

PERROTIN

Mark RYDEN

Juxtapoz,

Animal Secrets: Mark Ryden @ Perrotin, Paris

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Perrotin Gallery, Paris May 19, 2022 - July 30, 2022

Whether it's Tokyo, where [Mark Ryden](#) recently showed works at the [Perrotin space](#), to Paris, where he is now showing the stunning [Animal Secrets](#), there is a sense of mystery that matches the locale. Maybe it's escapism and fantasy, or perhaps there is something more intimate and innate at play, where historical kitsch meets innocence and memory. I do think Mark Ryden is exploring memory in profound ways, this mythical and mystical essence of what it means to be alive and what it means to have a sense of wonder.

But that doesn't mean that what Ryden creates in his paintings, drawings and sculptures is childlike. There is a spirituality, mainly portrayed through animals. That he moved to the Pacific Northwest just as the pandemic locked us in and was able to further explore the animal as a spirit guide is palpable here. Nothing is set in stone either, as you think you are looking at an animal and yet human qualities emerge, and vice versa. Perhaps that is why people say Ryden's work is creepy when they try and explain it, and I often think that is a lazy descriptor. His work is uncomfortable in that it meticulously and fantastically merges our evolution and our most precious memories of childhood and the possibility of unadulterated exploration.

As the gallery notes, "Ryden's enigmatic characters dwell in harmony with nature amidst idealized landscapes. His tranquil sceneries evoke the nostalgia of Romantic imagery with a dream of the lost Golden Age from classical antiquity to the present day. The power of this iconography is in its simplicity and balance, where an unavoidable piercing gaze of the mythical entity entices the beholder into a silent conversation. A longing for harmonious coexistence with nature, with each other, and oneself. Anima animals become spiritual guides to connect us with the surrounding world with a sensitive, humanist philosophy."

Once again, Ryden looks back at art history and yet makes a body of work that only he could make. After nearly 3 decades of being at the forefront of what was called lowbrow, Ryden has entered a lexicon that is completely his own. —*Evan Pricco*