

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**GEORGE CONDO**  
**HEADSPACE**

11 FEBRUARY – 22 MARCH 2014

PRIVATE VIEW: MONDAY, 10 FEBRUARY, 6-8PM

Simon Lee Gallery is proud to present an exhibition of new paintings by renowned American artist George Condo. This is the artist's first solo presentation of paintings in London since the critically acclaimed retrospective *George Condo: Mental States*, which travelled to the Hayward Gallery in 2011-2012.

Blurring the line between comedy and tragedy, the grotesque and the beautiful, the critical and the empathetic, Condo has developed a provocative and adventurously imaginative pictorial language, which has helped make him one of the most innovative and influential artists of his generation. Since first gaining attention in the early 1980s with his 'fake Old Master' paintings, Condo's oeuvre has encompassed an incredible diversity of styles and media. In painting, drawing, sculpture and print, his works have been informed by an art historical trajectory spanning from the Renaissance and the Baroque through to Cubism, Surrealism, Abstract Expressionism and Pop. Speaking to the multiplicity of sources from which his work derives, Condo himself has stated, '*The only way for me to feel the difference between every other artist and me is to use every artist to become me*'.

With this exhibition, Condo takes up portraiture, a genre that has dominated his practice for over three decades, albeit through untraditional and unanticipated visual means. Combining stylistic elements from several different artists who cross multiple generations, Condo's portraits subvert traditional practice and only infrequently take as their subject real people; instead, the works often portray a fantastical assembly of characters derived specifically from the artist's own imagination. Built up in a vocabulary that has gone through several iterations – from the blurred to the distorted, the Picasso-esque to the removed, the humanoid to the antipodal – Condo's subjects have nevertheless always appeared surprisingly and uncannily familiar. Distended and often deformed, their vividly portrayed emotions register with viewers, creating an air of psychological plausibility.

Marking a new development in the artist's body of work, the paintings on view in *HEADSPACE* feature a series of portraits whose abstracted subjects extend irrepressibly beyond the confines of the canvas. Larger than life, the works present the face as a scrambled and colourful pictorial landscape, obstructing viewers' impulses to 'read' portraits for narrative meaning, and yet often revealing something of the subject's inner psyche.

In paintings such as *In Darkness*, and *Out of the Blue*, triangular, circular and cylindrical blocs of colour, traced in black line and placed together like an abstract puzzle, command the picture plane. It is only in registering discernible, but unexpectedly located body parts – the outline of an eye, the curve of an ear, the suggestion of teeth – that the portrait takes form in the mind's eye, exposing characters that are simultaneously composed and hysterical. In other works, such as *Screeching Figure*, *Heading Out* and *The Laughing Cavalier*, the tropes of portraiture are more readily evident; and yet, in building the figure through fractured forms, Condo consciously complicates perception, capturing multiple personalities at once which must be reconciled by the viewer.

George Condo (b. 1957) lives and works in New York. He has exhibited extensively in major international institutions, such as at La Biennale di Venezia (2013); The Metropolitan Opera House, New York (2013); Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt (2012); Hayward Gallery, London (2012); Museum Boijmans van Beuningen, Rotterdam (2011); New Museum, New York (2011); The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (2010); Musée Maillol, Paris (2009); DESTE Foundation, Athens (2007); and The Wrong Gallery at Tate Modern, London (2006). His works feature prominently in important public and private collections, including The Museum of Modern Art, New York; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; The Broad Art Foundation, Santa Monica; Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona; Astrup Fearnley Museet, Oslo; Dakis Joannou Collection, Athens; and Fonds National d'Art Contemporain, Paris.

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