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## FIGURATIVE EXPRESSION

BY THOMAS HOLMAN, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR OF THE FORUM GALLERY

SUBLIME COLORS,  
SUBDUED LIGHT,  
QUIETUDE OF PLACE.  
ENTER THROUGH  
THESE MOST RECENT  
PAINTINGS THE  
IDEALIZED WORLD  
ENVISIONED  
BY ALAN FELTUS

Represented by New York City's Forum Gallery at this year's Art Miami and Art Palm Beach exhibits was Alan Feltus, one of the quintessential painters of contemporary figurative art. Often celebrated as a master of realism and classical purity, Alan Feltus has transcended style with "the figure" as the focus of his painting. He does not paint his figures or subjects from life or from models in the studio. For inspiration, he glimpses at his own collection of cut-out photographs of Greek and Roman statuary and visits churches and museums across Italy to view paintings by Balthus and such Italian masters as Giotto, Piero della Francesca and Paolo Uccello. Feltus finds beauty in the female figure. A specific model in attitude, personality or physiognomy would hinder the ideal perfection he pursues. Painting is a continual art of refinement and study; the female figure, for instance, can be painted again and again, never being the same.

Literal subject matter is not the pursuit of Alan Feltus. Each of his paintings has meaning, but in nuances. Gestures, poses, glances and interlocking figures, as shape and form, are his subject. He combines these elements to create harmonious compositions. However, the

gesture is probably the most important aspect in understanding his work. Gesture is seen in any and all parts of a figure but is not limited to only the figure. There is gesture in the treatment of drapery, in the way an object sits, or in the way paint is applied. Color, value and the nature of light contribute to the somber, peaceful, or at times, more violent tonalities reflecting the intended intonation of the painting's subject.

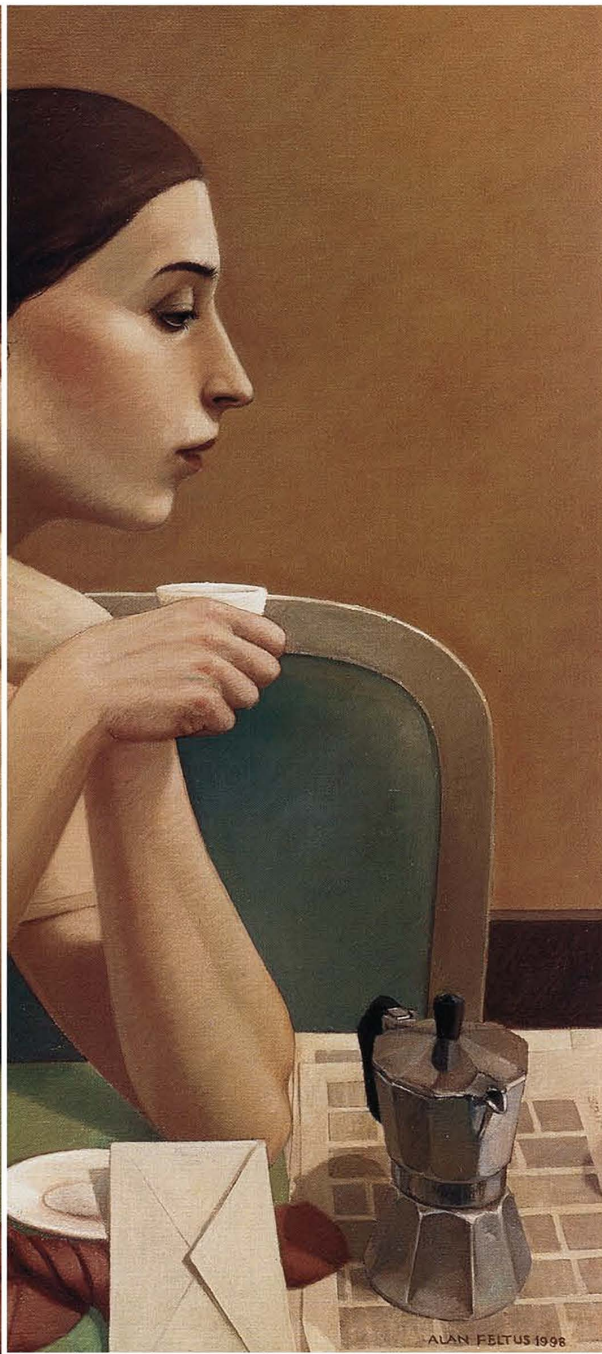
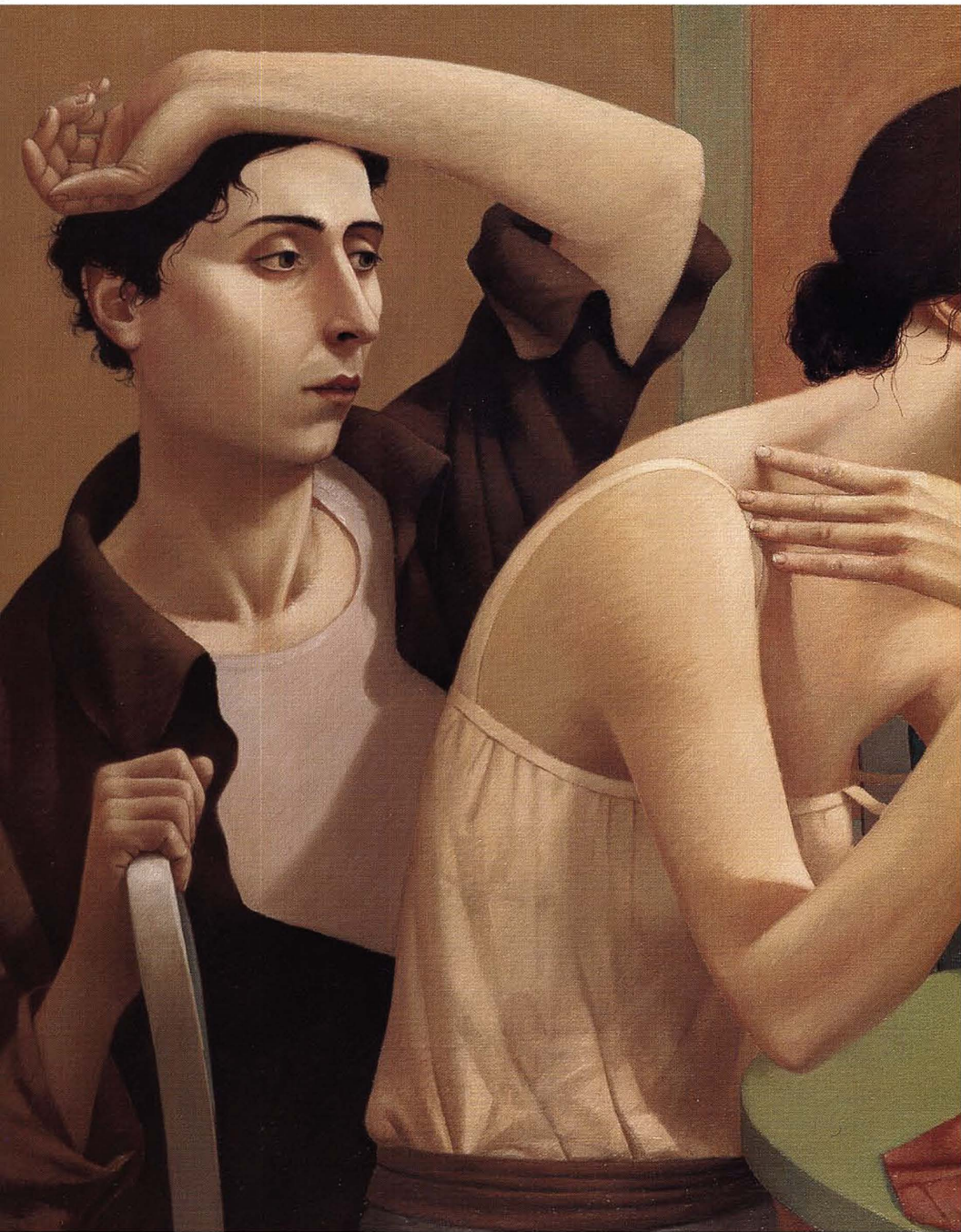
### BODY LANGUAGE

From his choice of color and vision of idealization, complete with nuances of gestures, expressions and glances, there is a prominent element that overshadows the paintings of Alan Feltus: quietude. Noise in a painting, for him, causes visual disharmony. A quiet figure might appear to turn inward. By this nuance or visual gesture, ▷

*(right) Preparing For An Evening, 1977  
Oil on linen, 47 1/4" x 39 3/8"*



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the figure has, perhaps, conveyed an aspect of despair. That is the noise that shouts within the quiet structure of his paintings. This inner narrative within a quiet world, where figures do not communicate and juxtapositions imply completed or yet to occur interactions, contributes to a sense of mystery as in "Preparing for an Evening." This mystery of implied narrative tends not to provide answers to questions that the viewer may have. Instead, his paintings invite contemplation.

Alan Feltus looks to the total idea and ideal of perfection in his paintings. These elements are part of the structure in which nothing can be taken out, nothing moves, nothing can be added without upsetting a balance or destroying everything. His paintings are made up of what remains after eliminating everything unwanted. Once the painting is finished, Alan Feltus has completed his story.

Although the viewer is not encouraged to invoke interpretations and readings of his paintings, the artists stares at the viewer in a very personal self-portrait (following page). With quietude, seriousness and somber expression, likened to the Christ figure in Piero della Francesca's "Resurrection," is the "Autumn Self Portrait: Assisi Earthquake," 1997. This is the most frontal and somber self-portrait painting of Alan Feltus' career:

### PERSONAL TOUCH

Born in Washington, D.C. in 1943, Alan Feltus has made Assisi, Italy his home since 1987. Assisi is the place where the artist can study *in situ* the frescoes of ▶

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