



Mark Ryden, *Eye Am #181*, 2024. Oil on panel in hand-carved wood frame. Unframed: 19 x 30 inches, framed: 29 x 40 1/4 x 2 inches. Courtesy of the artist, Perrotin, and Kasmin.

MARK RYDEN

EYE AM

October 30 – December 20, 2025

"You hide a Sun-powered device in darkness—only if you want to know when it is brought out into the light. In other words, the monolith may be some kind of alarm. And we have triggered it."
—Arthur C. Clarke, *2001: A Space Odyssey*, 1968

Perrotin Los Angeles is delighted to present a new solo exhibition by Mark Ryden titled *Eye Am*. Composed of twelve paintings and a selection of drawings, *Eye Am* debuts a succinct, eccentric series of mise-en-scènes that resist explanation. Ryden's worlds, perhaps only a rabbit hole away from our own, run on a separate logic. A wide-eyed Bye-lo Baby, a Tibetan snow lion, an Abe Lincoln chaperon, and, more mirage than flesh, a thin Christ pouring wine for a circle of young girls from his own dripping veins. Sentient, wondrous, and nonsensical entities inhabit the works.

One tubular figure, a yam perhaps, lies in bed at night, keeping vigil; the sheets retain a quality of Philippe de Champaigne's *Ex-Voto* (1662), a painting of the artist's paralyzed daughter miraculously healed in a convent. With the ornate frame inseparable from the body of the canvas, Ryden's figure stares with a single eye at the exhibition's title written above, as if aware of its own summoning. *Eye Am*: the words emboss and disguise a yam in plain sight. In a later work, a yam floats upright over a dreamscape. The sedentary

self and, later, the higher self. The yam is a curious medium, echoing the fetuses and internal organs that recur across Ryden's work. The medium signals fertility, or perhaps commodity—"medium yams, 25 cents a pound"—or even a continued exploration of the partition between body and spirit.

Much is formed in darkness, down in a certain country of dreams. In soil. In the womb. In sleep. In scripture, before there was light. Take the pineal gland. Detectable at three weeks, it is the first gland formed in the fetus; later, this tiny pinecone-shaped organ releases melatonin in darkness, telling the body to sleep. It is the only part of the brain without a pair. Descartes called it the "seat of the soul," and in Yogic teachings it aligns with the Ajna chakra, "the third eye."

The seat of the soul. The rice-sized force field they can't breach.

In Ryden's 177th painting, *The Sentinel* (2024), a single eye looks out from a mysterious object onto a field now covered with wild flowers. A bee, curious by the hush of her tiny, febrile moan, looks back. The title itself trips. It trips, another small synchronicity: only after naming the work did Ryden learn that *The Sentinel* (1951) by Arthur C. Clarke was the story that inspired the film *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968) and much science fiction since. Where did this watchtower come from, before the lake fell still and the third eye



Mark Ryden, *Beauty #178*, 2024. Oil on panel in hand-carved wooden frame. Unframed: 11 1/2 x 11 1/2 inches, framed: 16 x 16 x 1 1/2 inches. Courtesy of Courtesy of the artist, Perrotin, and Kasmin.

opened on this strange world? Better not answer. Not that I know. Best not spoil the illusion.

– Paige Haran

Well, maybe one spoiler. The caterpillar is Timothy Leary. If you can find him, he's ready to ask the riddle of life: "Who are you?"

Doors to Eye Am open on October 30 at 5:00 p.m.

A book signing with Mark Ryden will be held on October 31, from 1:00-3:00 p.m.



Mark Ryden, *King Jajo Cernunnos #180*, 2025. Oil on linen in hand-carved wood frame. Unframed: 40 x 29 inches, framed: 74 x 52 x 6 1/2 inches. Courtesy of the artist, Perrotin, and Kasmin.

Artist Statement

I always feel a certain resistance when asked to write or speak about my work. Painting, for me, begins where language ends. Words are linear - paintings are not. I'm interested in many things: sacred geometry, mysticism, consciousness, natural history, art history. Some are mysterious by nature, others more structured and concrete. But even with the more rational subjects, I'm not drawn to explaining them in my work. To analyze them would be to miss the point. What I'm really trying to paint is what can't be said - the felt experience of something just beyond the edge of articulation. Not a thing to define, but something to feel.

I believe imagination has been undervalued in favor of intellectual interpretation. In the modern world, people are quick to search for verbal meaning, for an articulated answer, for a neat idea to attach to a piece of art. But that kind of meaning is not my goal. Mystery is. I want my paintings to carry unexplained secrets. "Secret" and "scared" share the same etymological root. I'm trying to paint what is sacred. I want to build a quiet bridge between this world and the other one, a glimpse of the invisible merging with the visible.

In making the work for *Eye Am*, I did my best to let go of conscious restraints. I tried not to paint what I thought I *should* paint. I tried to make art only for myself. Paradoxically, I believe that's the most honest way to reach anyone else. Each painting usually begins with something real and personal. Often it's a fragment drawn from my extensive collection of imagery, books, ephemera, toys, statues, icons. I'm an iconophile at heart. I believe in the power of the image to speak directly to the soul, bypassing the verbal mind.

There's a passage I love from Eckhart Tolle's *The Power of Now*: "All true artists, whether they know it or not, create from a place of no-mind, from inner stillness." I've found this to be true. Real creativity doesn't come from thinking harder; it comes from stopping thought long enough for something deeper to emerge. The mind can then shape what arises, but it can't summon it. In that stillness, something ancient and essential can appear. That is the source I try to paint from - not for certainty, but for wonder.



Portrait by Christopher French. Courtesy of the artist, Perrotin, and Kasmin.

Mark Ryden

Born in 1963 in Medford, Oregon, USA.
Lives and works in Portland, Oregon, USA.

Mark Ryden received his BFA from the Art Center College of Design in Pasadena, California in 1987. His paintings have been exhibited in museums and galleries worldwide, including a 2016 career-spanning retrospective *Cámara de las maravillas* at The Centro de Arte Contemporáneo of Málaga, as well as an earlier retrospective *Wondertooneel* at the Frye Museum of Art in Seattle and Pasadena Museum of California Art (2004–2005). In 2017 Ryden was commissioned to create the set and costume design for a new production of *Whipped Cream*, put on by the American Ballet Theatre with choreography by Alexei Ratmansky. The drawings, sketches and paintings created by Ryden for the ballet were exhibited concurrently at the Gallery Met located at the Metropolitan Opera House and at Kasmin. Ryden currently lives and works in Portland, Oregon.

More information about the artist >>>
