

Press Release

## George Condo. People Are Strange

15 February – 22 April 2023  
Hauser & Wirth West Hollywood



**Los Angeles...** On 15 February, Hauser and Wirth is pleased to announce that George Condo will inaugurate the newly established West Hollywood gallery with his first exhibition in LA in nearly five years.

With the exhibition's title 'People Are Strange,' taken from the hit 1967 song of the same name by legendary – and quintessentially Los Angeles – band The Doors, Condo's latest canvases are filled with fragmented portraits and abstractions. In these large-scale works, the artist renders layered, vibrating planes, lines and geometries that suggest a world of oppositional forces and states, at once solemn and euphoric, connected and entropic, logical and ineffable, beautiful and ugly. In their ability to convey deep contradictions through Condo's mastery of the medium of painting, the canvases on view painted in New York City over the past year and a half are a reconstructive body of work involving both harsh lines and melodic painterly passages – and which characterize the dividing forces of modern life everywhere.

Condo has said that the exhibition's title, 'People Are Strange,' references 'the effect of the divisive politics of our time that have created a fractured society. In these works I put together the broken pieces and fragmented aspects of that division to intentionally point out the question: is it that people are strange or is it the politicians that are in fact strange, thus resulting in a maelstrom of dehumanized and disenchanting people who as a result have become strange....even to themselves.'

'People Are Strange' offers impressions of the strange world around him and, in doing so, captures something universal about the transforming effects of time's passage as it pertains to the time-lapse we have all lived through during the pandemic.

### Exhibition details

Filling the sweeping expanse of Hauser & Wirth's new West Hollywood gallery, housed in a 1930s Spanish Colonial Revival building redolent of Hollywood's Golden Age, the works on view present Condo's latest explorations in scale and the painterly process. While seemingly disparate upon first glance, these new paintings are united by



a central theme of transformation: they succeed in representing temporality both in the built-up, layered stages of their construction, and in the chimerical effects of the figures that inhabit them. Each work embodies its own logical chaos, at once disorderly and intact, which speaks to the fractured nature of our contemporary moment and indirectly references the ever-changing conflicts in the world. According to Condo, the artist is uniquely equipped to translate the ineffable effects of time, acknowledging that 'the transformation of society and people is something we all feel but that a painter can actually show.'

A centerpiece of the exhibition, the large-scale triptych 'Transformation' (2022) will be visible to passersby through the large plate glass windows that front the gallery's storied stretch of Santa Monica Boulevard. The frenetic energy of the work is echoed in this vivid tableau, which features a frenzied picture of undulating forms punctuated by the interaction of figures coalescing and diverging on the surface of the canvas. Condo's subject is the effects of increasing isolation that pulls individuals away from one another, fraying and fracturing community and society. The amount of time required to create such a work – the ongoing process of laying down line and color, and of removing, adding, repeating the process – is more consuming than the final images might suggest. Time itself thus becomes a material and a central theme of the show.

Inspired by the way literature can track the passage of time and its effects on the reader, Condo has created a trio of large-scale portraits of female muses, erudite and canonical. Each of these is dominated by a color that conveys mood with an iconographic intensity. For example, 'Transitional Portrait in Turquoise and Gold' (2022) depicts within its single frame, where the image is read from left to right, the collapsing of time in the passage of a life. The effect of the work is that of a time-lapse film. Condo observes, 'The irony is, that as we age, we get younger in our minds and spirits, even though the external view of us is completely different than what's in our heads. The tragic and the beautiful come together when perceived from the perspective of the viewer.'

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Condo's embrace of the possibilities of paint to record the passage of time is further extended into three-dimensional form with the debut of the new sculpture 'Constellation II' (2022). A variation of 'Constellation for Voices' (2019), his monumental 11-foot-tall sculpture installed at Lincoln Center in New York City, this work similarly comprises a multifaceted gold head that fuses human and alien parts into a single composition – a dialectical harmonization of differing forms. Simultaneously evoking ancient deities and modern man, 'Constellation II' collages a group of angles and forms together in a such way that the final fixed object vibrates as if animated. By reaching for an effect that the artist describes as 'spatial and ethereal and galactic,' 'Constellation II' presents viewers with the notion that limitlessness and a lack of fixity are, for better and for worse, the human condition.

Concurrent with the exhibition at Hauser & Wirth West Hollywood, the Morgan Library & Museum in New York City will present 'Entrance to the Mind: Drawings by George Condo,' featuring 28 works on paper that provide a unique overview of Condo's drawing practice over the last 45 years. This March in Europe, an exhibition titled 'Humanoids,' curated by Didier Ottinger, will be held at the Nouveau Musée National de Monaco – Villa Paloma.

### **About the artist**

Born in Concord, New Hampshire in 1957, George Condo lives and works in New York City. He studied Art History and Music Theory at the University of Massachusetts in Lowell before relocating to New York, where he worked as a printer for Andy Warhol. In 1985, Condo moved to Paris, subsequently spending a decade moving between New York and Europe. During this period, Condo invented his hallmark 'artificial realism' and made his first foray into sculpture. His 11ft gold leaf sculpture 'Constellation of Voices' (2019) was recently acquired as a permanent gift to The Metropolitan Opera House in Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts.

Condo's work has appeared in a number of solo exhibitions including 'Confrontation' in 2016 at the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin – Museum Berggruen in Berlin, Germany. In this exhibition work by Condo was presented alongside some of his major art historical reference points: masterpieces by Cézanne, Picasso, Matisse, Klee and Giacometti. From 2011–2012 a mid-career survey of Condo's portraiture entitled 'Mental States' travelled from the New Museum, New York to the Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam, Netherlands, Hayward Gallery, London, United Kingdom, and Schirn Kunsthalle, Frankfurt, Germany.

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In addition to this, Condo's work has appeared in numerous biennials internationally, including the Venice Biennale in 2019 and 2013, the 13th Biennale de Lyon in 2015, the 10th Gwangju Biennale in 2014 and the 2010 and 1987 iterations of the Whitney Biennial among others. Condo's work can be found in numerous renowned public collections internationally: Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, France; Tate Modern, London, United Kingdom; The Broad Collection, Los Angeles CA; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; The Museum of Modern Art, New York; The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York NY; and the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York among many others.

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Gallery hours:  
Tuesday – Saturday, 11 am – 6 pm

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Transformation  
2022  
Acrylic, oil stick, and metallic paint on  
linen  
228.6 x 647.7 cm / 90 x 255 in

Transitional Portrait in Turquoise and  
Gold  
2022  
Acrylic, metallic paint and oil stick on  
linen  
300.7 x 267.3 x 3.8 cm / 118 3/8 x 105  
1/4 x 1 1/2 in

Constellation II  
2022  
Aluminium, gold leaf  
78.7 x 55.3 x 52.7 cm / 31 x 21 3/4  
x 20 3/4 in

Psycho  
2022  
Oil on linen  
228.6 x 215.9 cm / 90 x 85 in