



Mel Ramos
25 November 2004 to 22 January 2005

Robert Sandelson gallery is delighted to present an exhibition of works by Mel Ramos, which will include paintings, watercolours and prints. This is the artist's first show in London.

Mel Ramos (born 1935 in Sacramento, California) formed part of the American pop art movement, a movement famous for its appropriation of imagery garnered from popular culture and the mass media. In the 1960s Ramos developed a specific kind of pop art iconography by combining nude pin-up girls from American magazines and advertisements with branded products as in Virnaburger and Lola Cola, which are illustrated above.

Quite independently of Warhol and Lichtenstein, Ramos initially began to work with cartoon images as subject matter for his painting, and his comic book series of 1962-64 of costumed heroes and heroines such as *Wonder Woman*, not only triggered his breakthrough as a pop artist, but also provided him with the model for his entire later cosmos of naked female figures.

Following his cartoon series, Ramos went on to explore the idealisation of the female nude within advertising and pin-up magazines like *Playboy* and *Penthouse*. His female nudes –many of whom have the faces of Hollywood actresses- are set against banal, everyday consumer products or spied upon through a keyhole as in his peek-a-boo series to give us a repertoire of intriguing and provocative images. These were followed by witty and ironic images reworking and updating great nude masterpieces in Western art, ultimately leading to an insightful visual exploration of the role of artist and model.

A Ramos nude is not a painting of a naked woman but of an already existing image of a naked woman. Representing an image involved representing a prior stylisation. It is exactly this aspect of pop art that caused critical furore. But Ramos doesn't wish to shock; on the contrary he conceives of himself as an observer who presents selected phenomena of his time. His humour is not satire or ridicule: It's witty. It is an exaggerated perspective of the advertising world of product placements.

Ramos is one of the central figures of American pop art. He has enjoyed great success and critical acclaim as an adventurous artist with the creativity and sense of humour it takes to remain on top.

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