

KOHN GALLERY

INAUGURAL EXHIBITION IN NEW 12,000 SQ FT GALLERY
AT 1227 NORTH HIGHLAND AVENUE, HOLLYWOOD

MARK RYDEN *THE GAY 90s: WEST*

Paintings, works on paper, sculpture and installation

Opening Reception for the Artist: Saturday, May 3rd, 2014, 12pm to 6pm

Exhibition will continue through June 28, 2014



Los Angeles (February 14, 2014)—Kohn Gallery announces the inaugural exhibition of its new, expansive 12,000-square foot space: new work by Los Angeles-based, Pop-Surrealist artist Mark Ryden. *Mark Ryden, The Gay 90s: West* will be on view at the new Kohn Gallery, 1227 N. Highland Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90038, from May 3 through June 28, 2014.

Designed by Malibu-based architect Lester Tobias, the new gallery building features an immense space with 22-foot ceilings, allowing for stunning exhibitions on a monumental scale. This design also incorporates a massive glass window along Highland Avenue and extensive skylights to bathe the gallery with natural light. With an eye always towards the future, the Kohn Gallery will utilize this expansive new exhibition space to continue to mount bold exhibitions of established and emerging artists.

In the inaugural exhibition Mark Ryden, underscores his aesthetic forays into cultural kitsch through his exploration of the lost but not forgotten “Gay 90s”. Employing the visual

trappings of the formally idealized 1890s in America—women dressed in satin skirts with large bows, large wheeled bicycles, Main St. USA, vaudevillian stages—Ryden recreates scenes from this marginalized slice of pop culture. This important new body of work—which includes paintings, works on paper, installations, and sculpture—negotiates the aesthetic value of clichéd nostalgia through the lens of polished neoclassic painting, and will include Ryden’s largest and most ambitious work to date, *The Parlor (Allegory of Magic, Quintessence and Divine Mystery)*: a 96 x 120 inch painting with a wooden frame hand-carved in bas-relief.

Known for both his imaginative subject matter and consummate skill as a painter, Ryden’s work is influenced by both the French 19th century painter of pristine portraits, Jean Auguste Dominique

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Ingres, and the underground cartoonist Robert Crumb, where offbeat subject matter is rendered in traditionally beautiful painting technique. His simultaneously nostalgic and dystopian narratives underscore our culture's attraction and repulsion to kitsch, while linking its ebb and flow as an accepted notion of taste to larger periods of art history.

As such, Ryden has a keen interest in what becomes kitsch in our cultural landscape. The "Gay 90s" is a term that was invented in the 1920s and refers to the utopian image of American life in the simpler times at the end of the 19th century. For the burgeoning population of the big cities in the United States during the Roaring Twenties, the "Gay 90s" was a symbol of a less chaotic life, of an insulated and prosperous country untouched by world wars, when the population of rural America was still greater than the urban one. But 100 years later, by around 1990, not only did the term "Gay 90s" no longer conjure an escape to the 19th century, but rather, its image as an idyllic respite was no longer the paradigm of the Golden Life. Moreover, the notion of large wheeled bicycles and women's dress bustles had become forgotten if not repugnant to nostalgia seekers and cultural historians more interested in Mid-century Modern.

Enter Mark Ryden. The artist explores Victorian decorative design, clichéd notions of "Main Street USA," small business and immigration ("The Meat Shop"), and vaudeville shows with a dark and complex sentimentality. Integrating the Christ figure and Abraham Lincoln with his wide-eyed, petticoat clad ingénues, Ryden presents the viewer with an unreal and very oddly camp version of American history. His is an exploration of what becomes cliché, what becomes kitsch and what becomes forgotten. Yet through it all Ryden makes some of the most richly rendered, beautifully glazed, idealized yet disturbing works of contemporary art. Like his contemporaries John Currin, Lisa Yuskavage and Neo Rauch, Mark Ryden uses a skillfully honed technique to render his polished and emotionally charged works.

This exhibition that opens on May 3rd is a continuation of his show "The Gay 90s: Olde Tyme Art Show" that took place in 2010 at the Kasmin Gallery, New York. The Los Angeles exhibition at the Kohn Gallery will include his now famous painting of a meat dress (made popular by Lady Gaga), *Incarnation*, 2009, along with numerous other smaller paintings and works on paper. Finally, the artist will make a site-specific installation that consists of found and crafted objects that relate to this specific body of work.

Mark Ryden is the subject of a large-scale, limited edition deluxe book recently published by Taschen that reproduces works from over a 20-year period. In addition, Rizzoli has published a book titled "The Gay 90s" that focuses on the subject matter of the show. Ryden was included in "The Artists' Museum," at The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (2010), and was the subject of a one-person exhibition, "Wondertoone!, " that traveled from the Frye Art Museum, Seattle (2004) to the Pasadena Museum of California Art (2005).

Join the "Mark Ryden, *The Gay 90s: West*" conversation on social media by mentioning @KOHNGallery and using the #RydenKohn hashtag when posting.

Visit kohngallery.com for the latest information on upcoming exhibitions.

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Photo Caption: Mark Ryden, *Queen Bee*, 2013. Oil on panel with hand carved frame. 45 x 28 inches. Courtesy of Mark Ryden and Kohn Gallery.