

Mark Ryden

SELECTED PRESS

OCULA

Mark Ryden Paints Sinister Barbie in Mattel Collab

Ryden's ashen-face Mali-boo! Barbie is depicted with a raw meat purse and pink hair that seems to levitate, as if possessed.

SAM GASKIN

OCTOBER 12, 2022



Mark Ryden, *Pink Pop Barbie*, 2021, oil on panel, 28 3/4 x 39 inches. Courtesy of Kasmin Gallery.

Artist Mark Ryden has developed a series of Barbie artworks and limited-edition dolls in partnership with toy company Mattel. The artworks will be exhibited in a solo show entitled *Pink Pop* at 8382 Melrose Avenue in Los Angeles from 11 November to 11 December. 'Barbie has made appearances in my art for a long time,' Ryden said in a statement. 'The body of work in the *Pink Pop* exhibition are my own new personas for her.'

The exhibition, hosted jointly by Mattel and Kasmin Gallery, will feature oil and watercolour paintings, sculptures in wood and bronze, a selection of studies, and Ryden's Barbie dolls made for Mattel Creations, the company's premium collectible platform.

It will also include Ryden's first ever depiction of Barbara Millicent Roberts, Saint Barbie (1994). The work shows a girl praying to a vision of Barbie with upturned hands and a corona of sunlight.

'It is difficult to define Barbie,' Ryden said. 'She is a cultural phenomenon, an archetypal figure. She is a bona fide celebrity, a subject worthy for Andy Warhol to portray alongside the likes of Elizabeth Taylor and Marilyn Monroe.'

Other artists to reference Barbie in their works include British conceptual artist Helen Chadwick, who exposed the plastic doll to the realities of flesh and blood in her 1993 work Birth of Barbie.

Mark Ryden was born in Medford, Oregon, in 1963. Now based in Portland, Oregon, he regularly exhibits with Kasmin and Perrotin, who put on two shows of the artist's work this year: Animal Secrets in Paris and YAKALINA 9 in Tokyo.

'From the start, Mark Ryden has been an advocate for the idea that toys inspire art and that toys are also a canvas for artists to express themselves,' says Richard Dickson, President and Chief Operating Officer, Mattel.

Ryden's Pink Pop works build on a recent fascination with the colour that spans fashion, film, and art. It's called Barbiecore.

The trend took off with the widespread use of a blistering hot pink in Valentino's Pink PP Fall/Winter 2022–23 collection, and has maintained its momentum with early glimpses of Greta Gerwig's film Barbie (2023), which stars Margot Robbie opposite Ryan Gosling as Ken.

HYPEBEAST

Mark Ryden Introduces The Mysterious Animal Spirit ‘Yakalina’

As part of a new solo exhibition at Perrotin Tokyo.

SHAWN GHASSEMITARI

APRIL 4, 2022



Exhibition views of ‘Yakalina 9’ at Perrotin Tokyo. Photo by Keizo Kioku. Courtesy Of The Artist, Perrotin, And Kasmin.

This past weekend, Perrotin and Kasmin Gallery unveiled a joint exhibition of new works by American artist, Mark Ryden. Well known for his Pop Surrealist aesthetic that often depicts Victorian characters in eery dreamlike scenes, the artist introduces a mysterious new character called Yakalina.

Housed at Perrotin’s Tokyo location, the eponymously titled exhibition presents a number of Yakalina sculptures and accompanying drawings in various colors. Cast in bronze, Yakalina features a long conical body covered in fur, with arms outstretched in a gesture of worship. The figures on display appear mythic, containing a spirit that lends itself to popular Japanese folklore, but possessing a posture that refers to a range of classical religious art — from early Christianity and Roman catacomb frescoes to the icons and mosaics of Byzantine art.



Exhibition views of 'Yakalina 9' at Perrotin Tokyo. Photo by Keizo Kioku. Courtesy Of The Artist, Perrotin, And Kasmin.

The exhibition continues the artist's exploration into the invisible order of the universe, in which the animal evokes a feeling of awe and mystery within the viewer. According to a statement, Ryden believes that "if you ask for your animal spirit, it will come to you. Close your eyes, look inward, and ask your animal guide to come, then keep your eyes open for a visitation."

Yakalina 9 serves as a component to a larger solo exhibition, *Animal Secrets*, which will go on view at Perrotin Paris in May. The current exhibition will be on view in Tokyo until May 14.

Despite China's Wavering Economy, Western Dealers Find Plenty of Encouragement at Shanghai's Art Fairs

Art021 and the West Bund Art Fair serve as complements to one another.

EILEEN KINSELLA
NOVEMBER 9, 2018



Mark Ryden, *Salvator Mundi* (2018) at Paul Kasmin's booth at Art021 in Shanghai. Photo by Eileen Kinsella.

[EXCERPT]

Meanwhile, in the main section of the fair, dealer Paul Kasmin was among the first-time exhibitors, with a booth that proved wildly popular. The gallery riffed on Christie's viral marketing campaign for Leonardo da Vinci's *Salvator Mundi* last fall, with a playful blue Mark Ryden portrait—sphere in hand and all—flanked by security guards in dark suits, at the front of the booth. By the end of the preview day, it had sold for about \$350,000.



Art021 Wants to Mint a Million New Chinese Collectors

NATE FREEMAN
NOVEMBER 9, 2018

[EXCERPT]

It was also Kasmin's first time at Art021. The New York gallery sold Mark Ryden's cheeky painting *Salvator Mundi* (2018), a play on the Leonardo da Vinci painting that sold for \$450 million at Christie's a year ago, but with a fluffy dog holding the gazing ball instead of Jesus Christ.

Kasmin had a bit of fun with the presentation, as two security guards stood by the painting protecting the canvas as if it were truly the Leonardo and not a cute puppy-fied homage. And while it didn't command a price tag nearing half a billion, it did sell for a very respectable \$350,000.

"We're only three hours into the fair and the activity has been overwhelming," said director Eric Gleason. As if on cue, a woman approached him, pointed and yelled "Sit down!"—she wanted to get an unobstructed picture of the six-foot-tall Robert Indiana "LOVE" sculpture that served as the booth's centerpiece.

"We're thrilled to be here," Gleason said. His only regret about Art021: "I wished we had come earlier."

Fleish-Bilder:

Die derzeitige Debatte um Tierwohl und Vegetarismus findet auch an unvermuteten Stellen statt: Etwa im Werk und den Internet-Postings des US-amerikanischen Pop-Surrealisten Mark Ryden

WOLFGANG ULLRICH
JULY 2018

Einer der erfolgreichsten Künstler ist in Europa kaum bekannt. Seine Gemälde kosten, obwohl recht kleinformatig, hohe sechsstellige Preise, und bei Instagram besitzt er mehr Follower als jeder seiner Kollegen. Die Rede ist von Mark Ryden. Der US-Amerikaner findet hier wohl deshalb wenig Beachtung, weil er dem Pop-Surrealismus zugeordnet wird: einer Richtung, der Kritiker auch gerne das Attribut »lowbrow« verleihen, so als sei sie das Gegenteil zu »highbrow«, also alles andere als klug und hochkulturell. Von Pop-Surrealismus spricht man, wenn Motive populärer Bildwelten – aus Massenmedien, Konsum, Starkult – so ungewöhnlich gemischt sind, dass die Zusammenhänge rätselhaft werden. Tauchen Schneewittchen, ein Dinosaurier, ein Hase und ein Kreuz gleichzeitig auf einem Bild auf, ist die Wahrscheinlichkeit hoch, dass es von Mark Ryden stammt. 1991 entwarf er im selben Stil das Cover für Michael Jacksons Album *Dangerous*, und auch auf Büchern von Stephen King finden sich seine Motive. Beides mag bestätigen, dass es sich dann nicht um hohe Kunst handeln kann. Doch sollten das Werk und der Erfolg Rydens Anlass sein, den Sinn einer strikten Trennung zwischen »high« und »low« zu überprüfen. Denn warum sollte Kunst nicht gerade darin bestehen, Sujets und Ästhetiken populärer Genres aufzunehmen, um sie zu überhöhen und zuzuspitzen, statt sie einfach nur zu dementieren?

Für einen Künstler wie Ryden bieten die sozialen Medien zusätzliche Chancen. Hier kann er seine Motive wieder der breiten Öffentlichkeit zugänglich machen, aus der er sie bezogen hat. Auf seinem Instagram-Account lässt er fast eine halbe Million Follower

an der Entstehung seiner Gemälde teilhaben, zeigt die Herkunft einzelner Sujets, offenbart aber auch, wo und wie die Bilder verkauft werden. Er postet Fotos aus Museen, in denen er wahlverwandte Kunst entdeckt, teilt aber ebenso andere Reiseerlebnisse. Dazu zählte im September 2017 der Besuch eines Fleischmarkts in Athen. Ryden filmte dort Metzger, während sie das Fleisch kundengerecht kleinhacken, und er war davon so betroffen, dass er das Video auf Instagram mit einem Warnhinweis versah. Anschauen kann es daher nur, wer das ausdrücklich will.

Dass Ryden, sonst an steril plastikverpacktes Fleisch in den USA gewöhnt, auf dem Markt ganze Tierhälften sowie deren Zerlegung sehen konnte, brachte ihn dazu, eine Diskussion zu starten: Warum überhaupt Fleisch essen? Auf der Kommentarspalte neben seinem Video entwickelte sich daraus eine lebhaftige Debatte. Vegetarier, Veganer und überzeugte Fleischesser meldeten sich zu Wort, zahlreiche User schilderten ihre Ernährungsbiografien, manche mit Selbstzweifeln, manche mit Sendungsbewusstsein, fast alle aber ohne die Aggressivität, die solche Debatten sonst oft prägt. Nachdem die meisten denkbaren Argumente ausgetauscht waren, schaltete Mark Ryden sich zwei Tage später auch wieder ein. Er bekannte, sich selbst nach und nach in Richtung Vegetarismus zu bewegen, postete vor allem aber eines seiner Gemälde: *The Angel of Meat* aus dem Jahr 1998. Dieser Fleisch-Engel ist Teil einer zwölfteiligen *Meat-Show*, deren einzelne Bilder Fleischstücke, aber auch Wurst oder ganze Tiere in überladenen Interieurs mit Spielzeugpuppen und einem Klavier oder inmitten weiter Landschaften mit Heiligenfiguren und Lincoln-Porträts präsentieren.

The Angel of Meat hat die Form eines Kreuzes; die Engelsfigur schwebt, von Wurst- und Fleischwaren umkränzt, über ei-

ner in sanftem Licht strahlenden Landschaft, in deren Vordergrund ein Rind auf einer Wiese steht, direkt dahinter ein Bauer, der Besitzer des Tiers. Es ist bereits mit einer Nummer markiert, sodass Ryden hier eine neue Version des klassischen Motivs »Et in Arcadia ego« bietet: Auch mitten in der Idylle ist der Tod anwesend – in diesem Fall der Tod im Schlachthaus, wo das Rind der menschlichen Lust auf Fleisch zum Opfer fallen wird. Aber kommt es nicht auch in den Himmel? Kündet der Engel nicht von Erlösung?

Ryden selbst gibt an, Fleisch zum Motiv seiner Kunst gemacht zu haben, weil Tiere und Menschen gleichermaßen daraus bestehen. Wenn der Mensch sich zugleich für ein spirituelles Wesen hält, müsste man das selbe aber auch den Tieren zugestehen, zumal wenn Engel umgekehrt mit Körpern aus Fleisch dargestellt werden. Warum also etwas töten, das dem eigenen Wesen so nahesteht? Er sei in Sorge um »unseren schönen Planeten«, daher wolle er die Praktiken der Fleischindustrie nicht unterstützen, schreibt Ryden und macht sein Gemälde mit all den Versatzstücken aus religiösen Kitschbildchen und Kinderbuchillustrationen zum Appell, Tieren denselben Status zuzugestehen wie Menschen und Engeln. Und als Pop-Surrealist erreicht er damit ein viel größeres Publikum

und verändert viel mehr, als es mit politischer Kunst, die »highbrow« sein will, möglich ist. Ein paar Wochen später postete er ein Foto vom ersten vegetarischen Thanksgiving-Menü seines Lebens und kommentierte: »Ein toter Truthahn weniger in diesem Jahr.« Vermutlich aber waren es einige mehr, die nach dieser Debatte am Leben bleiben durften. //



WOLFGANG ULLRICH ist Professor für Kunstwissenschaft und Medientheorie und Autor zahlreicher Bücher. In **art** analysiert er jeden Monat aktuelle Bilder.



A
 Das Rind ist dem
 Tod geweiht, aber kommt
 es nicht auch in den
 Himmel und wird erlöst?
 MARK RYDEN: THE ANGEL
 OF MEAT, 1998, 97 X 84 CM

>
 Schlüsselerlebnis:
 Auf dem Fleischmarkt
 in Athen sah der
 Maler Erschütterndes –
 und teilte es mit
 seinen Followern
 INSTAGRAM-POST VON
 MARK RYDEN, 2017



markyden @ - Abonniert

markyden took a walk through the Athens Meat Market. It was one of the most intense experiences I've ever had. What do you all think about consuming animals as food?

https://www.instagram.com/p/B...
 To me it honestly sucks that we go to take life from innocent animals for people to eat but at the same time some people don't care so there's nothing much to do besides become vegan but then again meat isn't that bad after being cooked so well.

responder with this: no matter what we eat, it's still a living thing. Even plants are scientifically considered "slow moving animals". ... As a person who raise plants and live stock, I can tell you with full confidence that a plant can physically feel when it gets cut. That is how I am able to change the growth pattern of a slow moving animal. ...
 Rude in animals a null idiom have

52,155 Aufrufe
 117 Reaktionen

Markyden hat dieses Bild geliebt

whitewall

Mark Ryden and the Art of Whipped Cream

RYLIE COOKE
MARCH 27, 2018



Scene from "Whipped Cream." Photo Gene Schiavone. Courtesy of American Ballet Theatre

In Hong Kong this month, Paul Kasmin gallery is presenting three projects by artist Mark Ryden. *Whipped Cream*, Ryden's collaboration with the American Ballet Theatre premieres at Hong Kong Cultural Centre during the Hong Kong Arts Festival. Coinciding with the ballet is his public sculpture *Quintessence 132- Mezzo Dodecahedron*, which will be on display at the Cultural Centre and at PMQ during Art Basel Hong Kong. And at the fair, Paul Kasmin is showing 16 of Ryden's works in the Kabinett section.

Ryden spoke with *Whitewall* in advance of his Hong Kong happenings.

WHITEWALL: Your collaboration with the American Ballet Theatre will be performed over the final week of Hong Kong Arts Festival. Can you tell us more about the process of bringing the ballet's characters to life?

MARK RYDEN: Everything began as any of my other art projects might, with sketches, drawings, and color studies. But then things took a very different path from my usual process. I worked with many great collaborators on the

ballet, including an experienced costume designer, Holly Hynes, and set designer, Camellia Koo. I had never done sets and costumes before so I was very dependent on their expertise. The process of translating my art into functional three dimensional sets and costumes was involved and complicated, and included months of visits to costume shops and set production facilities. Dozens of artists and craftsmen were involved with the fabrication of everything. This was a very different process for me. With my art, I am used to doing everything myself. Conducting the work of others is a different skill set. Fortunately, it all went really well. It was thrilling to see everything come together at the end.



Scene from "Whipped Cream." Photo Gene Schiavone. Courtesy of American Ballet Theatre



Scene from "Whipped Cream." Photo Gene Shiovone. Courtesy of American Ballet Theatre

WW: Alongside *Whipped Cream* your sculpture *Quintessence 132 – Mezzo Dodecahedron* carries over the “all seeing eye,” a recurring motif in your work. What does this symbol represent to you and your work?

MR: It is through the eyes that we take in the sublime beauty of the physical world which connects directly to our hearts where that beauty ignites a conciseness of divinity.

WW: How important is it to you that the audience can interact and experience a taste of the fairy-tale-like world you create?

MR: I don't feel that I create a world, instead I respond to the world I see. The world is a magical and enchanted place. My work combines pieces of the world that I observe and take interest in.

WW: You offer a unique perspective on the beauty of childhood innocence. How have you developed this perspective through your singular style of “pop-surrealism”?

MR: “Develop” suggests a conscious effort to take my work down a certain path, but my process is not so literal and analytical as that. My perspective is not something I develop, but something I simply have. A cerebral dissection of that perspective only serves to diminish the creative connection to something of a much higher consciousness.



Portrait by Elizabeth Daniels



Mark Ryden, *Swirl Girl*, 2017. Oil on panel. 28.6 x 59.1 cm. Courtesy Kasmin Gallery



Mark Ryden, Cotton Candy Curtain, 2017. Oil on panel. 26 x 41.9 cm. Courtesy Paul Kasmin Gallery



Mark Ryden, Whipped Cream Drops, 2017. Oil on panel. 26.7 x 40.6 cm. Courtesy Kasmin Gallery

PAUL KASMIN GALLERY

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

Whipped Cream Review: A Gutton's Fantasia

Robert Greskovic

une



Sarah Lane and Daniil Simkin in Whipped Cream. PHOTO: GENE SCHIAVONE.

Alexei Ratmansky's two-act "Whipped Cream"—part of American Ballet Theatre's current season at Lincoln Center, following its premiere in March in Costa Mesa, Calif.—has roots in "Schlagobers" (meaning "whipped cream"), a no longer seen ballet by Heinrich Kröll, named for its now little-known score by Richard Strauss, that had its debut in Vienna in 1924.

ABT's eye-filling and visually enchanting effort runs under 100 minutes with intermission. The lavish production has candy-colored settings and marvelously confectioned costumes by pop-surrealist artist Mark Ryden. Mr. Ratmansky, ABT artist in residence, reworked the original narrative, tweaking it somewhat from Strauss's to tell the story of a Viennese boy who, on the day celebrating his first communion, overeats whipped cream and finds himself ill and fantastically delirious. He ends up in a hospital from which he dreamily escapes into the realm of a Praline Princess, where he finds himself recovered and celebrated.

Act one follows the communicants—with adult dancers, albeit mostly short ones, playing these children with intermittent credibility—as they visit a deluxe sweet shop and gorge themselves. From the start, Mr. Ryden's designs aim to distinguish the action's children from its adults by having the latter performed by dancers costumed with outsize heads, like delicately painted bobblehead dolls.

After the young characters depart, with a central one, The Boy, carried off on stretcher, the stage is set for the shop's delicacies to come to life and animate the scene with often playful and fanciful dancing. In turn, we

PAUL KASMIN GALLERY

meet Princess Tea Flower, Prince Coffee, Prince Cocoa and Don Zuccherò, as well as subsidiary characters of Marzipan, Sugarplum and Gingerbread.

Besides inventing classically felicitous moves (a recurring partnered configuration has the woman repeatedly spun, with her extended leg and arm evoking a stick candy's stripe), Mr. Ratmansky works to humanize these inanimate essences. So far, in the array of casts put on by ABT, only a few of the dancers in this scene provided much beyond clear dancing. The Prince Coffee of Cory Stearns proved the most individually flavored, as his palpable infatuation with the lithe and delicate Hee Seo as Princess Tea Flower notably infused his dancing and partnering to tell of an abiding flirtation.

The first act wraps up memorably as 16 women enter Mr. Ryden's scenic surround to evoke swirls of whipped cream spilling from a confectioner's bowl. Mr. Ratmansky's kaleidoscopically configured waltz presents these dancers as sprites embodying the ballet's air-filled title. In Mr. Ryden's inspired, sleek and simple white costumes, fitted with ponchos of gauzy fabric that float about them like dry-ice vapor, the corps de ballet chains and curls and amasses itself in responsive rapport with Strauss's stirring, sometimes staccato music.

At this point, however, it seems a missed bet that The Boy who disappeared early on isn't part of the fantastic scene to remind us of his plight. When, at the start of act two, he does reappear, in his hospital bed, we have to reacquaint ourselves with the ballet's storyline.

Mr. Ratmansky's use of a dozen women as dancing nurses brandishing hypodermic needles the size of bazookas gives the sickroom scene a wittily nightmarish touch. Eventually, scenes of a more dream-like and felicitous dimension transpire. A procession of droll characters attend the appearance of the narrative's main ballerina, Princess Praline, including a four-legged Snow Yak and a no-legged Worm Candy Man, all of which shows Mr. Ryden at his most inventive as Mr. Ratmansky gives this simple parade the impact of a coup de theatre.

Once a trio of liquors, enacted by dancing bottles of spirits in a near-slapstick interlude, has put the stern doctor and his sidekick nurses into inebriated stupors, The Boy finds himself clad in gold and happily recovered as the center of attention amid a glowing old-world city square. Mr. Ratmansky has generalized Strauss's original scenario here by doing away with any number of 1920s details, such as the leaflet distributing and rabble-rousing activities that Vienna's citizens would have recognized during the hardly easy-living times following World War I.

The finale and closing waltz of today's "Whipped Cream" become an ebullient showcase for The Boy as he joins in the general merriment amid wave upon wave of dancing by all the fantasy characters who have returned for the occasion. At select moments the teeming mass of characters stands back and clears the way for The Boy to circuit the stage with acrobatic jumps intermixed with dizzying turns.

For the season's penultimate week, ABT has programmed an eight-performance run of "Whipped Cream." It's a sweet prospect that could be sweeter still if the featured dancers take the opportunity to personalize their parts in this pretty confection.

PAUL KASMIN GALLERY

the PARIS REVIEW

The Art of Whipped Cream

Dan Piepenbring

May 24, 2017

"The Art of Whipped Cream," an exhibition of drawings, sketches and paintings by Mark Ryden, is at Paul Kasmin Gallery through July 21. Ryden created this work for the American Ballet Theatre's production of Whipped Cream, an adaptation of a 1924 Richard Strauss ballet about a boy who eats too much candy and, in the delirium of a world-class sugar high, dreams that his dessert has come to life. Ryden designed props, costumes, and backdrops for the production, combining sugary pinks and pastels with a darker palette of grays and neutrals. The result: a candy land that threatens to become sickeningly sweet.



MARK RYDEN, PRINCESS PRALINE AND HER ENTOURAGE, 2017, OIL ON CANVAS, 15" X 52".

PAUL KASMIN GALLERY



TEA FLOWER ALTERNATE, 2016, OIL ON PANEL, 17" X 11".



NURSE CORPS DE BALLET, 2016, OIL ON PANEL, 17" X 11".

PAUL KASMIN GALLERY



NICOLO, 2016, OIL ON PANEL, 26" X 11".



MARK RYDEN, HOSPITAL, 2016, OIL ON PANEL, 23 X 32 INCHES

PAUL KASMIN GALLERY



DESSERT COUNTER, 2016, OIL ON PANEL, 18" X 24".



PRINCESS PRALINE'S PROCESSION, 2016, OIL ON PANEL, 17 1/2" X 23 1/2".

May 2017

THE REPORT



WHIPPED CREAM

MARK RYDEN DESIGNS A BALLET

All photography by
Gene Schiavone

above
Sarah Lane and Danil Simkin
in *Whipped Cream*

I REALLY DIDN'T KNOW WHAT TO EXPECT ON MY WAY to *Whipped Cream*, the ballet that Mark Ryden took part in designing. Possibly there would be a few recognizable Ryden touches on the stage, I imagined. Instead, I was bowled over by the monumental effort that was unbelievably realized in this production. Every square inch in the look of the staging was signature Mark Ryden. Possibly a way to sum it up would be to compare it to seeing the best of his paintings come to life. I've never experienced anything like this in my art world, and it was phenomenal. The opera *Tristan Und Isolde*, designed by David Hockney, was my personal favorite for best set design, but it did not capture, with such entirety, the look and feel of the production in the same way. I have nothing but praise for Ryden's creation of something so beautiful, and I had to know more. When it comes to your neighborhood, do treat yourself to this fantastic experience. —Greg Escalante

Greg Escalante: This show is so monumental and amazing, one can only wonder how it came about. When did you first hear about the concept, and how did they approach you?

Mark Ryden: I was originally contacted about two years ago via email by Benjamin Millepied, the famous ballet dancer and choreographer (and famously, Natalie Portman's husband). He was reaching out on behalf of the choreographer Alexei Ratmansky, asking if I would be interested in doing the design for a ballet. Hollywood people have approached me repeatedly over the years, and I always resisted getting involved in that world, but a ballet seemed like it might be a really interesting departure from my usual work and not have the soul-sucking nature of Hollywood. Ratmansky and I met in person for the first time at one of my favorite places, the Paris Flea Market, in the fall of 2015. He told me all about this forgotten ballet and what he had in mind to resurrect it. We got along really

PAUL KASMIN GALLERY



well, and the project seemed fascinating! I met with the American Ballet Theatre production team in Costa Mesa that December, when they were doing their annual *Nutcracker*. Fifteen months later, we have our ballet.

Wow! There must have been some magic chemistry occurring there, that's for sure. So, once you started on this venture, how did you fit it into your already busy schedule? What were your days like once you made the commitment?

I had that meeting with the production team literally the day after I returned from *Dodecahedron*, my last exhibition in New York. The timing worked out well because I had not committed to another show or project yet, so I began working full time on this ballet that day. The whole time I worked on it, I had in mind that I would also have an exhibition of my paintings and drawings from the project. This work will be shown at Paul Kasmin Gallery in New York

the weekend of the ballet's premiere at the Metropolitan Opera House. There will also be a simultaneous exhibition of some of this work at a gallery space there at the Met Opera.

Last year was, indeed, busy. We moved from Los Angeles to Portland in the fall. When you visited the house in LA, you saw how much junk I have, so you have some idea of the monumental task involved in the move! I also had a major retrospective at CAC Malaga in December. I am definitely ready for a break.

The ballet was amazing in that it looks like you were in charge 100% and that you took this challenge very seriously. You saw the potential of what it could be. To me, like your Sistine Chapel, it was like the biggest, best Mark Ryden painting come to life times ten. I never really got ballet, but in *Whipped Cream*, ballet finally worked for

above (top)
Scene from
Whipped Cream

above (bottom)
Various images
from Mark Ryden's
Whipped Cream
art direction

PAUL KASMIN GALLERY

THE REPORT

me, and created the Ryden painting of my dreams coming to life with music, dance and movement. I expected to see maybe just a few elements of Ryden influence. Instead, you were in complete control, creating *Whipped Cream* with your signature insane attention to detail in every aspect. Explain how this could happen without you actually pointing a gun to people's heads?

The simple answer is because of Alexei Ratmansky, the choreographer. He is a superstar in the world of ballet, and there is a good reason for this. He is a true genius, and his accolades are well deserved. People use the term "genius" lightly, but in this case, I sincerely mean it. You can observe how everyone around him reacts to his brilliance. What he wants is respected and honored, and I am very fortunate he wanted me to design this ballet. Beyond that, I have to also give credit to the entire production crew at ABT. Jamie Whitehill, the director of production, was very patient and diligent about seeing my designs implemented as closely to my intentions as possible. Because I had no prior theater experience, an experienced set designer, Camellia Koo, was brought in, as well as a professional costume designer, Holly Hynes. They were both great about seeing my designs through as we worked with dozens of fabricators. I have to say, I was surprised myself at how willing everyone was to go along with whatever I threw at them, including snow yaks and candy worms. There was a wonderful working rapport with everybody on this production.

Can you tell me something about the history of *Whipped Cream*? How is your version different from the original?

The original 1924 Richard Strauss production was called *Schlagobers* which is Viennese dialect for "Whipped Cream." It was not well received. This was post WWI Europe, and his production was seen as too extravagant and frivolous for that difficult time. Strauss defended his work, explaining that he couldn't bear the tragedy of his present time, and that he wanted to create joy. I thought about that a lot with my work on this project, as we are going through our own difficulties in our time, but like Strauss, I also believe there is a great value in beauty and joy. It is incredibly important to escape into a place of imagination and contemplation. Our production of *Whipped Cream* differs from the original in that we chose to focus our story on the child's perspective of fantasy and dreams of the surreal. The original version of *Schlagobers* had some political undertones, with a subtext that involved conflict between the proletariat and the royal class, which is understandable with what was going on in the world in 1924. We kept Strauss's original cast of fantastical characters, but added a few new ones of our own.

Where does the ballet go after the three-day premiere at Segerstrom Center in Costa Mesa California?

The ballet played for five days at the Segerstrom Center. American Ballet Theatre has a special arrangement with Segerstrom's where they get use of the theater for ten days before the opening night. This gives them a good amount of time to rehearse and work things out that they would



not be able to do in another venue with less time. From there, the ballet will have its New York City premiere at the Metropolitan Opera on May 22 of this year. That same weekend, on May 20, the exhibition of my *Whipped Cream* art will open at Paul Kasmin Gallery.

above (from top)
Alexei Agoudine in
Whipped Cream

Daniil Simkin and Richel Ruiz
in *Whipped Cream*

The ballet will begin to travel to other cities. It will be at the Kennedy Center in Washington DC next February, and then will play in Hong Kong next March. It will travel to many other locations afterwards.

JUX

abt.org
markryden.com

VANITY FAIR

May 2017

SPOTLIGHT

BONBON VOYAGE

Justifying the unabashed escapism of his opulent ballet, *Whipped Cream*, which premiered at Vienna's Staatsoper in 1924, Richard Strauss wrote, "I cannot bear the tragedy of the present time. I want to create joy." It was this statement by the Romantic composer that persuaded painter Mark Ryden to say yes when Alexei Ratmansky, American Ballet Theatre's artist-in-residence, sought him out to design costumes and sets for the ballet's revival, opening on May 22 at Manhattan's Metropolitan Opera House. Though he initially intended to collaborate with an experienced stage professional, Ratmansky kept musing over a small book on Ryden that he had bought a decade earlier in Japan. Only Ryden's meticulously rendered, "sinister, creepy, disturbing, but saccharine-sweet images of children," Ratmansky decided, could accurately articulate his vision for Strauss's score and libretto and his own choreography. A cautionary fable of a boy who overeats at a confectionery shop after his first communion, *Whipped Cream* was in its original incarnation nicknamed "the Billionaire's Ballet" because of its sheer extravagance. Ratmansky's phantasmagoric production likewise shoots the works. In Act I, for example, the corps de ballet, swathed in spumy white fabric (and personifying the eponymous topping), spill out of a colossal mixing bowl. "I want to explore the spirit of childhood imagination and the darkness and nightmares that go along with it," Ryden explains. Though by Act II the gluttonous hero winds up hospitalized, hallucinating, and tormented by an ominous doctor and a needle-brandishing nurse, the ballet ends jubilantly, with anthropomorphic candied companions joining him "in a celebration," Ratmansky reports. "That is the 'joy' Strauss was talking about." —AMY FINE COLLINS

Alexei Ratmansky, Stella Abrera, and Mark Ryden, with Ryden's artwork and costume for the ballet *Whipped Cream*.



PHOTOGRAPH BY RUVEN AFANADOR

MAY 2017

www.vanityfair.com | VANITY FAIR | 89

PAUL KASMIN GALLERY

Los Angeles Times

Mark Ryden's foray into set design is a fantastical ballet of
candyland delights

Deborah Vankin

ar h



Pop-Surrealist painter Mark Ryden designed the candy-colored costumes and sets for American Ballet Theatre's "Whipped Cream," his first foray into stage design. Allen J. Schaben / Los Angeles Times

Mark Ryden is on something of a sugar high. Backstage at Costa Mesa's Segerstrom Center for the Arts, the painter giddily navigates a luscious candyland of his own creation — something he's now seeing fully realized, onstage, for the first time.

Dressed in black with round, wire-rimmed glasses, a black fedora and a silvery goatee, the Pop Surrealist looks like a magical wizard as he surveys the fantastical haven of desserts he's created for American Ballet Theatre's new production of "Whipped Cream." Ginormous sugary confections glint under draping stage lights: velvety swirls of sugar plum pastry, strawberry-topped cupcakes, powder-coated chocolate drops and glossy, melon-sized gum balls. Theatrical technicians, like Willy Wonka factory workers, scramble around the artist. Stage hands roll towering peaks of whipped cream across the floor on dollies while prop artists affix Swarovski crystals to vanilla-iced tarts.

"C'mere," Ryden beckons, slipping behind a cotton candy-pink dessert counter, a proverbial kid in his self-conjured candy store. The black backside of the giant set piece exposes the infrastructure behind the magic — ladders and trap doors that the dancers scurry up and through.

"It's all these details," Ryden says, showing off the underside of a monstrous tin coffee can that one of the characters pops out of. "We had to make these openings big enough for the dancers' tutus to get through."

PAUL KASMIN GALLERY



Painter Mark Ryden tries on a cape he designed for "Whipped Cream," a revamped Richard Strauss ballet about a boy who falls ill after eating too many sweets. Allen J. Schaben / Los Angeles Times



Painter Mark Ryden, known for his vaguely unsettling fairy tale images, has designed sets and costumes for American Ballet Theatre's production of "Whipped Cream." Allen J. Schaben / Los Angeles Times



Characters in "Whipped Cream" include Princess Tea Flower, who wears this costume. Allen J. Schaben / Los Angeles Times

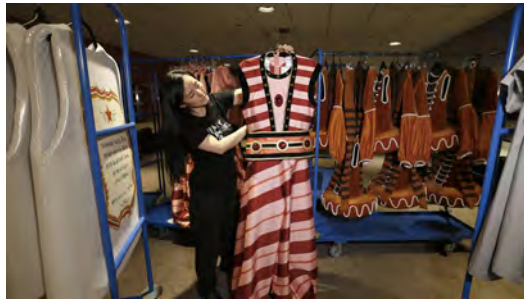


A costume confection for American Ballet Theatre's "Whipped Cream" is held by wardrobe supervisor Tomoko Ueda-Dunbar. Allen J. Schaben / Los Angeles Times

PAUL KASMIN GALLERY



Costume supervisor Tomoko Ueda-Dunbar and designer Mark Ryden hold a costume for Princess Tea Flower backstage at Segerstrom Center for the Arts, where "Whipped Cream" will be given its world premiere. Allen J. Schaben / Los Angeles Times



A Mark Ryden-designed costume is held by Tomoko Ueda-Dunbar. With the ballet "Whipped Cream," Ryden makes his first foray into stage design. Allen J. Schaben / Los Angeles Times



Costume supervisor Tomoko Ueda-Dunbar stands amid a sugar rush of costumes and props. Allen J. Schaben / Los Angeles Times



Giant gum balls are given a coat of clear gloss by scenic artist Chrissy Skubish. Allen J. Schaben / Los Angeles Times

PAUL KASMIN GALLERY



These cavity-inducing hats will be worn in American Ballet Theatre's production of "Whipped Cream," a reworking of a Richard Strauss ballet. Allen J. Schaben / Los Angeles Times



Painter-designer Mark Ryden, left, and American Ballet Theatre's director of production, N. James Whitehill III, inspect a whipped cream-style slide. Allen J. Schaben / Los Angeles Times

Ryden designed the sets and costumes for "Whipped Cream," which features choreography by ABT artist-in-residence Alexei Ratmanský, formerly artistic director of Moscow's Bolshoi Ballet. The fanciful production seeing its world premiere at Segerstrom Hall on Wednesday is based on an obscure, 1924 two-act ballet called "Schlagobers," written and composed by Richard Strauss. It's about a young boy who, after his first Communion, celebrates by wolfing down too many sweets at a Viennese pastry shop. He falls into a sugar-induced delirium and is rushed to the hospital, where a series of hallucinations bring his beloved desserts to life.

The character of Princess Praline was to be played, in select performances, by Misty Copeland, but the dancer had to bow out because of an injury. The opening performance features ABT principal dancer David Hallberg as Prince Coffee and South Pasadena native Stella Abrera as Princess Tea Flower, with Sarah Lane as Princess Praline. The Pacific Symphony will perform the score live. Daniil Simkin plays the character known as "the boy."

Ryden, nicknamed the "godfather of Pop Surrealism" by Interview magazine, is known for his kitschy, brightly colored paintings blending pop culture elements and old master techniques for a glossy, danger-tinged, fairy-tale-like aesthetic. His first European retrospective, at the Centro de Arte Contemporáneo de Málaga in Spain, closed on March 5.

"Whipped Cream" is his first foray into theatrical design.

"It just seemed like an exciting adventure," Ryden says of why he was drawn to the project. "And it hit at the right time for me. I'd just finished a series of art shows, and this seemed like something different. Just bringing the other dimensions beyond a static painting — story, action, movement, music, all those things."

PAUL KASMIN GALLERY

The result is an explosion of fantasy, surrealism and traditional ballet — “Willy Wonka & the Chocolate Factory” meets “Miss Peregrine’s Home for Peculiar Children” meets “The Nutcracker.”

Ryden, who launched his career designing book and album covers, including Michael Jackson’s “Dangerous,” did more than simply design the costumes and backdrops though. His cutesy, seemingly saccharine style with a darkly humorous, Tim Burton-like twist inspired the creation of the production.

Ratmansky had toyed with the idea of reinventing “Schlagobers” in the early 1990s, and he developed a short piece of the ballet in a choreography workshop. Then, almost a decade later, he stumbled on a book of Ryden’s art in a Tokyo store and was so taken with the imagery, it reignited his desire to develop the ballet. He now considers Ryden a co-creator of “Whipped Cream”; the artist’s style informs nearly every aspect of the production, even the choreography, Ratmansky says.

There’s something very unsettling, disturbing, about his paintings, which hides behind the sometimes very sweet surface.”— Alexei Ratmansky

“His style is completely original, it’s very precise and detailed. He uses classical techniques, but the story he tells is very contemporary,” Ratmansky says. “There’s something very unsettling, disturbing, about his paintings, which hides behind the sometimes very sweet surface. I just thought it was a good fit for the music and that it would make this 1920s work feel contemporary.”

The two met in 2015 at a Paris flea market and clicked right away, says Ryden, for whom the location, with its vintage toys, old furniture and discarded oddities, is one of his all-time favorites. He was “beyond excited” to tackle such a new and different project. But there were obvious challenges.

Ryden typically works solo, painting on flat canvases in his Portland, Ore., studio. He and his wife, the artist Marion Peck, moved there last year after Ryden had spent 35 years in L.A.

For ABT he had to create three-dimensional pieces up to 36 feet tall and 60 feet wide that would visually work in a venue with more than 3,000 seats. He scoured classical theater design books and Internet imagery for inspiration, listening to Strauss in his studio while he worked.

What proved especially difficult, Ryden says, was “letting go.” He collaborated with ABT director of production N. James Whitehill III as well as independent costume supervisor Holly Hynes and scenic design supervisor Camellia Koo on his sketches, paintings and digital renderings. Ryden’s designs for 150 costumes and backdrops for nine scenes were then sent to costume shops and scenic design houses, mostly in New York, for fabrication.

“I’m a very hands-on person and I like to create things myself,” Ryden says. “A lot of artists like [Takashi] Murakami and Jeff Koons, Damien Hirst, they have a team of people that they direct to make their art, they don’t actually do it themselves. And that’s what their personalities are suited for. And I’m very much not that way. I like to have total control. So it was hard for me to let go and have other people execute things.”

But letting go also opens doors. Not only will Ryden present his “Whipped Cream” paintings and drawings in a May exhibition at Paul Kasmin Gallery in New York, but also he has found a new love of ballet.

“I’d been on and off,” he says. “I always liked it when I went — ‘The Nutcracker,’ ‘Swan Lake’ — but I wasn’t a big, huge fan or anything.”

As research, Ryden and Peck attended Ratmansky’s “Firebird” at the Metropolitan Opera in New York twice last year, viewing it once from the audience and once backstage in the wings.

PAUL KASMIN GALLERY

“It was just amazing to see the dancers out onstage. They fly around like they’re weightless, and then they come offstage and just collapse in exhaustion,” Ryden says, eyes wide. “And to see it in that intimate setting, what they put into their performance, it was one of the most moving things I’ve ever done. It was so inspirational.”

Given Ryden’s art stardom among a particular young and online-savvy audience — he has 360,000 followers on Instagram, where he’s been posting about “Whipped Cream” — the production is also a chance for Segerstrom to diversify its audience.

“He’s a big deal,” says Segerstrom Executive Vice President Judy Morr. “And we know that people who are followers of his are going to come to see ballet probably for the first time. The whole concept of his doing this production in canon with Alexei Ratmansky — they’re among the most creative people alive today.”

When the curtain rises, Ryden’s influence may or may not be immediately evident to his fans in the audience. His paintings are often shot through with mysterious symbols, religious iconography, mathematical and scientific fodder and cabinet-of-curiosity ephemera, not to mention Abraham Lincoln heads. The ABT backdrops backstage, however, are pink and frothy candy-landscapes, noticeably lighter and more innocent than the artist’s typical work.

Suddenly, the answer to the question, “Where is Ryden in all this?” lands with a slap as one last backdrop is lowered onto the stage.

The piece, from Act II when the boy is hallucinating, is a psychedelic explosion of eyeballs, flowers, single-celled organisms, sea creatures and other primordial elements.

“I was trying to depict what might be lurking in his deep subconscious, what was swirling around,” Ryden says.

Ryden doesn’t care much for sweets himself, he says, but this one backdrop is particularly delicious for him.

“I think that’s where I got to start to really go into my own territory,” he says, “when the boy is truly into the fantasy world and it’s more open-ended.”

His face breaks into a wide grin.

“Like: This is what I would start to see if I fell into a sugar delirium myself.”

American Ballet Theatre’s ‘Whipped Cream’

Where: Segerstrom Hall, Segerstrom Center for the Arts, 600 Town Center Drive, Costa Mesa

When: 7:30 p.m. Wednesday-Friday, 2 and 7:30 p.m. Saturday, 1 and 6:30 p.m. Sunday.

Tickets: \$29 and up. Subject to change.

Information: (714) 556-2787, SCFTA.org

<http://www.latimes.com/entertainment/arts/la-et-mark-ryden-whipped-cream-20170303-story.html>

PAUL KASMIN GALLERY

The New York Times

March 10, 2017

IN THIS BALLET, A SWEETLY DISTURBING CONFECTION FROM ALEXEI RATMANSKY

Roslyn Sulcas



The pop-surrealist artist Mark Ryden's backdrops for the ballet "Whipped Cream" being prepared at Scenic Art Studios in Newburgh, N.Y., in December. Lauren Lancaster for The New York Times

A Viennese pastry shop, dancing sweets, a little boy who overindulges and a revolution by the lower pastry orders. An almost unknown Richard Strauss score. Décor and costumes by the pop-surrealist artist Mark Ryden. And a great title: "Whipped Cream! It's really wonderful," Alexei Ratmansky said of his full-length work for American Ballet Theater after a long day of rehearsal last week.

Mr. Ratmansky, who is 48 and grew up in Ukraine, is the artist in residence at Ballet Theater, and a fluent creator of ballets of all kinds. He has made pure-dance pieces, full-length narrative works and ballets that joyfully mix the comic and the classical. He is fascinated by ballet history and has shown a particular love for reworking forgotten Soviet gems ("The Bright Stream," "Flames of Paris") and for painstakingly remaking 19th-century classical ballets ("Paquita," "Swan Lake," "The Sleeping Beauty") to reflect their original choreographic intentions.

"Whipped Cream" falls into the "lost historical gems" category. And its premiere on Wednesday, March 15, at the Segerstrom Center for the Arts in Costa Mesa, Calif., will have extra allure with the return of the principal dancer David Hallberg, after a two-and-a-half-year absence. Despite its Strauss score — one of only two ballets that the composer created (the other was "The Legend of Joseph," in 1914) — it is barely known, even to balletomanes.

"I had no thought of trying to find out about the original or making this a research project," Mr. Ratmansky said, noting that there was no detailed account of the choreography by Heinrich Kröllner, a ballet master who Strauss brought to the Vienna State Opera during his 1919-1924 tenure as co-director. "Mainly, the

PAUL KASMIN GALLERY

existence of a ballet score by Strauss, which hadn't been used, really excited me. The story is almost nothing; it's not exactly Tolstoy. It's about a little boy who eats too many sweet things, ends up in hospital and has nightmares that lead him into a fantasy world. But the music is wonderful, rich waves of sound, 10 things going on at once."



Backdrops by Mark Ryden being prepared. Lauren Lancaster for The New York Times

"Whipped Cream" — "Schlagobers" at its June 1924 premiere — was a resounding failure when it was created, said Wayne Heisler, the author of "The Ballet Collaborations of Richard Strauss." "Vienna was in a time of economic crisis, and the ballet cost a fortune and was seen as frivolous," Mr. Heisler said. "The score is, in some ways, a great one, Strauss's masterpiece of high and low art. It's really honest in that the spectacular aspect of it is not framed as high art or something transcendent."

Mr. Ratmansky discovered the music by chance in the early 1990s, when he spotted a CD on a trip to Japan soon after he and his wife, Tatiana Kilivniuk, had left Kiev to join the Winnipeg Ballet. "At the time, food was scarce in the Ukraine, you could buy nothing, and suddenly there was all this stuff," he said. "Tatiana loves whipped cream and would run to the stores to buy those cans you can squirt. After I found the music, I did a little extract for a choreography workshop where I was the whipped cream and she was a little boy, eating it."

The music stayed in the back of Mr. Ratmansky's mind, and a few years ago he began to discuss the project with Benjamin Millepied, at the time the director of the Paris Opera Ballet. "I felt very strongly that I needed a really powerful design element, because it's a fantasy land that has to become a very specific world onstage," Mr. Ratmansky said. "Benjamin and I had a lot of ideas, but we didn't find the designer that both of us felt was it."

They abandoned the idea. Mr. Ratmansky, who had decided that Mr. Ryden's strange, surreal mélange of kitsch and gore (his work inspired Lady Gaga's famous meat dress) would be perfect, took the project to Kevin McKenzie, the artistic director of Ballet Theater, who had been interested in co-producing the ballet. "I was amazed there was a ballet by Strauss that I didn't know," Mr. McKenzie said.

PAUL KASMIN GALLERY



From left, Valentina Abramova, a tailor; Alexei Agoudine, a dancer in costume; and Tomoko Ueda-Dunbar, wardrobe supervisor at American Ballet Theater. Credit Joanna Ebenstein/Cernunnos

Mr. McKenzie added that for logistical and financial reasons, Ballet Theater is often unable to take on ambitious and expensive projects. “Then other people jump on them,” he said. “The ingredients for this were so good that I was determined to make it work.” (The budget for “Whipped Cream,” Mr. McKenzie said, is around \$3 million.)

“Whipped Cream” is Mr. Ryden’s first theatrical undertaking. In a telephone interview from his home in Portland, Ore., he said the experience of creating its costumes and décor had been a huge creative departure. “I am used to working in isolation and having complete control,” he said. “I like to create everything with my own hands, but it was a real joy to work with a group.”

He looked at some photographs from the original production but tried not to be overly influenced by the early designs. Instead, he wanted to incorporate “the 1920s aesthetic of a Viennese pastry shop in a very general way, and then give it a more modern, surrealist edge,” he said. “One of the things I really like about the whole production is the contrast between sweet and disturbing — maybe even frightening — elements.”

Mr. Ratmansky said that the yearlong process of collaboration with Mr. Ryden was not always easy but that there was a lot of respect. “The meeting of serious painting and the ballet stage is a difficult one,” he said, “and I still don’t know how it will balance. But in Mark’s designs, I find a parallel to my own approach; the use of a classical, historical technique to say something different.”

PAUL KASMIN GALLERY



Sketches by Mark Ryden. © Mark Ryden

Mr. Ryden's fantastical designs, he added, had been a great help to him in creating the piece. "The score is wonderful, and there are amazing waltzes, gallops, polkas and a beautiful violin adagio, but it's challenging because not all of it is danceable," he said. "Parts are very symphonic, and when the music is saying something that I perhaps can't translate into movement, we have these huge heads and amazing backdrops to balance things."

A week before the company left for California, Mr. Ratmansky still had a few scenes to choreograph. Working intently with his large cast in the Ballet Theater studios on lower Broadway, he frequently consulted a small notebook as he gave detailed instructions about gesture and motivation, shaping the first minutes of Act 2, in which the little boy discovers the magical characters in a fantasy land of sweets. (The scenario is reminiscent of "The Nutcracker," although Strauss was unlikely to have seen the ballet when he wrote "Whipped Cream.")

"With Alexei, it's always a question of committing yourself utterly to the movement," Mr. Hallberg, who has the role of Prince Coffee, said in a break between rehearsals. "He wants you to always be totally on top of and attacking the movement, emphasizing how you are in the air, how you are on the ground." It was a relief, he added, to be making a comeback in a new role. "There is a kind of freedom in creating something, not living up to something," he said.

"It's super fun to dance," said Stella Abrera, who Mr. Hallberg partners as Princess Tea Flower. "Kind of over the top, grandiose, but never campy. She believes in that over-the-topness."

So does Mr. Ratmansky. "It's Strauss at his craziest, amusing his listeners and hoping to change the mood of depressed, postwar Vienna," he said. "He said, 'My duty as an artist is to entertain.' I believe that, too."

Diario de Sevilla

"Al lado de El Bosco, todo parece la porquería
de un mercado de pulgas"

El CAC de Málaga acoge hasta el próximo marzo 'Cámara de las maravillas', la primera retrospectiva en Europa del creador estadounidense, considerado padre del surrealismo pop.

Pablo Bujalance

December 19, 2016



Mark Ryden, junto a 'The Parlor-Allegory of Magic, Quintessence, and Divine Mystery' (2012), en el CAC Málaga. /JAVIER ALBIÑANA

Sentado junto a su mujer, Marion Peck, y ante un té que le acaban de servir, Mark Ryden (Meford, Oregón, 1963) revela durante la conversación un humor fino y sutil. En su forma de expresarse, al igual que en sus obras, los detalles revelan a menudo más que los *contenidos* más gruesos.

-Decía Nabokov que él respetaba a Freud como lo que es: un autor humorístico. ¿Quizá quiere usted demostrar con sus obras que hay más conexiones entre el humor y el psicoanálisis de las aparentes?

-No soy fan de Sigmund Freud. Soy consciente de la importancia de su obra y de su contribución a la humanidad, pero prefiero con mucho a Carl Gustav Jung. Creo que en Freud hay una simplificación de las cosas, nos hace depender de nuestra sexualidad o de lo que nuestra madre y nuestro padre opinen de nosotros, y por más que esto satisfaga a muchos creo que la personalidad, lo que viene a definir lo que es cada uno, encierra un proceso mucho más complejo.

-Se adivina en sus pinturas, tan cargadas de elementos, una intención de mantener la atención del espectador. ¿El tiempo que invierta alguien en ver uno de sus cuadros cuenta para usted?

PAUL KASMIN GALLERY

-Desde luego. Creo que ése es un indicador más que aceptable para evaluar la calidad de una obra de arte. Si la gente presta atención a una obra y si, más aún, empieza a hacerse preguntas respecto a lo que está viendo y respecto a sí misma, entonces se han cumplido determinados objetivos. A menudo viene mucha gente a preguntarme por mis obras, qué significa aquello o qué significa lo otro, pero yo prefiero no responder; es mucho mejor que cada uno encuentre las respuestas o, por lo menos, que se siga haciendo las preguntas.

-¿Podemos entender esto como una posible resistencia ante la fugacidad actual de las imágenes, con una sobreexposición en la que al final las representaciones pasan inadvertidas?

-Sí, pero eso pasa también a veces en los museos. He observado que no pocos visitantes dedican apenas unos segundos a ver cada obra, hay como un ansia por verlo todo muy rápido. Creo que el mundo del arte también contribuye a esa fugacidad de la imagen de la que habla. Por mi parte, para mí siempre es una satisfacción saber que ante mis obras hay personas que demuestran justo lo contrario, ganas de seguir mirando. Me parece que el arte sirve para eso, para crear esa necesidad.

-En sus obras abunda el contenido espiritual, una intención de ir más allá de la conciencia y de la experiencia. ¿Alguna vez ha tenido la impresión de que la pintura, como expresión artística, se le quedaba corta a la hora de dar forma a estas sensaciones?

-No, en absoluto. Yo me dedico a comunicar a través de la imagen, y me parece una actividad plena, que te permite llegar a donde quieras. A veces me he puesto a escribir, por ejemplo, y esto sí que me ha parecido un ejercicio frustrante, había ciertas imágenes en mi cabeza que no se podían traducir en palabras. Pero por el contrario amo la pintura, me reconozco plenamente en ella.

-Con respecto a la honda afección que dejó en usted la Semana Santa de Málaga, ¿le interesa aquello que Nietzsche definió como "el placer de lo trágico"?

-Es curioso, pero justo esta mañana estábamos hablando de esto. Fuimos de visita a la catedral [de Málaga] y reparamos en todas las imágenes que expresan tanto dolor, el Cristo crucificado, los discípulos torturados, las Vírgenes llorando mares de lágrimas. Nos parece muy interesante la imaginería católica, llena por todas partes de este desgarramiento, una desesperación a veces brutal. Hay en todo esto una combinación muy interesante de belleza y sufrimiento que conecta, supongo, con determinadas zonas del espíritu. Y sí, algo comparto de ese placer de lo trágico. Hace ya algunos años hice una obra titulada *Fountain* en la que aparece una niña decapitada de cuyo cuello emana un gran chorro de sangre. La incluimos en una exposición en el West Virginia State Museum y generó cierta controversia entre algunos católicos que la consideraban ofensiva. Y a mí me entraban ganas de decir a los que me criticaban: "Pero, ¿alguna vez habéis estado en una catedral católica? ¿Habéis visto las cosas que hay allí?" De hecho, en la misma catedral he visto un cuadro de un apóstol decapitado que no era menos explícito.

-No sé si en aquella visita vio usted la Semana Santa hasta el final, pero la última procesión, que sale el Domingo de Resurrección, es la del Cristo Resucitado, y, al contrario que en el resto de desfiles, habitualmente va a verla poca gente. ¿Las promesas de vida eterna son un mal negocio?

-Es fascinante todo eso que cuenta. Seguramente, claro. De hecho, lo que recuerdo más vivamente de la catedral ahora mismo es el cuadro del decapitado, es lo que más impresionado me ha dejado. Será por algo.

-¿Resulta descabellado incluir a El Bosco entre sus maestros?

-Es muy interesante que cite a El Bosco. Mucha gente me pregunta por mis influencias, y siempre digo que los artistas que más influyen son, en cada momento, los que más me inspiran. Tuve la suerte de poder ir al Museo del Prado y ver las obras de El Bosco, y desde luego aquella fue una de las experiencias más inspiradoras de mi vida. Me resulta imposible describir cómo llegó a conmoverme *El Jardín de las Delicias*. Conocía a El Bosco desde mi infancia, siempre me había llamado la atención, pero poder contemplar así su obra fue para mí un episodio fundacional. A su lado, cualquier obra parece la porquería sacada de cualquier mercado de pulgas.

PAUL KASMIN GALLERY

-Si tuviera que poner una banda sonora a su exposición en el CAC, ¿qué música escogería?

-Debussy.

-Vaya, creí que iba a decir "Frank Zappa".

-No, no, mejor algo más etéreo, más ambiental. Cuando trabajamos Marion y yo en casa escuchamos mucho a Brian Eno, por ejemplo. Algo así.

-¿Trabaja usted yendo a la búsqueda de la imagen ideal que pueda haber en su cabeza o, simplemente, se limita a esperar a que algo ocurra?

-Marion y yo seguimos procedimientos diferentes. Ella es capaz de abstraerse, de alumbrar una idea y de verterla en el lienzo. Yo necesito partir de algo que pueda ver, una fotografía, otra pintura, una imagen cualquiera. A veces lo que hago es intentar recordar un sueño, luchar contra el olvido para rememorar hasta el último detalle posible.

-Picasso dijo aquello de "yo no busco, yo encuentro". ¿Y usted?

-Sí, es otra posibilidad. Quién sabe. Tal vez.

PAUL KASMIN GALLERY

La Opinión DE MÁLAGA

La fanatasía de Ryden se hace real en el CAC de Málaga

Maria Palma

December 16, 2016



La primera retrospectiva europea del artista, reconocido mundialmente, comprende 55 obras de 30 coleccionistas diferentes y estará exuesta hasta el 5 de marzo © Paula Martín

El amor, el concepto de belleza, la naturaleza y la vinculación con la religión son algunos de los elementos comunes de las 55 obras que expuestas en el Centro municipal de Arte Contemporáneo y que se podrán visitar hasta el próximo 5 de marzo.

A Mark Ryden (Medford, Oregón, 1963) le gusta dibujar rostros casi angelicales a los que acompaña con elementos de la naturaleza. A algunas de las jóvenes, que ejercen de musas en sus obras las disfraza de ardillas y a otras, sin embargo, las viste con un largo vestido hecho de salchichas, chuletas y otros productos cárnicos.

El artista estadounidense, con más de 20 años de trayectoria a sus espaldas, ha decidido pararse a recordar y ha elegido el Centro municipal de Arte Contemporáneo malagueño para ello. La exposición del pintor, titulada Cámara de las maravillas, se inauguró ayer y estará presente en el antiguo mercado de mayoristas hasta el próximo 5 de marzo.

«Es extraordinario que en solo un año se haya podido llevar a cabo esta exposición», aseveró ayer Ryden, que confesó que el hecho de que sus obras se hallen expuestas en el CAC no es otra cosa que una suma de casualidades. «Hace 10 años de mi última retrospectiva que se llevó a cabo en un museo de Seattle. Le dije a mi galerista que quería volver a repetir un proyecto similar», recordó. Fue entonces cuando el director del

PAUL KASMIN GALLERY

centro, Fernando Francés, se puso en contacto con el galerista de Ryden. «Fue una maravillosa casualidad», comentó el artista, pero después vendrían muchas otras.

El pintor estadounidense relató la primera vez que recorrió la ciudad, coincidiendo con la Semana Santa. Visitó la institución junto a su mujer y se sentó a la mesa con Antonio Banderas, quién le transmitió su pasión por las procesiones. «Y después de muchos mails, las obras ya están expuestas», sentenció Ryden.

La muestra contiene más de 55 obras de 30 coleccionistas internacionales, sobre todo norteamericano. Obras como The Last Rabbit, Rose, Snow White, Goodbye Bear, Angel of Meat o Saint Barbie forman parte del recorrido de esta muestra que junto a Wood Meat Dress, una escultura de madera concebida únicamente para la exposición, recorren dos décadas de creación del norteamericano.

En sus obras, Mark Ryden presenta varios elementos comunes, como la búsqueda de la belleza a través de imágenes casi andróginas de ojos grandes, tez clara y mirada inocente. Asimismo, la relación con la naturaleza también se manifiesta en obras tan complejas como El árbol de la vida, donde lo real y lo surrealista se abren paso para desnudar al pensamiento más profundo del pintor.

Además del amor, la relación con la religión o el empleo de productos cárnicos están presentes en muchas de sus piezas. Personajes históricos como el que fuera primer presidente republicano de Estados Unidos Abraham Lincoln aparecen de forma reiterada en sus obras, representado como un héroe que liberó a los esclavos.

«Observo la vida y la realidad de diferentes maneras y desde múltiples perspectivas», confesó Mark Ryden, también conocido como el padre del surrealismo pop.



© Paula Martín

PAUL KASMIN GALLERY



Juxtapoz x Superflat: Mark Ryden

u 27 2016

The man needs no introduction. We are so excited to have Mark Ryden part of "Juxtapoz x Superflat," with a massive painting last featured at his solo show, "Dodecahedron," in NYC at Paul Kasmin Gallery earlier this year. His work, *Anatomia*, will be on display at Juxtapoz x Superflat, happening at Pivot Art & Culture in Seattle from August 4–7, 2016. The show was co-curated by Takashi Murakami and Juxtapoz editor, Evan Pricco.



Mark Ryden is not only a vital part of Juxtapoz's history, but has become one of the most successful and sought-after painters of the last twenty years. His paintings are so influential, his style so often-borrowed, but when you see his work in person, the skill and texture is so unmatched that it's often silly to compare his work to others. We are excited to have *Anatomia* in the Juxtapoz x Superflat show, as it was our favorite work in his last exhibition, and a massive work that really shows just how detailed these works are in person.

PAUL KASMIN GALLERY

Artists selected to appear in the show by Murakami include: Chiho Aoshima, Urs Fischer, Kim Jung Gi, Kazunori Hamana, James Jean, JH Kagaku, Friedrich Kunath, Takashi Murakami, Kazumi Nakamura, Otani Workshop, Mark Ryden, David Shrigley, Katsuya Terada, a selection from Toilet Paper Magazine, Yuji Ueda, Yuji Ueno, He Xiang Yu, and Zoer & Velvet. Artists selected by Pricco include Trenton Doyle Hancock, Todd James, Austin Lee, Rebecca Morgan, Elisabeth Higgins O'Connor, Paco Pomet, Parra, Christian Rex van Minnen. Erin M. Riley, Devin Troy Strother, Sage Vaughn, and Ben Venom.

PAUL KASMIN GALLERY



“Juxtapoz x Superflat” @ Pivot Art, Seattle

u

Takashi Murakami and *Juxtapoz Art & Culture Magazine* today announced a special pop-up group exhibition organized to coincide with the second edition of the Seattle Art Fair. The exhibition, entitled *Juxtapoz x Superflat*, will be on view at Vulcan’s 3,000-square-foot flexible concept space, Pivot Art + Culture, from August 4 – 7, 2016 and will feature work by over 23 artists, spanning from the underground to the heart of the international art scene.



The works in the gallery above will not necessarily be in the exhibition, but are examples of the artist's work.

Following in the footsteps of Murakami’s previous curatorial efforts—*Superflat* (2000, Nagoya Parco Gallery, LA MOCA, Walker Art Center, Henry Art Gallery), *Coloriage* (2002, Fondation Cartier pour l'Art Contemporain), and *Little Boy: The Arts of Japan’s Exploding Subculture* (2006, Japan Society)—the exhibition will continue to expand Murakami’s *Superflat* theory by conflating art, subculture, and a range of divergent genres within a single space. Murakami and Juxtapoz Editor-in-Chief Evan Pricco conceived the exhibition as a survey of the most exciting visual artists to emerge in recent years, with a heavy emphasis on artists who operate outside of the central hubs of the global art world. Pricco’s selection of artists’ works will be shown alongside a similar selection chosen by Murakami, featuring artists from his *Kaikai Kiki* stable and other established names.

PAUL KASMIN GALLERY

“Over the past 22 years, Juxtapoz Art & Culture Magazine has documented the creative life through underground art and street culture,” remarks Evan Pricco. “In recent years, with the increasing popularity of contemporary art, Juxtapoz has become the staple for accessible communication of emerging art forms, contemporary art, design, fashion, and graffiti. The magazine's focus is a literal flattening of high and low cultures. In discussions with Takashi Murakami, Juxtapoz has curated a selection of artists covered in the magazine over the past two decades that encompass both growth and expansion in the sub-cultures they emerged from: skate, surf, graffiti, street art, comics, design, illustration, painting, and digital and traditional arts.”

Murakami himself commented: “It has now been 16 years since my original Superflat exhibition. At the time, I concentrated on Superflat as a phenomenon which had spread in Japan but since then, we have seen it take root all over the world and I felt it was time for a sequel. I have always been a fan of Juxtapoz but especially since my co-curator on this show, Evan Pricco, took over editorial duties, I have felt a similarity in our approach and hoped that together we would be able to create a true happening.”

Artists selected to appear in the show by Murakami include: Chiho Aoshima, Urs Fischer, Kim Jung Gi, Kazunori Hamana, James Jean, JH Kagaku, Friedrich Kunath, Takashi Murakami, Kazumi Nakamura, Otani Workshop, Mark Ryden, David Shrigley, Katsuya Terada, a selection from Toilet Paper Magazine, Yuji Ueda, Yuji Ueno, He Xiang Yu, and Zoer & Velvet. Artists selected by Pricco include Trenton Doyle Hancock, Todd James, Austin Lee, Rebecca Morgan, Elisabeth Higgins O'Connor, Paco Pomet, Parra, Christian Rex van Minnen. Erin M. Riley, Devin Troy Strother, Sage Vaughn, and Ben Venom.

The exhibition, planned to coincide with the Seattle Art Fair, aims to build upon the attention on Seattle's growing art scene. As part of these efforts, a reception, complete with live music by (artist TBA), will be held on Friday, August 5th at the main gallery from 7 PM. Seattle Art Fair will also provide transportation from the CenturyLink Field Event Center to the Vulcan campus.

This pop-up presentation follows Pivot Art + Culture's current exhibition, *Imagined Futures: Science Fiction, Art, and Artifacts*, which is on view through July 10, 2016.

PAUL KASMIN GALLERY

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

Pop Surrealist Artist Will Design Sets and Costumes for New Ballet

Mark Ryden, known for fantastical oil paintings, will join forces with choreographer Alexei Ratmansky

to er



Princess Praline's Procession by Mark Ryden, who will create the sets and costumes for a new American Ballet Theatre piece by choreographer Alexei Ratmansky. PHOTO: TK MARK RYDEN/PAUL KASMIN GALLERY.

Pop surrealism is coming to the ballet stage: Visual artist Mark Ryden, known for fantastical oil paintings, will create the sets and costumes for a new ballet by choreographer Alexei Ratmansky, American Ballet Theatre announced Wednesday.

The two-act confection, called “Whipped Cream,” is story about a young boy who overindulges in a Vienna pastry shop. With libretto and music by Richard Strauss, the ballet, originally titled “Schlagobers,” was first performed by the Vienna State Opera in 1924.

Mr. Ryden, whose work has been exhibited widely around the world, is known for mysterious, often unsettling paintings filled with big-eyed children and kitschy-looking creatures. Mr. Ratmansky, one of ballet’s most prolific choreographers, is Ballet Theatre’s artist-in-residence.

“The combination of fantasy and surrealism will prove something dreamlike from both of them,” said artistic director Kevin McKenzie.

“Whipped Cream” will have its New York premiere May 22 at the Metropolitan Opera House after a run at the Segerstrom Center for the Arts in California.

INFLUENCES



DODECAHEDRON

MARK RYDEN'S DIVINE DOZEN

MARK RYDEN'S NEWEST EXHIBITION AT PAUL

Kasmin Gallery in NYC features his first monumental bronze sculpture and an ongoing exploration of Jungian archetypes in porcelain and paint. Ryden graciously discussed his personal philosophy and current influences exclusively for *Juxtapoz*.

A Life In Bronze

Mark Ryden: I had thought about doing a bronze sculpture for a while. The idea for this piece came to me during a conversation with my wife, Marion. We were discussing what kind of grave marker we might want for ourselves and what our graves might look like, a subject we find interesting. The vision of a dodecahedron covered in my own iconography came to me. I thought what a wonderful bronze sculpture it would be and decided to create it for this exhibition. I titled the piece *Self Portrait as a Dodecahedron* because the subject is a reflection on myself and the imagery I often return to in my work.

It is fascinating to think that this sculpture could possibly be around a couple thousand years or more from now. For the patina of the sculpture, I was inspired by a visit to a recent exhibition of bronzes from the Hellenistic period, in the first few centuries BC, at the Getty Museum. The sculptures beautifully showed their great age on their exquisite surfaces: deep hues of black covered in gorgeous turquoise corrosion. I tried to emulate this surface on my sculpture.

The sculpture was created by a wonderful group of artisans at Foundry Guastini in Vicenza, Italy, using a traditional lost wax technique. These people are masters at classical traditional bronze casting and sculpting. It was wonderful to work with them. They beautifully brought my vision to life.

The Dodecahedron

Even before I fully understood the significance of the dodecahedron, I was instinctively attracted to it, and it began to show up in my paintings. The dodecahedron is a very special geometric form, permeated with mystery and connotations of divinity. It belongs to a small group of five geometric solids that share a simple set of parameters: the same polygon on every face, and the same number of faces at each vertex. It is interesting that there are only five shapes that belong to this very limited group. They each have a mathematical beauty and perfect symmetry that have given them tremendous significance to mathematicians and philosophers since the times of antiquity. They became known as the Platonic Solids because they figured prominently in the philosophy of Plato. He associated each shape with one of the four classical elements: earth, air, water and fire. The fifth solid, the dodecahedron, he nebulously associated with God

PAUL KASMIN GALLERY



and the heavens. Aristotle alleged that the heavens were made out of an element he called "ether" and he attached the dodecahedron to this element. The dodecahedron symbolizes a bridge between the physical world and the intangible realm.

The images on the twelve sides of the sculpture are the icons or symbols that I most often use in my art overall. These include things like the bee, the tree, meat, the eye, etc. I embrace the symbols and icons that return repeatedly in my art. I have a long relationship with each of them and feel great affection for them. On the top pentagon surface of the dodecahedron, I have incorporated my own astrological birth chart.

Alchemy

I think that when the alchemists played around with substances, it was not unlike an artist playing around with paint. They liked to see what would happen with various substances as they tried different things with them. They were interested in the connection between a physical substance and the spiritual realm. In that way, I do feel a kinship to alchemy. I love to play with paint and see what magical thing I can make happen with it.

Spirit Guides

I think the more an artist tries to have complete control of their work, the more lifeless the work will be. I feel an artist has to give themselves over to "other forces" to get some real numinous power in their work. One of the most important things an artist needs to do is learn how to get their guiding spirits to show up and help them in their work.

Aurora

I had certain thoughts about the paintings I would do for this show rolling around in my head for quite a long time, and then the vision of the large piece, *Aurora*, came to me. Initially, I resisted. It seemed a bit off on a tangent from what I originally thought was the theme of this body of work. She also needed to be epic in scale, and I knew it would take up most of my time and prevent me from doing many of the other pieces I had planned. But I felt strongly compelled to do the piece, and in the end, she became the very piece that best defined the theme of the show, which could be described as "the soul confronting its physical form."

Feeling The Mystery

In my work, I am not attempting to communicate a narrow, specific meaning. I would hope my work is more open and provides an opportunity for the viewer to think their own thoughts, form their own ideas, and draw their own conclusions. I want my art to be enjoyed without rational analysis. I'm not dealing with literal, ordinary, daytime thought that can be put into an identifiable container. I would hope my art moves people on a different level, something more to do with the subconscious and more mysterious.

Jungian Archetypes

With *Anima*, I was referring to the Jungian school of thought in which anima is the feminine aspect of the male unconscious mind (the counterpart to animus, the masculine part of the feminine unconscious mind). At some point, my wife, Marion, conjectured that the recurring female figures in my paintings were really self-portraits. This was very insightful and I had to agree. In that way, the recurring figure is my anima. In a more general way, she is simply anima, the soul, relating to anyone looking at my paintings.

100
A
Oil on c
58"

above /fro
Mark Ryden in 1
Portrait by Ann C

Chroma Struct
Oil on c
30"

INFLUENCES.JUSTAPOZ.COM

PAUL KASMIN GALLERY

INFLUENCES



I am very interested in archetypes and the deeply rooted, collectively held ideas and forms that we all share. Archetypes are primordial psychic structures. They come from the mysterious deep strata of the psyche revealed in the dream world, and therefore, hold great power. When they live in a painting, they give the work a very dynamic charge.

“THE RECURRING FEMALE FIGURES IN MY PAINTINGS WERE REALLY SELF-PORTRAITS.”

Porcelain Biology

Anatomia is a progression from my previous porcelain sculpture, *The Meat Dress*. Both of these porcelains are based on my paintings. With the thought of meat being the physical substance that keeps our souls in this physical realm, we are all wearing a “meat dress.” With *Anatomia*, the dress becomes a display of the wondrous anatomy that makes up our biological form. I am astonished by our miraculous biology. Seeing our internal organs on display inspires contemplation of the incredible complexity of our inner workings. While it might seem disturbing to see our insides, our anatomy is actually quite beautiful, and that is what I attempted to show in my work.

After Death

I think that we dissolve back into the collective field of consciousness. Just as our bodies are absorbed back into the earth, so are our spirits absorbed back into the “Anima Mundi,” the great collective soul of the earth. I don’t think we maintain any awareness at that point. I imagine it is something like dreamless sleep, but I believe we go on to combine with the whole in a realm beyond time and beyond the world of opposites.

Beauty in Math

Sacred Geometry combines two subjects of great interest to me: math and art. There are beautiful mathematics that exist underneath the surface of everything around us. Phi, the golden ratio (1.618), is a magic number. It is the number of existence. I think of the world a little bit like a video game. The game can be a rich, complex world of wondrous sights, incredible music, interesting characters and intriguing stories, but at the deepest level, the game is made up of numbers. Binary 0s and 1s.

Recent Obsessions

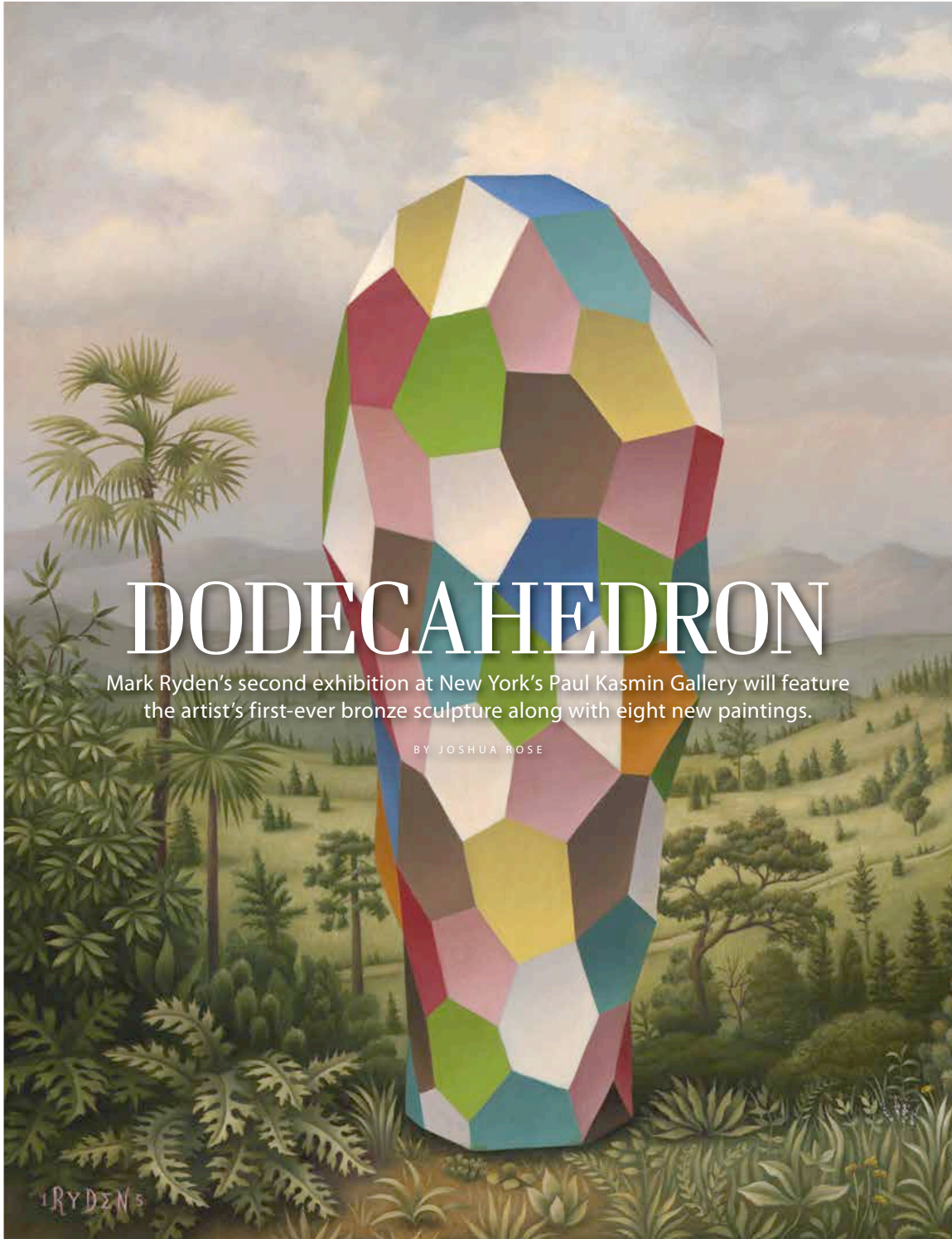
Black truffles, authentic water buffalo mozzarella, Japanese Kawaii, Japanese BJD, my own Final Cut Pro home movies, Woody Allen movies now that he is no longer in them, collecting sea shells, ancient Greco-Roman mystery cults, Instagram.

JUX

Mark Ryden's Dodecahedron is on view through January 23, 2016 at Paul Kasmin Gallery in New York City

100%
Dymaxion Prin
Oil on ca
44"

PAUL KASMIN GALLERY



DODECAHEDRON

Mark Ryden's second exhibition at New York's Paul Kasmin Gallery will feature the artist's first-ever bronze sculpture along with eight new paintings.

BY JOSHUA ROSE

PAUL KASMIN GALLERY



PAUL KASMIN GALLERY



2

A dodecahedron is a geometric structure bearing 12 sides whose “perfect symmetry has been the source of extensive query by mathematicians and scientists since antiquity.”

Add artists to that list, as well. Well, at least one artist: Mark Ryden. For his second solo exhibition at the esteemed Paul Kasmin Gallery in New York City, Ryden has focused on the dodecahedron and used it to influence his paintings and art. In fact, it took over his creative process so much for this current exhibition that he actually built one himself in bronze.

“Measuring 1 meter in height, the work consists of 12 pentagonal panels that join together to form a dodecahedron,” says Paul Kasmin Gallery. “Each panel is individually cast and features images and motifs that have been prevalent throughout the artist’s oeuvre such as the tree, the eye, the fetus, the bee, the ammonite and Abraham Lincoln.”

Ryden uses the form to continue a theme that has been found in his work since the beginning—the exploration of the bridge between the physical world and the intangible realm. For Ryden, this is done by bringing the



3

PAUL KASMIN GALLERY

2
*Mark Ryden: Dodecahedron on view
at Paul Kasmin Gallery.*

3
Experiment 118, oil on panel, 12 x 12"

4
Anatomia, oil on canvas, 54 x 30"

mystery of the natural world into focus. Ryden's hidden realms aren't so hidden, rather than typically ignored by most passersby. But, they are the realms that have always served as a source of inspiration for artists—the inner worlds of the human body (*Anatomia*), the external natural environment (*Chroma Structure 113*), and the hidden undersea world (*Aurora*). Ryden holds a microscope to these natural worlds, and the curves and bends of an intestine, the spindling branches of a piece of coral, and the patterning of various leaves and shrubs all are brought into focus to capture our attention.

"The vocabulary of images in Ryden's new body of work remains consistent with his pervasive distortion of scale and his iconic fairy tale-like creatures set against seductive landscapes of untouched beauty," says the gallery. "The artist's paintings focus on the 'soul confronting its physical form' as represented by his recurring feminine child figure, he calls 'anima' or 'soul' figure."

This feminine anima figure is of central importance to Ryden's paintings and relates to both his own self as an artist and his unconscious mind.

"In the Jungian school of thought, anima is the feminine aspect of the male unconscious mind—the counterpart to animus, the masculine part of the feminine unconscious mind," says Ryden. "At some point, my wife, Marion, conjectured that the recurring female figure in my paintings was really a self-portrait. This was very insightful, and I had to agree. In that way, the recurring figure is my anima. In a more general way, she is simply the soul, relating to anyone looking at my paintings."

Many of Ryden's paintings approach his subject through a sense of innocence



4

PAUL KASMIN GALLERY



5

and wonder found in childhood, a way of looking at the world for what it is rather than contextualized in our own trained and adult minds. *Experiment 118*, for example, shows a small girl studying a table filled with strange and exotic items. The organic shapes she encounters seem to be still alive but needing to be put together, to fit into some shape or pattern that brings them life. It's the soul Ryden speaks of attempting to make sense of the natural world, to encounter the mysteries and embrace them.

And Ryden does this with sincerity and honesty not usually seen in the oft-sarcastic and nihilistic world of contemporary art.

"Sentimentality, nostalgia and kitsch are hazardous territories in the art world," says Ryden. "I find it fascinating that these areas are so disdained. I suppose they are looked down upon because anybody from any social class or level of education can respond to these subjects. I do not fear kitsch. Many respected contemporary artists use kitsch in their art but protect themselves



6

5
Euglena, oil on canvas, 18 x 24"

6
Artist Mark Ryden in his studio.

7
Aurora, oil on canvas, 112 x 58"

8
The frame designed for Mark Ryden's painting *Aurora*.

PAUL KASMIN GALLERY



with an ironic posture. I am striving for something more complex; I try and combine irony with a degree of sincerity. I believe kitsch is a domain that holds the powerful universal archetypes of the collective consciousness."

And this is something that Ryden achieves, whether it be a 6-foot oil painting or a work in miniature.

"My large paintings are colossal undertakings because I finish them off with an intense degree of finish and with tiny brushes," says Ryden. "I want large paintings to work at both a macro and micro scale and read well at a distance, but engage the viewer as they approach closer and closer with discoveries to be made at each level of investigation." ●

MARK RYDEN: DODECAHEDRON

When: On view now

Where: Paul Kasmin Gallery,
293 10th Avenue, New York, NY 10001

Information: (212) 563-4474,
www.paulkasmingallery.com



SPECIAL PREVIEW

065

PAUL KASMIN GALLERY



Mark Ryden Exhibits New Paintings and Bronze Sculpture in “Dodecahedron”

ovem er



Pop Surrealist Mark Ryden (Hi-Fructose Vol. 18) has long incorporated alchemy and numerology in his fairytale-like world, filled with symbols and strange letters. The Los Angeles based artist ōncē said that if he hadn't pursued art, his next choice would have been math or science. For his upcoming exhibition “Dodecahedron”, opening December 10th at Paul Kasmin Gallery in New York, Ryden looked to geometry for inspiration. His exhibition is so named after the “dodecahedron”, a 12-sided geometric shape of perfect symmetry and mystery. The number 12 is found numerous times in art, literature, music and holds metaphysical and spiritual connections- and endless possibilities for Ryden, who believes that numbers have a life of their own. This is an idea depicted by a curious doll-like character named “Anima”, whom Ryden describes as a “soul confronting its physical form.” She has starlight colored hair and wears an expression of awareness beyond her years, appearing in various forms and bizarre settings. This includes a new iteration of Ryden's famous “Incarnation” painting that inspired Lady Gaga's meat dress, only here it is made of human organs. His exhibit will feature a series of 8 new oil paintings, drawings, and first-ever bronze sculpture, exploring the divide between the world defined by science and that of our subconscious.

“Dodecahedron” by Mark Ryden will be on view at Paul Kasmin Gallery in New York December 10th, 2015 through January 23rd, 2016. Take a look at our early preview of the show below.

PAUL KASMIN GALLERY

The New York Times

a

Mark Ryden: Drawing a Dividing Line

By BROOKS BARNES MAY 16, 2014

LOS ANGELES — Leonardo DiCaprio is an ardent collector of his macabre paintings. Katy Perry refers to his imagery in Twitter posts, and Amanda Seyfried has practically begged to be his muse. (“I’d love for him to paint a caricature of me with blood trickling down my throat and me holding a dead cat,” she told *W* magazine.) That gown of raw meat that Lady Gaga donned on MTV a few years ago? Derived from one of his [best-known works](#).

Yep, Hollywood is riding the Mark Ryden train in a big way.

Whether the art world’s ruling class sees the same brilliance is difficult to judge. Mr. Ryden, 51, has long been admired for his old-master-esque technique, and mega-collectors like [Francois Pinault](#) own his work.

But a lot of art-world tastemakers cringe at his nonironic embrace of kitsch, and a little of that meat he likes to paint — bleeding steaks, strings of sausages, the occasional salami — can go a long way, especially hanging on a living-room wall.

Mr. Ryden’s celebrity following also tends to send art-world noses skyward. What do *they* know about fine art? “His work is deeply polarizing and easily dismissible, but the worst thing that can happen to an artist is consensus,” said [Maria Bell](#), a former chairwoman of the Museum of Contemporary Art here who owns multiple Ryden paintings.

“And the naysayers are wrong,” she added. “I truly feel that he is poised to have broader recognition.”

Mr. Ryden is definitely making noise. “[The Gay qos: West](#),” his first California exhibition in seven years, opened with a thunderclap at the [Kohn Gallery](#) this month, attracting stars like Mr. DiCaprio, moneyed collectors like Ms. Bell, hundreds of Mr. Ryden’s smiley rank-and-file fans and hipster swarms, led by Frances Bean Cobain and crew. About a quarter of the crowd turned out in Victorian costumes (high stand collars, parasols) to reflect the show’s 19th-century theme.

“We have a print of this one hanging in our bathroom,” said an excited Weird Al Yankovic, peering at a painting of a googly-eyed girl with a four-armed Santa standing inside her petticoat. (Whether Mr. Yankovic was in costume, it was hard to say.) Meanwhile, the party in the parking lot — this is Los Angeles — rivaled the exhibition itself, with drippy candles providing the only light and attendees clawing at hors d’oeuvres catered by [Caroline Styne](#), a co-owner of local foodie temples like Lucques and the wife of the gallery’s owner, Michael Kohn.



Mark Ryden. Stefanie Keenan/Getty Images for Kohn Gallery

293 TENTH AVENUE, NEW YORK, NY 10001 515 WEST 27TH STREET, NEW YORK, NY 10001

TELEPHONE 212 563 4474 PAULKASMINGALLERY.COM

“I hope it’s an egg from, like, an endangered species or something,” a woman in a baby-doll dress ditzily chirped before downing an itty-bitty yolk on a triangle of toast.

The exhibition, which runs through June 28 and attracted more than 2,500 people on its first full day, coincides with the release by Mr. Ryden of a [limited-edition record](#), “The Gay Nineties Old Tyme Music,” on which musicians (Ms. Perry, the rapper [Tyler the Creator](#), Danny Elfman) offer various takes on “[Daisy Bell](#),” an 1892 parlor song better known as “Bicycle Built for Two.” “Picture me trying to explain the concept of the Gay 90s to Tyler the Creator,” Mr. Ryden said with a shy grin.

Featuring new and old work, the show has created enough chatter to land in the British tabloids, one of which noted that the “Breaking Bad” star Aaron Paul rolled up at the gallery in a blue 1968 Gran Torino. [LA Weekly](#) put Mr. Ryden on its cover, rare media real estate for a painter. (Headline: “Like Mark Ryden? Hate Mark Ryden? Maybe You Want Different Things From Your Art.”)

The crackle and pop around Mr. Ryden says a lot about the Los Angeles art scene, where celebrities serve as Pied Pipers to a greater degree than in New York. The wild opening also reflected the big-tent nature of contemporary art — there is room for a bit of everything and everyone — and the increasing blur between artistic disciplines: painting, fashion, music.

The sudden hubbub is a bit terrifying for Mr. Ryden, who spends most of his time alone in a cozy studio in this city’s Eagle Rock neighborhood, slowly painting under a magnifying glass. (As in, very slowly: He annually produces about five new paintings, which Mr. Kohn sells for \$100,000 to \$2 million.) Sitting in the studio on Tuesday, a wisp of smoke rising from a stick of burning incense and the Sneaker Pimps on the stereo, Mr. Ryden said the opening gave him “attention sickness.”

While a bit reluctant to reflect on his increasing profile (his first major appearance at auction came last year, when Christie’s sold a painting called “[Queen Bee](#)” for \$714,000), Mr. Ryden was happy to talk about the imagery that repeatedly seeps into his art. “I like realism you can get lost in,” he said. “The kitschy items, which either crack me up or appall me or both, are usually based on things I have collected.”

His studio and adjacent home are nothing short of a bric-a-brac museum, with neat displays of tiki mugs, creepy doll heads, seashells and Abraham Lincoln figurines, among many other items he has picked up on eBay and at flea markets. His wife, Marion Peck, who is also [an artist](#), mentioned the TV program “Hoarders” as she ushered me through an overgrown back room.

And the meat?

“For me, it’s a bridge between physical and spiritual,” he said. “What keeps our spirit in this world is our meat.” He slapped his rib cage a few times. As for Lady Gaga’s appropriation of his meat-dress image, I got the distinct sense that he was annoyed about it, or that he at least would have appreciated a shout-out. “What can I say for the record?” he said, pausing. “It’s flattering to be the inspiration for another creative person.”

Mr. Ryden, who got his start as an illustrator of [album covers](#) for the likes of Michael Jackson, belongs to a corner of contemporary art known as Pop Surrealism or, somewhat disparagingly, Lowbrow Art — work influenced by comic books, tattoo design, toys, cartoons and other 1950s-to-1970s Americana. “It is skilled, technically beautiful work,” said Sharon Squires, a senior appraiser at Jacqueline Silverman & Associates. “But the qualities of contemporary kitsch and surrealist illustration are not to everyone’s taste.”

Converting more nonbelievers is part of the reason Mr. Kohn decided to open his new 12,000-square-foot gallery with a Mark Ryden exhibition. “He has had an uphill battle because stylistically his work does not fit into the contemporary lineage,” said Mr. Kohn, who also represents artists like [Will Cotton](#) and [Ryan McGinness](#). “By going out of our way to present him in a strong way, both by borrowing back major pieces and by making him our first exhibition in our new space, it will certainly prompt some people to look at the work with fresh eyes.”

BROOKS BARNES is a reporter in the Los Angeles bureau of The New York Times. Scene Stealers appears monthly.

A version of this article appears in print on May 18, 2014, on page ST2 of the New York edition with the headline: Drawing a Dividing Line.

PAUL KASMIN GALLERY

whitewall

June 18, 2013



Mark Ryden is known for pop surrealist canvases that display a genuine, earnest fascination with historical kitsch. His nostalgic, cryptic compositions allude to scenes from the fantasies of children's fairytales, but the people and woodland creatures appear to be ageless, ethereal and completely ensouled. Mixing the aesthetics of tawdry illustrations with narrative compositions and masterful, traditional painting techniques, Ryden's works are linked to both low-brow popular culture and the works of William Blake, seamlessly transcending cultural divides and conceptual boundaries.

His two recent books, *Pinxit* (Taschen) and *The Gay 90s* (Rizzoli) trace the development of his cryptic oeuvre. *The Gay 90s* documents his recent exhibition at **Paul Kasmin Gallery**, a show of mature paintings of eclectic, masterfully defined personas that ignite the viewer's imagination. *Pinxit* is a large format retrospective that documents his career from its beginning, outlining the evolution of his diverse inspirations and cultural philosophy. His devoted interest in *Wunderkammer*, cabinets of curiosity display collections of objects whose categorical bounds are yet to be defined, is clearly illustrated.

Whitewall caught up with Ryden at a recent book signing in New York at **Paul Kasmin Shop**.

WHITEWALL: You chose an eclectic and fascinating group of contributors for your book – Yoshitomo Nara, Anthony Haden-Guest, and Amanda Erlanson. How do their words and perspectives complement your art?

MARK RYDEN: It seems good to have diverse ways of looking at things, which I would hope might inspire the reader to have some new insights and thoughts about my work they might not get with a single point of view. Anthony's essay is very astute and intelligent, while Amanda has a more spiritual way of looking at art. Nara's viewpoint is that of a fellow artist, which is nice to have included as well.

WW: What are you most excited about from the elaborate Taschen limited-edition retrospective?

MR: Because of its grand scale *Pinxit*, more than any other book I have done, gives a good appreciation of the minute detail I put into my paintings. Since so many people don't get a chance to see my originals in person, this book gives them an opportunity for the next best thing.

WW: What's next?

MR: I have a major exhibition at **Michael Kohn Gallery** scheduled for this September. There will be several new paintings, including the largest painting I have ever done, *The Parlor*, as well as some previous works from my first "Gay 90's" exhibition. I will be including two new porcelain editions as well as a large scale diorama with mechanical motion that I am currently working on.

Mark Ryden was born in Medford, Oregon in 1968 and received his BFA from the Art Center College of Design in Pasadena in 1987. His solo debut show entitled "The Meat Show" in Pasadena, California in 1998, featured works such as *The Birth of Venus*, and *The Pumpkin President*. Recent exhibitions include a mid-career retrospective "Wondertoone!" at the Frye Art Museum in Seattle and the Pasadena Museum of California Art (2004-2005); "The Gay 90's: Old Tyme Art Show" at Paul Kasmin Gallery April 29th through June 5th, 2010; "Art Shack," Laguna Art Museum, Laguna Beach, CA, 2010; "WONDERFUL – Humboldt, Krokodil & Polke", me Collectors Room, Berlin,

PAUL KASMIN GALLERY

THE NEW YORK TIMES
MAY 7, 2010

Mark Ryden 'The Gay 90s: Old Tyme Art Show'

*Paul Kasmin
293 10th Avenue, at 27th Street
Chelsea
Through June 5*

"Incarnation" by Mark Ryden in his Paul Kasmin Gallery show features one of his signature baby dolls in a dress of meat.



Fathered by figures like Big Daddy Roth and Robert Williams, a movement affectionately called Lowbrow by its adherents has been percolating out of the quasi-underground pop culture of Southern California since the 1970s. Lowbrow paintings typically feature illustrative technique and comically weird imagery.

Mark Ryden is a master of the style. Painting and drawing with the skill of a Beaux-Arts academician, he creates funny pictures of big-eyed female waifs whose dreamy innocence is bizarrely incongruous with the grotesque situations they are in.

The largest painting, at 6 by 4 feet, portrays one of Mr. Ryden's baby dolls in a misty park wearing a pink party dress that turns out, on closer examination, to be made of slabs of meat and sausages. In a scene set in an old-time outdoor cafe, Lincoln, wearing a loud, green plaid suit, serves a young femme a plate of raw hamburger that he has processed through a meat grinder.

Jesus puts in an appearance in "The Piano Player," wherein he caresses the ivories of a pink piano as three blondes whose heads are considerably larger than his recline on the instrument's lid. In a watercolor-tinted graphite drawing called "Riding With the Lord," the Man of Sorrows, with crown of thorns, takes a back seat to a girl in a Victorian bonnet and gown on a bicycle built for two.

Such zany pictures hint at what creepy psychic stuff might pullulate beneath the sentimental, nostalgic and naïve surface of modern kitsch. KEN JOHNSON

293 TENTH AVENUE, NEW YORK, NY 10001

TEL 212 563 4474 FAX 212 563 4494

www.paulkasmingallery.com

PAUL KASMIN GALLERY

THE NEW YORK TIMES STYLE MAGAZINE
April 30, 2010

Meat Lover | Mark Ryden's Cool Cuts

By Christine Muhlke



Mark Ryden/Courtesy of Paul Kasmin Gallery

293 TENTH AVENUE, NEW YORK, NY 10001

TEL 212 563 4474 FAX 212 563 4494

www.paulkasmingallery.com

PAUL KASMIN GALLERY

THE NEW YORK TIMES STYLE MAGAZINE
April 30, 2010

Attention amateur butchers, meat lovers and hungry aesthetes: At the Paul Kasmin Gallery, the artist Mark Ryden is doing wonders with off cuts at his new show, “The Gay ’90s: Olde Tyme Art Show.” The paintings of a Gibson girl riding a bicycle built for two with Jesus and a brooding beauty in period finery are spooky and lovely, but it’s his meatier images that steal the show — a wispy girl in a gown of hams, hindquarters and sausages, or Abraham Lincoln grinding fresh chuck for a tea-drinking demoiselle. Surreally delicious.

The Moment caught up with Ryden at his studio in Sierra Madre, Calif., before the opening and learned why meat was such a joy to paint and why there were no good butchers.

Q. What’s the idea behind the “Olde Tyme Art Show”?

A. “The Gay 90s” refers to the 1890s era of barbershop quartets and bicycles built for two. I am interested in exploring the line between attraction to and repulsion from kitsch. I find the “Gay 90s” to be a thematic genre that pushes sentimentality and kitsch to its utmost limits.

Q. What’s the idea behind depicting a beautiful girl wearing sausages?

A. That painting is called “Incarnation,” which literally translates from the Latin to “in the meat.” I think it is more important for an image to maintain some mystery. I leave it to the viewer to interpret the images how they will.

Q. Why does meat factor into your work? You did a “Meat Show” in ‘98.

A. There seems to be a complete disconnect between meat as food and the living, breathing creature it comes from. I suppose it is this contradiction that brings me to return to meat in my art. It surprises many people to learn that I am actually not a vegetarian. I don’t think it is morally wrong to eat meat. What I do personally is to try to remain aware of what I am eating and where it came from. I am not trying to preach a moral stance on anything in my art, but I find that juxtaposition of imagery can create a kind of distance and then an ensuing heightening of awareness.

393 TENTH AVENUE, NEW YORK, NY 10001

TEL 212 563 4474 FAX 212 563 4494

www.paulkasmingallery.com

PAUL KASMIN GALLERY

THE NEW YORK TIMES STYLE MAGAZINE
April 30, 2010

Q. What's the hardest thing about painting it?

A. Meat is a joy to paint. The wonderful variety of textures and patterns in the marbling of meat is sumptuous. Subtle pinks gently swirl around with rich vermilions and fatty yellow ochers. A representational painting of meat easily becomes an exercise in abstraction. I find myself playing with the paint, smearing, scraping, staining and doing things I wouldn't be so inclined to with other representations.

Q. What's your favorite meat dish in Manhattan?

A. I am on the hunt, and open to suggestions.

Q. Who's your butcher?

A. That is a funny question, as there is really no such thing as a butcher anymore, is there? Since Reagan, the meat industry has been consolidated (like so many other industries) into just two or three gigantic corporations whose myopic interest is profit. The result is that the animals we use as food live a life of indescribable torture, because this generates a tiny slice more profit for these corporations. Our daily diet is tainted with this torture, and it really doesn't have to be that way.

303 TENTH AVENUE, NEW YORK, NY 10001

TEL 212 503 4474 FAX 212 503 4494

www.paulkasmingallery.com

PAUL KASMIN GALLERY

INTERVIEW MAGAZINE
May 4, 2010

Arsenic and Old Lace

By ELLIOTT DAVID



MARK RYDEN, DAISY, 2010.
COURTESY THE ARTIST AND PAUL KASMIN GALLERY

You don't have to invent a movement to be considered its ambassador; you just have to be the best at it—or at least its most popular practitioner. And painter Mark Ryden, whose first major solo show in seven years, "The Gay 90s Olde Tyme Art Show," opened last week at Paul Kasmin Gallery, has long been considered the godfather of Pop Surrealism because his work inhabits both arenas. His deeply devoted followers range from obscure goths, steampunks, and cultish Victoria-philes to celebrities like Leonardo DiCaprio and Jake Gyllenhaal; his work has graced the covers of books (Stephen King) and records (Ringo Starr,

293 TENTH AVENUE, NEW YORK, NY 10001

TEL 212 563 4474 FAX 212 563 4494

www.paulkasmingallery.com

PAUL KASMIN GALLERY

INTERVIEW MAGAZINE

May 4, 2010

Red Hot Chili Peppers, Michael Jackson). He is a master draftsman with a dark imagination whose swoon-and-cringe inducing works of dazzling old world opulence make even the most uninformed spectator feel reverence and communion, like they lost a part of themselves in a time in which they never lived. And while Ryden has always depicted a vague suggestion of modernistic antiquity, with this show of new oil paintings, drawings, and sketches, he's become quite specific: its title references the pre-Income Tax, mauve-heavy final decade of the 19th century, the American equivalent to Europe's *fin de siècle*.

"Being born in 1963, I grew up in a time where I was surrounded by these heavily sentimentalized Gay 90's images," explains Ryden. "These images give me very strange feelings. On the one hand, they can make me queasy with their thick content of saccharine, but on the other hand, I am fascinated by vintage objects, by nostalgia, memory, and death. I am interested in exploring the line between attraction to and repulsion from 'Kitsch.'"

In the show we see Darger-esque girls, albinos with big eyes and bangs and sometimes bows in their hair riding a bicycle-built-for-two with a bleeding Jesus Christ; or wearing a dress made of meat so sparkly you can almost taste the salt; or having tea while Abraham Lincoln (depicted as a disease-stricken gay man) grinds up fresh flesh beneath a chandelier hanging from the sky. But this small collection of paintings is less busy than works of the past; the backgrounds are calmer, more sparse. Ryden's works come in cupcake colors and are never lose sight of kitsch, and they're also harbingers of harmony of danger and delicacy. Hidden in these girls' oversized eyes is the imperialism and the blood of heritage aristocracy, a sort of false innocence that might imply evil but is really coy subversiveness lurking within.

107 TENTH AVENUE, NEW YORK, NY 10001

TEL 212 503 4474 FAX 212 503 4404

www.paulkasmingallery.com

PAUL KASMIN GALLERY

LOS ANGELES TIMES
April 30, 2010

Culture Monster

ALL THE ARTS, ALL THE TIME

Mark Ryden just might be the pied piper of painting (and no child is safe)



293 TENTH AVENUE, NEW YORK, NY 10001

TEL 212 563 4474 FAX 212 563 4494

www.paulkasmingallery.com

PAUL KASMIN GALLERY

LOS ANGELES TIMES
April 30, 2010

Many artists have followers. Mark Ryden has disciples.

Three years ago, the L.A. painter of "low brow" fame inspired an opening-night crowd at the Michael Kohn Gallery to dress up like trees.

Thursday night, his most ardent fans showed up at Paul Kasmin in New York looking like Victorian ladies or gents, in keeping with "the Gay '90's old tyme" theme of his new show. The standout was a woman on stilts, wearing a corseted red dress decorated with plastic pieces of meat.

Her costume was a nod to a painting in the show: "Incarnation," 2009, right, featuring a porcelain-doll-like girl-woman who wears a dress made of sausage links, ham shanks and other raw meat. The red flesh of the meat matches her lips and cheeks.

Ryden, who said he enjoyed seeing the meat-dripping stilt-walker, says his work reflects "an attraction to the Victorian treatment of funerals and death" and "an obsession with collectibles from that period," from children's books and toys to anatomical models.

As for his own outfit Thursday night, the artist wore a three-piece suit (bought on eBay) and bowler hat (bought in Pasadena) for the occasion. His wife, artist Marion Peck, went for a festive (though funereal) shirt blossoming with black flowers.

The New York gallery, which is showing Ryden for the first time, also had reason to celebrate. The show includes five paintings priced at \$250,000 to \$800,000 along with more affordable drawings and watercolors. By Thursday night, four of the five canvases had sold, with the fifth on reserve, according to gallery manager Nick Olney.

A poster of "Incarnation," priced at \$500 each in an edition of 500, has also sold out.

This mesmerizing time-lapse video of Ryden in action bringing the pale creature to life might have helped.

--Jori Finkel

301 TENTH AVENUE, NEW YORK, NY 10001

TEL 212 301 4474 FAX 212 301 4494

www.paulkasmingallery.com

PAUL KASMIN GALLERY

THE JAPAN TIMES
February 21, 2009

Snow yaks and yetis — an ice man cometh

By MANAMI OKAZAKI

Special to The Japan Times

Fans of Pop Surrealism were no doubt tickled pink to hear of their messiah, painter Mark Ryden, making an appearance in Tokyo for the opening of "The Snow Yak Show" at the Tomio Koyama Gallery. The solo exhibition features eight new works from the masterful painter, each exquisitely detailed in his characteristic style that is reminiscent of illustrations in classic children's books such as Hans Christian Andersen's "The Snow Queen."

Large-eyed snow yaks, woolly mammoths and a strange female snow creature that came to Ryden "in a vivid dream" take up most of the canvases, with simple backgrounds executed in icy tones. The paintings are minimalist and captivating, as well as being geeky in their meticulousness. For Ryden, who finishes paintings with



Twisted talents: "Heaven" by Pop Surrealist Mark Ryden, now showing at Tomio Koyama Gallery
MANAMI OKAZAKI (below)

293 TENTH AVENUE, NEW YORK, NY 10001

TEL 212 563 4474 FAX 212 563 4494

www.paulkasmingallery.com

PAUL KASMIN GALLERY

THE JAPAN TIMES
February 21, 2009

brush strokes executed under a magnifying glass, doing one can take up to a year. Ryden's following is cultish. He has groupies who call themselves Rydenites, and, at a Los Angeles exhibition at the prestigious Michael Kohn gallery, thousands of people showed up for a six-hour reception. Demand for his work has led to astronomical price tags and a fan list splattered with the names of A-listers, including Ringo Starr, Bridget Fonda and Robert De Niro, and famous kooks such as Michael Jackson.

"I try not to think about that," Ryden tells The Japan Times at his opening at Tomio Koyama. "It can get in the way of your creativity. If you fill your head with how people are reacting, it's hard to separate that from the work. But for the most part it's been great."

The popularity of Ryden's paintings have led the Michael Kohn gallery — where his piece "Tree of Life" sold for \$800,000 — to take him on as one of their artists. An exhibition at Seattle's Frye Art Museum in 2004, "Wondertooneel," was the best attended since the museum opened in 1952.

Ryden also has a following in Japan, which only increased with the translation of his book "Mysterious Circus" into Japanese as "Fushigi Circus" in 2006.

"His works appeal not only to art collectors but also music fans or creative directors, such as Nagi Noda, whose art direction had a great impact among teenagers," says Tomoko Omori of Tomio Koyama at the opening. "While Ryden's subjects are based upon childlike toys and storybook figures, within them resides a parallel truth of dark mystery."

Ryden is still squarely at the forefront of the Lowbrow genre, a term that loosely refers to the Surrealist art movement that draws from accessible pop-culture sources such as comics and rock 'n' roll, and

293 TENTH AVENUE, NEW YORK, NY 10001

TEL 212 563 4474 FAX 212 563 4494

www.paulkasmingallery.com

PAUL KASMIN GALLERY

THE JAPAN TIMES
February 21, 2009

"low culture" such as tattooing and TV. However, Ryden is among a group of artists who are able to straddle both sides of fence when it comes to "fine art" versus Lowbrow. Japan's Takashi Murakami and Yoshitomo Nara, both of whom Ryden cites as influences, also manage to do this. How his work is categorized is unimportant to him though.

"I've never really thought about it, I'm just doing the same thing that I've always done," says Ryden. "It's not really feedback that motivates me, it's my own drive. It's my own inspirational ideas. The feedback is fortunately positive, but it can't become the motivating factor, or that can mess you up. Then you start creating your art for audience, and that can be dangerous. You second guess what people are going to like."

Ryden usually works along a specific theme, such as the white, wintry settings in this exhibition. Past themes include: blood and bees, meat, trees and bunnies. His works often depict as their central subjects frightening characters such as decapitated bunnies or an infant carrying a balloon made of meat, all painted in old-world painterly techniques. The themes, says Ryden, "take on a life of their own, once I go in that direction."



The work for which he is most renowned portrays a disturbing world of bug-eyed gods that have assumed the form of pop-culture icons, such as in "The Birth of Venus" (1998), in which Colonel Sanders is feeding an umbilical cord down Abraham Lincoln's ear.

"My work is a product of my surroundings and of my time," explains the painter. "From when I was born in 1963, (Los Angeles pop culture is) what I was exposed to and what formed my archetypes of what the world is to me."

These icons are often juxtaposed with strange symbols from religions, but even simpler paintings, with characters such as "The Yeti" in the

293 TENTH AVENUE, NEW YORK, NY 10001

TEL 212 563 4474 FAX 212 563 4494

www.paulkasmingallery.com

PAUL KASMIN GALLERY

THE JAPAN TIMES
February 21, 2009

"Snow Yak" series, are creepy and confusing, forcing the viewer to seek meaning.



"I like for people to try and figure it out," Ryden says. "That is a good sign that someone is inspired enough that someone does a deep analysis of something, that they are engaged long enough to try and figure out a deep explanation to what they are seeing."

"The Yeti character doesn't 'symbolize' anything to me, but that does not mean that it is meaningless."

While audiences are familiar with Ryden as a purveyor of unsettling imagery and obtuse symbolism, his work at Tomio Koyama is more subtle, tinged with a more innocent childlike vision.

"My role as an artist is simply to act as a reminder to people to not become jaded," says Ryden with a chuckle. "A lot of people who are not artists can look at artists, and feel through them what it is to be creative and see things through an unjaded eye."

"The Snow Yak Show" is at Tomio Koyama Gallery till Feb. 28; open 12 noon-7 p.m. For more information, call (03) 3642-4090 or visit www.tomiokoyamagallery.com

The Japan Times: Friday, Feb. 20, 2009
(C) All rights reserved

293 TENTH AVENUE, NEW YORK, NY 10001

TEL 212 563 4474 FAX 212 563 4494

www.paulkasmingallery.com

PAUL KASMIN GALLERY

LA WEEKLY
March 16, 2007

SHOOTING LOW, AIMING HIGH

The strange trajectory of Mark Ryden
BY HOLLY MYERS

The opening reception for Mark Ryden's new exhibition, "The Tree Show" at Michael Kohn Gallery, was six hours long. If you glanced at the invitation beforehand, you might have thought this was a misprint. Six hours? Two is customary. Three is generous. Six, you might be forgiven for concluding, falls somewhere between pointless and pretentious. But then you would be seriously underestimating both the breadth and the fervor of Ryden's fan base. In fact, the extension was merely practical.

At 3 p.m. on Saturday, midway through the opening, a line stretched out the back door, down Crescent Heights and around the corner onto Beverly. By the time the gallery closed its



Allegory of the Four Elements, 2006 (All images courtesy Mark Ryden and Michael Kohn Gallery)

doors at 6, the guard who'd been hired to manage the flow had counted 2,222 visitors — this in addition to the 220 who'd attended the private preview two nights before. (All those twos make a curious pattern for an artist with a professed interest in numerology.) Kohn associate Samantha Glaser confirmed later over the phone that Ryden himself had been there throughout, milling with admirers and signing autographs. Each time I'd seen them in the course of the week leading up to the show, Glaser and other gallery staff appeared to be wavering between exhilaration and exhaustion, taken aback by the machinations of a network they weren't used to handling and didn't entirely understand. Ryden, on the other hand, was clearly in his element. "Oh, he's having a great time," Glaser said. "He's just in heaven!"

The show is a kind of debut for Ryden, or, depending on your vantage point, a departure: his first in a gallery that bears no affiliation whatsoever with the disparate "underground" community collectively known as Lowbrow. (Other Kohn artists include Walton Ford, Bruce Conner and Reed Danziger.) His last dealer, prior to 2003, was Earl McGrath, whose historically "mainstream" gallery took a Lowbrow turn a number of years ago and has shown Josh Agle (Shag), Gary Baseman, Chuck Agro, Andrew Foster and Eric White. In the past, Ryden has shown solo at Mondo Bizarro in Bologna and Outre in Melbourne, and in group shows at Roq La Rue in Seattle, CoproNason in Culver City (the gallery has since moved to Bergamot Station), Merry Karnowsky on La Brea, and, of course, La Luz de Jesus in Hollywood — all galleries that wear their

293 TENTH AVENUE, NEW YORK, NY 10001

TEL 212 563 4474 FAX 212 563 4494

www.paulkasmingallery.com

PAUL KASMIN GALLERY

LA WEEKLY
March 16, 2007



Apology, 2006

outsider/underground/post-pop/pop surrealism (whatever you want to call it) credentials on their sleeve. A midcareer retrospective co-organized in 2004 by the Pasadena Museum of California Art and the Frye Museum in Seattle — a show that broke attendance records in Pasadena — began to point the way toward a broader sort of recognition. The show at Michael Kohn, it seems, confirms it: The high prince of Lowbrow — known for his incomparable skill, his often shocking price tags, and his capacity to sell out just about anything — is ready for some attention from the art world.

"He didn't come to us because he needed to sell paintings," Kohn told me shortly before the show went up. "He had no problem selling paintings. He came to us because he wanted to be selling paintings to the 'right' people."

Kohn's slightly guilty inflection on the word right points to the awkwardness at play here: There are significant differences — not only aesthetic but social, institutional and philosophical — between the world of Lowbrow and the

293 TENTH AVENUE, NEW YORK, NY 10001

TEL 212 563 4474 FAX 212 563 4494

www.paulkasmingallery.com

PAUL KASMIN GALLERY

LA WEEKLY
March 16, 2007

mainstream art world, but any attempt to examine these differences tends to bring out the worst in both. Few in the mainstream art world care to look too closely at the elitism of which they're often accused, just as few on the Lowbrow side care to address the dangers of blind aesthetic populism. So, like feuding siblings they keep to opposite sides of the room, each professing indifference while privately coveting some aspect of the other.

Lowbrow is popular (within a particular range), theatrical, fun and often lucrative. It fosters figuration and narrative — qualities that were, until recently, widely scorned in the contemporary art world — and rewards rather than questions the development of technical skill. Operating largely outside the scope of critical discourse, it enjoys a high degree of freedom. It can afford to be funny, it can afford to be crass. And Lowbrow artists have fans — passionate ones. What mainstream artist can boast of a MySpace group organized “for anyone who has had their life altered by the magnificent and profoundly magical Mark

Ryden”? Those in the art world, on the other hand, have access to a kind of prestige that no amount of popularity — or celebrity patronage — can buy. By aligning themselves, more or less, with an established historical trajectory, and playing to the terms of an established critical discourse, these artists forsake a certain freedom but increase their opportunities for serious — and lasting — recognition.

There are numerous artists who enjoy some degree of crossover but few who straddle the divide quite as cleanly as Ryden. Combining the pictorial accessibility of Lowbrow with the weight of art-historical awareness, layering seductive technique over an increasingly mystical conceptual framework, Ryden makes work that plays by both sets of rules, without, impressively, seeming to bow to either.



The Tree of Life, 2006

293 TENTH AVENUE, NEW YORK, NY 10001

TEL 212 563 4474 FAX 212 563 4494

www.paulkasmingallery.com

PAUL KASMIN GALLERY

LA WEEKLY
March 16, 2007

"These pictures," Kohn remarks, "are just extraordinarily well painted. And they're weird enough to be interesting. I've noticed among my colleagues — a lot of my colleagues out in New York, who deal with more conceptually based work — that looking at Mark's work used to be a guilty pleasure. I saw them coming by my booth in the Miami Basel Art Fair and oohing and aahing over this extraordinarily seductive painting. This was not their normal fare but they liked it anyway. Now, little by little, it's shifting. A guy who bought one of the works in this show collects Diebenkorn and Thiebaud and John Currin and some contemporary photographers — not just figurative work but mainstream contemporary work, and now that also includes Mark Ryden. Now people can finally do it guilt free."

That Ryden will get the attention of the art world is all but assured: He's simply too talented, too rigorous and — more to the point — too savvy an artist not to. More interesting, then, is the next question: What does it mean for a serious contemporary artist to be popular?

With his thin brown hair falling now to his shoulders and strands of gray winding through the long, spindly beard that extends from his chin, the 44-year-old artist has the air of one passing into an assured, if by no means complacent, middle age. The polished, Victorian dandy you'll find in the portrait posted on his Web site has given way, it seems, to the image of a tousled, affable, slightly mischievous wizard. The most striking thing in meeting him is how little his worldly success appears to have impeded the fundamental generosity of his character. Whether fussing over details of the installation, discussing his work with me over lunch, or mingling with friends and collectors at the preview, his demeanor is soft-spoken, modest and warm. If there is an edge to his character somewhere — the sort of edge you might expect in one who more or less independently steered his career into such a daunting price bracket — I never saw it.

What does emerge, occasionally, beneath the air of affable equanimity are suggestions of an uncommonly rigorous work ethic. "I used to be a night owl," he says when I ask about his daily practice. "I'd work really late and sleep in. Now I wake up really early, for some reason, and I work late." He laughs.

"I've been working really hard on this show," he adds, "for a long time."

303 TENTH AVENUE, NEW YORK, NY 10001

TEL 212 503 4474 FAX 212 503 4494

www.paulkasmingallery.com

PAUL KASMIN GALLERY

LA WEEKLY
March 16, 2007

It shows. Several years in the making, "The Tree Show" is Ryden's most involved undertaking since "The Meat Show," his solo debut in 1998. ("I like themes," he says.) There are several dozen works in all, ranging from small preparatory drawings to the spectacular Tree of Life, a 7-foot-by-4.5-foot-tall painting encased in an astonishingly intricate wood frame, designed by Ryden, that apparently took four men in Thailand nine months to carve. In addition to the numerous canvas paintings, there are also portraits made on cross sections of tree trunks, an 8-foot-tall treelike sculpture with an elaborately festooned forest spirit doll enshrined in its trunk, and an installation containing a plethora of objects — toys, books, souvenir pennants — from Ryden's personal collection, continuously circled by a moving toy train.

The visceral impact of the work — and thus, much of its popular draw — derives largely from a profound sense of personal investment. As gallery director Lisa Wells points out while we waited for Ryden to repair the clasp on a door at the back of the sculpture, there is no aspect of the show, from the imagery to the frames to the memorabilia to the invitation (a clever, foldout contraption that stands upright on a desk) and the miniature felt pennants he had manufactured for the show, that isn't specific, considered and exacting. "I keep looking for a slip somewhere," she says, "but I haven't found it. He just doesn't cut corners — anywhere."

Between the cheerful quality of his presence, the confidence of his new work, and the charm of his banter with artist Marian Peck, his partner of four years, one gathers that Ryden is in an especially good place at the moment — a fact that threatens to revise his reputation as a poet of the macabre.

His last gallery show, at Earl McGrath in 2003, came together just after the dissolution of his 14-year marriage and was tellingly titled "Blood: Miniature Paintings of Sorrow and Fear." The walls were draped in red velvet. In the 11 small paintings on display, blood flowed from the eyes of bewildered children, drained from a stigmata onto the head of a naked infant, spurting from the neck of a decapitated ballerina, and tinted the water in which a blond waif stood submerged, seeping from a gaping wound in her chest. The severed head of Abraham Lincoln sat at the foot of a bed, staring wistfully, staining the sheets.

393 TENTH AVENUE, NEW YORK, NY 10001

TEL 212 503 4474 FAX 212 503 4494

www.paulkasmingallery.com

PAUL KASMIN GALLERY

LA WEEKLY
March 16, 2007

Speaking in an interview with Juxtapoz magazine published around that time, Ryden was candid about the show's emotional undercurrent. "I've been going through a very difficult time," he said. He'd lost his marriage, his home, daily access to his two children. "It is brutal to have your dreams shattered," he said. "The hopes you have for your life and family get torn apart and it causes a pain very deep inside. I found it curious that there was no blood with my trauma. It seemed like with so much pain I should be covered in blood. I wanted to be able to see my wounds, but they were not on the surface of my flesh."

Ryden scheduled the "Blood" show, rather perversely, to open on the date of his wedding anniversary — which was also, eerily, the day the U.S. began to bomb Iraq.

The current show, by contrast, is all about life. Indeed, the only trace of blood appears in a sort of birth scene: Abraham Lincoln pulls an infant, still suspended in a placenta-like sack, from a red, vaginal slit at the base of a tree. The only somewhat violent image is one in which a little girl is swallowed by a tree, and even that, though peculiar, seems not such a bad fate. In a drawing a little farther on, another girl (or is it the same?) appears cozily curled in the belly of a tree, hiding.

"The show is about our relationship with nature," Ryden explains over lunch. "There are many different parts to it, but you know, some people look at these massive trees and feel a sort of spiritual awe looking at them, and then other people just want to cut them up and sell them. It's amazing how people can look with such different screens. Some see a tree as a commodity, an inanimate material to use for themselves, or even worse like it's some kind of heroic thing to cut down this tree that's taken 2,000, 3,000 years to grow. Like in the vintage photos of these lumberjacks, when they line up — it's just mind-boggling how they do that. And it's mind-boggling that it's still going on today."

The little girls are, even more than in past series, the soul of this new work — the surrogate through which Ryden appears to be exploring the human experience of nature. Some have the air of spirits or symbols, as in *Allegory of the Four Elements*, an especially beautiful painting of four girls — earth, air, fire and water

393 TENTH AVENUE, NEW YORK, NY 10001

TEL 212 503 4474 FAX 212 503 4494

www.paulkasmingallery.com

PAUL KASMIN GALLERY

LA WEEKLY
March 16, 2007

— seated around a tree-stump table. Others are distinctly human, with a simpler and more innocent air than many of Ryden's previous darlings, but with a sensitive, intensely inquisitive connection to the world around them. Many of the kitschier items in Ryden's trademark repertoire appear to have fallen away in this work, including most of the toylike figures. The compositions, which New York Times critic Grace Glueck grumbled in 2001 were "so compulsively packed with nutty detail as to try the eye severely," have aired out considerably. These are positive improvements. What might once have been classified as a giddy effusion of precocious pop — a quintessential expression of the now prevalent term "pop surrealism" — seems to be drifting now toward a kind of narrative mysticism, informed less by consumer culture and Americana than by Ingres, David, the old Dutch and Flemish masters, and the painters of the Italian Renaissance (to list a few of the artist's professed influences).

Because Ryden's most obvious affiliations up to this point are traditional Lowbrow strongholds, it's easy to overlook some equally compelling connections on the other side of the fence: namely the development on various fronts of an exaggerated realism.

"There is a context for Mark's work," as Kohn says, "whether it's arisen in a parallel way or whether it's come out of a movement. There is a definite relationship to, you know, John Currin, to Lisa Yuskavage, to Murakami, to Nara, to Barry McGee."

Ryden accepts this characterization to a point.

"There's definitely something going on," he says, "and it's all tied together. There's a common interest in, you know, what stuff looks like, more than just what the concept behind it is. It's not devoid of ideas, but it's concerned with what the work looks like too. So, you know, I share that. I get lumped in with a lot of artists that I kind of wonder how people see me as a peer to them but . . ."

On the whole, however, the question of context seems not to interest him.

"I think it's important as an artist not to think about where your place is in all that. I think it just freezes you up — I try not to think about it at all. If you start to

303 TENTH AVENUE, NEW YORK, NY 10001

TEL 212 503 4474 FAX 212 503 4494

www.paulkasmingallery.com

PAUL KASMIN GALLERY

LA WEEKLY
March 16, 2007

evaluate: Am I doing something fashionable, am I doing something that fits in with the times, am I doing something new that hasn't been done before — it will just freeze up the creative process. I'm so lucky that people respond to my art, but if I think about that it's hard to, ah, make any art."

Ryden may be wary of discussing his own position in the art world, but he's animated on the subject of William-Adolphe Bouguereau, the 19th-century French painter.

"Do you know Bouguereau?" he asks. "He's one of the most hated artists ever. He's also one of the most skilled artists ever. He paints flesh better than any artist, I feel. I don't think his paintings are the best paintings ever. His content is peasant girls, beautiful peasant girls, and it offends so many people, so many people just hate him with a passion — but they're painted so well. Especially for an artist, to look at just that application of paint mimicking flesh — it's just mind-boggling, how amazing it is. People now want to know how to do that, they can appreciate it."



California Brown Bear, 2006

The more he talks, describing a debate the Getty organized on the subject of Bouguereau last summer, the more personal his account begins to sound.

"He was hated for being very successful in his time," he says. "It's very respected to be insane like Van Gogh and never sell a painting — that's a respectable way to be an artist. But to actually be successful with it and make good money is a sin."

293 TENTH AVENUE, NEW YORK, NY 10001

TEL 212 563 4474 FAX 212 563 4494

www.paulkasmingallery.com

PAUL KASMIN GALLERY

LA WEEKLY
March 16, 2007



Redwood Spirit I, 2006

If one purpose of "The Tree Show" is to introduce Ryden to a new level of collector, this was accomplished before the exhibition even opened: The show, predictably, was sold out before the preview. The buyers, Kohn says, were American, primarily, and there are MOCA trustees among them. Allegory of the Four Elements was sold within moments of the opening of the Art Basel Miami fair in December, to a Colorado collector for \$300,000. Tree of Life went for a whopping \$800,000, the sculpture for \$500,000. In an absurdly convenient stroke of symbolism, the preview's guests included both Billy Shire, L.A. Lowbrow's wizened patron saint (founder of La Luz de Jesus and Billy Shire Fine Arts), and the effortlessly elegant Ann Philbin, director of the city's most significant "mainstream" contemporary-art institution, the Hammer Museum. They'd not, apparently, met.

293 TENTH AVENUE, NEW YORK, NY 10001

TEL 212 563 4474 FAX 212 563 4494

www.paulkasmingallery.com

PAUL KASMIN GALLERY

The New York Times

December 2001

"Mark Ryden - "Bunnies and Bees"
By Grace Glueck

Earl McGrath Gallery
20 West 57th Street, Manhattan

A relentless kitsch meister working in the tradition of Bosch, Dali and Little Golden Books, Mark Ryden produces painstakingly painted, pastel-colored canvases of less-than-innocent children in surroundings so compulsively packed with nutty detail as to try the eye severely. Bunnies, choice cuts of raw meat, the visage of Abraham Lincoln and sugary religious icons are among his continuing motifs.

In "The Magic Circus (Beth)," a wall-eyed waif with limp red hair and a head disproportionate to her body stands like a jack-in-the-box in a cubicle marked "Meat Show," ringmaster of a bewildering assortment of other children, toys, bunnies, birds, balloons, insects, sea creatures and a statuette of Jesus in a free-for-all extravaganza. A black rabbit upfront makes like Al Jolson, down on one knee with arm outstretched, presumably to sing "Mammy."

"The Ringmaster (Shelly)" depicts Lincoln's top-hatted head with arms and legs coming out of it juggling cuts of meat, as other diversions take place around him. The most sinister work is the simplest: "Little Boy Blue," depicting a tyke on a bike in pink shorts, shirt and cap, with Nazi-style swastikas emblazoned in blue on his cap and sleeve.

A dollop of Mr. Ryden's drollery goes a very long way. Swallow quickly so you don't taste it going down.

203 TENTH AVENUE, NEW YORK, NY 10001

TEL 212 503 4474 FAX 212 503 4494

www.paulkasmingallery.com