

ABN **FIRST WORKS**

# MARK RYDEN'S CABINET OF CURIOSITIES

BIG EYES AND BUNNY RABBITS  
TRANSFORM AN ARTIST INTO A LEGEND

BY **JENNIFER M. WOOD**

**H**e has designed album covers for Michael Jackson and The Red Hot Chili Peppers, painted a guitar for Metallica's Kirk Hammett and had solo exhibitions around the world. Now Mark Ryden is the subject of *Mark Ryden, Pinxit*, a brand-new, limited-edition book from TASCHEN.

*continued on page 62*



All photos copyright Mark Ryden, courtesy of TASCHEN



*The Birth of Venus* (1998)

**"I AM NOT AFRAID OF NOSTALGIA OR SENTIMENT. I VALUE TAKING THE TIME TO MAKE A PAINTING 'BEAUTIFUL.' I WANT TO BREATHE LIFE INTO MY PAINTINGS."  
—MARK RYDEN**



*The Pumpkin President (1998)*

Mixing pop art and surrealist themes with techniques reminiscent of the masters, Ryden has created a genre unto himself and earned a cult-like following of art connoisseurs young and old, low-brow and high-brow.

"Things I find to be 'strange' I also often find to be elevating," writes Ryden in the introduction to *Pinxit*.

After receiving a BFA from the Art Center College of Design in Pasadena, California in 1987, Ryden's first public showing came courtesy of Los Angeles' Tamara Bane Gallery, as part of its 1994 "Side Show" exhibition. By 1998, Ryden was standing center stage at Pasadena's Mendenhall Gallery for his first solo exhibition, "The Meat Show," which featured such works as the two pictured here, *The Birth of Venus* and *The Pumpkin President*.

"This visual debris from contempo-

rary pop culture contains the specific archetypes that formed my consciousness while living in this particular period in history," says Ryden of his inspirational beginnings. "I often find archetypes in old children's books and toys, so these things make up a large part of my collection. I am attracted to things that evoke memories from childhood."

Nostalgic and cutting-edge at the same time, Ryden's work captures the viewer's attention with its familiarity and keeps them transfixed by hinting at darker themes that seem to exist below the surface. **ABN**



Many books have been published on Mark Ryden, but none like *Mark Ryden, Pinxit*, TASCHEN's large-format monograph, released in a boxed Collector's Edition of 1,000 copies, each signed by the artist, as well as an Art Edition of only 50 copies, each accompanied by a piece of art. This print retrospective brings together nearly two decades worth of Ryden's work, one big page at a time. Visit [www.taschen.com](http://www.taschen.com) for more information.