

Artist Resources – George Condo (American, b. 1967)



Condo, 1989

Photograph: Marianne Haas

[Condo at Simon Lee Gallery, New York](#)

[Condo at Skarstedt Gallery](#)

Condo provided [BOMB Magazine](#) glimpse of his intuitive sensitivity and poetic thought processes in 1992. “There was a time when I realized that the central focal point of portraiture did not have to be representational in any way,” he explained. “I like what Miles [Davis] said, “Play what’s not there.” That’s why people like Rembrandt’s portraiture. He really painted what was not there.”

[The New Museum, New York](#), and the [Hayward Gallery, London](#), organized Condo’s 2011 mid-career survey,, bringing together over eighty paintings and sculptures, some never before seen in public. [Watch Condo and gallerists discuss](#) inspiration and influence at [Schirn Kunsthalle](#) in Frankfurt, in which he reflects how, “every artist can create a sort of species of kind of facial recognition of who that artist is based on the way they paint the figure or the face.” [The New Yorker](#) also spoke with Condo in his New York studio in 2011 in a profile about his early days in New York and how he found his visual aesthetic.

In a [2014 interview with The Guardian](#), Condo discusses recovery from serious illness, the importance of drawing in an art world that favors painting, celebrity collaborations, and his personal aesthetic he calls “psychological cubism.”

“I don’t think [people] quite understood the concept of constants and variables in my art, where they would just think, ‘Oh, it looks like Picasso’...but those were the motifs I was improvising on,” revealed Condo in an [oral history](#) conducted for the Smithsonian Archives of American Art in 2017 about his youth, family, and love of music. “[Musicians] worked from these constants, what are known as standards, and the improvisations on those standards became what distinguished them as great artists.”

Condo discusses his practice and affection for drawing as a more “private” medium than painting in a [2017 video interview](#) conducted in his New-York studio. “I kind of draw like you’re walking through the forest,” Condo explains, “like you don’t really know where you’re going and you just start from some point and randomly travel through the paper until you get to a place where you finally reach your destination.”

“I strive to be a realist, to see things the way I see them as opposed to being representational. If you want to be representational, the only reality out there is the man-made artificial world that we live in....a constructed reality.” Condo told [Art & Object](#) in a 2019 interview in conjunction with his exhibition, [What’s the Point?](#), at Sprüth Magers in Los Angeles.

Condo put his creative resources to use while under quarantine in New York during the first months of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, creating a new series of pen and ink drawings that “somehow or another reflect my inner feelings about how it is to be left alone, out here in the wilderness.” Hauser & Wirth, [Condo’s new gallery representative](#), showcased the new work in the [virtual exhibition](#), *Drawings for Distanced Figures*.



Condo, 2014
Photograph: Phaidon

George Condo (American,
Renaissance Woman, 2020
Ink on paper

Peterson Family Collection; L2020:82.2

George Condo discovered his idiosyncratic aesthetic in 1982 in an attempt to move beyond the gravity of his employer, Pop Art icon Andy Warhol. Building from the catalyst of Old Master paintings, Condo's distorted visions are first and foremost imaginary, occasionally inspired by real life and art historical reference. Though abstracted, his portraits, landscapes, and sculptures retain the touch of careful, studied draftsmanship, a critical part of his practice, which he defines as a "private activity." **Renaissance Woman** comes from a recent series created in the forced privacy of quarantine during the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic. The ink drawing, which displays the artist's quintessential cubist play of facial features and perspective, reflects Condo's mindset as he worked:

"We're all quarantined, sitting around at home trying to figure our way into some sort of imaginary world that will make life better. So, I'm imagining figures that are distanced from one another. They don't want to be, but they have to be...figures who are invented to resemble those I wish I could see, and they somehow or another reflect my inner feelings about how it is to be left alone, out here in the wilderness."

On view August 20 – November 22, 2020





George Condo (American, b. 1957)

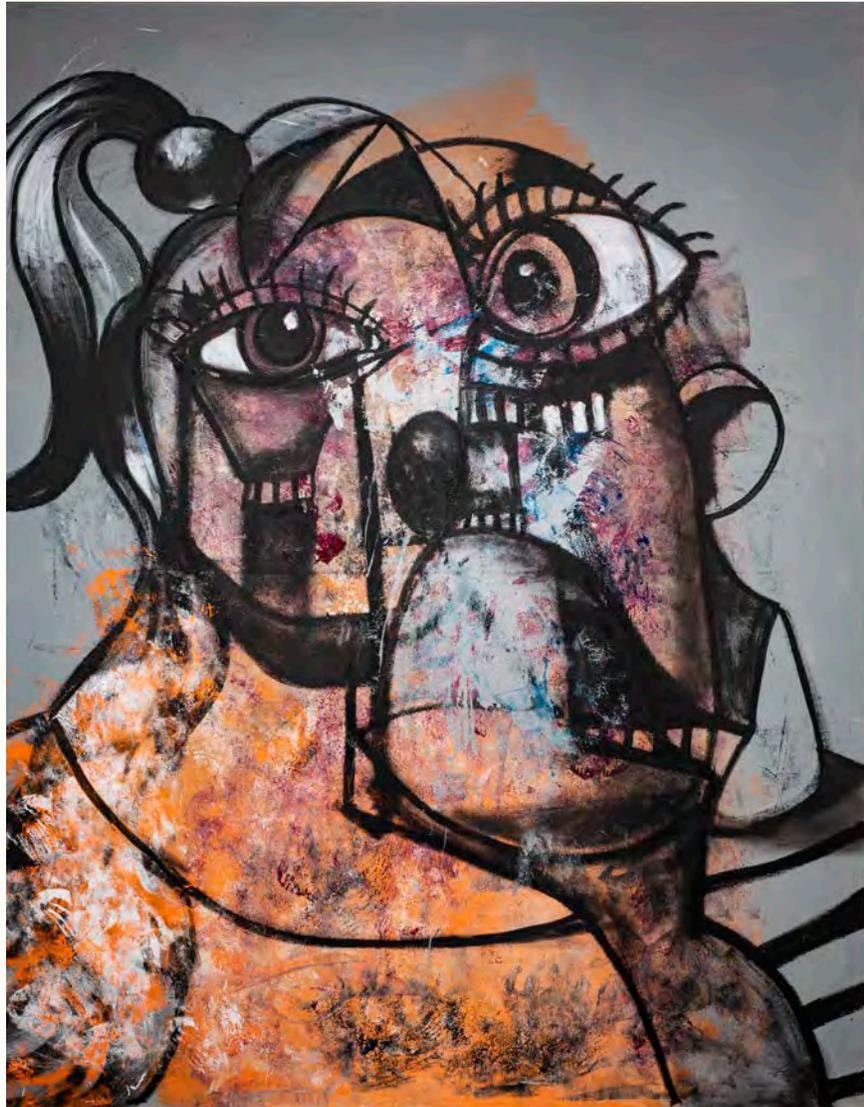
Portrait Composition, 2020

Acrylic, pastel, charcoal and metallic paint on paper

Private Collection, Los Angeles; L2020:47.1

George Condo studied art history and music theory at the University of Massachusetts in Lowell, played in hybrid punk bands, and worked for Andy Warhol at the Factory in New York before settling into a career in the visual arts in the late 1980s. The diverse output that defines Condo's work over the ensuing thirty years remains closely intertwined with his musical roots and experimental artistic education. In particular, Condo identifies his process of merging art historical influence and his own imagination in painting and drawing as acts of "sampling, appropriating, [and] presencing (sic)." As in his other work, the figurative abstractions of **Portrait Composition** borrow from the stylistic manipulations of twentieth-century masters like Pablo Picasso and Willem de Kooning. Condo describes such sampling as "Psychological Cubism," explained as the concrete representations of intangible emotional states, and "Artificial Realism," which he defines as a realistic representation of that which is ultimately artificial.

On view June 17 – September 20, 2020



George Condo (American, b. 1957)

Man and Woman, 2019

Oil, acrylic, oil stick, and metallic paint on canvas

Private Collection; L2019:86.1

More than thirty years into his career, George Condo continues to push the boundaries of representation with psychological explorations of the human figure. His **Man and Woman** reveals a disconcerting glimpse into the furthest extremes of the human psyche using elements of the absurd and grotesque. Here, as in other works, Condo borrows from the experimental manipulations of twentieth-century masters like Pablo Picasso and Willem de Kooning in search of concrete representations of intangible emotional states. The titular characters in in this work merge together in an aggressive physical deformation that creates a sense of intense mental disquiet, intensified by a lack of context. The figures' piercing gaze and jagged mouths suggest an entrenched cultural divide— both a reverence for and a distinct fear of femininity. By viewing a historically and ideologically loaded subject through a subversive contemporary lens, Condo demonstrates his idiosyncratic ability to merge tradition and innovation.

On view December 18 – April 30, 2020