in 1966, a mural for the national library in Ottawa.<sup>90</sup> These creations were easily accessible by virtue of being in public spaces and helped shape the urban landscape of these cities.

During the 1960s, Pellan became a central figure in a wider movement to establish Quebec artists as Old Masters and mentors to a new generation of creators.<sup>91</sup> He had received the national award in painting and related arts from the University of Alberta in 1959.<sup>92</sup> The following year, the National Gallery of Canada in Ottawa organized a retrospective of his work: “In choosing to honour Pellan’s achievement, the three sponsoring galleries [the National Gallery, the Musée des beaux-arts de Montréal, and the Art Gallery of Toronto] hoped to realize a clearer picture of his evolution and to provide an opportunity to assess the nature and the extent of his influence upon contemporary Canadian painting,”<sup>93</sup> explained Evan Turner (1927-2020), then director of the Musée des beaux-arts de Montréal.

As the decade progressed, Pellan emerged as a key innovator in the province’s visual arts community. In 1963, Guy Robert (1933-2000) published an extensive study of the artist’s life and work—the first comprehensive volume of this nature since Maurice Gagnon’s book in 1948. Two years later, Pellan received a medal from the Canada Council for the Arts.<sup>94</sup> The council had been created in 1957 in the wake of a 1951 report by the Royal Commission on National Development



in the Arts, Letters and Sciences, commonly known as the Massey Commission. That assessment described a bleak cultural landscape in which gifted Canadians “must be content with a precarious and unrewarding life in Canada, or go abroad where their talents are in demand.”<sup>95</sup> Pellan, who had achieved success abroad and in his home country, was celebrated because he fostered the production of art and promoted its study and enjoyment.

In the lead-up to Expo 67, Pellan’s work *Icare (Icarus)*, 1956, was chosen to adorn one of the promotional posters for the event, which marked the one-hundredth anniversary of the Canadian Confederation in an international arena. As well, the artist, who was said to possess “greater imagination and inventiveness than most of his fellows,”<sup>96</sup> received a Canadian Centennial Medal—a commemorative award given to individuals who had demonstrated outstanding contributions to public service.



LEFT: Alfred Pellan, poster for Expo 67, *Images de l'homme (Man the Creator)*, 1967.  
RIGHT: Canadian Pavilion at Expo 67, May 1967, photograph by Laurent Bélanger.

That same year—1967—Pellan was made an inaugural member of the Order of Canada—a symbolic honour established by Queen Elizabeth to celebrate Canadians who have made a significant mark through both service and exceptional accomplishments. In 1969, the year he received an honorary doctorate from the University of Ottawa, Pellan had a solo exhibition at Montreal’s Musée d’art contemporain, where poet Louis Portugais (1932–1982) screened *Voir Pellan*, 1969, a unique mosaic-like film project that allowed people to “really see” the artist’s oeuvre.<sup>97</sup>

In spite of all these accolades, Pellan continued to experience tension with those who disagreed with his views and did not understand his work. He resigned two months into his tenure as a consultant for the Conseil provincial des arts, where he was hired in 1962 and tasked with recommending scholarships for artists, musicians, and writers. A “senior official of the government very close to the issue” declared that Pellan’s “figurative tendencies could not be reconciled with those non-figurative [views] of certain other members of the Art Council and, for this reason, he preferred to withdraw than to sit with those that didn’t share his pictorial ideas.”<sup>98</sup> The conflict seemed to revolve around a wider discussion about whether abstract art was a worthwhile category. In an effort to reframe the conflict, Pellan stated, “I regret that the controversy has been reduced to an incompatibility of the pictorial concept that is supposed to exist between my ex-colleagues and me.... And why the desire to class me in the category of figurative painters?”<sup>99</sup>





LEFT: Alfred Pellán, *Les carnivores (The Carnivores)*, 1966, oil on wood, 70.8 cm x 51.2 cm, Dalhousie Art Gallery, Halifax. RIGHT: Alfred Pellán, *Végétaux marins (Aquatic Plants)*, 1964, oil on board, 122.2 x 81.6 cm, The Corporation of the City of Kingston Civic Collection.

### LATER LIFE AND LEGACY

By the mid-1970s, the establishment had come to embrace artists and art forms that had typically been associated with the Quebec avant-garde.<sup>100</sup> Exhibitions were organized, documentaries were sponsored, and awards were bestowed. There was renewed appreciation for Pellán's achievements in the visual arts—and recognition followed accordingly: in 1971, he was granted honorary doctorates by the Université Laval and Sir Georges Williams University,<sup>101</sup> became a member of the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts, and assumed the role of honorary president of the *Guilde graphique de Montréal*. In 1972, he received the Louis-Philippe-Hébert Prize from the Société Saint-Jean Baptiste, awarded to great Quebec painters.<sup>102</sup>

A huge retrospective of Pellán's art was mounted that year by the Musée des beaux-arts de Montréal and the Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, featuring for the first time a selection of his *Mini-bestaiaires (Mini-Bestiaries)*, 1971–75, an important evolution in his experiments with Surrealism. The exhibition, which covered his career from the 1930s all the way to



LEFT: Alfred Pellán receiving the Louis-Philippe-Hébert Prize, 1972, photographer unknown. RIGHT: Alfred Pellán and Germain Lefebvre on the release of Lefebvre's book, 1973, photographer unknown.





his most recent work, focused mainly on paintings to give “pride of place” to the artist’s “completed thoughts.”<sup>103</sup> It explored thematic continuities (such as his insistence on colour as the defining element in his painting) and outliers (such as the Jardins (Garden) series from 1958, in which he abandoned his complex drawings). The show demonstrated that Pellan’s work had achieved a level of sophistication that “was so complex and of technical accomplishment and personality as to discourage imitation.”<sup>104</sup>

In 1973, Germain Lefebvre published the second biography of Pellan, who was also the recipient of the Canada Council’s Molson Prize, an award that aimed to “recognize and encourage the exceptional contributions to the arts, the humanities and the social sciences.”<sup>105</sup> The following year, Pellan received an honorary doctorate from the Université de Montréal,<sup>106</sup> and in 1978, the Hotel Reine-Elisabeth in Montreal honoured the artist as one of twenty people whose contributions “make Montreal an extraordinary city.”<sup>107</sup> As a *Montreal Gazette* article suggested, the choice was a “most understandable and laudable one.”<sup>108</sup> The Quebec establishment was sending Pellan a clear message: “You have arrived. You are accepted. You are one of the greats.”



LEFT: Alfred Pellan, *Mini-bestiaire n° 22* (*Mini-Bestiary no. 22*), c.1971, painted stone and wood, 6.3 x 12 x 7.2 cm, Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Quebec City. RIGHT: Alfred Pellan, *Mini-bestiaire n° 24* (*Mini-Bestiary no. 24*), c.1971, painted stone and wood, 2.8 x 7 x 2.5 cm, Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Quebec City.

In the meantime, Pellan continued to work. Between 1968 and 1980, the artist created an impressive graphic oeuvre, which was largely made up of serigraphs, a form of silkscreen printing. These works were often reinterpretations of his earlier paintings, as, for instance, with *Baroquerie* (*Baroquerie*), 1970, which was published as a serigraph in 1975.<sup>109</sup> They were never mere copies, however: while reproducing some elements, he distorted others and experimented with new variations. He “simplif[i]e[d] and reorganize[d] his forms and colours, he transform[ed] the proportions of support”<sup>110</sup>—in short, he recreated his world.

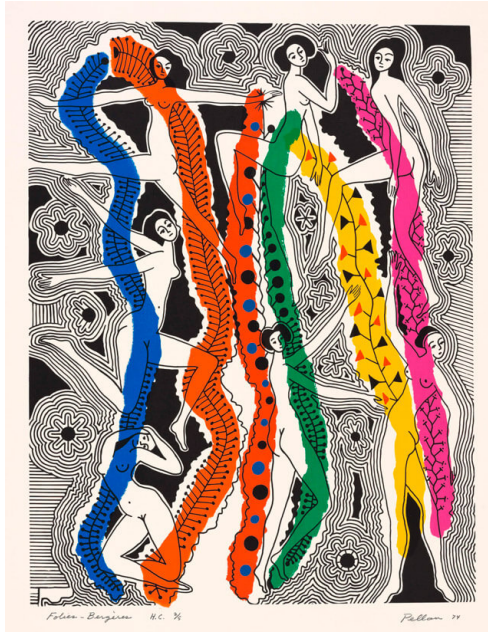
Perhaps most importantly, in 1984 Pellan received the Paul-Émile Borduas Prize “for his dynamic contribution to art education, for his struggle for the indispensable freedom of artistic expression and for his works, known and recognized in Québec as well as abroad.”<sup>111</sup> When asked about the irony of the honour, given his notoriously acrimonious relationship with Borduas, Pellan said that the award served as a sort of compensation for everything he had



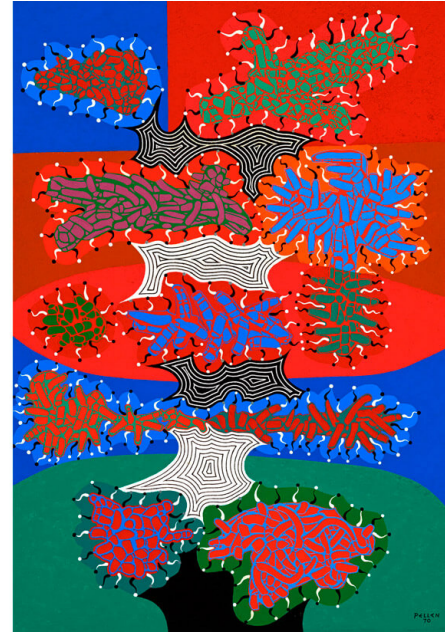
endured.<sup>112</sup> His wife, Madeleine, saw it as proof of at least one thing both artists had in common: "passion for their art."<sup>113</sup>

After suffering for years from pernicious anemia and rheumatism,<sup>114</sup> Pellan died on October 31, 1988. One of the province's greatest artists,<sup>115</sup> he was a "giant of Quebec modern painting,"<sup>116</sup> who refused to be identified with a specific school. His place in Canadian art was rather that of "prophet and creator."<sup>117</sup> As a pioneer of modernism,<sup>118</sup> Pellan was a key figure in a movement that "initiated a break with traditional social and intellectual customs, encouraged broader and freer educational opportunities, and enlarged horizons of thought" in French Canada.<sup>119</sup> His Parisian-inspired oeuvre delivered a vigorous blow to the cultural lethargy that prevailed in Quebec in the mid-twentieth century.

For Pellan, the prospect of creating a truly free visual language, uninhibited by ideology, school, or even media, was a lifelong quest: he created astounding work that encompassed academic drawings, paintings inspired by Surrealism and Cubism, large-scale glass murals, intensely colourful graphics, strange and curious objects, and poetic experiments in theatre design. With Pellan's death, Canada lost a "sorcerer"<sup>120</sup> who yearned to expose poetry in life through his art.



LEFT: Alfred Pellan, *Folies-Bergère*, 1974, serigraph, H.C. 2/5, 66.3 x 51.1 cm (paper); 53.6 x 40.9 cm (image), Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Québec City.  
RIGHT: Alfred Pellan, *Baroquerie (Baroquerie)*, 1970, oil on canvas, 91.5 x 63.5 cm, Canada Council Art Bank, Ottawa.







# ALFRED PELLAN

Life & Work by Maria Rosa Lehmann



Alfred Pellán in his studio, 1946, photograph by Ronny Jaques.





# KEY WORKS

Alfred Pellán had a courageous and eclectic approach to art. Driven by a desire for reinvention, he was perpetually evolving. From his very first paintings, through his Modernist canvases, murals, and theatrical work, to his unusual objects and late serigraphs, he taught his audience to expect the unexpected. Pellán engaged with abstraction, played with techniques borrowed from cutting-edge movements such as Cubism and Surrealism, and eagerly explored a range of media. But a common thread runs through the artist's varied oeuvre: he maintains a balance between line and colour that creates a sense of harmony in every work.



## STRAWBERRIES 1920



Alfred Pellán, *Les fraises* (Strawberries), 1920  
Oil on cardboard glued onto plywood, 33 x 43 cm  
Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Quebec City

Alfred Pellán created *Les fraises* (Strawberries) at the age of fourteen, before he received any formal training. It depicts a ceramic jug, a fruit basket, and a glass bowl of strawberries on a table, set against a sky-blue backdrop. The berries are juicy and ripe; the scene celebrates this eagerly anticipated Quebec summer bounty. A strong diagonal line dominates the composition, rising from left to right and dividing background and foreground. The rigid order in the picture radiates a sense of calm and stillness that is pleasing to the eye.

A seemingly traditional still life, *Strawberries* demonstrates a solid approach to drawing, composition, and colour, as well as vigorous expression.<sup>1</sup> Two single strawberries catch the eye: placed in the lower-right corner, their “noses” point toward the basket and create another diagonal sweep, this time from right to left. Different viewpoints further disrupt the serenity of the composition: the basket’s opening appears to be seen from overhead, while the glass bowl is



viewed from below and the jug is viewed from the front. As a result, *Strawberries* unsettles the viewer's spatial perception.

In the still-life tradition, fruits refer to mortality and the ephemerality of human existence. However, Pellan goes beyond these themes in his painting. He interprets his subject through a dynamic composition, generous brushwork, and vibrant colours that harmonize with one another.<sup>2</sup> The nature of the colour and the odd reflections of the strawberries on the table—

which create the impression of a wet surface—contribute to the sense of movement. Despite the apparent stillness of the arrangement, *Strawberries* doesn't speak of death; everything seems to scream vitality and life. Even in one of his very first paintings, Pellan was already demonstrating his artistic audacity.



Pierre-Auguste Renoir, *Still Life with Strawberries*, c.1880, oil on canvas, private collection.



## MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS – A 1933



Alfred Pellán, *Instruments de musique - A* (*Musical Instruments - A*), 1933

Oil on canvas, 132 x 195.5 cm

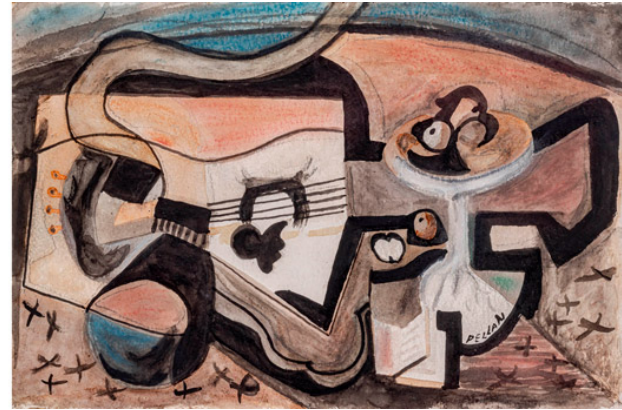
Davis Museum at Wellesley College, Massachusetts

A geometric still life, Alfred Pellán's *Instruments de musique - A* (*Musical Instruments - A*) shows various obscured, deformed, and disconnected objects on a table. While a book and some pieces of fruit are clearly identifiable, the instruments that dominate the left side of the canvas appear broken, the lines reduced to their simplest essence and their constituent parts superimposed on top of each other. They create a fragmented yet continuous mass, a system of lines and coloured planks. There are few if any links between the shapes on the left side of the picture and the objects on the right, and the distribution of the forms creates a collage-like impression. It was an important critical success for Pellán: at the *Première grande exposition du Salon de l'art mural* in 1935, a competition "limited to young technicians who were supposed to have the craftsmanship and understanding 'to link painting with architectural values and uses,'" <sup>1</sup> the jury awarded first prize to this painting.

Reflecting on this achievement many years later, Pellán said, "I was amazed when I learned that I had won, since it was an international exhibition and even the great priests of modern art, naturally not included in the competition, like



Léger and Picasso, were represented."<sup>2</sup> *Musical Instruments - A* constitutes a major professional milestone and marks a concerted shift away from the artist's classical education in Quebec, a change that is evident when the work is compared with *Les fraises* (*Strawberries*), 1920, or the lauded *Coin du vieux Québec* (*A Corner of Old Quebec*), 1922.



LEFT: Alfred Pellan, *Le port de Québec* (*Port of Quebec*), 1922, oil on canvas glued to wood fibreboard, 36.8 x 74.2 cm, Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Quebec City. RIGHT: Alfred Pellan, *Étude pour Instruments de musique - A* (*Study for Musical Instruments - A*), c.1933, mixed media on paper, 15.2 x 22.9 cm, private collection.

Forgoing traditional perspective, depth, and conventional representation, *Musical Instruments - A* reflects a Cubist-inspired approach that defined Pellan's work at the time. Letting go of the need to depict objective reality,<sup>3</sup> the artist imagines a world composed of deconstructed elements and figures, an approach associated with Synthetic Cubism.<sup>4</sup> This process also involves sombre hues, uniformly applied, which complement the geometric forms—as can be seen in the preparatory study for this work.<sup>5</sup> *Musical Instruments - A* is one of only a few paintings in which Pellan does not use vibrant and luminous colours to appeal to the viewer—with the exception of the large red mass.



## LAUGHING MOUTH 1935



Alfred Pellán, *Bouche rieuse (Laughing Mouth)*, 1935  
Oil on burlap, 55.1 x 46 cm  
National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa



In *Bouche rieuse* (*Laughing Mouth*), Alfred Pellán grafts various shapes on top of three background spaces, each one dominated by a specific colour: blue on the top, shades of ochre in the middle, and various greens on the lower right. Smaller drops of paint create a connection between these three nearly monochromatic sections. These sections are overlaid by stark black lines that upon first glance appear to be freed from the burden of realism, but which are not purely nonrepresentational. In the middle of the painting, these contours come together to create something recognizable: a bird, in which the artist places a large eye. The lines of the animal and the eye may even shape the “laughing mouth” referenced in the title. This composition exemplifies Pellán’s Parisian work in the mid-1930s, showcasing his interest in challenging the binary between representation and abstraction.

Before his arrival in France, Pellán relied on an academic and realistic style of painting. In Paris, however, he was captivated by Modernist efforts to reinvent existing codes of expression. Inspired by the works of Paul Klee (1879–1940) and Joan Miró (1893–1983),<sup>1</sup> *Laughing Mouth* skims the edge of abstraction in order to imbue the real with a sense of wonder and poetry. Yet while his works of the 1930s had fewer links to figurative representation, they were by no means entirely abstract.<sup>2</sup> Pure abstraction “was far from his thoughts,”<sup>3</sup> as Pellán felt it caused a kind of creative stasis. In his words, “abstraction is instinctive mathematics, of form, volume and colour in space, it means a purification of the painting by way of geometry.”<sup>4</sup>



Alfred Pellán, *Intérieur d'atelier* (*Studio Interior*), c.1935, oil on canvas, 38.1 x 55.2 cm, private collection.

Pellán’s work betrays a particular attachment to recreating the human world. “I did a lot of abstraction,” he said in 1952. “Often, I started a canvas in abstract terms and then reality, the human side, began to graft itself on top of it.”<sup>5</sup> It is as if the artist tried to experiment with how much abstraction objects could tolerate before they became completely divorced from any sense of the real.

In *Laughing Mouth*, the lines are more than the simple outline of a well-defined image; they transform into the very subject of the painting. They break with the linear structure of the space, creating a counter-diagonal movement from the outline of the green “envelope” in the lower-right corner to the curious “windmill” in the upper-left corner. These black lines provide a sense of movement that contrasts with the rigid stalemate of the coloured masses; they create dynamic harmony between the elements.



## UNTITLED (CANADA WEST) AND UNTITLED (CANADA EAST) 1942–43



LEFT: Alfred Pellán, *Sans titre (Canada Ouest) (Untitled [Canada West])*, 1942–43  
Gouache on canvas on wood panel, 208.5 x 322 cm  
Global Affairs Canada Visual Art Collection, Ottawa



RIGHT: Alfred Pellán, *Sans titre (Canada Est) (Untitled [Canada East])*, 1942–43  
Gouache on canvas, on wood panel, 208.2 x 322.3 cm  
Global Affairs Canada Visual Art Collection, Ottawa

In 1942, Jean Déry (1893–1960), the Canadian ambassador to Brazil, commissioned Alfred Pellán to create two works for the reception room of the first Canadian mission in Rio de Janeiro. The first of many public murals by the artist, these two compositions depict imaginary landscapes intended to represent the West Coast and East Coast of Canada. *Sans titre (Canada Ouest) (Untitled [Canada West])* is formidable, with massive mountains in white, blue, and green that stand in stark contrast to the red-and-blue sky. An industrialized metropolis containing remnants of the neoclassical parliament building in Winnipeg is depicted in the lower-right corner.<sup>1</sup> In *Sans titre (Canada Est) (Untitled [Canada East])*, the background is made up of blue-tinted hills, red-and-green fields cut by white-and-pink paths, and small blue-and-white houses. A great lake in mauve dominates a large portion of the painting, while tall, sharp-edged ochre cliffs draw the eye to the right. Rendered in fantastical hues, a bear, a deer, and a beaver—all animals associated with Canada—are placed in the foreground.

Because mural art engages with a given architectural space—and indeed, may even modify such a space on occasion—the genre is anchored in site specificity: artists must consider the structural context of the building in which a mural is to be placed. Whereas a traditional mural approach would involve painting directly onto the wall, Pellán created large-scale decorative panels that covered the surface. In doing so, he freed his murals from their architectural constraints and created a spatial opening via the imagined landscapes depicted on the canvases. As portals of sorts, they allowed the viewer to be transported to Canada. But neither *Canada East* nor *Canada West* represent any actual location; rather, they are a personal interpretation of certain characteristics of



the nation. They are the result of “a spirit of someone that passionately loves the land he paints: its people, its animals and its heaven.”<sup>2</sup> Tasked with creating art to be displayed in a building that represented Canada abroad, Pellan needed to conjure an image of the country through his murals; his animals, symbols, and landscapes had to be easily recognizable as “Canadian.”

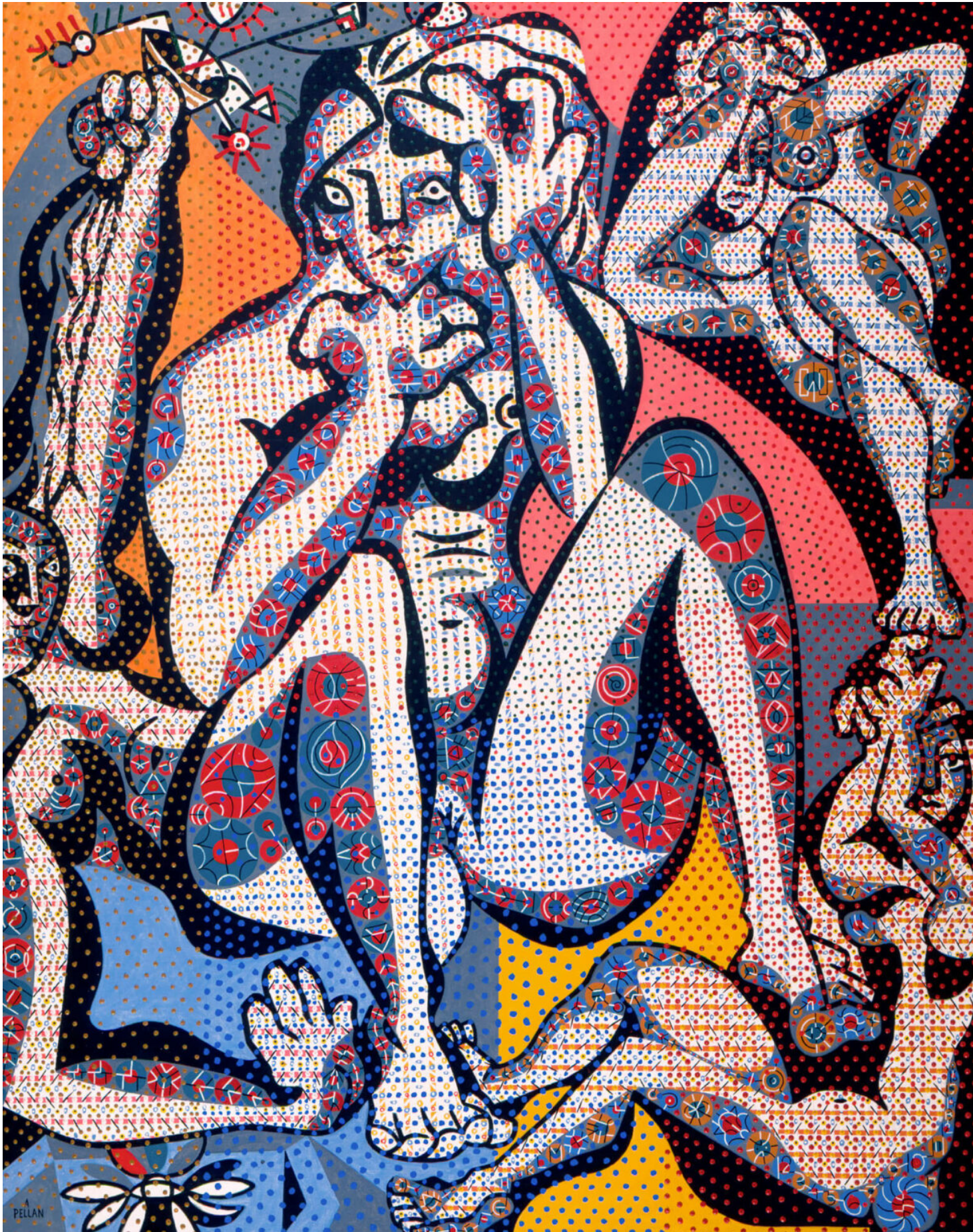
For many years, this pair of paintings held pride of place above the reception desk in the Lester B. Pearson building in Ottawa, where Pellan’s murals were installed in 1973 when Queen Elizabeth inaugurated the headquarters of what was then known as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. But in 2011, John Baird, who oversaw the department, swapped the whimsical landscapes for a photographic portrait of the Queen, taken in 2002. As a spokesperson for Baird noted at the time, the switch was part of a celebration of the monarch in the year leading up to her diamond jubilee and was timed to coincide with a visit from the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge.<sup>3</sup> Four years later, in 2015, *Canada East* and *Canada West* were returned to their previous home on the wall of the newly renamed Global Affairs Canada<sup>4</sup>—a move that implicitly signalled a renewed interest in emphasizing Canada’s distinctive identity as a nation in its own right, and not simply as a part of the British Commonwealth. Pellan’s unique vision of the country’s national mythos played a key role in communicating this notion.



Alfred Pellan painting *Sans titre (Canada Ouest) (Untitled [Canada West])* for the reception room at the Canadian Embassy in Rio de Janeiro, 1942, photographer unknown.



## FOUR WOMEN 1944–47



Alfred Pellan, *Quatre femmes (Four Women)*, 1944–47  
Oil on canvas, 208.4 x 167.8 cm  
Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal



Alfred Pellan became notorious for including bold explorations of sexuality in his work, and *Quatre femmes* (*Four Women*) was among a group of paintings that were censored in a 1956 exhibition. This canvas depicts four nude women in various positions, unabashedly supine. Their bodies are disarticulated—stylized and awkwardly contorted—and each figure's face is reduced to its most basic elements.

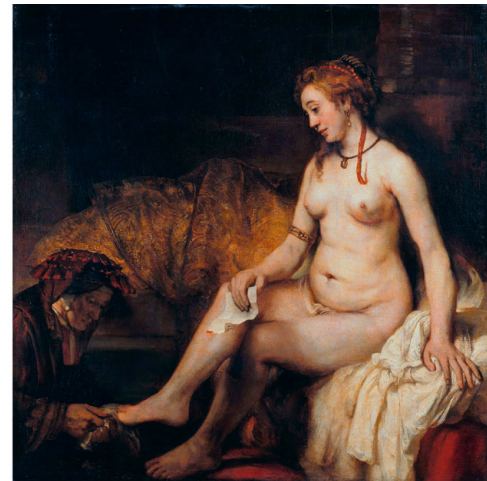
The centre of the painting is occupied by a monumental female nude who reclines with her legs spread—an inviting gesture that provides an intimate view of her body. Yet there is an undercurrent of anxiety in her sensuality. Immobile, her eyes staring straight ahead, she echoes the sense of violence in the painting, a quality evoked by the emphatic line around her body.<sup>1</sup> She seems to grasp her head not in ecstasy, but in fear.

This torment is mirrored by the other three female figures, who are held captive, in cramped conditions, within the picture plane. We are reminded that the artist is in control, not the women he depicts.<sup>2</sup> They have no say in how they are placed within his composition. They are offered on the altar of the canvas to the greedy eye of the viewer. Rather than expressing an authentically feminine perspective, these bodies represent the desire of the absent (male) gaze.<sup>3</sup> Although this work is ostensibly an homage to feminine beauty, Pellan's *Four Women* are the objects of the painting, not its subjects.

In Western art, sexuality was not historically allowed to dominate representations of the female nude; any references to sex were necessarily implicit in order to distance the artwork from pornography. In *Four Women*, however, sexuality is quite explicit. It is true that there is a decorative pattern in the form of a complex network of small luminous dots, which runs through the picture surface and undermines the depicted nudity.<sup>4</sup> Still, the women are sexualized and voluptuous, and they have been placed in provocative poses. Great masses of white shapes caress their bodies, while thick black outlines emphasize their physicality.



LEFT: Pablo Picasso, *Les demoiselles d'Avignon*, June–July 1907, oil on canvas, 243.9 x 233.7 cm, the Museum of Modern Art, New York. RIGHT: Rembrandt Harmenszoon van Rijn, *Bathsheba at her Bath*, 1654, oil on canvas, 142 x 142 cm, Louvre Museum, Paris.



*Four Women* reflects Pellan's interest in combining a Surrealist vision with stylistic elements found in works by Pablo Picasso (1881–1973). Here, he draws direct inspiration from Picasso's *Les demoiselles d'Avignon*, 1907.<sup>5</sup> The spatial treatment of the canvas is inspired by Cubism: two-dimensional with a non-traditional perspective and multiple viewpoints. In *Four Women*, Pellan refused to privilege mimetic depiction,<sup>6</sup> choosing instead to scramble codes of representation. This decision could be seen as a challenge to centuries of artists working in the European tradition, who venerated the nude as a prestigious subject.



## MAD LOVE (HOMAGE TO ANDRÉ BRETON) 1954



Alfred Pellán, *L'amour fou (Hommage à André Breton)* (*Mad Love [Homage to André Breton]*), 1954  
Oil on canvas, 115.5 x 80 cm  
Montreal Museum of Fine Arts



*L'amour fou (Hommage à André Breton) (Mad Love [Homage to André Breton])* reflects Pellan's engagement with Surrealism, a fascination of his for more than forty years, as well as his friendship with André Breton (1896–1966), one of the movement's key writers.<sup>1</sup> A portrait that somewhat resembles Breton sits toward the bottom of the canvas, which is dominated by red and cut with splashes of green, yellow, black, and white.<sup>2</sup> A female figure in an impossibly contorted pose stands on top of the male face, stabilized on the right by a massive dismembered hand.

The composition reveals Pellan's ability to create something new and highly personal based on his own interpretation of *l'amour fou*—or “mad love,” as defined by Breton in his 1937 book of that name. Collapsing the barrier between carnal and spiritual love, this Surrealist concept brings together desire, freedom, and beauty; it is an ethos that illuminates the transcendent in everyday encounters.



LEFT: Alfred Pellan, *Sur la plage (On the Beach)*, 1945, oil on canvas, 207.7 x 167.6 cm, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa. RIGHT: Photo booth portrait of André Breton with glasses, c.1924–29.

Women played an important symbolic role in this idea. Within Surrealism, as the critic Katharine Conley has noted, women were viewed as “powerful, capable of intuitive leaps, and able to enter the unknown” in ways that evaded their masculine counterparts.<sup>3</sup> However, while women were pivotal in the Surrealist universe,<sup>4</sup> they were often relegated to lesser roles as objects within artworks.

Art historian Reesa Greenberg has argued that Pellan does not overly emphasize the woman as an object of desire in *Mad Love*. Rather, he highlights her role in the delicate balance of male and female. While the two entities are not physically fused, there is a certain unity conveyed through their placement. Pellan further underscores this enmeshment between genders by using the same colour and pattern on the skin of his male and female forms; to Greenberg, these choices allude to “their metamorphosis into one being.”<sup>5</sup>

Pellan pays special attention to the sexualized female form here, twisting and distorting the figure to emphasize her breasts, her pubic area, her flowing hair, and her long legs. But the artist also alludes to the Surrealist idea that the body can be a conduit for change. In contrast with the fluid lines of his female counterpart, the male seems immobilized—trapped by the planks below and the hand to his right.



## GREEN GARDEN 1958



Alfred Pellan, *Jardin vert (Green Garden)*, 1958  
 Oil and cellulose powder on canvas, 104.6 x 186.3 cm  
 Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Quebec City

Shown from a bird's-eye view, a garden in bloom takes on the ordered rhythm of a grid, with dividing lines that are more relaxed than rigid. Against a background of variegated green shapes that stand in for dirt and grass, thickly applied daubs of colour burst forth to represent abstract plants and flowers. *Jardin vert (Green Garden)* is part of a series of garden paintings, each of which corresponds to a component colour of white light as filtered through a prism. All six paintings are quite similar in their saturated colour treatment, attention to materiality, and structural organization. A 1958 grant from the Canada Council helped Pellan complete the series, which was considered some of his finest work.

As Guy Robert (1933–2000), author of the 1963 biography of Pellan, wrote, “rarely has the brush contained so much poetry; rarely has the light seemed so subtle, the composition so elegant, and the skill so great.”<sup>1</sup> In *Green Garden*, any reference to traditional landscapes has disappeared. Only the fertile, grassy soil remains, “cultivated by the hands of the painter ‘gardener.’”<sup>2</sup> It covers the entire surface of the painting, unifying a network of horizontal and vertical lines that introduce a sense of structure to the composition. To achieve an illusion of depth, Pellan juxtaposes transparent layers of similar hues.



In the Garden series, “the primary quality, the basic quality, of everything which may appear and appeal to the senses and understanding, is colour.”<sup>3</sup> The rich, vibrant paint is extremely dense; it is the material that creates the subject and shapes the plastic structures.<sup>4</sup> To achieve this effect, Pellan used a *seringue à glacer*, or icing syringe. Emphasizing the thickness of the substance, he adds a sculptural quality to the painting: the flowers appear ready to be picked if only the viewer could reach out and break through the dimensional barrier of the canvas.

Incorporating elements of bas-relief into his experiments with the materiality of colour, Pellan would go on to add another layer to his Garden series. In *Jardin mécanique* (*Mechanical Garden*), 1965, the artist embedded plastic elements into the paint, creating a three-dimensional flower that resembles a windmill. The almost futuristic plant-machine appears to be in perpetual motion.



LEFT: Alfred Pellan, *Jardin mécanique* (*Mechanical Garden*), 1965, acrylic, plaster, and gouache on plywood, 122 x 121.8 cm, Vancouver Art Gallery. RIGHT: Alfred Pellan, *Étude pour Jardin mécanique* (*Study for Mechanical Garden*), 1965, dental cement, 8.9 x 8.3 x 1.7 cm, Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Quebec City.

The luxurious vegetation and organic variations that Pellan showcases in the Garden paintings are characteristic of the artist’s work throughout the 1960s. He endeavoured to depict the natural world—but a “surreal” kind of nature, redefined by his own imagination.<sup>5</sup> His pictorial language is simplified and the new compositions appear unrestricted by the complex drawings of his Surrealist-inspired paintings and sketches. Pellan uses only a few elements to create a new universe populated by rocks and plants, as well as organic cells, which are often bisected in the middle, like biological samples.<sup>6</sup> These paintings exude a calming rhythm and sense of serenity. Even so, there is no clear break with his past work; rather, he draws on all the techniques he has learned in order to evolve it into something new.<sup>7</sup>



## TWELFTH NIGHT 1971



Alfred Pellan, *Sire André*, from the artist's book *Sept costumes et un décor pour La nuit des rois de Shakespeare*, 1971  
Serigraph, 10/100, 65.8 x 50.6 cm  
Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Quebec City



In 1946, Alfred Pellán created costumes, set decorations, and props for a production of Shakespeare's *Le soir des rois* (*Twelfth Night*) presented by the theatre company Les Compagnons de Saint-Laurent at the Gesù theatre in Montreal. The director of the troupe, Father Émile Legault, was initially "less than enthusiastic about having a modern artist handle the visual presentation of the piece, but he conceded to the reasoning of [actors] Jean Gascon and Jean-Louis Roux, both fervent admirers of Pellán"; the two would go on to co-found Théâtre du Nouveau Monde (TNM).<sup>1</sup> In 1967, Roux, who was then the artistic director of TNM, invited Pellán to revisit this story—first in the framework of a festival, and then as part of his adaptation of *Twelfth Night*, presented in 1968–69.<sup>2</sup>

Pellán, who described the play as "a fantasy, an enchantment that commands all of the resources of the imagination,"<sup>3</sup> produced a Cubist-infused Surrealist universe. Each costume transformed its actor into a canvas, painted in the liveliest colours—the comedic supporting character Sir Andrew, for example, is playfully clad in red and turquoise. Though Pellán was always best known as a painter, the *Twelfth Night* designs demonstrated his remarkable aptitude with other media.

Divided by a single horizontal line, the large-scale background panels in the TNM production were separated into two picture planes: vibrant colours dominated the upper part, while dark and sombre tones on the bottom allowed the outfits to stand out. The characters developed in front of these canvases: through the actors' movements, the colours of their costumes—rich purple for Olivia, blue and pink for Viola, orange and red for Sir Toby—continually shifted the overall spatial organization.

Some critics voiced concern that by conveying his personal vision of Shakespeare's world, Pellán betrayed the author's original intentions.<sup>4</sup> They feared that with costumes and decoration commanding attention, audiences would be distracted from the play and the interactions between the characters. While some may have been overwhelmed by the marriage of Shakespeare's text and the artist's visual universe, as noted by writer and director Éloi de Grandmont, one of Pellán's students, the design should not simply complement the text—rather, the combined elements should work together to create an "authentic rhythm for a poetic masterpiece," as the artist achieved with this production.<sup>5</sup>



LEFT: Alfred Pellán, *Olivia*, from the artist's book *Sept costumes et un décor pour La nuit des rois de Shakespeare*, 1971, serigraph, 10/100, 65.8 x 50.6 cm, Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Québec City. RIGHT: Alfred Pellán, *Viola*, from the artist's book *Sept costumes et un décor pour La nuit des rois de Shakespeare*, 1971, serigraph, 10/100, 65.8 x 50.7 cm, Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Québec City.





LEFT: Alfred Pellan's set and costume designs for the characters Olivia (played by Elizabeth Lesieur) and Maria (played by Marjolaine Hébert) for the 1968 production of Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* at the Théâtre du Nouveau Monde, Montreal, photograph by André Le Coz. RIGHT: Alfred Pellan's set and costume designs for the characters Sébastien (played by Jean Besré) and Viola/Césario (played by Monique Miller) for the 1968 production of Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* at the Théâtre du Nouveau Monde, Montreal, photograph by André Le Coz.

Most critics responded well to Pellan's theatrical design,<sup>6</sup> which created a unique world for the play and added depth to the characters.<sup>7</sup> His costumes served as a kind of visual commentary on each role—some included elements that exaggerated certain attributes in ways that verged on caricature.<sup>8</sup> The overall effect was both depersonalizing and defining: the elaborate costumes and makeup (which covered each actor's face) masked the performers' identity while amplifying their characters' personalities beyond the limitations of the descriptions in Shakespeare's text.



## MINI-BESTIARY NO. 31 C.1971



Alfred Pellan, *Mini-bestaie n° 31 (Mini-Bestiary no. 31)*, c.1971

Painted stone and wood, 6.8 x 9 x 5.7 cm

Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Quebec City

Created primarily between 1971 and 1975, Mini-bestaie (Mini-Bestiary) is a collection of small stones, which Alfred Pellan transformed into insect-like creatures by painting on faces in bright colours and adding wooden legs. Most are decorated with interesting patterns of dots and stripes that draw the eye; their expressions are open, bright, and curious, even smiling at times. Many of the fantastic beasts in Pellan's paintings, sketches, and illustrations provoke feelings of distress—in *Bestaie n° 3 (Bestiary no. 3)*, 1974, his nightmarish beings devour helpless humans whose mute faces communicate their pain. In contrast, the comical Mini-Bestiaries reveal the artist's playful character.

Pellan was fascinated with Surrealism and often used his work to reframe the movement's philosophies to better correspond with his own ideas on love, eroticism, freedom, and art. The Mini-Bestiaries were an important evolution in this process. Pellan had explored haptic impressions in his *Jardins (Garden)* series from 1958. But now, the strange creatures that populated his oeuvre took on real form and shape and began to invade the material world.<sup>1</sup>



This development allowed the viewer to interact with Pellan's work on a concrete level, touching and feeling it. Breaking the dimensional barrier between the work and the observer granted new access to the artist's thoughts and experiences.

While handling these curious animal-objects, we can almost imagine ourselves being transported to their point of origin: colourful rock formations in the Gaspésie, Quebec.



LEFT: Alfred Pellan, *Bestiaire n° 3* (*Bestiary no. 3*), 1974, oil and India ink on paper, 26.3 x 37 cm, Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Quebec City. RIGHT: Alfred Pellan, *Mini-bestiaire n° 5* (*Mini-Bestiary no. 5*), c.1971, painted stone and wood, 6.4 x 5.5 x 2.7 cm, Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Quebec City.

In 1944, Pellan visited the small town of Percé to see his friend André Breton (1896–1966), a visionary poet and the so-called father of Surrealism. Breton had briefly settled in the region to finish his book *Arcanum 17* (1944), and he compared the agates making up the rocky landscape to a "symphony."<sup>2</sup> Driven by his impassioned "agatomania," Breton would spend hours searching for the colourful rock formations<sup>3</sup>—expeditions that Pellan eagerly joined. As Breton recalled, Pellan "came here in 1944 and we met again at Percé. We were both interested in agates and we went looking for them on the beaches of l'Anse-à-Beaufils and elsewhere."<sup>4</sup> The two men talked about art as they collected rocks, shells, and other natural objects.<sup>5</sup> Nearly thirty years later, Pellan's imagination was sparked by these small stones: in their shapes, he saw the weirdest and most whimsical animals.



## MUTONS... 1974



Alfred Pellan, *Mutons...*, 1974  
Serigraph, H.C. 4/6, 111.8 x 81.2 cm  
Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal

*Mutons...* shows faces, disembodied hands, and fantastic creatures in a complicated decorative pattern, all surrounded by monochromatic coloured masses. The contrast between the red, blue, and green tones creates emotional impact, conveying a kind of angst. The work exemplifies Alfred Pellan's approach to screen printing, a medium he embraced late in his career.

This image overrides the traditional dichotomy between drawing and colour; Pellan creates his universe through the dialogue between the two techniques. The viewer follows the line—sometimes curved, sometimes straight and rigid—that traces the developing scenario: fine black outlines merge with animal shapes and a distorted human form. The colour highlights this movement, which carries the eye through the entire picture. As the line unsettles our gaze with its seemingly endless undulations, colour reacts with the contours.

As art historian Germain Lefebvre has stated, drawing dominates Pellan's graphic work and provides a sense of organization within his compositions. Here, the line adds vitality to the figures represented. There is harmony and elegance in the arrangement on the page, mirroring Pellan's obsession with precise drawings in his earlier work.

While Pellan's paintings have received a significant amount of attention, his explorations of other mediums—in particular his graphic work from the 1970s and 1980s—have, with few exceptions, been the objects of far less study. Pellan began to experiment with printing techniques at the end of the 1960s in a workshop held by the engraver Richard Lacroix (b.1939). At first, he created serigraphs, or screen prints—a method in which an image is created by passing ink through a fabric screen on which a design has been mapped out, using an impermeable substance to mask the spots that are meant to remain blank. Screen printing became more popular throughout the 1960s, reflecting a growing desire among artists to produce work outside of established genres that had a greater sense of immediacy.<sup>1</sup> Pellan, who believed that art should be more democratic, sought to increase access to his oeuvre.<sup>2</sup> He returned to older pieces and experimented with format, visual language, and composition.

As a particularly versatile printing process, serigraphs could draw attention to colour and its plasticity, an area of great interest for Pellan. His printing technique in *Mutons...* creates a distinct separation between the different bodies, contributing to a sense of balance which is belied only by the colour that serves to establish "the emotional environment, the atmosphere."<sup>3</sup> He achieved a similar result in several other serigraphs, including *Pop Shop*, 1972, and *Façonnage (Shaping)*, 1973.



LEFT: Alfred Pellan, *Pop Shop*, 1972, serigraph, 48/100, 66 x 51 cm (paper); 46.6 x 40 cm (image), Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Québec City. RIGHT: Alfred Pellan, *Façonnage (Shaping)*, 1973, serigraph, 61/100, 89 x 58.5 cm (paper), 56 x 48.5 (image), Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Québec City.





## PIQUE-MÉGOTS 1974



Alfred Pellan, *Pique-mégots*, 1974

Leather shoe, plaster, metal, paper, tobacco, plywood, and paint, 11.2 x 35.5 x 15 cm

Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Quebec City

Alfred Pellan made a series of shoe-objects, all based on the same shoe-shaped plaster mould and incorporating various household items.<sup>1</sup> He drew heavily on bawdy humour: *Pique-mégots*, for example—which translates to “butt picker” in English—includes a cigarette butt impaled on a hook that protrudes from the black leather toe. The shoe sculptures are life-sized and realistic, which makes the playful additions seem especially uncanny. Pellan often wrote out the title directly on the surface of each piece, adding another layer of meaning.

The artist conceived this series in 1974 for an exhibition held at the SAPQ gallery in Montreal. These works are another example of his connection to Surrealism, whose adherents believed that by taking an object out of its original context, one could reframe it in the context of new relationships and thereby expand our conception of reality.<sup>2</sup>

There are parallels between this work and *Mini-bestaiaires* (Mini-Bestiaries), 1971–75: both centre an object as the concrete embodiment of the artist's ideas, thoughts, and experience. Along with reconfiguring the meaning of the shoes by placing them in a new context, Pellan referenced the erotic body in this series,

particularly in works such as *Pince-fesse*, *L'exhibitionniste* (*The Exhibitionist*), *Veuve joyeuse* (*Merry Widow*), and *Pour masochiste* (*For Masochist*), all 1974. These objects reveal the artist's playful character, but their main purpose seems to be provocation.



LEFT: Alfred Pellan, *L'exhibitionniste* (*The Exhibitionist*), 1974, patent leather shoe, plaster, plywood, ink, and paint, 15 x 32.5 x 15.4 cm, Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Québec City. RIGHT: Alfred Pellan, *Veuve joyeuse* (*Merry Widow*), 1974, leather shoe, plaster, offset on paper, plywood, and paint, 21.6 x 42.7 x 20.2 cm, Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Québec City.

In *Pince-fesse* and *For Masochiste*, the titles (and the metaphorical action the viewer imagines through them) gesture toward sexual content. *The Exhibitionist* and *Merry Widow* are less subtle: the large phalluses attached to the shoes, as well as the picture of a nude woman in the latter work, leave no doubt as to their intended meaning. While Pellan is indeed presenting footwear in a new context, these associations are not as outlandish as one might think, since the shoe itself may be anchored in the subject of a fetish. The artist could simply be completing the connection between the foot and eroticism that has already circled the edges of the viewer's unconscious mind.

In that respect, Pellan's erotic shoe-objects refer to tensions beneath the surface—after all, many societies impose strict limits upon the expression of sexual desire. The human body is regulated and controlled by shared cultural codes that determine which behaviours are considered “appropriate.”<sup>3</sup> Pellan's erotic shoes question those limits by playfully addressing and exposing sexual desires and fantasies.

These shoe-objects remind us once again of the importance of freedom—freedom of expression and freedom from social constraints. They remind us of the many times Pellan used erotic images and symbols to fight censorship. His sexually charged sculptures take the direction of a “positive and playful, altruistic and subversive exaltation of love that is resolved on a social level through scandal and revolt.”<sup>4</sup>





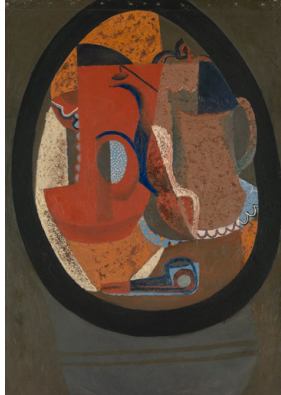
# SIGNIFICANCE & CRITICAL ISSUES

As a defender of an aesthetic that refuted traditional artistic forms, Alfred Pellán contributed to setting Canadian painting free from restrictive ideology and delivering it into the modern era. He left his mark on Quebec at a time when the province had become suffocatingly conservative. His radical style, his exhibitions, his work with the group *Prisme d'Yeux*, his activities as a professor at the *École des beaux-arts* during the 1940s, and his efforts to resist censorship offered the possibility of creative liberation to those yearning for more than their oppressive environment would allow.



### THE FATHER OF QUEBECOIS MODERNISM

Pellan was a pivotal figure in introducing modernist ideas to the Quebec art scene. He encountered a relatively welcoming climate when he returned from Paris in 1940—a striking change from his experiences four years earlier, when he was refused a teaching position at Montreal's École des beaux-arts due to his radical style. At the time of his homecoming, many of his contemporaries had never seen work with Cubist or Surrealist elements, but the



LEFT: Alfred Pellan, *Nature morte n° 22* (*Still Life no. 22*), c.1930, oil on canvas, 73 x 54 cm, Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Quebec City. RIGHT: Alfred Pellan, *Étude pour Fruits au compotier* (*Study for Fruit in a Fruit Bowl*), c.1933, mixed media on paper, 15.2 x 22.9 cm, private collection.

prevailing attitude was one of curiosity, both among his fellow artists (such as John Lyman, who founded the Contemporary Arts Society in the late 1930s),<sup>1</sup> and within the broader culture, thanks to a process of modernization that had been launched by the Provincial Secretary.<sup>2</sup>

Against this political backdrop, in 1940 the Musée de la Province mounted the artist's first solo exhibition, *Exposition Pellan*, under the patronage of provincial MLA Henri Groulx. While Pellan had regularly participated in salons at the École des beaux-arts during his time in Paris, the public in Quebec had only a vague sense of his art. As a result, this show marked the first opportunity for many of those around him to directly engage with his daring forms, colours, and compositions, which featured "elements of style from most of the modern masters."<sup>3</sup> Among the works on display were *Jeune fille aux anémones* (*Girl with Anemones*), c.1932, *Jeune fille au col blanc* (*Young Girl with White Collar*), c.1934, *La table verte* (*The Green Table*), c.1934, and *Fleurs et dominos* (*Flowers and Dominoes*), c.1940.





LEFT: Alfred Pellán, *Jeune fille aux anémones* (*Girl with Anemones*), c.1932, oil on canvas, 116 x 88.8 cm, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa. RIGHT: Alfred Pellán, *Jeune fille au col blanc* (*Young Girl with White Collar*), c.1934, oil on canvas, 91.7 x 73.2 cm, Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Quebec City.

The 161 paintings, sketches, drawings, gouaches, and aquarelles included in Pellán's Musée de la Province exhibition introduced Quebec to the "liveliness" of the "new" French art,<sup>4</sup> and challenged the conformity of creative norms in the province. While the show was met with some enthusiastic reactions, only a few reviews were published after it opened. Moreover, many viewers were unsure whether to admire or condemn Pellán's aesthetic.<sup>5</sup> Among those confounded was painter Marc-Aurèle Fortin (1888-1970), who, upon surveying the exhibition, declared that the work on display confirmed his sense that he lived in a "century of follies."<sup>6</sup>

It was only after the show moved to Montreal later that year that artists such as Jean Paul Lemieux (1904-1990) spoke up on Pellán's behalf. Although he recognized that the abstract compositions might be challenging for many visitors (as works on display in Montreal included *Pensée de boules* [*Bubble Thoughts*], c.1936, and *Mascarade* [*Masquerade*], c.1939-42), Lemieux encouraged people to look closer.<sup>7</sup> One could be surprised, unsettled, or even disconcerted by Pellán's paintings,<sup>8</sup> but the artist's avant-garde approach also provided the opportunity to spark the imagination and expand the horizons of creative possibility.





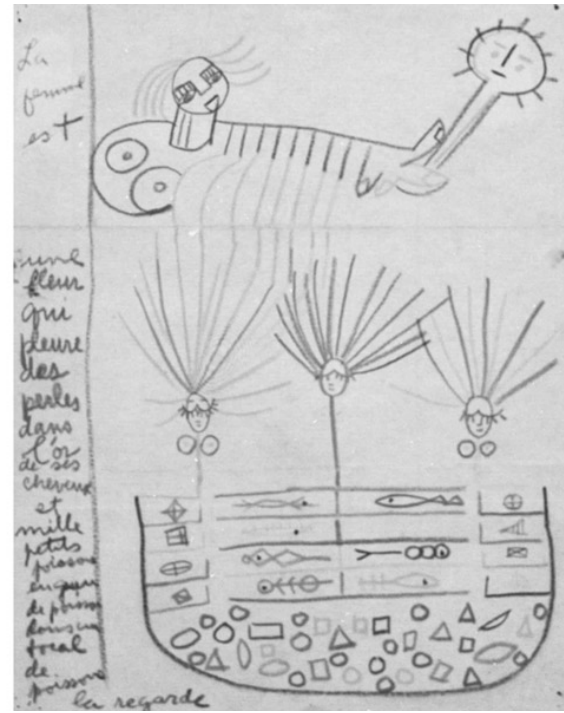
Alfred Pellán, *Mascarade (Masquerade)*, c. 1939-42, oil on canvas, 130.5 x 162.2 cm, Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal.

Art historians have identified this exhibition as one of critical impact in Quebec. François-Marc Gagnon (1935-2019) argued that through Pellán, "Canadian painting was catching up with international movements."<sup>9</sup> To be sure, despite art historian Dennis Reid's assertion that the artist "was received as a returning hero,"<sup>10</sup> Pellán's paintings were not universally embraced; he continued to grapple with many prevailing prejudices about modern art. Although fierce in his stance against academic traditions, Pellán realized that he needed to build bridges between accepted norms and the new approaches he proposed through his art. This attitude was crucial in defending his modernist expression in a society that was only just beginning to embrace new tendencies.

### LEGACY AS A TEACHER

In 1943, Pellán accepted a teaching position at the École des beaux-arts in Montreal, perhaps partly motivated by the desire for a steady and reliable income. He openly denounced the rigid atmosphere of the school and the restrictions imposed on the students. By 1952, when he reached the end of his tenure, the institution boasted an atmosphere that was far more liberal and open.

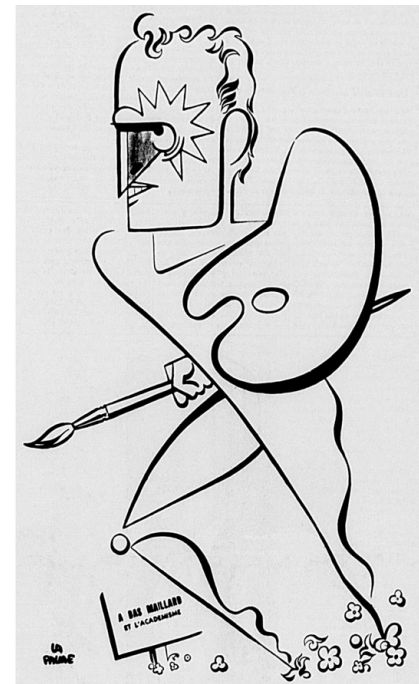




LEFT: Alfred Pellán and his students at the École des beaux-arts de Montréal (with Jean Benoît and Mimi Parent, centre), 1944, photographer unknown. RIGHT: Exquisite corpse drawing created by Pellán and students, 1976.

According to Pellán, art in itself wasn't teachable, because it encompassed questions of "personal sensibility, imagination, research and invention."<sup>11</sup> Instead, he sought to create an environment in which student creativity could flourish, explaining, "I did my best to come up with a free class, because I think it necessary if one wants students to do sincere work. For my part, I give them free rein to do what they want. What really matters is that a student finds himself, that he is able to express his personality in full."<sup>12</sup> He was careful not to impose any specific aesthetic,<sup>13</sup> not even his own style,<sup>14</sup> on those who took his classes.

Pellán's ideas on art and teaching provoked conflict within both the faculty and the student body.<sup>15</sup> He and the school's director, Charles Maillard (1887–1973), experienced some tension from the outset; their difference of opinions came to a head in 1945. While surveying the annual Salon de l'École des beaux-arts shortly before it opened, Maillard demanded that two pieces by Pellán's students be taken down for "moral reasons"<sup>16</sup>—one painting of a nude by Mimi Parent (1924–2005), and one that was intended as a parody of Leonardo da Vinci's (1452–1519) *The Last Supper*, c.1495–98. The director insisted that the exhibits needed to be "irreproachable."<sup>17</sup> Instead, Pellán



LEFT: Charles Maillard, c.1940, photographer unknown. RIGHT: Robert La Palme, caricature of Alfred Pellán published in *Le Jour*, Montreal, July 21, 1945, at the time of the Affaire Maillard. The caption reads "Down with Maillard and academicism."



advised his students to amend the specific aspects that seemed to disturb Maillard's sensibilities.<sup>18</sup> The works were ultimately removed from the show, despite Pellan's objections.

That decision led to a protest by members of the student body, who opposed "narrowness, [special] interests and authoritarianism in art."<sup>19</sup> The official student association (MASSE) opined that the uprising compromised "the good reputation of all [the association's] members."<sup>20</sup> But the mainstream press saluted the students' actions as belonging to a generation frustrated by cultural dictatorship and the reactionary spirit that still reigned at the school.<sup>21</sup>

In a personal statement, Pellan declared, "To my knowledge, this is the first time censorship of this sort has been imposed in a fine arts school. M. Maillard deems the incident finished. I want to tell him that it is actually not finished."<sup>22</sup> And as it turned out, the controversy was not yet resolved. The *Affaire Maillard*, as it is known today, became a key event in the gradual cultural revitalization of Quebec society during the 1940s.<sup>23</sup> In the end, Pellan and his students emerged victorious—and he created a painting inspired by the incident, *Surprise académique* (*Academic Surprise*), c.1943. An allegorical take on the event, the canvas shows a Surrealist-inspired scene with tools for painting in the foreground, along with architectural elements and a central character who resembles a harlequin. This figure's head is positioned upside down; it seems to have recoiled in a state of panic. The composition is chaotic, a riot of disparate elements in an uneasy relationship to one another. Although the painting is intended to convey discomfort, it also contains an element of whimsy, signalling Pellan's amusement at the situation. In the wake of the scandal, Maillard resigned, opening up new possibilities for the École des beaux-arts.





Alfred Pellan, *Surprise académique* (*Academic Surprise*), c.1943, oil, silica, and tobacco on canvas, 161.6 x 129.5 cm, private collection, Montreal.

#### PELLAN VS BORDUAS

In the history of Quebec art, Pellan is known as a figure who heralded the advent of modernity as part of a wave of social and cultural progress. But he was not alone in this endeavour. Another name that became synonymous with modernism is that of the painter Paul-Émile Borduas (1905–1960). While



Borduas's outspoken political stance made him a symbol of the separatist movement during the Quiet Revolution, Pellan, who found most arguments in favour of separation to be one-sided and excessively dogmatic, remained on the sidelines of these discussions. (His moderate views were out of step with the political climate at the time.) Nevertheless, Pellan's critique of tradition and commitment to innovation were instrumental in setting the stage for modern art to flourish in Quebec. Indeed, it has been said that Pellan's actions "became the catalyst"<sup>24</sup> for the radical change inherent to Borduas's work and ethos.

Although Pellan and Borduas originally worked in tandem to confront old ideologies and challenge rote allegiance to convention, hostility developed between the pair sometime in the early 1940s. This antagonism would endure for the rest of their lives, although its exact source is hard to pinpoint.<sup>25</sup> Some have defined the tension as a stylistic one—the two men had radically different approaches to artmaking, a contrast that can be seen if one compares Pellan's *L'homme A grave* (*Man A Engraving*), c.1948, and Borduas's *The Black Star*, 1957.<sup>26</sup>

Writer Claude Gauvreau (1925–1971), on the other hand, suggested the rupture happened after Pellan accepted the position as professor at the École des beaux-arts in 1943. Pellan was not only considered a traitor to the modernist cause, he was also condemned as a naive pawn in director Charles Maillard's effort to improve the image of the school.<sup>27</sup> Both Montreal Museum of Contemporary Art founder Guy Robert (1933–2000) and philosopher François Hertel attributed the conflict to jealousy, noting Borduas's temperament as a major factor.<sup>28</sup> Curator Germain Lefebvre, while more sanguine in his assessment of Borduas, also described the feud as one of polarized personalities.<sup>29</sup>

For art historian François-Marc Gagnon, the animosity between the artists was symptomatic of two antithetical ideologies.<sup>30</sup> Through his more traditional portraits and Canadian landscapes, such as *Enfants de la Grande-Pointe*, *Charlevoix* (*Children from Grande-Pointe, Charlevoix*), 1941, and *Cordée de bois* (*Cord of Wood*), 1941, Pellan aimed to make the efforts of a modern painter accessible to both seasoned collectors and general audiences.<sup>31</sup> This compromise was unthinkable for Borduas, who sought "not to tame the public to modern art," but "to move forward into the unknown."<sup>32</sup>



LEFT: Alfred Pellan, *L'homme A grave* (*Man A Engraving*), c.1948, gouache and ink on paper, 29.8 x 22.8 cm, Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Quebec City.  
RIGHT: Paul-Émile Borduas, *L'étoile noire* (*The Black Star*), 1957, oil on canvas, 162.5 x 129.5 cm, Montreal Museum of Fine Arts.







LEFT: Alfred Pellan, *Enfants de la Grande-Pointe, Charlevoix* (*Children from Grande-Pointe, Charlevoix*), 1941, oil on canvas, 43.5 x 59 cm, Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Quebec City. RIGHT: Alfred Pellan, *Cordée de bois* (*Cord of Wood*), 1941, oil on canvas, 43.5 x 58.7 cm, Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Quebec City.

There is truth to all of these theories. However, two essential issues seem to be at the heart of the artists' discord. First, Pellan opposed the manner in which Borduas had adapted the Surrealist concept of automatism—a process in which thought is expressed “free from any control by reason, independent of any aesthetic or moral preoccupation.”<sup>33</sup> In Pellan's opinion, no single technique should stand as an end in itself.<sup>34</sup> He did acknowledge the potential of automatism,<sup>35</sup> but believed that artists needed to expand on the basic concept. For him, automatism served as a preparatory tool, on whose basis pictorial problems were to be elaborated.<sup>36</sup> This interest is evident in works such as *La pariade* (*The Pairing*), 1940–45, where Pellan developed his composition in a manner that allows hybrid creatures to flow together.



Alfred Pellan, *La pariade* (*The Pairing*), 1940–45, oil and India ink on paper glued to plywood, 19.7 x 34.6 cm, Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Quebec City.



Perhaps even more importantly, Pellan was highly critical of how Borduas presented automatism as the only innovative school of thought. Pellan didn't believe that there was one single truth, but rather a range of equally valuable truths.<sup>37</sup> According to him, such variety was necessary to prevent stagnation and to avoid simply re-establishing a kind of academic art.<sup>38</sup>

### PRISME D'YEUX

Pellan had no desire to be formally affiliated with any particular art movement, and he welcomed a multiplicity of viewpoints. Prisme d'Yeux, a group largely founded on his initiative in 1948, was supposed to counterbalance the Automatistes, an experimental movement led by Paul-Émile Borduas. It encouraged diversity of expression, even encouraging the open sharing of opinions that directly opposed one another. The group's main objective was liberty: as they stated in their manifesto, "we seek a painting [practice] free from all accidents of time and place, and of restrictive ideology; and conceived without the intrusion of literary, political, philosophical, or other influences which can adulterate its expression and sully its purity."<sup>39</sup> In their first exhibition, held at the Art Association of Montreal, Pellan showed *Femme d'une pomme* (*Lady with Apple*), 1943.



LEFT: Alfred Pellan, *Femme d'une pomme* (*Lady with Apple*), 1943, oil on canvas, 161 x 129.7 cm, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto. RIGHT: Prisme d'Yeux exhibition at the Librairie Tranquille, Montreal, May 1948, photographer unknown.

Members of the group were convinced that to defend artistic freedom, it was essential to support all styles and theories in art, even contradictory ones. This, along with their disdain for politicized art, was key to their ideology. Because the original manifesto has disappeared,<sup>40</sup> it is not possible to verify all the signatories, but some confirmed members of the group were Mimi Parent, Jean Benoît (1922-2010), Albert Dumouchel (1916-1971), Pierre Garneau (b.1926), Jeanne Rhéaume (1915-2000), Jacques de Tonnancour (1917-2005), Léon Bellefleur (1910-2007), and Louis Archambault (1915-2003).





Alfred Pellan, *Prisme d'Yeux*, 1948, ink, graphite, and watercolour on paper, 12.4 x 20.2 cm, Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Quebec City.

Although the group ostensibly stood for freedom, its members refused to abandon established ethical norms.<sup>41</sup> Unlike *Refus global*, the Automatistes manifesto published by Borduas that year, which called for everyone to “permanently break with every habit of society [and] to disengage from its utilitarian spirit,”<sup>42</sup> *Prisme d'Yeux* did not pose a threat to the socio-political status quo. And because the group’s innovations seemed to exclusively target the domain of art, they were lauded in the contemporary press, where their endeavours were interpreted as sincere<sup>43</sup> and emblematic of the “diversity of human experiences.”<sup>44</sup> Borduas, on the other hand, was presented as an egotist whose opinions threatened the fabric of society. *Prisme d'Yeux* initially seemed to win the battle to become Montreal’s leading art group: aside from a few negative responses,<sup>45</sup> most critics encouraged the collective to expand its efforts.<sup>46</sup>

### THE “CONSPIRACY OF SILENCE” AND PELLAN’S LEGACY

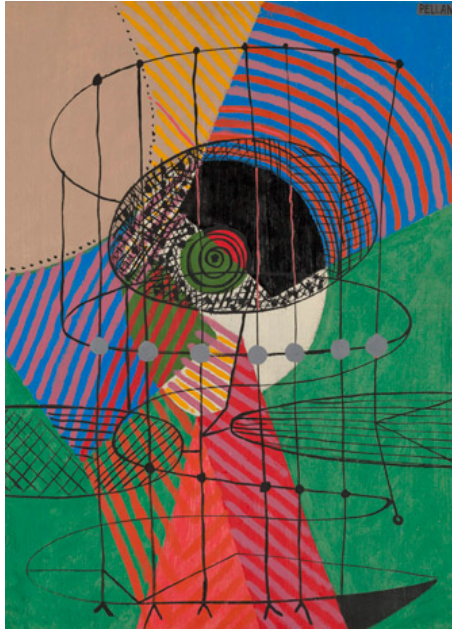
While Canadian critics initially considered abstraction a “marginal phenomenon with no future prospects,”<sup>47</sup> by the 1950s the unorthodox qualities of this approach were seen as the only way to free art from prevailing aesthetic strictures. That notion deeply influenced how Pellan’s oeuvre was perceived.<sup>48</sup> Although works such as *La spirale* (*The Spiral*), 1939, illustrate his engagement with abstraction, *Bouche rieuse* (*Laughing Mouth*), 1935, is an example of how the artist placed limits on purely nonrepresentational art. Meanwhile, the liberal francophones who had initially gravitated toward Pellan’s group, *Prisme d'Yeux*, developed a new appreciation for Paul-Émile Borduas and his approach to abstraction.<sup>49</sup> The apolitical stance that had previously drawn supporters to



Prisme d'Yeux became less appealing in the years before the Quiet Revolution—a period of intense socio-political and cultural change in Quebec. At the same time, many were galvanized by Borduas's radical critiques of the ideological foundations of French Canadian society, which had, just years earlier, scandalized authorities and the press. As a result, Pellan became "more or less rejected by Quebec's intelligentsia, who swore by the Automatistes."<sup>50</sup>

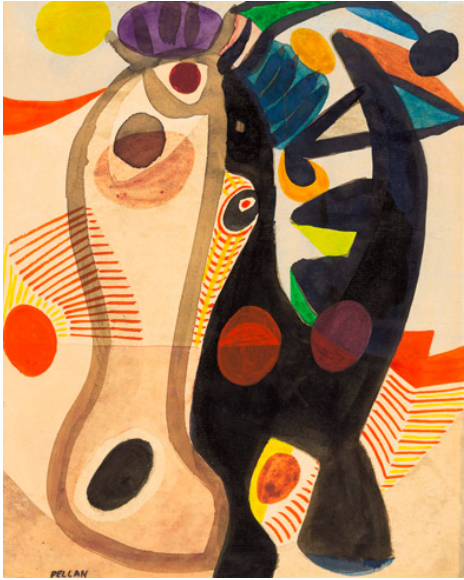
Pellan felt as though he'd been relegated to the fringes; in later interviews, he spoke of a "conspiracy of silence" in which he was a specific target, one that was more broadly directed toward anyone not affiliated with the Automatistes.<sup>51</sup> But quantitative assessments of articles written about the artist's work and activities make it clear that, while he received relatively fewer mentions during this period than he had in the 1940s, there was no dramatic decline in his press coverage. Pellan's achievements were publicized, his exhibitions were promoted, and his controversial show at City Hall in 1956 sparked a larger discussion about censorship, with many speaking up in the artist's favour.

Although Pellan feared the controversy with Borduas overshadowed his legacy, the significance of his modernist explorations remains undisputed. He is known for radical paintings such as *Sans titre (Untitled)*, 1942, and *Le petit avion (The Small Plane)*, 1945, the latter of which received an honourable mention at the Art Association of Montreal in 1949. His work continued to evolve and was widely exhibited until his death in 1988. Today, Pellan is recognized for his contribution to freeing a young generation from "an era of lethargy where the stiff coldness of academism was only equaled by an outdated Picturesque style."<sup>52</sup>



LEFT: Alfred Pellan, *La spirale (The Spiral)*, 1939, oil on canvas, 73 x 54 cm, Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Quebec City. RIGHT: Paul-Émile Borduas, *Composition*, 1942, gouache on canvas, 58.4 x 43.2 cm, private collection.





LEFT: Alfred Pellán, *Sans titre (Untitled)*, 1942, India ink on paper, 25.6 x 20.9 cm, Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Québec City. RIGHT: Alfred Pellán, *Le petit avion (The Small Plane)*, 1945, oil and sand on canvas, 91.5 x 155.3 cm, Winnipeg Art Gallery.

### PELLAN AT INTERNATIONAL EXHIBITIONS

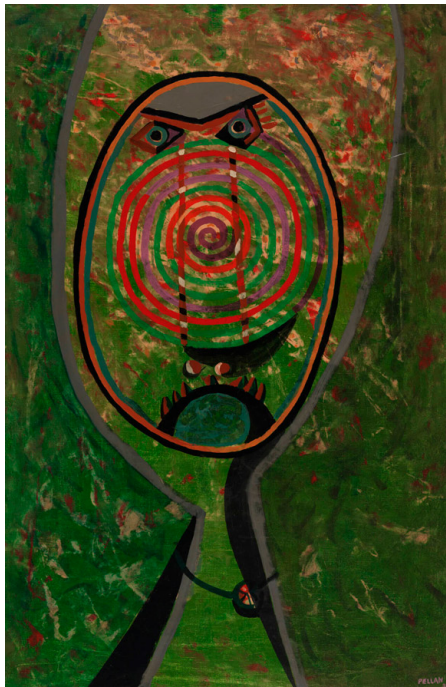
In the first half of the twentieth century, Canadian artists were rarely known beyond the country's borders. During the *Exhibition of English-American Painters of Paris* in 1935, French critics questioned whether Canada could be said to have its own art.<sup>53</sup> Pellán, one of two artists chosen to represent the country in the show, was lauded by European collectors and the press<sup>54</sup>—effectively providing an emphatic answer to that question.

While Pellán absorbed the European trends he encountered in Paris between 1926 and 1940, he transformed these influences through a “North-American/Quebecois prism”<sup>55</sup>; this personal interpretation of his source material became even stronger over time. He remained connected to his origins throughout his long sojourn abroad, a shining example of an artist who embraced the possibilities of modern (European) art while cherishing his own (French Canadian) traditions and culture. Because of this hybrid approach, Pellán helped establish Canada as part of the international art scene,<sup>56</sup> while underscoring the country's unique national identity.



Pellan's work became an important factor in the country's cultural politics after the Second World War. The most striking example is his inclusion in the first Canadian section at the 26th Venice Biennale in 1952 (along with Emily Carr [1871–1945], David Milne [1882–1953], and Goodridge Roberts [1904–1974]). Canadian officials firmly believed that art and culture had important roles to play in international affairs.<sup>57</sup> As part of "larger systems of artistic practice, markets and commercial relations, local and national economic development and political activity of various kinds,"<sup>58</sup> biennials in general provided excellent

opportunities to present a strong national identity on a global stage. Since its inception, the Venice Biennale has emphasized themes of nationhood, and with the country's inclusion in 1952, Canada finally took its "place with most of the other nations of the free world in this assembly of the arts."<sup>59</sup> In addition to helping define what Canadian contemporary art could be, Pellan contributed to the spread of artistic theories developed in Canada. This phenomenon continued throughout the 1960s and 1970s, as the Ministry of Cultural Affairs enthusiastically supported Pellan's exhibitions in major European cities as part of Quebec's effort to assert its unique identity.<sup>60</sup>



LEFT: Alfred Pellan, *Femme à la perle (Woman with a Pearl)*, 1938, oil on canvas, 81.3 x 53.3 cm, private collection, Montreal. RIGHT: Emily Carr, *Blunden Harbour*, c.1930, oil on canvas, 129.8 x 93.6 cm, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.



Alfred Pellan, *Jardin d'Olivia (Olivia's Garden)*, 1968, oil on cardboard, 19.5 x 38 cm, Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Quebec City.



# STYLE & TECHNIQUE



Alfred Pellán spent a significant part of his early career in Paris, and he was influenced by European modernism—an artistic movement whose followers rebelled against conservative, academic traditions. Pellán fully embraced experimental approaches to artmaking, although this decision was initially met with resistance in his country of origin, where conventional ideas still dominated the Quebec art scene. His oeuvre reflects a blend of various elements: Pellán managed to incorporate his personal beliefs, his formal training, and his interpretation of Quebecois culture into his own synthesis of European modern art.



### PARISIAN INFLUENCES

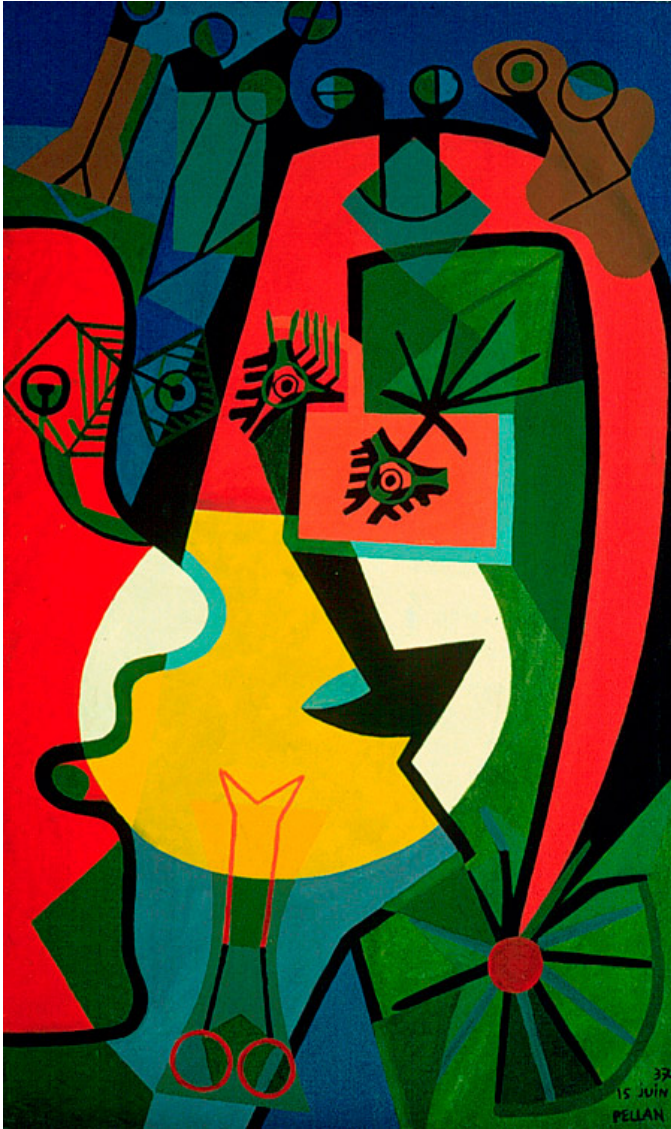
It can be a challenge to identify specific stylistic periods in Pellan's art, as his oeuvre did not evolve in a strict linear fashion. Art historians have claimed that he is "impossible to catalogue"<sup>1</sup> and "unclassifiable."<sup>2</sup> Still, one thing is clear: there is a clear distinction between everything Pellan produced before he travelled to Paris, where he lived from 1926 to 1940, and his subsequent work—that period changed his art forever. Although his preference for dominant colours and powerful, expressive brushstrokes is evident in early compositions such as *Le port de Québec (Port of Quebec)*, 1922, those works are rooted in his classical training and reflect the academic tradition taught at the École des beaux-arts in Quebec. Compared with his paintings of the early 1920s, his Parisian work is notable for the ways in which it showcases his embrace of European modernism.



Alfred Pellan, *Le port de Québec (Port of Quebec)*, 1922, oil on canvas glued to wood fiberboard, 36.8 x 74.2 cm, Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Quebec City.

Pellan recognized the impact of his fellow artists in Europe. Works such as *Bouche rieuse (Laughing Mouth)*, 1935, *Désir au clair de la lune (Desire in the Light of the Moon)*, 1937, *Vénus et le taureau (Venus and the Bull)*, c.1938, and *La spirale (The Spiral)*, 1939, allude to the schematic sketches of artists Joan Miró (1893–1983) and Paul Klee (1879–1940). In Pellan's eyes, Klee was "a painter par excellence, one for whom colour, drawing, composition come together to build a whole."<sup>3</sup> He also admired Max Ernst (1891–1976), whom he described as "a great pioneer."<sup>4</sup>





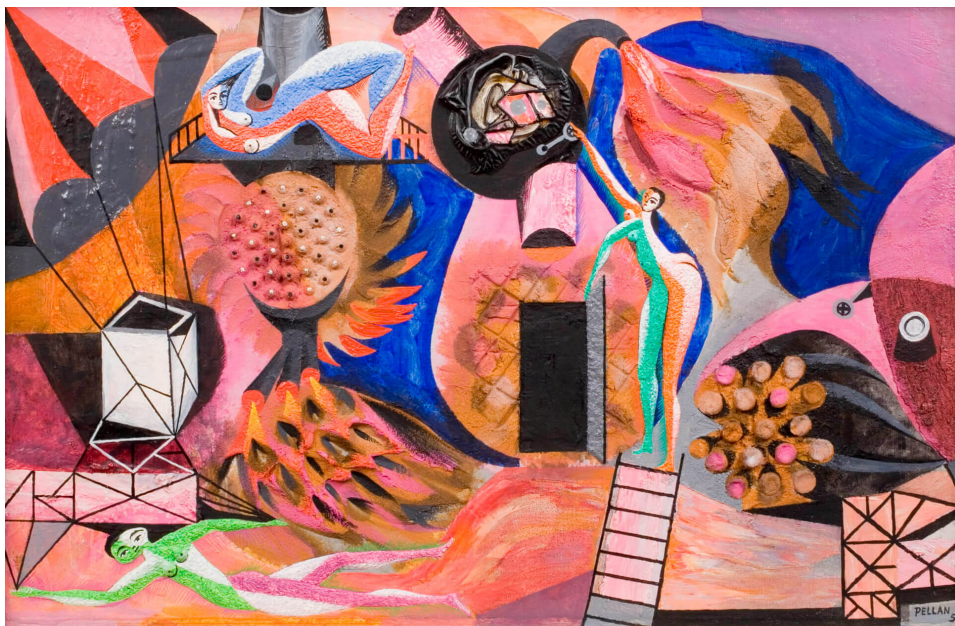
LEFT: Alfred Pellán, *Désir au clair de la lune* (*Desire in the Light of the Moon*), 1937, oil on canvas, 161.8 x 97.1 cm, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa. RIGHT: Alfred Pellán, *Vénus et le taureau* (*Venus and the Bull*), c.1938, oil on canvas, 73.5 x 50 cm, Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Quebec City.

Pellán was also greatly influenced by Fernand Léger (1881–1955), whom he met around 1935 and would refer to as “perhaps the greatest painter of our time.”<sup>5</sup> Pellán’s painting *Magie de la chaussure* (*Magic of Shoes*), 1947—which was based on an “exquisite corpse,”<sup>6</sup> according to art historian Jean-René Ostiguy—recalls the mechanical and geometric forms that Léger used throughout his career to represent humans navigating the world. Similar themes would appear in later works as well, such as *Les mécaniciennes* (*The Mechanics*), 1958.

Pellán was also drawn to movements such as Fauvism, which he admired for the way its proponents used intense colour,<sup>7</sup> as well as Cubism, Surrealism, and abstraction. In a 1960 interview, the artist explained that he “attempted to assimilate all the schools, all the techniques.”<sup>8</sup> Pellán did not consider himself a purely abstract, Cubist, or Surrealist artist. He never wanted to become a “painter enlisted under any label or banner”<sup>9</sup>; rather, he viewed all these styles as potential modes that could help him achieve his goals. During a conversation with the poet and writer André Breton (1896–1966), he expressed his desire to synthesize Impressionism, Fauvism, Cubism, and Surrealism into a coherent whole.<sup>10</sup>



Pellan often combined elements he borrowed from various artists, with the aim of developing them in his work. This led to unique interpretations of his source material. In paintings like *Nature morte aux deux couteaux* (*Still Life with Two Knives*), 1942, and *Le couteau à pain ondulé* (*The Serrated Bread Knife*), 1942, for instance, he presents still lifes with experimental compositions. While Pellan was undoubtedly influenced by European art, he transformed his inspirations into something personal and specifically *Pellanian* through his own research and unique perspective. As one critic later claimed, Pellan passed “from one world to another, only to reject them all and to invent a new one.”<sup>11</sup>



Alfred Pellan, *Les mécaniciennes* (*The Mechanics*), 1958, oil, silica, and polyfilla on canvas mounted on panel, 27.9 x 43.2cm, Leonard & Bina Ellen Art Gallery, Concordia University, Montreal.



LEFT: Alfred Pellan, *Nature morte aux deux couteaux* (*Still Life with Two Knives*), 1942, oil on cardboard, 101.7 x 76 cm, Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal. RIGHT: Alfred Pellan, *Le couteau à pain ondulé* (*The Serrated Bread Knife*), 1942, oil on canvas, 91.5 x 63.5 cm, The Hiram Walker Group, Windsor.



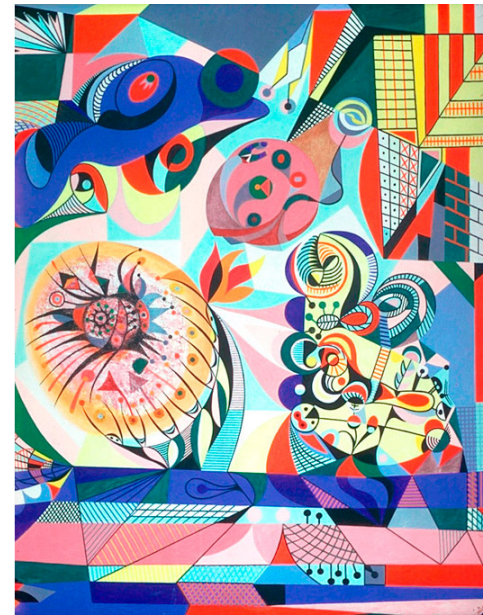
## EXPERIMENTS WITH SURREALISM AND CUBISM

In 1942, Surrealist writer André Breton (1896–1966) declared, “All the inner lights shine for my friend Pellan.”<sup>12</sup> Among the movements Pellan explored through his art, Surrealism stands out. “I have always been in love with it,” declared the artist in 1967, “and I still am, and I think I will always be Surrealist, because I think that Surrealism is great poetry.”<sup>13</sup> Even so, he was never an official member of the group; although he did attend some meetings in cafés, he “witnessed it all from outside, without taking part in it.”<sup>14</sup>

Pellan frequently employed Surrealist subject matter and imagery, often referencing the mysteries of the unconscious and depicting dreamlike visions, as can be seen in works such as *Calme obscur* (*Dark Calm*), 1944–47, and *Croissant de lune* (*Crescent Moon*), 1960. He also adopted some techniques commonly used by members of the group: he collaborated with his students to create “exquisite corpses” (a phrase that describes collectively assembling an arrangement of words or images); he juxtaposed incongruous objects in his compositions; and he experimented with automatism, or art created without conscious thought.<sup>15</sup> He occasionally linked disparate images and forms to create unseemly combinations, or disrupted and broke up pictorial space to achieve work that could feel ambiguous, even contradictory. Pellan also presented biomorphic shapes and hybrid creatures, such as the suggestions of flora and fauna in paintings like *Floraison* (*Blossoming*), c.1950, and *Les Carnivores* (*The Carnivores*), 1966.



LEFT: Alfred Pellan, *Croissant de lune* (*Crescent Moon*), 1960, oil and India ink on paper glued to plywood, 29.5 x 21.5 cm, Musée d'art de Joliette. RIGHT: Alfred Pellan, *Floraison* (*Blossoming*), c.1950, oil on canvas, 180.3 x 146.1 cm, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.



The artist brought a unique flair to his take on Surrealism.<sup>16</sup> For instance, aiming to divest the movement of any “morbid” tendencies,<sup>17</sup> he used vivid colour in works including *L'amour fou* (*Hommage à André Breton*) (*Mad Love [Hommage to André Breton]*), 1954, *Hollywood*, 1974, and *Mutons...*, 1974. In contrast to the famous Surrealist painter Salvador Dalí's (1904–1989) sombre tones and clear contrasts created by light and shadow, Pellan's colours seem to vibrate, creating an energy that breaks through the lines that try to keep them in check.<sup>18</sup>





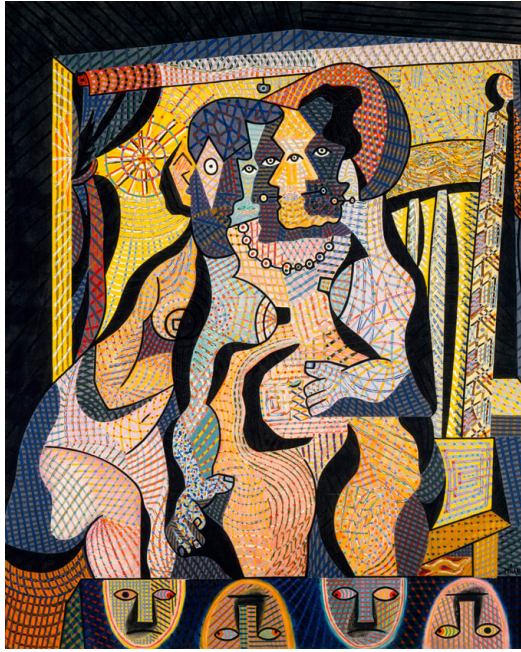
Alfred Pellan, *Hollywood*, 1974, coloured ink and India ink on velvet paper, 25.4 x 33.2 cm, Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Quebec City.

Surrealism had an important impact on French Canadian art and culture: in 1943, painter Fernand Leduc (1916–2014) declared that only Surrealism contained “a sufficient reserve of collective power to rally all generous energies and direct them towards the complete fulfillment of life.”<sup>19</sup> According to art historian Natalie Luckyj, French Canadian artists remained remote and isolated compared with their European counterparts.<sup>20</sup> However, Pellan’s ongoing exploration of Surrealist techniques and vocabulary suggests he was more actively engaged with the movement. Indeed, it was thanks to Pellan that Surrealism spread in Quebec:<sup>21</sup> the “spirit of liberty and poetic visual language” in his work helped introduce characteristics of the movement to the region.<sup>22</sup> More importantly, Pellan shared his adapted version of Surrealism with a younger generation of artists, including Mimi Parent (1924–2005) and her husband, Jean Benoît (1922–2010), who absorbed his influence.<sup>23</sup>

Although Pellan considered his Cubist work of the 1930s and early 1940s to be merely a step toward his Surrealist explorations, he alternated between the two styles and frequently combined them, especially throughout the 1940s. While his composite images are Surrealist, the imagery of two fused heads attached to a single neck, which appears in several paintings, including *Conciliabule* (*Secret Conversation*), c.1945, derives from Pablo Picasso’s (1881–1973) Cubist heads, which incorporate frontal and profile views.



Moreover, Pellan's *Hommes-rugby* (*Footballers/Rugby Players*), c.1935, and *Sous-terre* (*Underground*), 1938, are reminiscent of Picasso's abstract Surrealism, as they seem to pulsate with "the same energetic curves and incorporat[e] the same areas of dot or striped pattern."<sup>24</sup> This integration of Cubist elements had been noted since the late 1930s, when art critics described Pellan as a "disciple of Picasso,"<sup>25</sup> and even as the "Quebecois Picasso."<sup>26</sup> While they recognized the influence of the Spanish painter, these assessments also highlighted Pellan's personal interpretation.<sup>27</sup>



LEFT: Alfred Pellan, *Conciliabule (Secret Conversation)*, c.1945, oil on canvas, 208 x 167.5 cm, Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Quebec City. RIGHT: Pablo Picasso, *Head (Tête)*, 1926, oil on canvas, 21.6 x 14 cm, The Cleveland Museum of Art.

Although Pellan had been aware of Picasso's work before his Parisian sojourn—his personal library included a book on the French painter by Maurice Raynal, a French art critic and ardent supporter of Cubism—it was only when he visited Picasso's retrospective at the Georges Petit Gallery in Paris in 1937 that the artist fully realized the potential of shortened perspectives and formal decomposition.

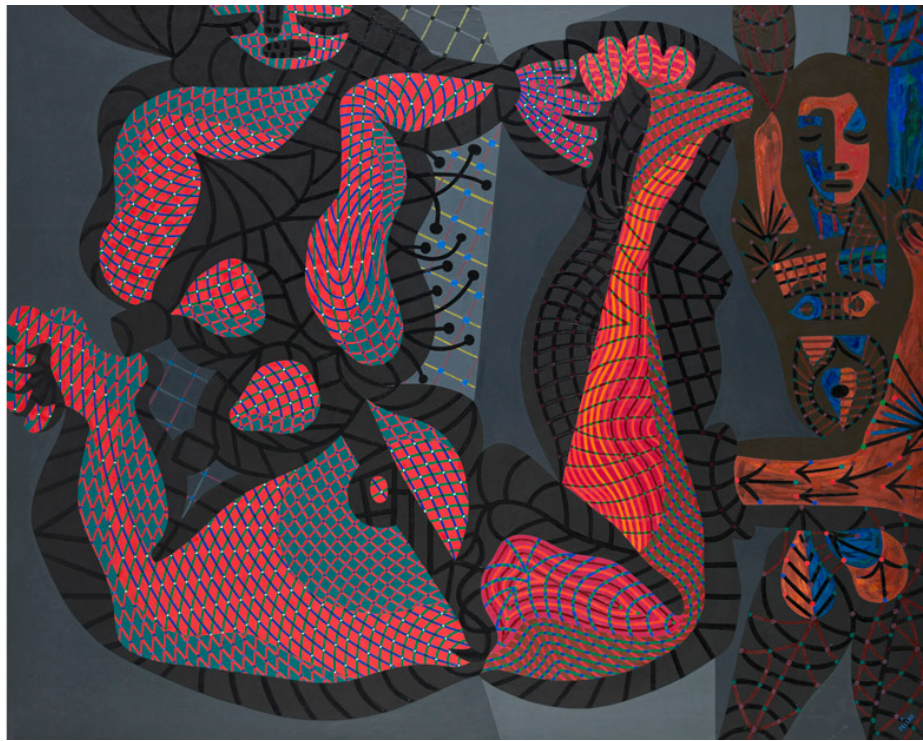


LEFT: Alfred Pellan, *Hommes-rugby (Footballers/Rugby Players)*, c.1935, oil on canvas, 54.2 x 64.2 cm, Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal. RIGHT: Alfred Pellan, *Sous-terre (Underground)*, 1938, oil on canvas, 33 x 35 cm, Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal.

Pellan and Picasso also met. "He simply knocked on my door," said Picasso, "presented himself, and we talked about painting. I've listened to him with great interest.... Pellan asked to see my most recent works and I showed them to him."<sup>28</sup> According to Pellan, these conversations were very stimulating, and pointed him in the right direction.<sup>29</sup> Through Picasso's approach to Cubism, he had found a way to question the academic and conservative attitudes that were still rooted in a dogma of representation. To Pellan, the movement "rejuvenated all of modern art and accomplished a big cleanse."<sup>30</sup>



Cubist techniques and imagery are as important to Pellan's oeuvre as Surrealism. Art critic Jerrold Morris, for example, draws attention to the "shallow space"<sup>31</sup> in Pellan's paintings, which was inspired by the movement. The deconstruction of the forms and flattened perspective in *Nature morte n° 22* (*Still Life no. 22*), c.1930, and *Fruits au compotier* (*Fruit in a Fruit Bowl*), c.1934, borrow heavily from Cubist principles as well. Furthermore, Pellan often used simultaneous viewpoints, as in *Homme et femme* (*Man and Woman*), 1943-47, where the process of spatial fragmentation can be seen in geometric picture planes of contrasting colours, and the bodies of the figures are reduced to flattened shapes.



LEFT: Alfred Pellan, *Nature morte n° 22* (*Still Life no. 22*), c.1930, oil on canvas, 73 x 54 cm, Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Québec City. RIGHT: Alfred Pellan, *Homme et femme* (*Man and Woman*), 1943-47, oil on canvas mounted on plywood, 167 x 208 cm, Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Québec City.

But as with the Surrealists, Pellan never officially became a member of the group. While he did borrow from Georges Braque (1882-1963), Juan Gris (1887-1927), and Picasso—going so far as to repeat their signature subjects, such as playing cards, bottles, musical instruments, and harlequin costumes—his reluctance to fully commit to pure Cubism is apparent in his work.

### APPROACHES TO DRAWING AND LINE

A "born draftsman,"<sup>32</sup> Pellan based most of his compositions, no matter how fantastical or imaginative, on the "solid rock that is the line."<sup>33</sup> His strong, assertive hand took charge of vibrant colours and worked out the smallest details in an abundance of forms, as can be seen, for instance, in a comparison of the painting *Citrons ultra-violets* (*Ultraviolet Lemons*), 1947, and a related drawing. His sketches, whether standalone efforts or ones that have been transformed into powerful canvases, are as recognizable and typically Pellanian as his colour schemes. As one reviewer observed in 1963, "his crazy, complicated, often baroque-like drawing, that's him, all him."<sup>34</sup> In fact, the artist always considered drawing an essential element of his art, as the technique also serves as the foundation of any painting.<sup>35</sup> This explains why he was first

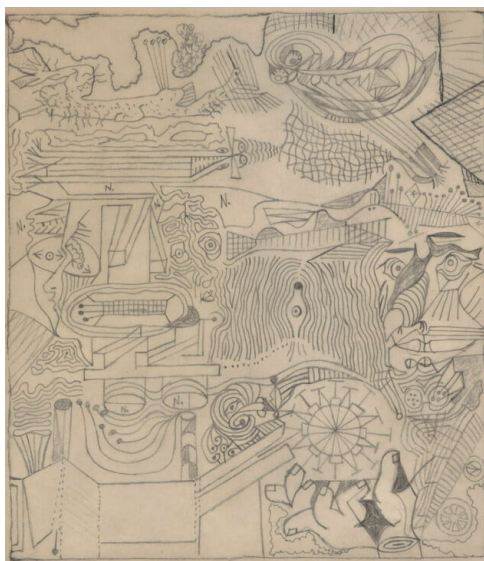


attracted to the Parisian group *Forces Nouvelles*, although he later rejected their traditionalist bent in favour of the more radical perspectives inherent to Cubism and Surrealism.

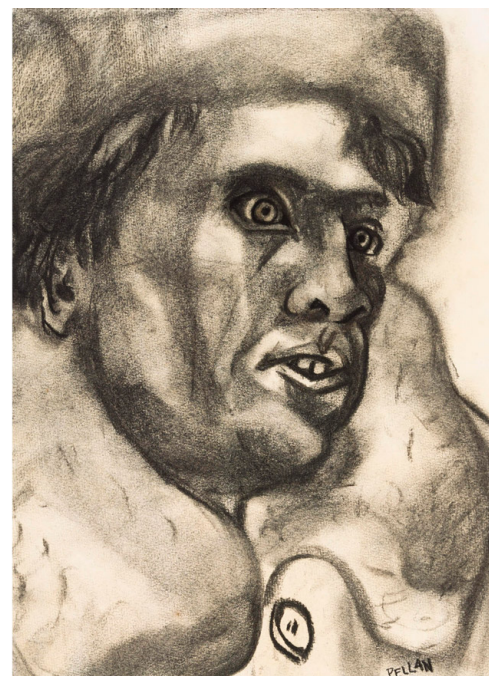
Art historian Reesa Greenberg has identified that Pellan's drawings can be divided into five periods: the first encompassing his time at the *École des beaux-arts* in Quebec (1921–26); the second during his sojourn in Paris (1926–40); the third spanning the years between 1940 and 1944; the fourth lasting from 1944 to 1952; and the last taking place after 1952.<sup>36</sup> Sadly, only four sketches from his early period (all emblematic of his academic training) remain. The drawings Pellan produced until midway through 1944 reflect this classical approach, although he was beginning to pull from the new ideas he encountered in Paris.<sup>37</sup>

While Pellan started to make work with simpler subjects in the 1930s, he still took time to create precise forms. He also paid close attention to the effects of light and shadow, volume, and line,<sup>38</sup> as can be seen in *Autoportrait* (Self-Portrait), 1934, *Portrait de femme* (Portrait of a Woman), c.1930, or *Jeune homme* (Young Man), 1931–34. *Fillette de Charlevoix* (Young Girl from Charlevoix), 1941, and *Femme à la causeuse* (Woman in a Loveseat), 1930–35, are delicate line drawings, whereas Pellan experimented with ink and charcoal in extensively worked studies such as *Tête de jeune fille* (Head of a Young Woman), 1935, *Le bûcheron* (The

Woodcutter), 1935–1940, and *Tête de jeune fille n° 126* (Head of a Young Woman no. 126), 1935–39. Yet these drawings were more personal than his academic studies of the 1920s, due in part to the artist having come to prefer a drawing style centred on few precise lines, or a "simple pen tracing" in which "synthetization is pushed to the extreme."<sup>39</sup> *Femme* (Woman), c.1945, is a perfect example of this approach: Pellan creates a stunning portrait out of a few



LEFT: Alfred Pellan, *Calque de Citrons ultra-violets* (Sketch for Ultraviolet Lemons), c.1947, graphite on tracing paper, 22.5 x 19 cm, Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Quebec City. RIGHT: Alfred Pellan, *Citrons ultra-violets* (Ultraviolet Lemons), 1947, oil, gold leaf, and fluorescent paint on canvas, 208 x 167.3 cm, Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Quebec City.

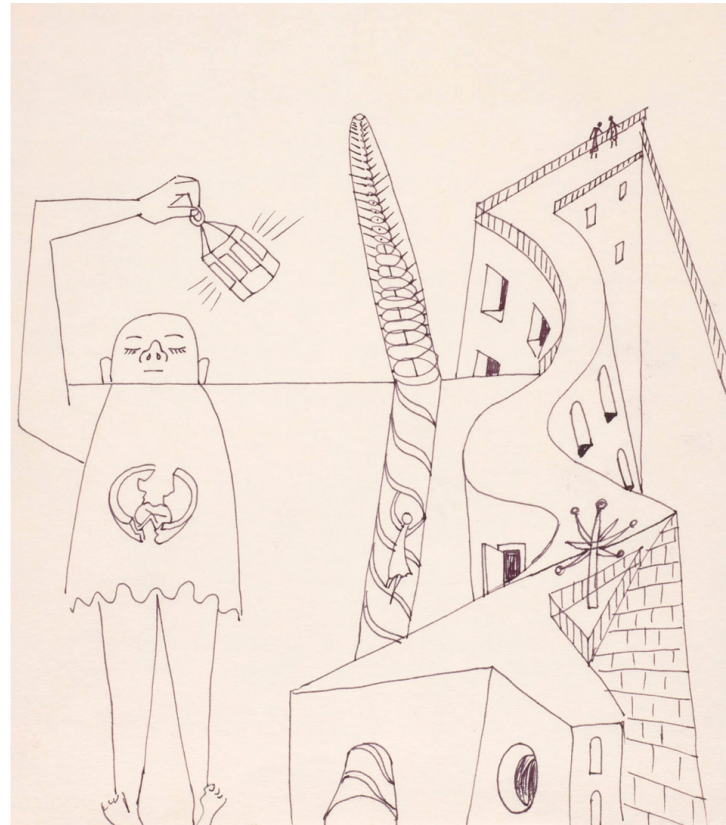
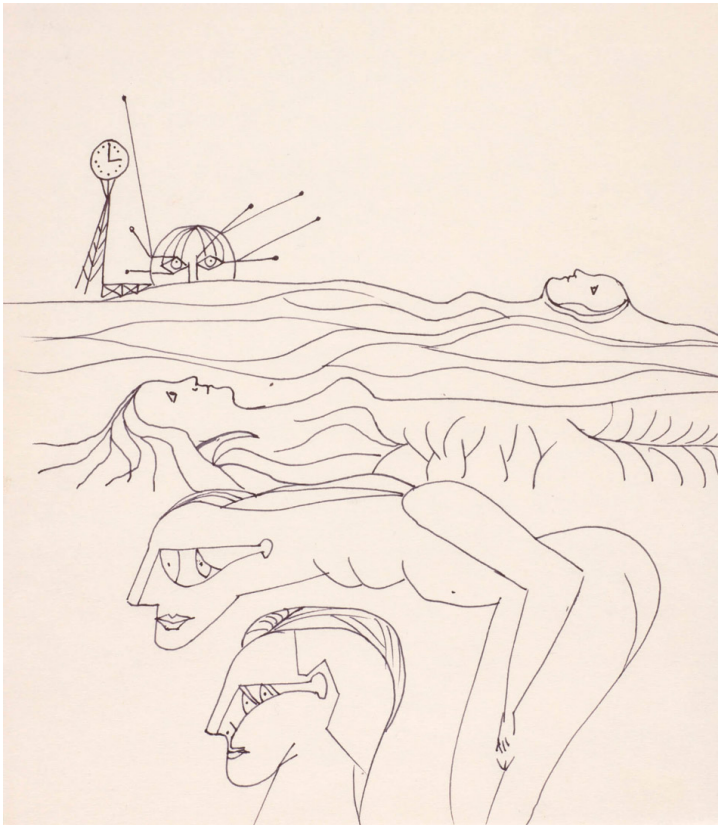


LEFT: Alfred Pellan, *Jeune homme* (Young Man), 1931–34, ink and charcoal on paper, 44.3 x 29.2 cm, Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Quebec City. RIGHT: Alfred Pellan, *Le bûcheron* (The Woodcutter), 1935–40, ink and charcoal on paper, 44.3 x 29.2 cm, Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Quebec City.



lines, with dark patches of charcoal building the woman's body and shaping her face. While we can see the artist's classical training in the core technique, the geometric shadows clearly show his allegiance to modern art—in this case, to Cubism.

In the mid-1940s, Pellan abandoned traditional subject matter almost entirely. He increasingly drew on a vocabulary of double and hybrid images, symbols that evoked love, dreams, and metamorphosis, and Surrealist poetry. These drawings depict a weird world in which emotionally charged objects might trigger feelings of discomfort or anxiety in viewers,<sup>40</sup> an effect illustrated by the distorted bodies and dizzying spaces in *Femmes paysage* (*Women Landscape*), c.1945-75, and *Personnage avec édifice labyrinthique* (*Figure with a Labyrinthine Building*), c.1945-75.



LEFT: Alfred Pellan, *Femmes paysage* (*Women Landscape*), c.1945-75, ink on paper, 20.5 x 17.8 cm, Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Quebec City. RIGHT: Alfred Pellan, *Personnage avec édifice labyrinthique* (*Figure with a Labyrinthine Building*), c.1945-75, ink on paper, 20.5 x 17.8 cm, Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Quebec City.

Compared with the sketches he realized in the 1930s, Pellan's later drawings "employed all-over compositions, marked contrasts of black and white and non-descriptive pattern, all of which give the impression of energy and movement."<sup>41</sup> His single lines—already "pure, vibrant, solitary, naked, simple, energetic"<sup>42</sup>—became fragmented. As well, he did not hesitate to paint his drawings, a practice that, according to Greenberg, transformed the artist's entire working process.<sup>43</sup> The drawings Pellan realized in the 1950s and beyond became even more diverse. Those executed in ink, for example, "convey a growing interest in the techniques of calligraphy and the compositions of Indigenous art."<sup>44</sup>



### APPROACHES TO COLOUR

Pellan's devotion to intense and luminous colour was at the heart of his creative personality. His unique world of colour was "highly emotional and brilliant, sometimes to the point of crudeness,"<sup>45</sup> and his seemingly "unrefined"<sup>46</sup> and sometimes even "violent"<sup>47</sup> palette brought his paintings to life.<sup>48</sup> In earlier work, such as *Pensée de boules* (*Bubble Thoughts*), c.1936, *Femme d'une pomme* (*Lady with Apple*), 1943, and *Floraison* (*Blossoming*), 1944, his complicated compositions were dominated by strict lines. But as time passed, Pellan began to simplify his drawings, giving more primacy and attention to his experiments with colour. These explorations had pronounced effects on his work: they could unify a scene or create stunning zones of contrast, and they also produced a certain rhythm that imbued his paintings and graphics with a sense of movement. In *Le buisson ardent* (*The Burning Bush*), 1966, for instance, shades of red create connection through the composition and map out a visual path for the eye to follow.



Alfred Pellan, *Le buisson ardent* (*The Burning Bush*), 1966, oil on canvas, 29.8 x 51.4 cm, Firestone Collection of Canadian Art, Ottawa Art Gallery.

At his landmark 1940 exhibition, *Exposition Pellan*, in Quebec and Montreal, Pellan's colourful excess astounded critics and spectators alike. Some called his canvases "feasts of colours," upon which the "most surreal but harmonious shades" stand out and interact with one another.<sup>49</sup> Others mentioned the range of his palette, poetically describing how it "sings of light in the most incredible, most astounding rhythms," while a sense of mystery seemed to "move the very soul."<sup>50</sup>





LEFT: Alfred Pellán, *Jeu de cinq* (*Game of Five*), 1968, coloured ink and India ink on velvet paper, 7.5 x 12.5 cm, Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Quebec City. RIGHT: Alfred Pellán, *Oniromancie* (*Oneiromancy*), 1972, serigraph, 98/100, 66 x 51 cm (paper); 46 x 40.2 cm (image), Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Quebec City.

When asked about his creative breakthroughs, Pellán declared “My colours are luminous without being fluorescent. They are vibrant. Sometimes in a photograph the camera pictures a halo around them.”<sup>51</sup> In fact, the artist wished to create “electric” paintings, paintings that were “so very lively that [they] appeared as if phosphorescent.”<sup>52</sup> By juxtaposing bold colours, he achieved a kind of potency that became characteristic of his style. As the critic Maurice Gagnon observed, Pellán’s colour “shines, erupts, vibrates and resonates with intensity.”<sup>53</sup>

### WORKING ACROSS MEDIA

In an interview with journalist Judith Jasmin in 1960, Pellán pointed out that the lines separating painting, architecture, sculpture, and illustration were beginning to disappear in contemporary art, a tendency he welcomed.<sup>54</sup> Diverse in his artistic research, the artist did not simply experiment with painting and drawing, but tried “to do everything.”<sup>55</sup> This versatility was not always applauded, since some critics doubted the quality of pieces that diverged from what was accepted as Pellanian.<sup>56</sup> However, his body of work is unique precisely because it employs many different media.



Pellan worked on illustrations as well as his paintings: some were a synthesis of an idea, simplified to the extreme,<sup>57</sup> while others were highly elaborate designs and patterns, intended to illustrate manuscripts by poets such as Alain Grandbois (*Les îles de la nuit* [*The Isles of the Night*], 1944), Éloi de Grandmont (*Le voyage d'Arlequin* [*Harlequin's Voyage*], 1946), and Claude Péloquin (*Pellan, Pellan*, 1976; *Le cirque sacré* [*The Sacred Circus*], 1981). The verses of these writers were often infused with the same Surrealist spirit as his paintings. In fact, Surrealist Quebecois poetry had helped cultivate the fantastic images in Pellan's graphic dream worlds.



LEFT: Alfred Pellan, *Alors nous vivons aux remparts des villes endormies*, illustration for Alain Grandbois's *Les îles de la nuit*, 1944, ink and wash on board glued on board, 35.5 x 28 cm, Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Quebec City. RIGHT: Alfred Pellan, *Ta forme monte comme la blessure du sang*, illustration for Alain Grandbois's *Les îles de la nuit*, 1944, watercolour, India ink, and varnish on board glued on board, 36.7 x 29.3 cm, Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Quebec City.



Beyond those aspects of his oeuvre, Pellan created "unforgettable costumes"<sup>58</sup> and scene decorations for the theatre productions *Madeleine et Pierre* (*Madeleine and Pierre*) (1944) and *La nuit des rois* (*Twelfth Night*) (1946/68). Breaking with the naturalistic tradition that clearly evoked the space and time in which a particular play was set, these two collaborations sparked Cubist- and/or Surrealist-infused universes in which Pellan mixed architectural styles, geometric patterns, deconstructed spaces, and multiple perspectives. For both shows, he created costumes based on a deep psychological analysis of the characters. This approach illuminated not only Pellan's talent as painter but also a "dramaturgical sensibility"<sup>59</sup> that was necessary for this curious fusion of theatrical text and image.



Alfred Pellan, *La Rue*, from the artist's book *Sept costumes et un décor pour La nuit des rois de Shakespeare*, 1971, serigraph, A.P. 8/10, 65.8 x 101.6 cm (paper); 25.5 x 63.7 cm (image), Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Quebec City.



Pellan also produced a great number of murals for private homes and businesses, as well as for the public sphere, most famously in *Sans titre (Canada Ouest)* (*Untitled (Canada West)*) and *Sans titre (Canada Est)* (*Untitled (Canada East)*), 1942–43. Murals have certain qualities that set them apart from other modes of artistic expression. For Pellan, their public nature was of particular interest, as he believed the cold and neutral character of modern architecture invited decoration.<sup>60</sup> These surfaces called for large-scale art that sought to “beautify.”<sup>61</sup> A study for a stained-glass project from 1960 shows the measure of detail, thought, and inventiveness involved in Pellan’s decorative work.

Between 1968 and 1980, Pellan completed around seventy-five engravings. He increasingly experimented with large-scale prints that accentuated the graphic character and two-dimensionality of smaller paintings he had created in his earlier years.<sup>62</sup> Striving to emphasize the colour of the pieces, he often simplified and reorganized forms, as can be seen in *Voltige d’automne – A* (*Autumn Acrobatics – A*), 1973.<sup>63</sup>

He also created many curious objects. Evoking the art of assemblage, Pellan’s *Satellites* (*Satellites*), 1979, were mobile sculptures, designed to be hung. They were composed of various assorted objects that the artist glued together using a kind of silver spray paint. A vacuum-cleaner hose, a sink stopper, shells, a plastic banana, and door handles were among the articles that went into the making of these strange creations. Pellan’s *Mini-bestiaires* (*Mini-Bestiaries*), 1971–75—fantastic creatures that also inhabited his paintings—were small, painted stones onto which the artist grafted legs, horns, and tails made of cotton swabs or plaster. Predominantly products of Pellan’s imagination, these tiny beasts were painted in bright colours and decorated with whimsical motifs that bore the stylistic mark of their creator. Finally, his playful shoe-objects, 1974, embrace Surrealist theories of the *poème-objet*—combining poetry and object, the technique was an effort to recreate things seen in dreams—and the *merveilleux*, a way of looking at the world that finds the marvellous in everyday life.



Alfred Pellan, *Voltige d’automne – A* (*Autumn Acrobatics – A*), 1973, coloured ink and India ink on velvet paper, 25.4 x 33.2 cm, Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Québec City.





LEFT: Alfred Pellan, *Satellites (Satellites)*, 1979, aluminum paint on found objects, 21.5 x 14.6 x 13.3 cm, Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Quebec City. RIGHT: Alfred Pellan, *Satellites (Satellites)*, 1979, aluminum paint on found objects, 29.2 x 18.4 x 18.4 cm, Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Quebec City.

Branching out into other forms helped Pellan fuel his creativity. By working across media, he explored new ways of expressing himself and experimented with styles. A new genre or format imposed certain novel constraints and eliminated others, allowing Pellan to think laterally and take risks. Even so, the artist built connections between different pieces and even across media. He explored how a single subject can be represented in multiple ways, returning to earlier paintings for inspiration in his later graphic projects and occasionally drawing on his evolving skills to create new companion works.





Alfred Pellan, *À la femme allongée* (To the Reclining Woman), from artist book *Délirium concerto*, 1982, etching and aquatint, A.P. 4/8, 56.8 x 76.3 cm (paper); 45 x 63.7 cm (image), Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Québec City.



# WHERE TO SEE



The works of Alfred Pellán are held in public and private collections in Canada and internationally. Although the following institutions hold the works listed below, they may not always be on view.





# ALFRED PELLAN

Life & Work by Maria Rosa Lehmann

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## ART GALLERY OF ONTARIO

317 Dundas Street West  
Toronto, Ontario, Canada  
416-979-6648  
[www.ago.ca](http://www.ago.ca)

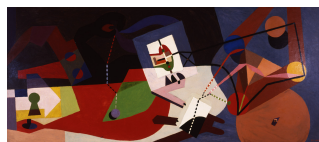


**Alfred Pellán, *Femme d'une pomme* (Lady with Apple), 1943**  
Oil on canvas  
161 x 129.7 cm

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## ART WINDSOR-ESSEX

401 Riverside Drive West  
Windsor, Ontario, Canada  
519-977-0013  
[www.artwindsoressex.ca](http://www.artwindsoressex.ca)



**Alfred Pellán, *Peintre au paysage* (Artist in Landscape), c.1935**  
Oil on canvas  
79 x 180 cm

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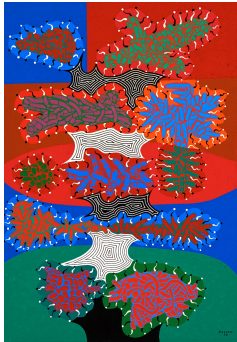
# ALFRED PELLAN

Life & Work by Maria Rosa Lehmann

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## CANADA COUNCIL ART BANK

921 St. Laurent Boulevard  
Ottawa, Ontario, Canada  
1-800-263-5588, ext. 4479  
[www.artbank.ca](http://www.artbank.ca)



**Alfred Pellan, *Baroquerie*  
(*Baroquerie*), 1970**

Oil on canvas  
91.5 x 63.5 cm

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## CENTRE POMPIDOU

Place Georges-Pompidou  
Paris, France  
+33 (0)1 44 78 12 33  
[www.centrepompidou.fr](http://www.centrepompidou.fr)



**Alfred Pellan, *Nature morte à la  
lampe* (*Still Life with Lamp*), 1932**

Oil on canvas  
65 x 81 cm



**Alfred Pellan, *La chouette* (*The  
Owl*), 1954**

Oil, sand, and various materials  
on canvas  
208 x 166.5 cm





# ALFRED PELLAN

Life & Work by Maria Rosa Lehmann

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## DALHOUSIE ART GALLERY

6101 University Avenue  
Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada  
902-494-2403  
[artgallery.dal.ca](http://artgallery.dal.ca)



**Alfred Pellan, *Les carnivores (The Carnivores)*, 1966**

Oil on wood  
70.8 x 51.2 cm

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## DAVIS MUSEUM AT WELLESLEY COLLEGE

106 Central Street  
Wellesley, Massachusetts, United States of America  
781-283-2051  
[www.wellesley.edu/davismuseum](http://www.wellesley.edu/davismuseum)



**Alfred Pellan, *Instruments de musique - A (Musical Instruments - A)*, 1933**

Oil on canvas  
132 x 195.5 cm

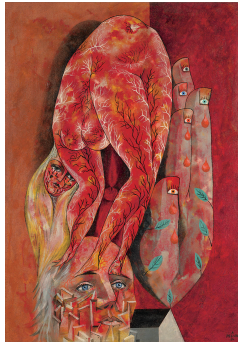
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## MONTREAL MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS

1380 Sherbrooke Street West  
Montreal, Quebec, Canada  
514-285-2000  
[www.mbam.qc.ca](http://www.mbam.qc.ca)



**Alfred Pellán, *L'amour fou* (Homage to André Breton) (Mad Love [Homage to André Breton]), 1954**  
Oil on canvas  
115.5 x 80 cm

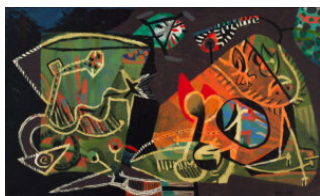


**Alfred Pellán, *Jardin rouge* (Red Garden), 1958**  
Oil, silica, and modelling clay on canvas  
104.5 x 187 cm

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## MUSÉE D'ART CONTEMPORAIN DE MONTRÉAL

185 Saint Catherine Street West  
Montreal, Quebec, Canada  
514-847-6226  
[www.macm.org](http://www.macm.org)



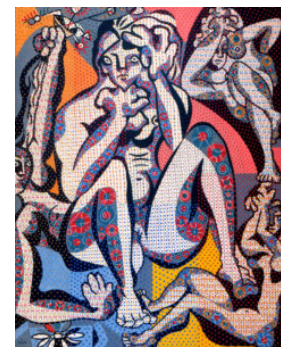
**Alfred Pellán, *Sous-terre* (Underground), 1938**  
Oil on canvas  
33 x 35 cm



**Alfred Pellán, *Mascarade* (Masquerade), c.1939-42**  
Oil on canvas  
130.5 x 162.2 cm



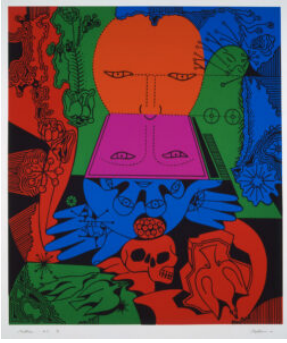
**Alfred Pellán, *Nature morte aux deux couteaux* (Still Life with Two Knives), 1942**  
Oil on cardboard  
101.7 x 76 cm



**Alfred Pellán, *Quatre femmes* (Four Women), 1944-47**  
Oil on canvas  
208.4 x 167.8 cm

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**Alfred Pellán,**  
***Mutons...*, 1974**  
Serigraph, H.C. 4/6  
111.8 x 81.2 cm

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## MUSÉE D'ART DE JOLIETTE

145 Rue du Père-Wilfrid-Corbeil  
Joliette, Quebec, Canada  
450-756-0311  
[www.museejoliette.org](http://www.museejoliette.org)



**Alfred Pellán, *Croissant de lune***  
**(*Crescent Moon*), 1960**  
Oil and India ink on paper glued  
to plywood  
29.5 x 21.5 cm

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## MUSÉE NATIONAL DES BEAUX-ARTS DU QUÉBEC

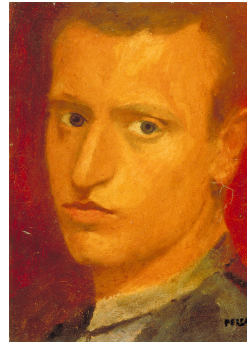
179 Grande Allée Ouest  
Quebec City, Quebec, Canada  
418-643-2150  
www.mnbaq.org



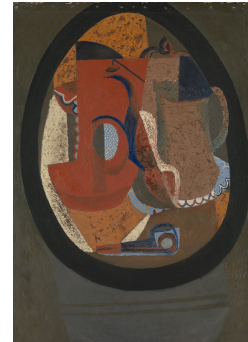
**Alfred Pellan, *Les fraises* (Strawberries), 1920**  
Oil on cardboard glued onto plywood  
33 x 43 cm



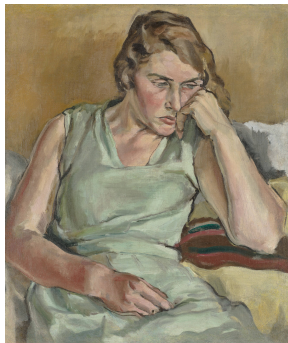
**Alfred Pellan, *Le port de Québec* (Port of Quebec), 1922**  
Oil on canvas glued to wood fibreboard  
36.8 x 74.2 cm



**Alfred Pellan, *Autoportrait* (Self-Portrait), 1928**  
Oil on cardboard  
30.5 x 23.3 cm



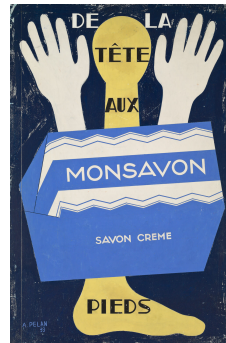
**Alfred Pellan, *Nature morte n° 22* (Still Life no. 22), c.1930**  
Oil on canvas  
73 x 54 cm



**Alfred Pellan, *Portrait de femme* (Portrait of a Woman), c.1930**  
Oil on canvas  
55.5 x 45.6 cm



**Alfred Pellan, *Jeune homme* (Young Man), 1931-34**  
Ink and charcoal on paper  
44.3 x 29.2 cm



**Alfred Pellan, *De la tête aux pieds, Monsavon, savon crème* ("From head to toe, Monsavon, cream soap"), 1933**  
Gouache on wood fibreboard  
120 x 79.8 cm



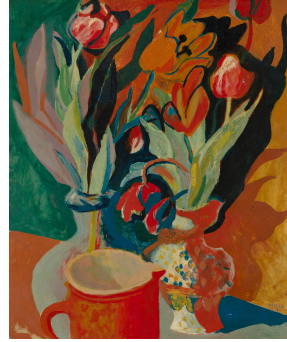
**Alfred Pellan, *Fruits au compotier* (Fruit in a Fruit Bowl), c.1934**  
Oil on plywood  
80 x 119.8 cm



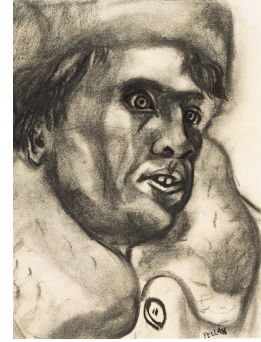
**Alfred Pellán, *Jeune fille au col blanc* (Young Girl with White Collar), c.1934**  
Oil on canvas  
91.7 x 73.2 cm



**Alfred Pellán, *La table verte* (The Green Table), c.1934**  
Oil on canvas  
54.3 x 81 cm



**Alfred Pellán, *Les tulipes* (Tulips), 1934-35**  
Oil on canvas  
55 x 46.2 cm



**Alfred Pellán, *Le bûcheron* (The Woodcutter), 1935-40**  
Ink and charcoal on paper  
44.3 x 29.2 cm



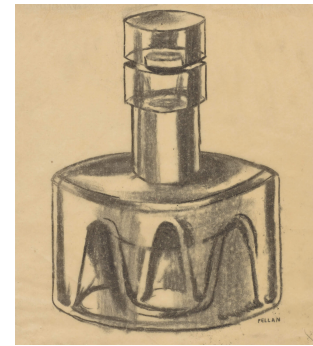
**Alfred Pellán, *Vénus et le taureau* (Venus and the Bull), c.1938**  
Oil on canvas  
73.5 x 50 cm



**Alfred Pellán, *La spirale* (The Spiral), 1939**  
Oil on canvas  
73 x 54 cm



**Alfred Pellán, *Fleurs et dominos* (Flowers and Dominoes), c.1940**  
Oil on canvas  
116 x 89.4 cm



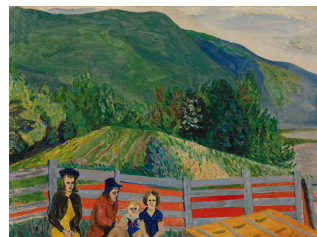
**Alfred Pellán, *Étude de flacon de parfum pour la maison Revillon, Paris* (Study for a perfume bottle for Revillon, Paris), before 1940**  
Charcoal on tracing paper pasted onto paper  
23.4 x 20.6 cm; 31.1 x 23.4 cm (secondary support)



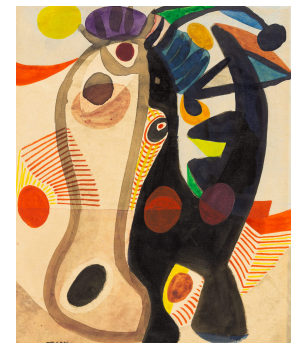
**Alfred Pellán, *La pariade* (The Pairing), 1940-45**  
Oil and India ink on paper glued to plywood  
19.7 x 34.6 cm



**Alfred Pellán, *Cordée de bois* (Cord of Wood), 1941**  
Oil on canvas  
43.5 x 58.7 cm

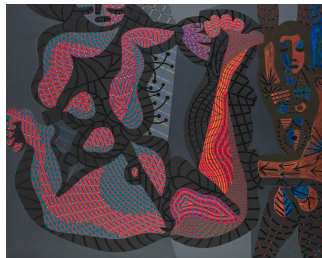


**Alfred Pellán, *Enfants de la Grande-Pointe, Charlevoix* (Children from Grande-Pointe, Charlevoix), 1941**  
Oil on canvas  
43.5 x 59 cm



**Alfred Pellán, *Sans titre* (Untitled), 1942**  
India ink on paper  
25.6 x 20.9 cm





Alfred Pellan, *Homme et femme (Man and Woman)*, 1943-47

Oil on canvas mounted on plywood  
167 x 208 cm



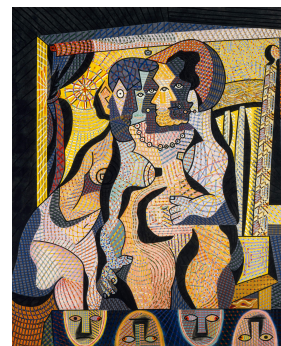
Alfred Pellan, *Alors nous vivions aux remparts des villes endormies*, illustration for Alain Grandbois's *Les îles de la nuit*, 1944

Ink and wash on board glued on board  
35.5 x 28 cm



Alfred Pellan, *Ta forme monte comme la blessure du sang*, illustration for Alain Grandbois's *Les îles de la nuit*, 1944

Watercolour, India ink, and varnish on board glued on board  
36.7 x 29.3 cm



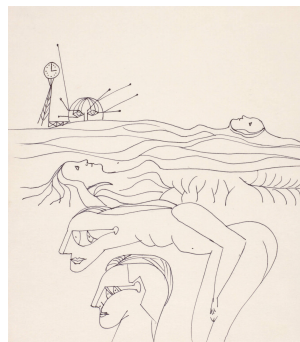
Alfred Pellan, *Conciliabule (Secret Conversation)*, c.1945

Oil on canvas  
208 x 167.5 cm



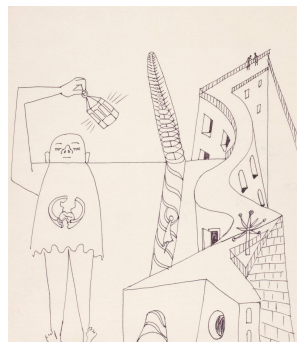
Alfred Pellan, cover for the program of *Madeleine et Pierre*, 1945

Letterpress printing in colour on paper  
28 x 21.6 cm



Alfred Pellan, *Femmes paysage (Women Landscape)*, c.1945-75

Ink on paper  
20.5 x 17.8 cm



Alfred Pellan, *Personnage avec édifice labyrinthique (Figure with a Labyrinthine Building)*, c.1945-75

Ink on paper  
20.5 x 17.8 cm



Alfred Pellan, *Le comédien*, cover for the program of *Le soir des rois (Twelfth Night)*, 1946

Letterpress printing in black and grey on paper  
29.1 x 46 cm



**Alfred Pellán, *Les mannequins (The Mannequins)*, c.1946**

Black ink and coloured pencil on paper mounted onto cardboard  
17.7 x 20.5 cm



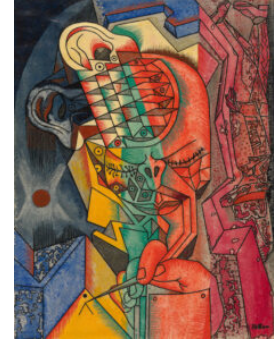
**Alfred Pellán, *Calque de Citrons ultra-violets (Sketch for Ultraviolet Lemons)*, c.1947**

Graphite on tracing paper  
22.5 x 19 cm



**Alfred Pellán, *Citrons ultra-violets (Ultraviolet Lemons)*, 1947**

Oil, gold leaf, and fluorescent paint on canvas  
208 x 167.3 cm



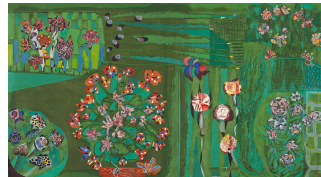
**Alfred Pellán, *L'homme A grave (Man A Engraving)*, c.1948**

Gouache and ink on paper  
29.8 x 22.8 cm



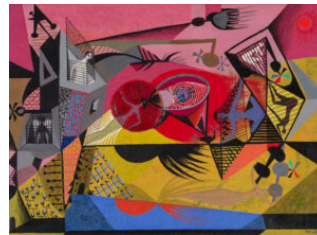
**Alfred Pellán, *Prisme d'Yeux*, 1948**

Ink, graphite, and watercolour on paper  
12.4 x 20.2 cm



**Alfred Pellán, *Jardin vert (Green Garden)*, 1958**

Oil and cellulose powder on canvas  
104.6 x 186.3 cm



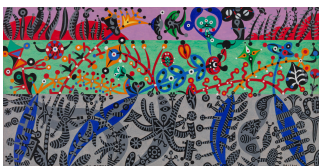
**Alfred Pellán, *Et le soleil continue (And the Sun Shines On)*, 1959 (first version c.1938)**

Oil, silica, and tobacco on canvas  
40.6 x 55.8 cm



**Alfred Pellán, *Étude pour Jardin mécanique (Study for Mechanical Garden)*, 1965**

Dental cement  
8.9 x 8.3 x 1.7 cm



**Alfred Pellán, *Jardin d'Olivia (Olivia's Garden)*, 1968**

Oil on cardboard  
19.5 x 38 cm



**Alfred Pellán, *Jeu de cinq (Game of Five)*, 1968**

Coloured ink and India ink on velvet paper  
7.5 x 12.5 cm



**Alfred Pellán, *Mini-bestaie n° 5 (Mini-Bestiary no. 5)*, c.1971**

Painted stone and wood  
6.4 x 5.5 x 2.7 cm



**Alfred Pellán, *Mini-bestaie n° 10 (Mini-Bestiary no. 10)*, c.1971**

Painted stone and wood  
3.7 x 5.8 x 4.7 cm





Alfred Pellan, *Mini-bestaire n° 22 (Mini-Bestiarium no. 22)*, c.1971  
Painted stone and wood  
6.3 x 12 x 7.2 cm



Alfred Pellan, *Mini-bestaire n° 24 (Mini-Bestiarium no. 24)*, c.1971  
Painted stone and wood  
2.8 x 7 x 2.5 cm



Alfred Pellan, *Mini-bestaire n° 31 (Mini-Bestiarium no. 31)*, c.1971  
Painted stone and wood  
6.8 x 9 x 5.7 cm



Alfred Pellan, *La Rue*, from the artist's book *Sept costumes et un décor pour La nuit des rois de Shakespeare*, 1971  
Serigraph, A.P. 8/10  
65.8 x 101.6 cm (paper);  
25.5 x 63.7 cm (image)



Alfred Pellan, *Olivia*, from the artist's book *Sept costumes et un décor pour La nuit des rois de Shakespeare*, 1971  
Serigraph, 10/100  
65.8 x 50.6 cm



Alfred Pellan, *Sire André*, from the artist's book *Sept costumes et un décor pour La nuit des rois de Shakespeare*, 1971  
Serigraph, 10/100  
65.8 x 50.6 cm



Alfred Pellan, *Viola*, from the artist's book *Sept costumes et un décor pour La nuit des rois de Shakespeare*, 1971  
Serigraph, 10/100  
65.8 x 50.7 cm



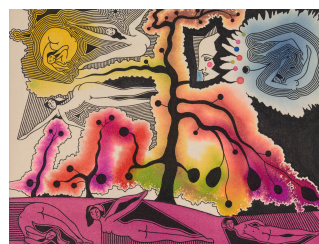
Alfred Pellan, *Oniromancie (Oneiromancy)*, 1972  
Serigraph, 98/100  
66 x 51 cm (paper); 46 x 40.2 cm (image)



Alfred Pellan, *Pop Shop*, 1972  
Serigraph, 48/100  
66 x 51 cm (paper);  
46.6 x 40 cm (image)



Alfred Pellan, *Façonnage (Shaping)*, 1973  
Serigraph, 61/100  
89 x 58.5 cm (paper),  
56 x 48.5 cm (image)



Alfred Pellan, *Voltige d'automne - A (Autumn Acrobatics - A)*, 1973  
Coloured ink and India ink on velvet paper  
25.4 x 33.2 cm



Alfred Pellan, *Bestiaire n° 3 (Bestiarium no. 3)*, 1974  
Oil and India ink on paper  
26.3 x 37 cm



**Alfred Pellan, *Folies-Bergère*, 1974**

Serigraph, H.C. 2/5  
66.3 x 51.1 cm (paper);  
53.6 x 40.9 cm (image)



**Alfred Pellan, *Hollywood*, 1974**

Coloured ink and India  
ink on velvet paper  
25.4 x 33.2 cm



**Alfred Pellan, *L'exhibitionniste (The Exhibitionist)*, 1974**

Patent leather shoe,  
plaster, plywood, ink,  
and paint  
15 x 32.5 x 15.4 cm



**Alfred Pellan, *Pince-fesse*, 1974**

Leather shoe, plaster,  
metal, plywood, and  
paint  
81.8 x 29 x 15.3 cm



**Alfred Pellan, *Pique-mégots*, 1974**

Leather shoe, plaster,  
metal, paper, tobacco,  
plywood, and paint  
11.2 x 35.5 x 15 cm



**Alfred Pellan, *Pour masochiste (For Masochist)*, 1974**

Leather shoe, plaster,  
latex, metal, plywood,  
and paint  
16.1 x 46.7 x 15.2 cm



**Alfred Pellan, *Veuve joyeuse (Merry Widow)*, 1974**

Leather shoe, plaster,  
offset on paper,  
plywood, and paint  
21.6 x 42.7 x 20.2 cm



**Alfred Pellan, *Satellites (Satellites)*, 1979**

Aluminum paint on  
found objects  
21.5 x 14.6 x 13.3 cm





**Alfred Pellán, *Satellites* (Satellites), 1979**

Aluminum paint on  
found objects  
29.2 x 18.4 x 18.4 cm



**Alfred Pellán, *À la femme allongée* (To the Reclining Woman), from artist book *Délirium concerto*, 1982**

Etching and aquatint,  
A.P. 4/8  
56.8 x 76.3 cm (paper);  
45 x 63.7 cm (image)



**Alfred Pellán, *Collage érotique* (Erotic Collage), n.d.**

Coloured pencil,  
graphite, and colour  
offset cut and pasted  
onto cardboard  
40.8 x 32.8 cm

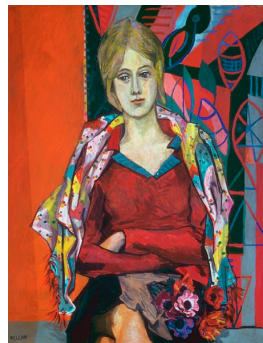
## NATIONAL GALLERY OF CANADA

380 Sussex Drive  
Ottawa, Ontario, Canada  
613-990-1985  
[www.gallery.ca](http://www.gallery.ca)



**Alfred Pellán, *Coin du vieux Québec* (A Corner of Old Quebec), 1922**

Oil on canvas mounted  
on cardboard  
62.8 x 58.4 cm



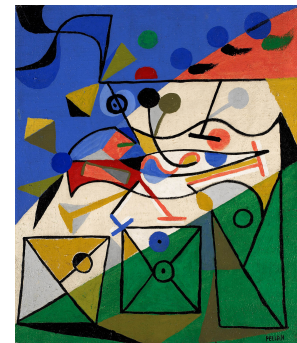
**Alfred Pellán, *Jeune fille aux anémones* (Girl with Anemones), c.1932**

Oil on canvas  
116 x 88.8 cm



**Alfred Pellán, *Jeune comédien* (Young Actor), c.1935/after 1948**

Oil on canvas  
100 x 80.9 cm



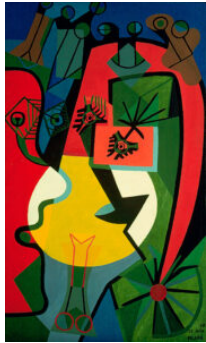
**Alfred Pellán, *Bouche riieuse* (Laughing Mouth), 1935**

Oil on burlap  
55.1 x 46 cm



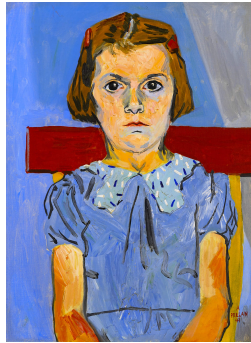
# ALFRED PELLAN

Life & Work by Maria Rosa Lehmann



**Alfred Pellan, *Désir au clair de la lune (Desire in the Light of the Moon)*, 1937**  
Oil on canvas  
161.8 x 97.1 cm

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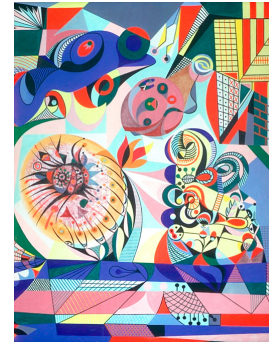
**Alfred Pellan, *Fillette à la robe bleue (Young Girl in Blue Dress)*, 1941**  
Oil on canvas  
58.7 x 43.2 cm

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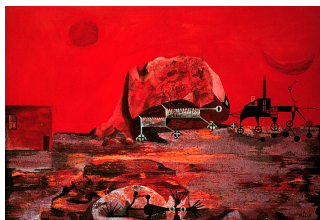
**Alfred Pellan, *Sur la plage (On the Beach)*, 1945**  
Oil on canvas  
207.7 x 167.6 cm

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**Alfred Pellan, *Floraison (Blossoming)*, c.1950**  
Oil on canvas  
180.3 x 146.1 cm

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**Alfred Pellan, *L'affût (The Stalker)*, 1956**  
Oil on canvas  
88.8 x 130.2 cm

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## OTTAWA ART GALLERY

50 Mackenzie King Bridge  
Ottawa, Ontario, Canada  
613-233-8699  
[www.oaggao.ca](http://www.oaggao.ca)



**Alfred Pellan, *Le buisson ardent (The Burning Bush)*, 1966**  
Oil on canvas  
29.8 x 51.4 cm

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# ALFRED PELLAN

Life & Work by Maria Rosa Lehmann

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## PUMPHOUSE

23 Ontario Street  
Kingston, Ontario, Canada  
613-544-7867  
[www.kingstonpumphouse.ca](http://www.kingstonpumphouse.ca)



**Alfred Pellan, *Végétaux marins*  
(*Aquatic Plants*), 1964**

Oil on board  
122.2 x 81.6 cm

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## VANCOUVER ART GALLERY

750 Hornby Street  
Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada  
604-662-4700  
[www.vanartgallery.bc.ca](http://www.vanartgallery.bc.ca)



**Alfred Pellan, *Jardin mécanique*  
(*Mechanical Garden*), 1965**

Acrylic, plaster, and gouache on  
plywood  
122 x 121.8 cm

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# ALFRED PELLAN

Life & Work by Maria Rosa Lehmann

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## WINNIPEG ART GALLERY

300 Memorial Boulevard  
Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada  
204-786-6641  
[www.wag.ca](http://www.wag.ca)



**Alfred Pellán, *Le petit avion* (*The Small Plane*), 1945**

Oil and sand on canvas  
91.5 x 155.3 cm

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## NOTES

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78. Charles Doyon, "Pellan à l'Hotel de ville," *La Reforme*, November 28, 1956, 131P-615/5, FAP, UQAM.
79. John Wyllie, "Artist in perspective: Alfred Pellan," *Canadian Art*, 21, no. 5 (September-October 1964): 290.
80. Pierre Saucier, "L'affaire Pellan : 'J'aime bien les cheveux sur la tête d'une dame... mais je ne les aime pas dans la soupe,'" *La Patrie*, November 18, 1956, 131P-615/5, FAP, UQAM.
81. Jacques Hébert, "M. Antoine Tremblay est-il plus catholique que le pape?" *Vrai*, November 24, 1956, 5.
82. Marchand, "Interview avec Pellan," 5.
83. Paquette Villeneuve, "Alfred Pellan," *Châtelaine*, 11, no. 4 (April 1970): 34-37, 63. He can also briefly be seen on stage of 1970's *Nuit de la poésie*. An oral manifestation of literature in which poets exercised an engaged, collective, and public *prise de parole* to comment the contemporary socio-political climate in Quebec, Pellan's documented presence demonstrated his continued interest and involvement—although he did voice his skepticism concerning Quebec's separatist movement (Judith Jasmin, "Je suis un sorcier," *La Presse*, July 14, 1962, 3).
84. Communication, Centre d'Art de Ste-Adèle, 131P-030/2, FAP, UQAM.
85. Rose-Marie Arbour, "Integration de l'art a l'architecture," in Francine Couture (dir.), *Les arts visuels au Québec dans les années soixante : La reconnaissance de la modernité* (Montreal: VLB Editeur, 1993), 245, 248.



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88. Illi-Maria Harff, "Introduction," in *Pellan* (Winnipeg: The Winnipeg Art Gallery, 1968), n.p.

89. "Feu et lumière," *Perspectives* 5, no. 6 (February 9, 1963): 3.

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91. Debra Anne Antoncic, "Oddballs and Eccentrics" (*Les Hirsutes et les Excentriques*): *Visual Arts and Artists in the Popular Press in Post-War Canada*, PhD thesis (Kingston: Department of Art, Queen's University, 2011), 229.

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101. "Deux doctorats à Alfred Pellan," *Le Devoir*, May 19, 1971, 6.

102. "Prix de la SSJB à Alfred Pellan," *Le Devoir*, May 13, 1972, 20.





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104. J. Russell Harper, *Painting in Canada: A History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977), 335.
105. "Un prix Molson à Alfred Pellan," *Le Devoir*, May 15, 1973, 10.
106. "Four men honored by University of Montreal," *The Montreal Star*, Saturday, June 1, 1974, 131P-050/1, FAP, UQAM.
107. Communiqué, The Queen Elizabeth, Montreal, 131P-050/1, FAP, UQAM.
108. Virginia Nixon, "Hotel's award is an honor for the 'fisherman' painter," *The Gazette*, July 1978, 131P-050/1, FAP, UQAM.
109. René Viau, "De Visu - Pellan, grand 'manie tout' de l'estampe," *Le Devoir*, December 16, 2006, <https://www.ledevoir.com/culture/arts-visuels/125060/de-visu-pellan-grand-manie-tout-de-l-estampe>.
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111. Press release, Tuesday, October 23, 1984, 131P-050/2, FAP, UQAM.
112. *L'art aujourd'hui : Alfred Pellan, Prix Paul-Emile Borduas*, Société Radio-Canada, Radio FM, audiotape, 131P-010: B3/1, FAP, UQAM.
113. Madeline Pellan, speech, Paul-Emile Borduas Award, Quebec City, October 23, 1984, 131P-050/2, FAP, UQAM.
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117. Harper, *Painting in Canada*, 335.
118. Pierre Roberge, "Pionnier de l'art moderne, Alfred Pellan, meurt à 82 ans," *54*, no. 113 (November 2, 1988): 19.
119. Harper, *Painting in Canada*, 330.
120. André Gladu and France Pilon, "Pellan : Propos sur un sorcier," *Le Devoir*, November 5, 1988, 1.



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2. Maurice Gagnon, *Pellan*, Collection Art Vivant (Montreal: L'Arbre, 1943), 9.

### KEY WORKS: MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS – A

1. Donald W. Buchanan, *Alfred Pellan*, The Gallery of Canadian Art 4 (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1962), 7.

2. André Marchand, "Interview avec Pellan," August 1969, *Bulletin du Musée du Québec*, no. 14 (March 1970): 1.

3. According to Jean Paulhan, a successful (Cubist) painting is one that breaks with existing preconceptions. Jean Paulhan, *La peinture cubiste* (Paris: Le cercle du livre précieux, 1970), 179-80.

4. Germain Lefebvre, *Pellan: Sa vie, son art, son temps* (La Prairie: Éditions Marcel Broquet, 1986), 28.

5. René Viau, "Les années parisiennes," in *Alfred Pellan : Le rêveur éveillé* (Quebec City: Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, 2014), 21.

### KEY WORKS: LAUGHING MOUTH

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2. The term "truly abstract" here refers to works that are entirely non-objective.

3. Pierre Théberge quoted in Pierre Roberge, "Pionnier de l'art moderne, Alfred Pellan meurt à 82 ans," *La Voix de l'Est*, November 2, 1988, 19.

4. Pellan's notes for an interview with Fernande and Jean Simard in *L'art et la vie*, Société Radio-Canada, January 20, 1957, 131P-030/1, FAP, UQAM.

5. G. de la Tour Fondue, "Pellan," in *Interviews Canadiennes* (Montreal: Chantecler, 1952), 125-39.

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2. Michel B. Kamenka, "L'Erable du Canada," *Correio da Noite*, December, 4, 1944, in *Canadian Art in Brazil: Press Review* (Rio de Janeiro, 1945), 59.





3. The Canadian Press, "Pellan Paintings Pulled for Queen's Portrait," *The Hamilton Spectator*, July 27, 2011, <https://www.thespec.com/news/canada/2011/07/27/pellan-paintings-pulled-for-queen-s-portrait.html>.

4. Kathleen Harris, "Queen's portrait pulled down, Alfred Pellan paintings back up in Foreign Affairs building," CBC News, Nov. 9, 2015, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/canada-foreign-affairs-art-queen-1.3310633>.

### KEY WORKS: FOUR WOMEN

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2. Marie-Jeanne Musiol, *L'autre œil: Le nu féminin dans l'art masculin* (Montreal: La pleine lune, 1988), 52.

3. Craig Ownes, "Der Diskurs der Anderen: Feminismus und Postmoderne," *Kunst mit Eigen-Sinn: Aktuelle Kunst von Frauen* (Vienna: Löcker Verlag, 1985), 84.

4. Danielle St-Laurent, « La figure féminine dans la peinture d'Alfred Pellan (1930-1960) », Master's thesis, Montréal, Université du Québec à Montréal, 1987, p. 24.

5. Michel Martin, "Le cubisme apprivoisé," in *Alfred Pellan*, ed. Michel Martin and Sandra Grant Marchand (Montreal: Musée du Québec, Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal, Les Publications du Québec, 1993), 202. In fact, Pellan's linking of stylistic elements seems only natural, since early Surrealism (1925-35) was marked by numerous signs of the group's allegiance to Picasso (Anne Baldassari, *The Surrealist Picasso* [Riehen: Fondation Beyeler, Flammarion, 2005], 30).

6. Kenneth Clark, *The Nude: A Study of Ideal Art* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1970), 113-62.

### KEY WORKS: MAD LOVE (HOMAGE TO ANDRÉ BRETON)

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3. Katharine Conley, *Automatic Woman: The Representation of Woman and Surrealism* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), 141.

4. Erika Billeter, "Introduction à l'exposition," in *La femme et le surréalisme*, ed. Erika Billeter and José Pierre (Lausanne: Musée cantonal des beaux-arts Lausanne, 1987), 23.

5. Reesa Greenberg, "Surrealism and Pellan: L'Amour fou," *The Journal of Canadian Art History* 1, no. 2 (Fall 1974): 4.



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2. Germain Lefebvre, *Alfred Pellan au Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec* (Quebec City: Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, 2008), 43.
3. Lefebvre, *Alfred Pellan*, 188.
4. Jean Bédard, "Pellan au musée... La longue maturation de l'œil et de la main," *Le Devoir*, November 11, 1972, 17.
5. Danielle Lord, "Pellan : Magicien de la couleur, fils de l'amour et de la liberté," in *Les enfants et Alfred Pellan* (Laval: Maison des arts de Laval, Salle Alfred Pellan, 2005), 11.
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7. Jean Bédard, "La sauvagerie apprivoisée de Pellan," *Culture vivante*, no. 26 (September 1972): 3.

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2. Germain Lefebvre, "Pellan et 'la Nuit des Rois,'" *Cahier de théâtre Jeu*, no. 47 (1988), pp. 25-30, <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/28068ac>.
3. Martial Dassylva, "'Nuit des Rois' au TNM ou l'épiphanie de Pellan," *La Presse*, December 14, 1968, 24.
4. Martial Dassylva, "Shakespeare et la peinture n'ont pas fait bon ménage," *La Presse*, December 21, 1968, 24.
5. Éloi de Grandmont, "Pellan au théâtre," in *Les Compagnons sur la scène du Gesù à Montréal: "Le soir des rois,"* programme de la pièce, Montreal, Les Compagnons de Saint-Laurent, 1946, p. 7.
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7. Éloi de Grandmont, « Le combat Pellan-Shakespeare dans *le soir des rois* aux Compagnons », *Le Canada*, no. 300 (Mar. 26, 1946), p. 6.
8. Nicole Clément, *Alfred Pellan et "Le Soir des rois": Analyse de l'œuvre scénique*, master's thesis, Université du Québec à Montréal, 1992, 43.





### KEY WORKS: MINI-BESTIARY NO. 31

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2. André Breton, *Arcane 17* (Paris: Editions Jean-Jacques Pauvert, 1975), 6.
3. Suzanne Lamy, *André Breton: Hermétisme et poésie dans Arcane 17* (Montreal: Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 1977), 14.
4. "The Tail of the Comet: Alfred Pellan, Witness to Surrealism," *Vie des arts* 20, no. 80 (Fall 1975): 89.
5. François-Marc Gagnon, "Alfred Pellan et André Breton sur la plage," *Vie des arts* 38, no. 151 (1993): 18.

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2. Gilles Daigneault, "L'estampe selon Pellan," in *Alfred Pellan: Les estampes* (Montreal: Musée des beaux-arts de Montréal, 2006), 17.
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2. Haim N. Finkelstein, *Surrealism and the Crisis of the Object* (Ann Arbor: Umi Research Press, 1979), 53.
3. Konrad Paul Liessmann, "Blutsverwandtschaft: Über Kunst und Erotik ein Annäherungsversuch," in *Eros in der Kunst der Moderne* (Vienna: Fondation Beyeler, Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2006), 10, 11.
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3. Dennis Reid, *A Concise History of Canadian Painting* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973), 212-13.



4. R.H. Hubbard, *L'évolution de l'art au Canada* (Ottawa: National Gallery, 1964), 118.
5. Jean Paul Lemieux, "Notes sur l'art à Québec," *Regards* 3, no. 2 (November 1941): 80.
6. Letter to Jean-Paul Lépin, no date, private archives, quoted in Grandbois, "Alfred Pellan," note 24, 275.
7. Jean Paul Lemieux, "Pellan, peintre de l'abstraction, créateur de symboles," *Le Temps*, November 8, 1940, FAP, UQAM.
8. Lemieux, "Notes sur l'art à Québec," 81.
9. François-Marc Gagnon, "Pellan, Borduas, and the Automatic Men and Ideas in Québec," *artscanada* no. 174-75, December 1972-January 1973, 49.
10. Reid, *Concise History*, 211.
11. Bernard Lévy, "Développer le discernement: entretien avec Alfred Pellan," *Vie des arts* 38, no. 151 (Summer 1993): 22.
12. Éloi de Grandmont, "L'Exposition de l'Ecole des Beaux-Arts," *Le Devoir* 35, no. 134 (June 12, 1944).
13. Murielle Villeneuve and Louise Foliau, "L'araignée tisse chez Pellan," *Toile d'Araignée*, Collège Basile-Moreau, Ville Saint Laurent, 1964, n.p.
14. Lévy, "Développer le discernement," 22.
15. "Exposition de l'œuvre d'A. Pellan," *Le Devoir*, January 4, 1961, 7.
16. "La police chez les pompiers," *Le Canada*, no. 61, June 14, 1945, 4.
17. "La querelle des pompiers et des artistes vivants," *Le Jour*, June 23, 1945, 4.
18. "M. Pellan s'explique après avoir été mis en cause par M. Maillard," *Le Canada*, June 19, 1945, 3.
19. "M. Pellan s'explique après avoir été mis en cause par M. Maillard," 3.
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24. Patrick Condon Laurette, "Pellan and Brandtner: An avant-garde hinge," in *Nova Scotia Collects: Pellan and Brandtner; Works on Paper* (Halifax: Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, 1980).
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26. Kate Taylor, "Quebec Artist Alfred Pellan," *The Globe and Mail*, July 3, 1993, C2.
27. Claude Gauvreau, "L'épopée automatiste vue par un cyclope," *La Barre du Jour*, no. 17, January-August 1969, 52.
28. Guy Robert, *Pellan, sa vie et son œuvre* (Montreal: Ed. du centre de pédagogie et de psychologie, 1963), 54; François Hertel, "Alfred Pellan, peintre," *Rythmes et Couleurs*, September-October 1965, 23.
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32. Gagnon, "Pellan, Borduas," 51.
33. André Breton, "Manifeste du surréalisme, 1924," in *Manifestes du surréalisme* (Paris: Gallimard Folio, 1985), 36.
34. Jean Seguin, "La peinture," *Antennes 4*, no. 2-3 (1957): 15.
35. Bernard Dorival, "Alfred Pellan," *Le Jardin des Arts*, no. 5 (March 1955): 318.
36. André Marchand, "Interview avec Pellan," August 1969, *Bulletin du Musée du Québec*, no. 14 (March 1970): 2.



37. Catherine-Eve Gadoury, "Un artiste libre: Entretien avec Germain Lefebvre," in *Alfred Pellan: Le grand atelier* (Quebec City: Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, 2013), 8.
38. John Wyllie, "Artist in perspective: Alfred Pellan," *Canadian Art* 21, no. 5 (September-October 1964): 290.
39. Excerpt of the manifesto written by Jacques de Tonnancour, in *Art, politique, révolution: Manifestes pour l'indépendance de l'art*, by Louis Gill (Ville Mont-Royal: M Editeur, 2012), 27.
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42. Paul-Émile Borduas, *Refus global*, La Bibliothèque électronique du Québec, Collection Littérature québécoise, vol. 93: version 1.0.
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44. Madeleine Gariépy, "Exposition Prisme d'Yeux," *Notre Temps*, May 22, 1948, 5.
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48. Marchand, "Interview avec Pellan," 5.
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50. Germain Lefebvre, *Pellan : Sa vie, son art, son temps* (Quebec City: Marcel Broquet, 1986), 115.
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### STYLE & TECHNIQUE

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16. Bernard Dorival, "Trois peintres canadiens au musée national d'art moderne de Paris," *Vie des arts*, no. 10 (Spring 1958): 19.
17. Pellan in *Dessin et Surréalisme au Québec* (Montreal: Musée d'art contemporain, 1979), 12.
18. When asked to compare his work to Salvador Dalí's painting, Pellan declared the colour of the Catalan artist as superficial: "His colours have no depth of relationship with each other." John Wyllie, "Artist in perspective: Alfred Pellan," *Canadian Art* 21, no. 5 (September–October 1964): 288.
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21. Jean-Pierre de Villier, "Quarante ans de Surréalisme dans la peinture québécoise," *Vie des arts* 31, no. 123 (June 1986): 45.
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## GLOSSARY

### **abstract art**

Also called nonfigurative or nonrepresentational art, abstract art uses form, colour, line, and gestural marks in compositions that do not attempt to represent images of real things. It may interpret reality in an altered form, or depart from it entirely.

### **academic tradition**

Associated with the royal academies of art established in France and England in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries respectively, the academic tradition emphasized drawing, painting, and sculpture in a style highly influenced by ancient classical art. Subject matter for painting was hierarchically ranked, with history painting of religious, mythological, allegorical, and historical figures holding the position of greatest importance, followed, in order, by genre painting, portraiture, still lifes, and landscapes.

### **Académie Colarossi**

Founded in Paris in 1870 by the Italian sculptor Filippo Colarossi as an alternative to the conservative École des beaux-arts, the Académie Colarossi was one of the first French schools to accept female students. Classes were segregated by gender but otherwise identical, with both men and women drawing from nude models. Notable students included Emily Carr, Camille Claudel, Paul Gauguin, and Amedeo Modigliani. The school closed in the 1930s.

### **Académie de la Grande Chaumière**

An art school founded in Paris in 1904 by Spanish artist Claudio Castelucho (1870–1927) and jointly directed from 1909 by artists Martha Stettler (1870–1945), Alice Dannenberg (1861–1948), and Lucien Simon (1861–1945). The Académie offered lower fees than other Parisian art schools and promoted a teaching program that emphasized a non-academic, experimental, and modernist approach to painting and sculpture.

### **Archambault, Louis (Canadian, 1915–2003)**

A significant figure in twentieth-century Canadian sculpture, whose numerous public commissions can be found in Montreal, Toronto, and Ottawa.

Archambault also contributed to the Canadian pavilions at the Brussels World's Fair, 1958, and Expo 67, in Montreal. He was a signatory of the 1948 *Prisme d'yeux* manifesto.

### **Arp, Jean (German/French, 1886–1966)**

Born Hans Arp, Jean Arp was a Surrealist artist and original member of the Dada group. His work includes textile, wood relief, sculpture, and collage. Arp also wrote essays and poetry, contributing to publications including *De Stijl* and *La Révolution surréaliste*. In the 1930s, following his association with the Paris group Abstraction-Création, Arp's work began to incorporate aspects of Constructivism, which translated into harder edges in his forms. His wife was the Surrealist artist Sophie Taeuber.





### **Art Association of Montreal (AAM)**

Founded in 1860 as an offshoot of the Montreal Society of Artists (itself dating to 1847), the Art Association of Montreal became the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts in 1947. The MMFA is now a major international museum, with more than 1 million visitors annually.

### **Art Gallery of Ontario (AGO)**

Founded in 1900 as the Art Museum of Toronto, later the Art Gallery of Toronto, the Art Gallery of Ontario is a major collecting institution in Toronto, Ontario, holding close to 95,000 works by Canadian and international artists.

### **assemblage**

An assemblage, collage, or bricolage is a three-dimensional artwork created from found objects. The term "assemblage" was first used in the 1950s by the French artist Jean Dubuffet to describe his butterfly-wing collages; it was popularized in the United States in reference to the work of the American artists Robert Rauschenberg and Jim Dine.

### **automatism**

A physiological term first applied to art by the Surrealists to refer to processes such as free association and spontaneous, intuitive writing, drawing, and painting that allow access to the subconscious without the interference of planning or controlled thought.

### **Automatistes**

A Montreal-based artists' group interested in Surrealism and the Surrealist technique of automatism. Centred on the artist, teacher, and theorist Paul-Émile Borduas, the Automatistes exhibited regularly between 1946 and 1954, making Montreal a locus of mid-century avant-garde art. Members included Marcel Barbeau, Marcelle Ferron, Jean-Paul Mousseau, Jean Paul Riopelle, Fernand Leduc, and Françoise Sullivan.

### **avant-garde**

From the French for "vanguard" or "advance guard," avant-garde entered discussions about art in the early nineteenth-century work of the socialist thinker Henri de Saint-Simon, who believed that artists had a role to play in building a new society. The meaning of "avant-garde" has shifted over the years, referring to artists in relation to their times rather than to a particular group of artists working at a specific time in history. It connotes radicalism and rejection of a status quo and is often associated with work that is provocative and confrontational.

### **bas-relief**

A type of sculpture in which the decorative motif projects slightly from the background plane. Bas-reliefs are common to exterior architectural design around the world.



### **Bellefleur, Léon (Canadian, 1910–2007)**

A painter and printmaker best known for his painterly, textured canvases composed of overlapping geometric shapes and blended, bright colours. Bellefleur studied at the École des beaux-arts de Montréal and was highly influenced by the Surrealist and automatist experiments of his artist colleagues, who included figures such as Jean Benoît (1922–2010), Mimi Parent (1924–2005), and Alfred Pellan (1906–1988).

### **Benoît, Jean (Canadian, 1922–2010)**

A Quebec City-born artist best known for designing mechanical, biomorphic sculptures and costumes. He studied at the École des beaux-arts de Montréal alongside fellow Surrealist artist Mimi Parent (1924–2005), whom he later married in 1948. Benoît joined the Surrealists in 1959, who dubbed him “The Enchanter of Serpents” in reference to the serpentine shapes and forms that often characterized much of his work.

### **Borduas, Paul-Émile (Canadian, 1905–1960)**

The leader of the avant-garde Automatistes and one of Canada’s most important modern artists. Borduas was also an influential advocate for reform in Quebec, calling for liberation from religious and narrow nationalist values in the 1948 manifesto *Refus global*. (See *Paul-Émile Borduas: Life & Work* by François-Marc Gagnon.)

### **Braque, Georges (French, 1882–1963)**

A seminal figure in the history of modern art. Working alongside Picasso from 1908 to 1914, Braque developed the principles of major phases of Analytic and Synthetic Cubism and, along with the latter, the use of collage. After the First World War, he pursued a personal style of Cubism admired for its compositional and colouristic subtleties.

### **Breton, André (French, 1896–1966)**

A poet and the leader of the Surrealists, whose members included the artists Max Ernst, Salvador Dalí, and Man Ray, and the poets Paul and Gala Éluard. Breton outlined in successive manifestos the tenets and techniques of Surrealism, and he organized the group’s first exhibition in 1925.

### **Canada Council for the Arts**

A Crown corporation created in 1957 by the parliamentary Canada Council for the Arts Act. The Canada Council exists to encourage art production and promote the study and enjoyment of art in Canada. It provides support to artists and arts organizations from across all artistic disciplines, including visual art, dance, music, and literature.

### **Carr, Emily (Canadian, 1871–1945)**

A pre-eminent B.C.-based artist and writer, Carr is renowned today for her bold and vibrant images of both the Northwest Coast landscape and its Native peoples. Educated in California, England, and France, she was influenced by a variety of modern art movements but ultimately developed a unique aesthetic style. She was one of the first West Coast artists to achieve national recognition. (See *Emily Carr: Life & Work* by Lisa Baldissera.)





### Contemporary Arts Society

Founded in 1939 by John Lyman, this Montreal-based society promoted a non-academic approach to modernist art and linked artistic culture in Quebec to contemporary life. Early members included Stanley Cosgrove, Paul-Émile Borduas, and Jack Humphrey.

### Courbet, Gustave (French, 1819–1877)

A critical figure in nineteenth-century art, Courbet helped establish the Realist movement, with paintings such as *Burial at Ornans*, 1849–50, and *The Painter's Studio*, 1855, and paved the way for later artists, including the Impressionists, to abandon classical subjects for those they encountered in their daily lives.

### Cubism

A radical style of painting developed by Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque in Paris between 1907 and 1914, Cubism is defined by the representation of numerous perspectives at once. Cubism is considered crucial to the history of modern art for its enormous international impact; famous practitioners also include Juan Gris and Francis Picabia.

### Dalí, Salvador (Spanish, 1904–1989)

The star of the Surrealists and one of his era's most exuberant personalities, Dalí is best known for his naturalistically rendered dreamscapes. *The Persistence of Memory*, 1931, with its melting clock faces, remains one of the twentieth century's most parodied artworks.

### de Tonnancour, Jacques (Canadian, 1917–2005)

A painter, photographer, and entomologist inspired by nature and vibrant Brazilian landscapes. De Tonnancour's landscape and figure paintings were influenced by the Group of Seven, Goodridge Roberts, and Pablo Picasso. As a member of the short-lived *Prisme d'Yeux* group (1948–1949), he opposed the Automatistes. In 1982, he stopped painting and began to study insects. De Tonnancour was named to the Order of Canada in 1979 and to the National Order of Quebec in 1993.

### Dumouchel, Albert (Canadian, 1916–1971)

A painter, printmaker, and educator. Over the course of his career, Dumouchel worked variously in Surrealist, abstract, and figurative modes, producing a body of work that reflects the trajectory of modern art in Quebec. In 1948, he signed the *Prisme d'yeux* manifesto spearheaded by the painter Alfred Pellan.

### École des beaux-arts de Québec

Founded in 1922, the École des beaux-arts de Québec became an important centre for the study of applied arts and fine arts, including architecture, drawing, engraving, tapestry, decorative arts (design), and art history. Among its famous students were Maximilien Boucher, Raoul Hunter, and Alfred Pellan. In 1970, the school became part of Université Laval.



### **Ernst, Max (German, 1891–1976)**

A prolific artist and pioneering member of both Dada and Surrealism. Ernst worked in a variety of mediums, including painting, sculpture, collage, and printmaking, and invented the experimental artistic techniques of frottage, grattage, and decalcomania. Critical of what he saw as the irrationality of the modern world, Ernst was largely inspired in his work by the Surrealist interest in dreams and the unconscious.

### **exquisite corpse**

A collaborative method of creating a work, invented by the Surrealists. A participant draws on a sheet of paper, folds it to conceal the illustration, and passes it to the next player to extend the drawing. André Breton wrote that the technique, adapted from an old parlour game of words, emerged among artist friends at 54 rue du Château, Paris. Early participants were Marcel Duchamp, Jacques Prévert, Man Ray, and Joan Miró.

### **figurative**

A descriptive term for an artwork that depicts or references recognizable objects or beings, including humans. Figurative art is often representational and takes source material from the real world, although its subjects may be overlaid with metaphors and allegory. The term arose in popular usage around the 1950s to describe artwork in contrast with the Abstract Expressionist movement as well as nonfigurative and non-objective art.

### **Forces nouvelles**

A reactionary association of painters, founded in Paris in the mid-1930s by art critic and painter Henri Hérault. The group rejected avant-garde movements such as Impressionism and Surrealism, seeking instead to revive principles of craftsmanship in French art by painting scenes of contemporary life in accessible, often realist styles.

### **Fortin, Marc-Aurèle (Canadian, 1888–1970)**

A Quebecois painter, watercolourist, and printmaker based in Montreal during most of his career. He is best known for his detailed, quaint depictions of the St. Lawrence Valley and its surrounding landscapes. Fortin had a particular interest in capturing the rural villages and lifestyles of Quebec's countryside and was highly influenced by the work of French painter Jean-François Millet (1814–1875).

### **Gagnon, Clarence (Canadian, 1881–1942)**

Although he travelled and lived in Europe periodically throughout his career, Clarence Gagnon is best known for his paintings of the people and landscapes of his native Quebec, and particularly the Charlevoix region. A virtuosic colourist, Gagnon created highly original winter scenes in vivid hues, with generous play between light and dark. He is also known for illustrating books such as *Maria Chapdelaine* by Louis Hémon (1913) and *Le grand silence blanc* by L.F. Rouquette (1928).





### **Gagnon, François-Marc (French/Canadian, 1935–2019)**

A writer, scholar, and professor recognized as one of Canada's most prominent art historians. Born in Paris, Gagnon was based in Montreal and dedicated his career to the advancement and promotion of Quebec and Canadian art and art history. He taught at the Université de Montréal before later founding the Institute for Studies in Canadian Art at Concordia University.

### **Gauvreau, Claude (Canadian, 1925–1971)**

A playwright, poet, and polemicist known for contributing greatly to modernist theatre in Quebec, Gauvreau was a leader of the Automatistes and signatory of the 1948 manifesto *Refus global*. His writing is characterized by poetic abstraction and expression, such as his first play, *Bien-être*, written in 1947 for his muse and lover, Muriel Guilbault.

### **Giacometti, Alberto (Swiss, 1901–1966)**

Primarily known as a sculptor, Alberto Giacometti was also a painter, draftsman, and printmaker. Although his early, abstract work was Surrealist with Cubist influences, Giacometti turned to sculpting the figure after the Second World War as well as to phenomenology—a way of understanding the world through perception and experience—increasing the size of his sculptures and thinning the human bodies they depicted until they seemed to almost disappear in space. Frail and isolated, they were written about by the existentialist philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre and caught the attention of Samuel Beckett, for whom Giacometti designed the first set for his play *Waiting for Godot*.

### **Gris, Juan (Spanish, 1887–1927)**

A Cubist painter associated with Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque known for his clear, geometric style of Synthetic Cubism and for his still lifes. Part of the Paris art scene of the early twentieth century, his friends included artists Henri Matisse and Fernand Léger and the poet Guillaume Apollinaire. Gris is credited with helping to systemize and theorize the stylistic developments of Picasso and Braque.

### **Impressionism**

A highly influential art movement that originated in France in the 1860s, Impressionism is associated with the emergence of modern urban European society. Claude Monet, Pierre-Auguste Renoir, and other Impressionists rejected the subjects and formal rigours of academic art in favour of scenes of nature and daily life and the careful rendering of atmospheric effects. They often painted outdoors.

### **Kandinsky, Wassily (Russian, 1866–1944)**

An artist, teacher, and philosopher who settled in Germany and later in France, Kandinsky was central to the development of abstract art. Much of his work conveys his interest in the relationships between colour, sound, and emotion. *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* (1911), his famous treatise on abstraction, draws on mysticism and theories of divinity.



### **Klee, Paul (Swiss-German, 1879–1940)**

Primarily known as a painter of prodigious energy and imagination—his output comprises an estimated nine thousand artworks—Klee was also a printmaker, art writer, and beloved teacher, first at the Bauhaus and later at the Düsseldorf Academy.

### **Lacroix, Richard (Canadian, b.1939)**

A multimedia graphic artist, printmaker, and painter known for his expressionistic style and use of vibrant colour and free-flowing lines. He studied at the Institute of Graphic Arts in Montreal and the École des beaux-arts de Montréal, where he later became professor of engraving in 1960. In 1964, he helped found the Fusion des Arts group, an artistic association that aimed to explore the synthesis of art and society.

### **Leduc, Fernand (Canadian, 1916–2014)**

A painter and member of the Montreal-based Automatistes. Leduc's earlier paintings evince his interest in Surrealism and automatism; later he began to work in a more formalist mode and then in a hard-edge style, which linked him to the Plasticien movement.

### **Léger, Fernand (French, 1881–1955)**

A leading figure of the Paris avant-garde, whose ideas about modern art, spread through his writing and teaching as well as his own artistic output, would guide a generation of artists. Prolific in media from paint to ceramics to film, Léger was appreciated for his diverse styles, which ranged from Cubist abstraction in the 1910s to realist imagery in the 1950s.

### **Lemieux, Jean Paul (Canadian, 1904–1990)**

A painter of landscapes and figures, who used these forms to express what he saw as the solitariness of human existence. Lemieux taught at the École des beaux-arts in Quebec City (now part of Université Laval) for thirty years, until 1967. He has been the subject of several major retrospectives at Canadian museums. (See *Jean Paul Lemieux: Life & Work* by Michèle Grandbois.)

### **Leonardo da Vinci (Italian, 1452–1519)**

The patriarch of the Italian High Renaissance and the creator of the *Mona Lisa*, 1503. Leonardo da Vinci's paintings, sculptures, and architectural and decorative designs altered ideas of what Western art could be, and his writings influenced the concepts of ideal artistic representation and expression through the modern era.

### **Lyman, John (Canadian, 1886–1967)**

A painter and art critic. Founder of the Contemporary Arts Society and a champion of Canadian artistic culture, Lyman established the short-lived art school The Atelier and wrote for the *Montrealer*. In opposition to perspectives invested in a distinctly Canadian painting style, Lyman advocated for an international approach.





### **Maillard, Charles (French, 1887–1973)**

A Tiaret, Algeria-born French painter who immigrated to Quebec in 1910, becoming director of the École des beaux-arts de Montréal in 1925. As a traditional painter of landscapes and portraits, Maillard's advancement of an academic, conventional style of artmaking often conflicted with his more modernist contemporaries within the Montreal art scene.

### **Milne, David (Canadian, 1882–1953)**

A painter, printmaker, and illustrator whose work—principally landscapes—displays the tonal brilliance and concern with process of his Impressionist and Post-Impressionist influences. Milne lived in New York early in his career, where he trained at the Art Students League and participated in the Armory Show in 1913.

### **Miró, Joan (Spanish, 1893–1983)**

A prolific artist and important figure in the history of abstract art in the twentieth century, Joan Miró engaged with painting, sculpting, printmaking, and decorative arts. Throughout his long career, Miró sustained thematic interest in the influence of his native landscape on his artistic creation. French Surrealism influenced his work, though he is recognized to have developed his own deeply personal style.

### **modernism**

A movement extending from the mid-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century in all the arts, modernism rejected academic traditions in favour of innovative styles developed in response to contemporary industrialized society. Modernist movements in the visual arts have included Gustave Courbet's Realism, and later Impressionism, Post-Impressionism, Fauvism, and Cubism and on to abstraction. By the 1960s, anti-authoritarian postmodernist styles such as Pop art, Conceptual art, and Neo-Expressionism blurred the distinction between high art and mass culture.

### **Modigliani, Amedeo (Italian, 1884–1920)**

A painter and sculptor of stylized, elongated, and melancholy portraits and nude figures, Modigliani is recognized for the sensuality and sexuality in his nude paintings of woman and for frank bodily depiction, considered vulgar by some during his time. His depictions of faces are mask-like but nonetheless provide psychological insight into his subjects. In 1906, Modigliani moved to Paris and became a central figure of the École de Paris circle of artists who created Fauvism, Cubism, and Post-Impressionism.

### **Montreal Museum of Fine Arts**

Founded in 1860 as the Art Association of Montreal, the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts has an encyclopedic collection of artworks and artifacts dating from antiquity to the present day. From its beginnings as a private museum and exhibition space to its current status as a public institution spread over four buildings on Sherbrooke Street, the museum has accumulated a collection of more than forty-three thousand works and hosts historical, modern, and contemporary exhibitions.



### **Morrice, James Wilson (Canadian, 1865–1924)**

One of Canada's first modernist painters and first artists to gain international recognition, during his lifetime Morrice was nonetheless more celebrated in Europe than he was at home. He is best known for richly coloured landscapes that show the influence of James McNeill Whistler and Post-Impressionism.

### **Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec**

An art museum located in Quebec City that initially opened to the public in 1933 as an archive and museum for the arts and natural sciences. After restructurings in 1962 and 1979, by 1983 the MNBAQ had become a Crown corporation focused solely on the visual arts. Today, its vast collection encompasses more than forty thousand works, primarily made in Quebec or by Quebec artists, that date from the sixteenth century to the present.

### **Nabis**

Also called the Pont-Aven School. A group of young Post-Impressionist artists, including Pierre Bonnard and Édouard Vuillard, who met at the Lycée Condorcet in Paris, established themselves as a movement in the decade 1880–90, and remained active until 1900. The Nabis (from the Hebrew *nebiim*, meaning “prophets” or “visionaries”) shared the Symbolists’ belief that objects in nature represent ideas, and that the visible is the manifestation of the invisible. Their most important contribution to painting was an abstract, rhythmic organization of figures and ground on the surface of the canvas.

### **National Gallery of Canada**

Established in 1880, the National Gallery of Canada in Ottawa holds the most extensive collection of Canadian art in the country as well as works by prominent international artists. Spearheaded by the governor general the Marquis of Lorne, the gallery was created to strengthen a specifically Canadian brand of artistic culture and identity and to build a national collection of art that would match the level of other British Empire institutions. Since 1988, the gallery has been located on Sussex Drive in a building designed by Moshe Safdie.

### **Palardy, Jean (American/Canadian, 1905–1991)**

A painter, writer, ethnologist, art historian, and filmmaker who studied at the Montreal School of Fine Arts. In 1941, he began a long association with the National Film Board as a director, screenwriter, cinematographer, and producer. His book on historical furniture design in Quebec was highly influential, and he became a consultant on restoration and museum projects, including the *Grande Hermine* (a replica of Jacques Cartier’s ship), the Fortress of Louisbourg, and the Château Ramezay. He married the artist Jori Smith in the early 1930s.

### **Parent, Mimi (Canadian, 1924–2005)**

A Surrealist painter best known for her dreamlike, whimsical, and highly symbolic canvases. She studied under Canadian painter Alfred Pellan (1906–1988) at the École des beaux-arts de Montréal before being expelled in 1948 for her participation in an anti-conformist campus art group. Her dissatisfaction with the traditionalism of the Canadian art scene led her to spend the rest of her artistic career in Paris.





### **Parent, Omer (Canadian, 1907–2000)**

A painter, photographer, decorator, and filmmaker, and an important if secretive figure of the Quebec avant-garde. A close friend of Alfred Pellan and Fernand Léger, Parent moved with Pellan to Paris in 1926 to attend the École des arts décoratifs. He was the founder and first director of the École des arts visuels at Université Laval.

### **Picasso, Pablo (Spanish, 1881–1973)**

One of the most famous and influential artists of his time, Picasso was a prominent member of the Parisian avant-garde circle that included Henri Matisse and Georges Braque. His painting *Les Femmes d'Alger*, 1907, is considered by many to be the most important of the twentieth century.

### **plasticity**

A term used to describe art that is created on a flat surface—like a painting—but which has the illusion of being three-dimensional. These works achieve the quality of plasticity through artistic techniques such as the interplay of light and shadow or the rendering of shapes and textures to give the impression that a two-dimensional representation of an object takes up real space.

### **Quiet Revolution**

During the 1960s, Quebecois society underwent a rapid change. Following the 1960 provincial election, which brought Jean Lesage's Liberal government to power, Quebec opened up to political and social reforms. A new Quebec identity replaced the more common French Canadian identity and, in addition, the Catholic Church's influence began to diminish. The idea of an independent and autonomous Quebec state was introduced to the international scene.

### **realism**

A style of art in which subjects are depicted as factually as possible. Realism also refers to a nineteenth-century art movement, led by Gustave Courbet, concerned with the representation of daily modern life, rather than mythological, religious, or historical subjects.

### **Refus global (Total Refusal)**

A manifesto released in 1948 by the Automatistes, a Montreal-based artists' group. Written by Paul-Émile Borduas and signed by fifteen other members, the main text condemned the dominance of Catholic ideology and the social and political status quo in Quebec. *Refus global* influenced the province's period of rapid change that came to be known as the Quiet Revolution. The sixteen signatories of *Refus global* were Madeleine Arbour, Marcel Barbeau, Paul-Émile Borduas, Bruno Cormier, Marcelle Ferron, Claude Gauvreau, Pierre Gauvreau, Muriel Guilbault, Fernand Leduc, Jean-Paul Mousseau, Maurice Perron, Louise Renaud, Thérèse Renaud, Françoise Riopelle, Jean Paul Riopelle, and Françoise Sullivan.



### **Rhéaume, Jeanne (Canadian, 1915–2000)**

A painter and textile artist whose work is characterized by bright, vibrant colours, crisp outlines, and loose brushstrokes. Born in Montreal, Rhéaume studied at the École des beaux-arts de Montréal and the Art Association of Montreal. She was a major proponent of experimental and modernist art in Canada before eventually moving to Florence, Italy.

### **Robert, Guy (Canadian, 1933–2000)**

A writer, art critic, teacher, and poet known for his participation in the Quiet Revolution, a period of socio-political upheaval in Quebec society which entailed the secularization of local governments and the expansion of a provincial welfare state. As an advocate of modernist art in Quebec, Robert helped found the Montreal Museum of Contemporary Art in 1964 and oversaw the international exhibition of contemporary sculpture at Montreal's Expo 67.

### **Roberts, Goodridge (Canadian, 1904–1974)**

A painter and influential teacher from New Brunswick, whose modernist sensibility developed in the late 1920s when he attended the Art Students League of New York. Roberts settled in Montreal in 1939 and within ten years was celebrated nationally for his careful but intense approach to figure painting, still life, and landscape.

### **Royal Canadian Academy of Arts (RCA)**

An organization of professional artists and architects modelled after national academies long present in Europe, such as the Royal Academy of Arts in the U.K. (founded in 1768) and the Académie royale de peinture et de sculpture in Paris (founded in 1648).

### **serigraphy**

A name for what is now typically described as "screen printing." It was advanced in 1940 by a group of American artists working in the silkscreen process who wished to distinguish their work from commercial prints made by the same method.

### **Simon, Lucien (French, 1861–1945)**

A French artist known for his membership in the Bande noire, a Paris-based group of painters who employed an Impressionistic style that made use of dark, rich colours as well as Realist elements. During his long career as a teacher at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris, Simon taught and influenced many notable Canadian artists, including Alfred Pellan (1906–1988), Edwin Holgate (1892–1977), and Florence Helena McGillivray (1864–1938).

### **Smith, Jori (Canadian, 1907–2005)**

A figurative painter and draftswoman trained at the École des beaux-arts in Montreal (now part of the Université du Québec à Montréal), and a leading figure in that city's vibrant 1930s art scene. An admirer of Pierre Bonnard, she concentrated on portraits and interiors. She was made a member of the Order of Canada in 2002. Jori Smith married fellow artist Jean Palardy in the early 1930s.





### still life

The still life is an important genre in Western art and includes depictions of both natural and manufactured objects. Often used to emphasize the ephemerality of human life in the *vanitas* and *memento mori* paintings of the seventeenth century, the still life was at the bottom of the hierarchy of styles established by the French Academy.

### Surrealism

An early twentieth-century literary and artistic movement that began in Paris, Surrealism aimed to express the workings of the unconscious, free of convention and reason, and was characterized by fantastic images and incongruous juxtapositions. The movement spread globally, influencing film, theatre, and music.

### Surrey, Philip (Canadian, 1910–1990)

A Calgary-born artist best known for his carefully composed, colourful, and highly stylized paintings of Quebec's urban landscapes. He worked in a number of mediums, including watercolour, oil, ink, and charcoal, and was a founding member of Montreal's Contemporary Arts Society in 1939. Public recognition of Surrey's unique cityscapes led to his appointment to the Order of Canada in 1982.

### Synthetic Cubism

Refers to the aesthetic experiments conducted by modernist artists Georges Braque (1882–1963), Pablo Picasso (1881–1973), and Juan Gris (1887–1927) from around 1912 to 1914. Considered the second, more abstract phase of the Cubist movement, Synthetic Cubism involved the incorporation of collage elements, such as newspaper clippings and advertisements, into painting. It also emphasized the visual effect of flatness and the complete fragmentation of objects and forms.

### van Gogh, Vincent (Dutch, 1853–1890)

Among the most recognizable and beloved of modernist painters, van Gogh is the creator of *Starry Night* and *Vase with Sunflowers*, both from 1889. He is a nearly mythological figure in Western culture, the archetypal "tortured artist" who achieves posthumous fame after a lifetime of struggle and neglect.

### Venice Biennale

Founded in 1895 as a biannual exhibition of avant-garde and contemporary art from participating countries, many of which have permanent pavilions in the Venice Giardini, a section of parkland that serves as the heart of the event. There have historically been several additions to the Biennale's programming, including film, theatre, and musical festivals. At present, the main events are the International Art Exhibition, which is held in odd-numbered years, and the International Architecture Exhibition (or Venice Biennale of Architecture), which is held in even-numbered years. Today, it regularly attracts more than 370,000 visitors. Canada has been participating since 1952.





# SOURCES & RESOURCES

Alfred Pellán earned critical acclaim in the 1930s and helped pave the way for modern art in Quebec. In the 1950s and 1960s, he gained renown and shaped the urban landscape through the murals he created on public and private buildings. Later in his career, Pellán embraced his desire to experiment with different media and techniques. The recipient of many prestigious awards and honours, he exhibited widely in Canada and abroad, and his work continues to be shown internationally. Several monographs, documentaries, and articles are devoted to the artist and his oeuvre.





LEFT: Installation view of *Alfred Pellán : Le rêveur éveillé*, 2014, Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Quebec City, photograph by Idra Labrie. RIGHT: A bronze sculpture based on Alfred Pellán's *Mini-bestaire*, displayed in Le Jardin Pellán at the Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Quebec City, 2013, photograph by Jean Gagnon.

## KEY EXHIBITIONS (INCLUDING POSTHUMOUS EXHIBITIONS)

### a) Selected group and solo exhibitions

**1923**

March–April, *40<sup>th</sup> Spring Exhibition*, Art Association of Montreal (Musée des beaux-arts de Montréal). Pellán exhibits *Coin du vieux Québec* (A Corner of Old Quebec), 1922, which is bought by the National Gallery of Canada not long after the exhibition.

**1928**

June 3–15, *7<sup>th</sup> Salon annuel de l'École des beaux-arts de Québec*, Manège militaire, Quebec City. Pellán sends seventy works from Paris.

**1935**

April 12–28, *Forces nouvelles*, Galerie Billiet-Pierre Vorms, Paris.  
April, first solo exhibition at the Académie Ranson, Paris.  
June 4–30, *Première grande exposition du Salon d'art mural de Paris*, Paris.  
Pellán receives first prize for *Instruments de musique – A* (Musical Instruments – A), 1933.

**1936**

April, *Œuvres récentes : peintures et dessins d'Alfred Pellán*, Galerie Joseph-Barra, Paris. Solo exhibition.

**1940**

June 12–July 7, *Exposition Pellán*, Musée de la province de Québec (Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec), Quebec City. Travelled to the Art Association of Montreal (Musée des beaux-arts de Montréal). First solo exhibition in Quebec.

**1941**

April 26–May 3, 1941, *Première exposition des Indépendants*, Galerie municipale, Palais Montcalm, Quebec City. Organized by Marie-Alain Couturier and inaugurated by Robert Lapalme.

**1942**

April 6–25, *Exhibition of Paintings by Alfred Pellán*, Bignou Gallery, New York City. Solo exhibition.



# ALFRED PELLAN

Life & Work by Maria Rosa Lehmann

<b>1944</b>	November 25–December 15, <i>Pintura Canadense Contemporanea</i> , Museu Nacional de Belas Artes, Rio de Janeiro. First exhibition of Canadian Art in Latin America; eight of Pellan's works are included, and he creates the catalogue cover.
<b>1945</b>	<i>Modern Art in Advertising</i> , Art Institute of Chicago. The exhibition assembles artists from forty countries; Pellan represents Canada.
<b>1948</b>	February 1948, <i>Prisme d'Yeux</i> , Art Association of Montreal (Musée des beaux-arts de Montréal). First exhibition of the group.
<b>1949</b>	July 4–30, <i>Salon du Musée d'art de London</i> , London, Ontario. Although it's a group exhibition, Pellan receives one room for himself, presenting forty-four of his works. Travelling exhibition.
<b>1952</b>	April 25–June 1, <i>Archambault and Pellan</i> , Art Gallery of Toronto (Art Gallery of Ontario). June 14–October 19: <i>26<sup>th</sup> Biennale</i> , Venice. Pellan is one of the few artists to represent Canada; he exhibits five works.
<b>1954</b>	January 29–April 29, <i>Pellan</i> , Coqliban, Paris. Solo exhibition, organized by Maurice Hajje.
<b>1955</b>	February 8–March 3, <i>Pellan</i> , Musée national d'art modern, Paris. First retrospective exhibition, organized by Jean Cassou.
<b>1956</b>	November 6–30, <i>Pellan</i> , Hall d'Honneur, City Hall, Montreal. Retrospective exhibition censored by Antoine Tremblay.
<b>1957</b>	November 16–30, <i>Pellan: Recent Paintings</i> , Laing Galleries, Toronto. Solo exhibition.
<b>1958</b>	April, Galerie Denyse Delrue, Montreal. Solo exhibition; Pellan presents his Garden series for the first time.
<b>1958–59</b>	Travelling group exhibition: November 7–December 7, 1958, as <i>Moderne Canadese Schilderkunst</i> at the Utrecht Centraal Museum; February 7–March 1, 1959, as <i>Contemporary Art in Canada</i> at the Rath Museum, Geneva; March 14–April 12, 1959, as <i>Zeitgenössische Kunst in Kanada</i> at the Wallraf-Richartz Museum, Cologne.
<b>1960</b>	April 25–May 7, <i>Hommage à Pellan</i> , Galerie Denyse Delrue, Montreal. Solo exhibition. October 13–November 6, <i>Alfred Pellan</i> , travelling solo exhibition jointly organized by the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, the Musée des beaux-arts de Montréal, and the Art Gallery of Toronto (Art Gallery of Ontario). November 1–18, <i>Alfred Pellan</i> , Robertson Galleries, Ottawa. Solo exhibition.





# ALFRED PELLAN

Life & Work by Maria Rosa Lehmann

<b>1961</b>	April 13–25, <i>Alfred Pellan</i> , Roberts Gallery, Toronto. Solo exhibition.
<b>1963</b>	October 2–22, <i>Présence de Pellan</i> , Libre Gallery, Montreal. Solo exhibition.
<b>1963–64</b>	December 17, 1963–January 5, 1964, <i>York Wilson, Alfred Pellan, Jean Paul Lemieux, Jean McEwen, Joe Plaskett</i> , Galliera Museum, Paris. Organized by Quebec and the Canadian Embassy; Pellan is represented with twenty-four works.
<b>1964</b>	February 7–March 1, Kitchener-Waterloo Art Gallery, Kitchener. Solo exhibition. November 10–21, Roberts Gallery, Toronto. Solo exhibition.
<b>1967</b>	<i>100 Years of Theatre in Canada</i> , Rothmans Gallery, Stratford, Ontario. First exhibition of Pellan's costume sketches and theatre decoration for <i>La nuit des rois</i> ( <i>Twelfth Night</i> ).
<b>1968</b>	April 4–28, <i>Alfred Pellan</i> , Winnipeg Art Gallery. Retrospective exhibition.
<b>1969</b>	April 29–June 1, Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal. Solo exhibition; the film <i>Voir Pellan</i> (Office national du film) is shown at the inauguration.
<b>1971</b>	February 24–March 6, <i>Pellan: Creations for the Theatre: Costumes and Decors of "Twelfth Night," "The Three Princes,"</i> Roberts Gallery, Toronto. Solo exhibition. March 25–May 15, <i>Costumes d'Alfred Pellan pour La nuit des rois de Shakespeare</i> , Centre culturel canadien, Paris. Solo exhibition.
<b>1972</b>	September 12–24, École des arts visuel, Université de Laval, Quebec City. Solo exhibition of Pellan's theatre costumes, decorations, and gouaches. October 20–November 26, <i>Pellan</i> , Musée du Québec (Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec), Quebec City; Musée des beaux-arts de Montréal; National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa. Organized by Germain Lefebvre and André Marchand. First major retrospective in Canada; Pellan exhibits his mini-bestiaires for the first time. October 28–November 26, Galerie de Montréal. Solo exhibition of forty-three gouaches.
<b>1974</b>	May, <i>Souliers d'artistes</i> , Galerie de la Société des artistes professionnels du Québec, Montreal. Pellan creates twenty-seven Surrealist-inspired shoes for the show.
<b>1976</b>	June 30–September 1, <i>Trois générations d'art québécois : 1940-1950-1960</i> , Musée d'art contemporain, Montreal.
<b>1977</b>	March 5–24, <i>Hommage à Pellan</i> , Signal Gallery, Montreal. Organized by the Société des artistes professionnels du Québec; the magazine of the Society ( <i>Propos d'art</i> ) dedicates a full issue to Pellan and Prisme d'Yeux.



# ALFRED PELLAN

Life & Work by Maria Rosa Lehmann

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- 1977–78** December 7, 1977–January 3, 1978, *Alfred Pellan*, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa. Solo exhibition.
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- 1978** September 16–October 29, 1978, *Other Realities: The Legacy of Surrealism in Canadian Art*, Agnes Etherington Art Centre, Kingston. Travelling exhibition organized by Natalie Luckyj, also shown at the Canada House, Trafalgar Square, London, U.K., and at the Centre Culturel Canadien, Paris.
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- 1979** April 28–June 8, *Dessin et Surréalisme au Québec*, Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal.
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- 1980** February 15–March 13, *Nova Scotia Collects: Pellan and Brandtner; Works on Paper*, Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, Halifax.
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- 1980–81** November 21, 1980–January 18, 1981, *Les dessins d'Alfred Pellan*, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa. Travelling exhibition.
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- 1988** May 19–July 31, *Pellan/Shakespeare : le peintre devenu scénographe*, Maison Hamel-Bruneau, Quebec City, in collaboration with the Théâtre du Nouveau Monde.  
May 19–August 14, *L'art au Québec depuis Pellan : une histoire des prix Borduas*, Musée du Québec (Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec), Quebec City.

## b) Selected exhibitions after the artist's death in 1988

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- 1993–94** June 17–September 26, *Alfred Pellan : une retrospective*, Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal. Travelled to Musée du Québec (Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec), Quebec City.
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- 2005–6** November 13, 2005–January 29, 2006, *Les enfants et Alfred Pellan*, Salle Alfred Pellan, Maison des arts de Laval.
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- 2006** *Alfred Pellan : la modernité*, Musée d'art contemporain des Laurentides, Saint-Jérôme, and Galerie d'art Michel Bigué, Saint-Sauveur, Quebec.
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- 2006–7** December 8, 2006–March 25, 2007, *Alfred Pellan : les estampes*, Pavillon Michal and Renata Hornstein, Musée des beaux-arts de Montréal.
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- 2008** *Alfred Pellan au Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec*, Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Quebec City.
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- 2013** June 13–September 15, 2013, *Alfred Pellan : le grand atelier*, Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Quebec City.



**2014–22** February 20, 2014–April 3, 2022, *Alfred Pellan : Le rêveur éveillé*, Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Quebec City. Inauguration of a gallery devoted to Alfred Pellan (on display until 2022).

**2019** May 2019, *Le Printemps Pellan à Toronto*, Thompson Landry Gallery, Toronto. Exhibition of fifty signed silkscreen prints from the collection of the Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Quebec City.

### SELECTED CRITICAL WRITINGS ON THE ARTIST'S WORK

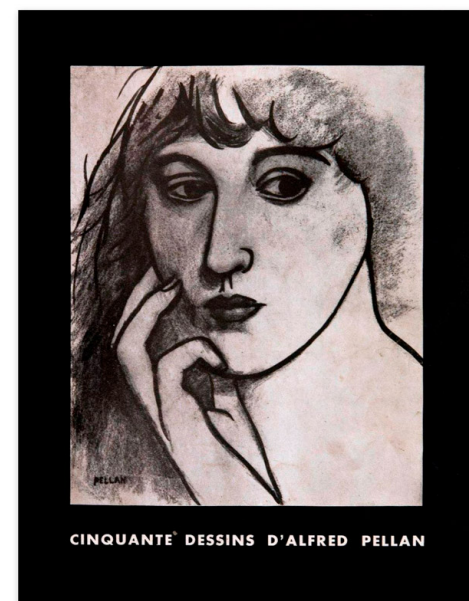
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LEFT: Cover of "Le merveilleux monde de Monsieur Pellan," *Vie des arts* 38, no. 151 (1993). RIGHT: Cover of *Cinquante dessins d'Alfred Pellan* (Montreal: Lucien Parizeau, 1945).

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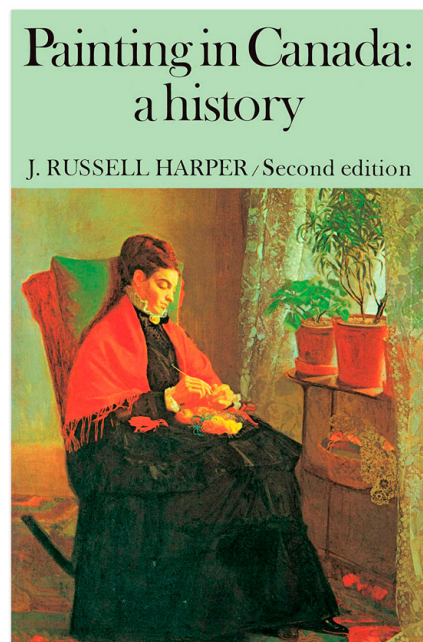
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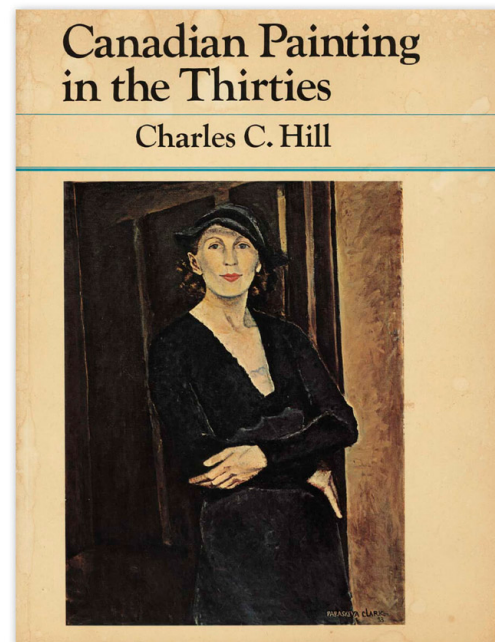
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LEFT: Cover of *Painting in Canada: A History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press and Presses de l'Université Laval, 1966). RIGHT: Cover of *Canadian Painting in the Thirties* (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1975).



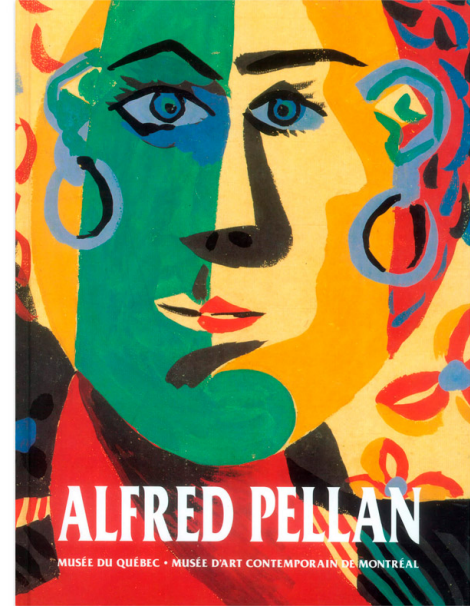
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LEFT: Alfred Pellan, *Grise-ailes* (Grey-Wings), 1958, oil and ink on paper, 29.8 x 22.9 cm, private collection. RIGHT: Cover of *Alfred Pellan* (Musée du Québec and the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal, 1993).

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### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

#### MARIA ROSA LEHMANN

Maria Rosa Lehmann is a scholar and teacher who specializes in transnational phenomena and local strategies of avant-garde and performance art. She teaches studio art and Francophone literature in Berlin, Germany, and holds a PhD from the Sorbonne University, Paris (2018), where she explored the relationship between Surrealism and performance art. Her doctoral research was supported by Brown University, Providence, where she was an international visiting scholar (2012–13), and the Labex CAP laboratory in Paris, where she was a research fellow (2014–16). Elements of her research have appeared in various publications, including *La femme fatale* (2020), *Les artistes et leurs galeries, Paris-Berlin, 1900–1950* (2019), and *La mise en scène dans tous ses états* (2016). She has written articles on Surrealism, performance art, eroticism, and the representation of the feminine in twentieth-century art for *MuseMedusa*, *Lingua Romana*, *(In)Disciplines*, *Symbolon*, *Studii și cercetări filologice*, *Studia Romanica et Anglica Zagrabiensia*, and *Acta Iassyensia Comparationis (AIC)*. Her most recent publication was a chapter on Yoko Ono's performances in *Women and Nonviolence* (2021), edited by Anna Hamling.

Dr. Lehmann has held postdoctoral fellowships at Cornell University, Ithaca (2018), at the Université du Québec à Montréal (2019–21) and at the German Center for Art History, Paris (2021–22). She has been part of numerous curating teams, most notably for *Ceci n'est pas un musée* at the Fondation Maeght (2014) and for *Une brève histoire de l'avenir* at the Louvre Museum (2015). She is interested in exhibition strategies that engage with and overcome the challenges of exhibiting artworks that are transitory or linked to a particular space. This fascination is reflected in her own practice: she often creates installations that function like puzzles and are put together differently depending on the characteristics of the exhibition context. In this way, her oeuvre is constantly reshaped, in transition, and mutating.



**"I became aware of Pellan's work during my doctoral research and was immediately drawn to his colourful, Surrealist-infused universe. Since then, I have wanted to write a book in which every page radiates his thirst for freedom, art, and experimentation."**



# ALFRED PELLAN

Life & Work by Maria Rosa Lehmann



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### From the Author

I became aware of Alfred Pellán's work when I was researching the lives of Québécois artists Mimi Parent and Jean Benoît (both students of Pellán), while working on my doctoral thesis on Surrealism. I was immediately enthralled by his Surrealist compositions, his astounding use of colour, and his endless quest for artistic freedom—the latter of which deeply resonates with me. When ACI invited me to submit a proposal for a monograph on Pellán, I welcomed the opportunity to dive deeper into the artist's oeuvre. I am deeply grateful to Annie Gérin, who introduced me to ACI's work and to Sara Angel. In my personal life, my ongoing interest in Pellán is shared by my parents, Ines and Klaus Peter Lehmann. Thank you for your support and for our many discussions about art, life, and passion. Sincere thanks also to my grandparents, Eleonore and Hagen Deckert. Thank you, Eleonore, for your insights on colour and the materiality of paint; thank you, Hagen, for your advice on philosophy of history. Many thanks also to Madeleine Bartschies, my best friend, who has supported my work for the past twenty years. I dedicate this book to my father, who suffered two strokes and a heart defect last year. You inspire me to keep on fighting and to smile while doing so. Thank you!





# ALFRED PELLAN

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I appreciate the efforts of all the staff at ACI, most notably those with whom I have worked directly. Thank you, Sara Angel, for giving me this opportunity and for trusting me with this project. Many thanks also to Jocelyn Anderson for pushing me further in my discussions and for making me think outside the box (particularly with respect to the Key Works). More than you can imagine, Pellan and ACI have been my guiding lights these past years—which have been filled with many ups and downs. I am deeply grateful to Rosie Prata for her editorial work—our many exchanges helped me refine my arguments. I wish to thank Monique Johnson, Sarah Liss, Annie Champagne, and Christine Poulin as well. And I give special thanks to Title Sponsor Jim Harrison, whose support enriched this project.

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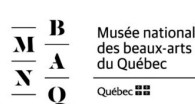
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Alfred Pellán, *Jeune comédien* (Young Actor), c.1935/after 1948. (See below for details.)

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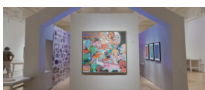
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Style & Technique: Alfred Pellán, *Pique-mégots*, 1974. (See below for details.)



Sources & Resources: Alfred Pellán, *Citrons ultra-violets* (Ultraviolet Lemons), 1947. (See below for details.)



Where to See: Installation view of Alfred Pellán : *Le rêveur éveillé*, 2014. (See below for details.)



Credits: Alfred Pellán, *À la femme allongée* (To the Reclining Woman), from artist book *Délirium concerto*, 1982. (See below for details.)

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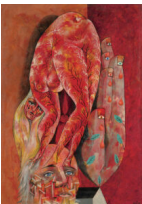
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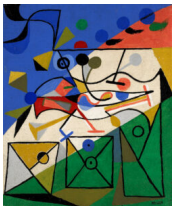




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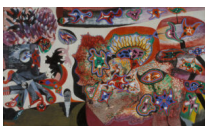
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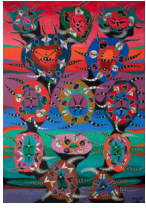
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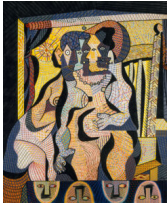


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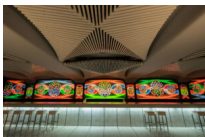




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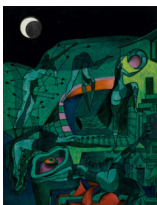
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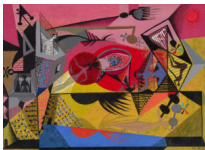
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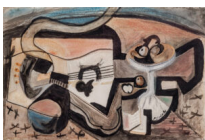
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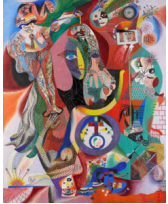
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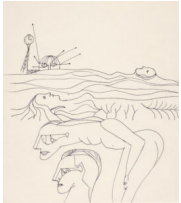
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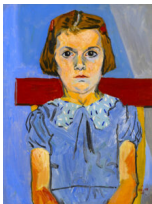
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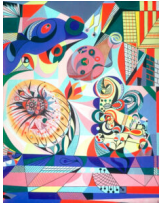
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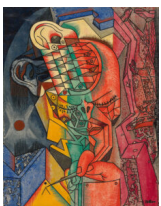
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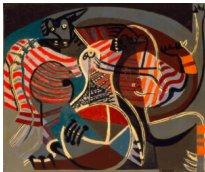


*L'homme A grave (Man A Engraving)*, c.1948. Collection of Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Purchase (1958.208). © Estate of Alfred Pellan / COVA-DAAV (2023). Photo credit: MNBAQ, Idra Labrie.

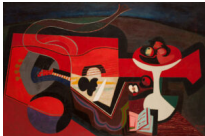




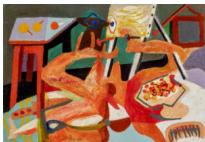
*Homme et femme (Man and Woman)*, 1943-47. Collection of Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Madeleine Polisenno Pelland Bequest (2011.223). © Estate of Alfred Pellan / COVA-DAAV (2023). Photo credit: MNBAQ, Idra Labrie.



*Hommes-rugby (Footballers/Rugby Players)*, c.1935. Collection of Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal (D9398P1). © Estate of Alfred Pellan / COVA-DAAV (2023). Photo credit: MNBAQ, Jean-Guy Kérourac.



*Instruments de musique - A (Musical Instruments - A)*, 1933. Collection of the Davis Museum at Wellesley College, Massachusetts, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Henry Clifford (1954.32). © Estate of Alfred Pellan / COVA-DAAV (2023).



*Intérieur d'atelier (Studio Interior)*, c.1935. Private collection. © Estate of Alfred Pellan / COVA-DAAV (2023). Photo credit: Toni Hafkenscheid.



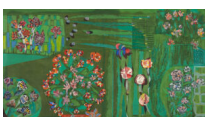
*Jardin d'Olivia (Olivia's Garden)*, 1968. Collection of Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Gift of the Alfred Pellan Estate (2004.457). © Estate of Alfred Pellan / COVA-DAAV (2023). Photo credit: MNBAQ, Denis Legendre.



*Jardin mécanique (Mechanical Garden)*, 1965. Collection of the Vancouver Art Gallery, Gift of Ron J. Longstaffe. © Estate of Alfred Pellan / COVA-DAAV (2023). Photo credit: Vancouver Art Gallery.



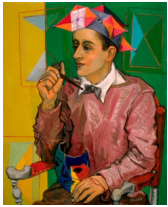
*Jardin rouge (Red Garden)*, 1958. Collection of the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, Gift of Louise and Bernard Lamarre (2016.297). © Estate of Alfred Pellan / COVA-DAAV (2023). Photo credit: MMFA, Christine Guest.



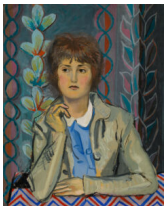
*Jardin vert (Green Garden)*, 1958. Collection of Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Purchase (1959.516). © Estate of Alfred Pellan / COVA-DAAV (2023). Photo credit: MNBAQ, Idra Labrie.



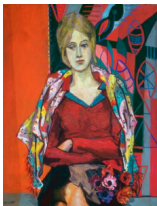
*Jeu de cinq* (*Game of Five*), 1968. Collection of Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Madeleine Polisenio Pelland Bequest (2011.238). © Estate of Alfred Pellan / COVA-DAAV (2023). Photo credit: MNBAQ, Louis Hébert.



*Jeune comédien* (*Young Actor*), c.1935/after 1948. Collection of the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa (9652). © Estate of Alfred Pellan / COVA-DAAV (2023). Photo credit: NGC.



*Jeune fille au col blanc* (*Young Girl with White Collar*), c.1934. Collection of Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Purchase, Restoration carried out by Centre de conservation du Québec (1940.106). © Estate of Alfred Pellan / COVA-DAAV (2023). Photo credit: MNBAQ, Denis Legendre.



*Jeune fille aux anémones* (*Girl with Anemones*), c.1932. Collection of the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa (15241). © Estate of Alfred Pellan / COVA-DAAV (2023). Photo credit: NGC.



*Jeune homme* (*Young Man*), 1931-34. Collection of Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Purchase (1973.17). © Estate of Alfred Pellan / COVA-DAAV (2023). Photo credit: MNBAQ, Patrick Altman.



*Maisons de Charlevoix* (*Houses in Charlevoix*), 1941. Power Corporation of Canada Art Collection, Montreal. © Estate of Alfred Pellan / COVA-DAAV (2023).



*Les mannequins* (*The Mannequins*), c.1946. Collection of Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Madeleine Polisenio Pelland Bequest (2011.265). © Estate of Alfred Pellan / COVA-DAAV (2023). Photo credit: MNBAQ, Idra Labrie.

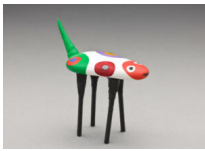




*Mascarade (Masquerade)*, c.1939–42. Collection of Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal (A7640P1). © Estate of Alfred Pellan / COVA-DAAV (2023). Photo credit: Denis Farley.



*Les mécaniciennes (The Mechanics)*, 1958. Collection of the Leonard & Bina Ellen Art Gallery, Concordia University, Montreal, Gift of Max and Helen Steinman, 1964 (964.43). © Estate of Alfred Pellan / COVA-DAAV (2023). Photo credit: Richard-Max Tremblay.



*Mini-bestaiaire n° 5 (Mini-Bestiarium no. 5)*, c.1971. Collection of Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Purchase made thanks to a contribution by Amis du Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec (2004.592). © Estate of Alfred Pellan / COVA-DAAV (2023). Photo credit: MNBAQ, Idra Labrie.



*Mini-bestaiaire n° 10 (Mini-Bestiarium no. 10)*, c.1971. Collection of Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Purchase made thanks to a contribution by Amis du Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec (2004.597). © Estate of Alfred Pellan / COVA-DAAV (2023). Photo credit: MNBAQ, Idra Labrie.



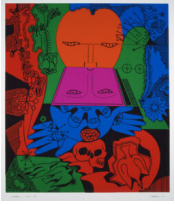
*Mini-bestaiaire n° 22 (Mini-Bestiarium no. 22)*, c.1971. Collection of Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Purchase made thanks to a contribution by Amis du Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec (2004.609). © Estate of Alfred Pellan / COVA-DAAV (2023). Photo credit: Idra Labrie.



*Mini-bestaiaire n° 24 (Mini-Bestiarium no. 24)*, c.1971. Collection of Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Purchase made thanks to a contribution by Amis du Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec (2004.611). © Estate of Alfred Pellan / COVA-DAAV (2023). Photo credit: Idra Labrie.



*Mini-bestaiaire n° 31 (Mini-Bestiarium no. 31)*, c.1971. Collection of Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Gift of the Alfred Pellan Estate (2004.618). © Estate of Alfred Pellan / COVA-DAAV (2023). Photo credit: MNBAQ, Idra Labrie.



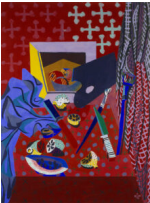
*Mutons...*, 1974. Collection of Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal (D9150G1). © Estate of Alfred Pellan / COVA-DAAV (2023). Photo credit: Denis Farley.



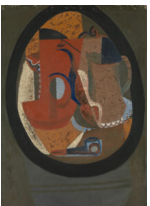
*Nature morte à l'assiette (Still Life with Plate)*, 1922. Private collection of Pierre Saint-Georges, Verdun. © Estate of Alfred Pellan / COVA-DAAV (2023).



*Nature morte à la lampe (Still Life with Lamp)*, 1932. Collection of Musée National d'Art Moderne / Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris (JP886P). © Estate of Alfred Pellan / COVA-DAAV (2023). © CNAC / MNAM, Dist. RMN-Grand Palais / Art Resource, NY. Photo credit: Jacqueline Hyde.



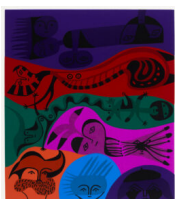
*Nature morte aux deux couteaux (Still Life with Two Knives)*, 1942. Collection of Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal (A92590P1). © Estate of Alfred Pellan / COVA-DAAV (2023). Photo credit: MNBAQ, Patrick Altman.



*Nature morte n° 22 (Still Life no. 22)*, c.1930. Collection of Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Purchase (1971.71V). © Estate of Alfred Pellan / COVA-DAAV (2023). Photo credit: MNBAQ, Idra Labrie.

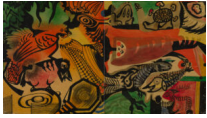


*Olivia*, from the artist's book *Sept costumes et un décor pour La nuit des rois de Shakespeare*, 1971. Collection of Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Purchase (1971.64.02). © Estate of Alfred Pellan / COVA-DAAV (2023). Photo credit: MNBAQ, Patrick Altman.



*Oniromancie (Oneiromancy)*, 1972. Collection of Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Purchase (1973.07). © Estate of Alfred Pellan / COVA-DAAV (2023). Photo credit: MNBAQ, Louis Hébert.

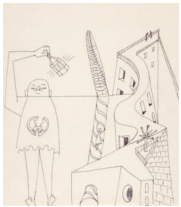




*La parade (The Pairing)*, 1940-45. Collection of Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Purchase (1959.339). © Estate of Alfred Pellan / COVA-DAAV (2023). Photo credit: MNBAQ, Denis Legendre.



*Peintre au paysage (Artist in Landscape)*, c.1935. Collection of Art Windsor-Essex, Purchased 1967 (1967.011). © Estate of Alfred Pellan / COVA-DAAV (2023).



*Personnage avec édifice labyrinthique (Figure with a Labyrinthine Building)*, c.1945-75. Collection of Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Madeleine Polisen Pelland Bequest (2011.871). © Estate of Alfred Pellan / COVA-DAAV (2023). Photo credit: MNBAQ, Stéphane Bourgeois.



*Le petit avion (The Small Plane)*, 1945. Collection of the Winnipeg Art Gallery, Acquired with the assistance of the Winnipeg Foundation and the Canada Council (G-70-655). © Estate of Alfred Pellan / COVA-DAAV (2023).



*Pince-fesse*, 1974. Collection of Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Madeleine Polisen Pelland Bequest (2011.471). © Estate of Alfred Pellan / COVA-DAAV (2023). Photo credit: MNBAQ, Idra Labrie.



*Pique-mégots*, 1974. Collection of Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Madeleine Polisen Pelland Bequest (2011.465). © Estate of Alfred Pellan / COVA-DAAV (2023). Photo credit: MNBAQ, Idra Labrie.



*Pop Shop*, 1972. Collection of Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Purchase (1973.06). © Estate of Alfred Pellan / COVA-DAAV (2023). Photo credit: MNBAQ, Louis Hébert.



*Le port de Québec (Port of Quebec)*, 1922. Collection of Musée nationale des beaux-arts du Québec, Gift of Madeleine Pelland (2006.85). © Estate of Alfred Pellan / COVA-DAAV (2023). Photo credit: MNBAQ, Denis Legendre.



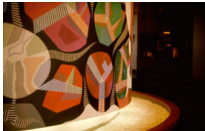
*Portrait de femme (Portrait of a Woman)*, c.1930. Collection of Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Purchase, Restoration carried out by Centre de conservation du Québec (1995.56). © Estate of Alfred Pellan / COVA-DAAV (2023). Photo credit: MNBAQ, Idra Labrie.



Poster for *Expo 67, Images de l'homme (Man the Creator)*, 1967. Collection BAnQ. © Estate of Alfred Pellan / COVA-DAAV (2023).



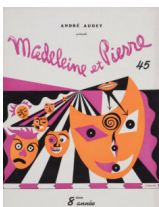
*Pour masochiste (For Masochist)*, 1974. Collection of Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Madeleine Polisenio Pelland Bequest (2011.475). © Estate of Alfred Pellan / COVA-DAAV (2023). Photo credit: MNBAQ, Idra Labrie.



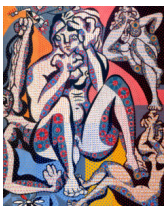
*The Prairies*, 1963. Collection of Aéroports de Montréal. © Estate of Alfred Pellan / COVA-DAAV (2023).



*Prisme d'Yeux*, 1948. Collection of Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Gift of Madeleine Pelland (1991.86). © Estate of Alfred Pellan / COVA-DAAV (2023). Photo credit: MNBAQ, Jean-Guy Kérouac.



Program cover of *Madeleine and Pierre*, 1945. Collection of Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Madeleine Polisenio Pelland Bequest (2011.321). © Estate of Alfred Pellan / COVA-DAAV (2023). Photo credit: MNBAQ, Denis Legendre.



*Quatre Femmes (Four Women)*, 1944-47. Collection of Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal. © Estate of Alfred Pellan / COVA-DAAV (2023). Photo credit: MNBAQ, Patrick Altman.

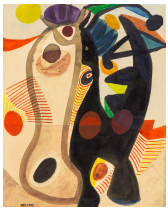




*Reine des cieux ou Immaculée-conception (Queen of Heaven or Immaculate Conception)*, 1960. Collection of Cégep de Granby. © Estate of Alfred Pellan / COVA-DAAV (2023). Photo credit: Chantal Lefebvre.



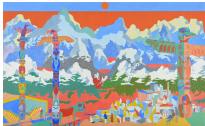
*La Rue*, from the artist's book *Sept costumes et un décor pour La nuit des rois de Shakespeare*, 1971. Collection of Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Madeleine Polisenno Pelland Bequest (2011.1320). © Estate of Alfred Pellan / COVA-DAAV (2023). Photo credit: MNBAQ, Louis Hébert.



*Sans titre (Untitled)*, 1942. Collection of Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Purchase made thanks to a contribution by Fondation du Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec (2000.301). © Estate of Alfred Pellan / COVA-DAAV (2023). Photo credit: MNBAQ, Louis Hébert.



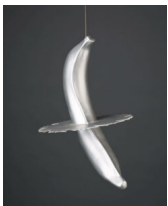
*Sans titre (Canada Est) (Untitled [Canada East])*, 1942-43. Global Affairs Canada Visual Art Collection, Ottawa (981.1.2). © Estate of Alfred Pellan / COVA-DAAV (2023).



*Sans titre (Canada Ouest) (Untitled [Canada West])*, 1942-43. Global Affairs Canada Visual Art Collection, Ottawa (981.1.1). © Estate of Alfred Pellan / COVA-DAAV (2023).



*Satellites (Satellites)*, 1979. Collection of Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Madeleine Polisenno Pelland Bequest (2011.512). © Estate of Alfred Pellan / COVA-DAAV (2023). Photo credit: MNBAQ, Idra Labrie.



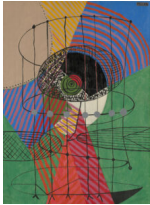
*Satellites (Satellites)*, 1979. Collection of Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Madeleine Polisenno Pelland Bequest (2011.517). © Estate of Alfred Pellan / COVA-DAAV (2023). Photo credit: MNBAQ, Idra Labrie.



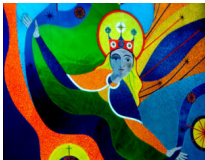
*Sire André*, from the artist's book *Sept costumes et un décor pour La nuit des rois de Shakespeare*, 1971. Collection of Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Purchase (1971.64.03). © Estate of Alfred Pellan / COVA-DAAV (2023). Photo credit: MNBAQ, Patrick Altman.



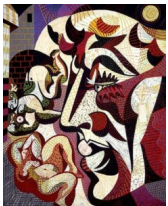
*Sous-terre (Underground)*, 1938. Collection of Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal (A71124P1). © Estate of Alfred Pellan / COVA-DAAV (2023). Photo credit: Denis Farley.



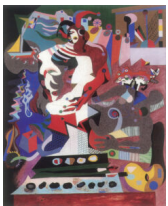
*La spirale (The Spiral)*, 1939. Collection of Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Purchase (1971.71R). © Estate of Alfred Pellan / COVA-DAAV (2023). Photo credit: MNBAQ, Idra Labrie.



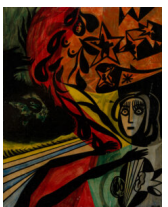
*Stained glass window from the Église Saint-Théophile*, 1964. Collection of BAnQ, Fonds Antoine Desilets, Montreal. © Estate of Alfred Pellan / COVA-DAAV (2023). Photo credit: Antoine Desilets.



*Sur la plage (On the Beach)*, 1945. Collection of the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa (9512). © Estate of Alfred Pellan / COVA-DAAV (2023). Photo credit: NGC.

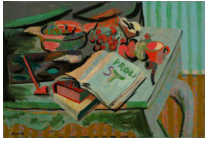


*Surprise académique (Academic Surprise)*, c.1943. Private collection, Montreal. © Estate of Alfred Pellan / COVA-DAAV (2023).



*Ta forme monte comme la blessure du sang*, illustration for Alain Grandbois's *Les îles de la nuit*, 1944. Collection of Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Purchase (1954.62). © Estate of Alfred Pellan / COVA-DAAV (2023). Photo credit: MNBAQ, Denis Legendre.

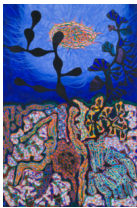




*La table verte* (*The Green Table*), c.1934. Collection of Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Purchase (1938.10). © Estate of Alfred Pellan / COVA-DAAV (2023). Photo credit: MNBAQ, Idra Labrie.



*Les tulipes* (*Tulips*), 1934-35. Collection of Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Purchase (1938.11). © Estate of Alfred Pellan / COVA-DAAV (2023). Photo credit: MNBAQ, Idra Labrie.



*Végétaux marins* (*Aquatic Plants*), 1964. The Corporation of the City of Kingston Civic Collection. © Estate of Alfred Pellan / COVA-DAAV (2023).



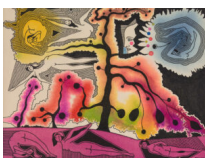
*Vénus et le taureau* (*Venus and the Bull*), c.1938. Collection of Musée nationale des beaux-arts du Québec, Purchase (1971.72). © Estate of Alfred Pellan / COVA-DAAV (2023). Photo credit: MNBAQ, Idra Labrie.



*Veuve joyeuse* (*Merry Widow*), 1974. Collection of Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Madeleine Polisenno Pelland Bequest (2011.459). © Estate of Alfred Pellan / COVA-DAAV (2023). Photo credit: MNBAQ, Idra Labrie.



*Viola*, from the artist's book *Sept costumes et un décor pour La nuit des rois de Shakespeare*, 1971. Collection of Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Purchase (1971.64.04). © Estate of Alfred Pellan / COVA-DAAV (2023). Photo credit: MNBAQ, Idra Labrie.



*Voltige d'automne - A*, (*Autumn Acrobatics - A*), 1973. Collection of Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Madeleine Polisenno Pelland Bequest (2011.243). © Estate of Alfred Pellan / COVA-DAAV (2023). Photo credit: MNBAQ, Denis Legendre.

### Credits for Photographs and Works by Other Artists



*À la plage (Saint-Jean-de-Luz) (On the Beach [Saint-Jean-de-Luz])*, 1929-30, by John Lyman. Collection of the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, Presented by the executors of Dr. Max Stern, 1988, in accordance with his wishes (30182). Photo credit: NGC.



Alfred Pellan (top) and friends from the École nationale supérieure des beaux-arts de Paris, 1928, photographer unknown. Collection of Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Madeleine and Alfred Pellan Fonds (P38.S17.D28.P1).



Alfred Pellan and Germain Lefebvre on the release of Lefebvre's book, 1973, photographer unknown. Collection of BAnQ, *Photo-Journal*.



Alfred Pellan and his father (to the left), 1945, photographer unknown. Collection of Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Madeleine and Alfred Pellan Fonds (P38.S17.D45.P1).



Alfred Pellan and his students at the École des Beaux-Arts de Montréal (with Jean Benoît and Mimi Parent, centre), 1944, photographer unknown. Collection of BAnQ, Fonds *La Presse*, Montreal.



Alfred Pellan in his studio, 1946. Photograph by Ronny Jaques. Collection of Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa. Archives / Collections and Fonds, Reference: R3133-668-9-F, Volume number: 12 (4325078).





Alfred Pellan painting *Sans titre (Canada Ouest)* (*Untitled [Canada West]*) for the reception room at the Canadian Embassy in Rio de Janeiro, 1942, photographer unknown. Collection of Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Gift of Daniel Cogé (CE.2006.01). Photo credit: MNBAQ, Patrick Altman.



Alfred Pellan receiving the Louis-Philippe-Hébert Prize, 1972, photographer unknown. Collection BAnQ, Télé-radiomonde, Montreal.



Alfred Pellan (in the foreground) working on a sculpture at the École des beaux-arts du Québec, 1923, photographer unknown. Collection of Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Madeleine and Alfred Pellan Fonds (P38.S17.D23.P1).



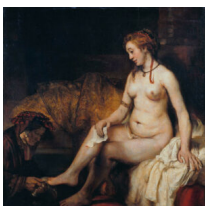
Alfred Pellan's set and costume designs for the characters Olivia (played by Elizabeth Lesieur) and Maria (played by Marjolaine Hébert) for the 1968 production of *Twelfth Night* at the Théâtre du Nouveau Monde, Montreal. Collection of Théâtre du Nouveau Monde, Montreal. Photo credit: André Le Coz.



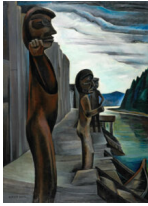
Alfred Pellan's set and costume designs for the characters Sébastien (played by Jean Besré) and Viola/Césario (played by Monique Miller) for the 1968 production of *Twelfth Night* at the Théâtre du Nouveau Monde, Montreal. Collection of Théâtre du Nouveau Monde, Montreal. Photo credit: André Le Coz.



Alfred, Réginald, and Diane as children, date unknown, photographer unknown. Collection of Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Madeleine and Alfred Pellan Fonds (P38.S17.D1.P1).



*Bathsheba at her Bath*, 1654, by Rembrandt Harmenszoon van Rijn. Collection of the Louvre Museum, Paris.



*Blunden Harbour*, c.1930, by Emily Carr. Collection of the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa (4285). Photo credit: NGC.



A bronze sculpture based on Alfred Pellan's *Mini-bestaie*, displayed in Le Jardin Pellan at the Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Quebec City, 2013. Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons. Photo credit: Jean Gagnon.



Canadian Pavilions at Expo 67, May 1967. Photograph by Laurent Bélanger. Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.



Caricature of Alfred Pellan at City Hall published in *Le Devoir*, Montreal, on November 13, 1956, by Robert La Palme. Collection of BAnQ, *Le Devoir*, Montreal.



Caricature of Alfred Pellan published in *Le Jour*, Montreal, on July 21, 1945, by Robert La Palme. Collection of BAnQ, *Le Jour*, Montreal.

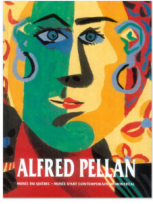


Charles Maillard, c.1940, photographer unknown. Collection of BAnQ, Centre d'archives de Québec, Montreal (03Q,P1000,S4,D83,PM31).

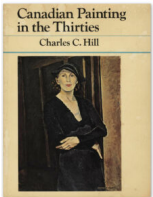


*Composition*, 1942, by Paul-Émile Borduas. Private collection. © Estate of Paul-Émile Borduas / COVA-DAAV (2023).

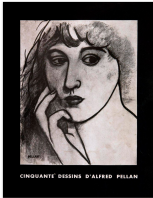




Cover of *Alfred Pellan* (Musée du Québec and Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal, 1993). © Musée du Québec and Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal.



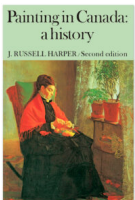
Cover of *Canadian Painting in the Thirties* (Ottawa: The National Gallery of Canada, 1975).



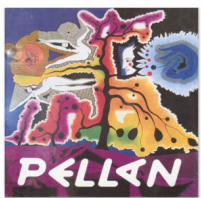
Cover of *Cinquante dessins d'Alfred Pellan* (Montreal: Lucien Parizeau, 1945).



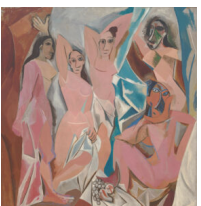
Cover of "Le merveilleux monde de Monsieur Pellan," *Vie des arts* 38, no. 151 (1993).



Cover of *Painting in Canada: A History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press and Presses de l'Université Laval, 1966).



Cover of *Pellan : sa vie, son art, son temps* (Quebec City: Marcel Broquet, 1986).



*Les demoiselles d'Avignon*, June–July 1907, by Pablo Picasso. Collection of the Museum of Modern Art, New York, Acquired through the Lillie P. Bliss Bequest (by exchange) (333.1939). © Estate of Pablo Picasso / copyright visual arts-CARCC.



Le Dôme Café in Montparnasse, Paris, c.1900-30. Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.



École des Beaux-Arts de Québec, April 6, 1923, photographer unknown. Collection of BAnQ, *La Presse*, Montreal.



*L'étoile noire* (*The Black Star*), 1957, by Paul-Émile Borduas. Collection of the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Gérard Lortie (1960.1238). © Estate of Paul-Émile Borduas / COVA-DAAV (2023). Photo credit: MMFA, Denis Farley.



Exhibition catalogue cover of *Forces nouvelles: 1935-1939* (Paris: Musée d'art moderne de la ville de Paris, 1980).



*Exposition Prisme d'Yeux* at Librairie Tranquille, May 1948, photographer unknown. Collection of Université de Sherbrooke, Fonds Henri Tranquille (P43/A1/3).



Exquisite corpse drawing created by Pellan and his students, from *Trois générations d'art québécois : 1940, 1950, 1960*, Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal, 1976. Collection of BAnQ Vieux-Montréal, Fonds Ministère de la Culture et des Communications, Claude Gosselin, Montreal (06M,E6,S7,SS1,D761851-761931).

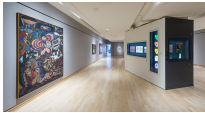


*A Gust of Wind*, 1902, by Lucien Simon. Collection of the Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts, Moscow.

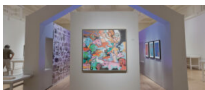




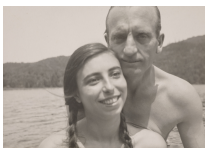
*Head (Tête)*, 1926, by Pablo Picasso. Collection of the Cleveland Museum of Art, Nancy F. and Joseph P. Keithley Collection Gift (2020.112). © Estate of Pablo Picasso / copyright visual arts-CARCC.



Installation view of *Alfred Pellan : Le rêveur éveillé*, 2014, Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Quebec City. Photo credit: MNBAQ, Idra Labrie.



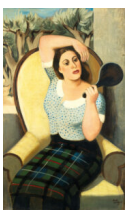
Installation view of *Alfred Pellan : Le rêveur éveillé*, 2014, Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Quebec City. Photo credit: MNBAQ, Idra Labrie.



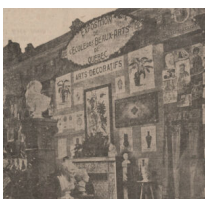
Madeleine Polisenio and Alfred Pellan at Lac Clef (Saint-Donat), c.1948, photographer unknown. Collection of Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Madeleine and Alfred Pellan Fonds (P38.S17.D48.P1).



Photo booth portrait of André Breton with glasses, c.1924–29. Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.



*Portrait de Sarah (Portrait of Sarah)*, 1935, by Robert Humblot. Private collection. Photo credit: MAK.



Salon de l'École des beaux-arts de Québec, May 26, 1923, photographer unknown. Collection of BANQ, *Le Soleil*, Quebec City.



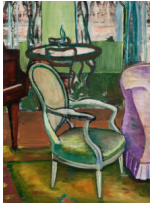
*Still Life with Strawberries*, c.1880, by Pierre-Auguste Renoir. Private collection.



# ALFRED PELLAN

Life & Work by Maria Rosa Lehmann

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*Study of the Drawing Room of the Artist*, c.1940, by Prudence Heward. Private collection. Photo credit: Sotheby's Inc.



Wedding Day, July 23, 1949, photographer unknown. Collection of Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Madeleine and Alfred Pellan Fonds (P38.S17.D49.P1).

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# ALFRED PELLAN

Life & Work by Maria Rosa Lehmann

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