

HAUSER & WIRTH

Press Release

George Condo. Internal Riot

5 November 2020 – 23 January 2021
Hauser & Wirth New York, 542 W 22nd Street



New York... On 5 November 2020, Hauser & Wirth will present 'Internal Riot' an exhibition of new paintings and works on paper by American artist George Condo. Made during the quarantine period, these works reflect the unsettling experience of physical distance and the absence of human contact during this prolonged time of social isolation. The pandemic has forced Condo to take his portraiture practice to a new level, with invented characters captured in an abstract web that reveals the humanity inherent in their fractured psychological states.

In this new body of work, Condo's figures grapple with the overwhelming uncertainty and dissonant emotions that are being felt across the globe. The portraits reflect a range of emotions occurring simultaneously within us. The subjects depicted are devoid of connection to one another in a state where, according to the artist, 'we are dealing with opposing forces and the elasticity of time.'

Earlier this spring Hauser & Wirth presented the online exhibition 'Drawings for Distanced Figures.' This new body of work which forms 'Internal Riot' continues to provide a powerful commentary on the divisive world we live in today.

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Artist Statement

Thought Block: George Condo on 'Internal Riot'

'These paintings and drawings explore my experience in isolation and reflect the inner isolation we have all experienced throughout our lives. Internal dialogues while in transit or asleep or in the form of dreams. The pandemic has forced us into that strange, unidentified region of the mind where it seems to function on its own without any guidance. Now our rules and daily lives have been re-ordered as well – face masks, endless sanitization, gloves, and germ warfare. Without structures and data, the humanitarian effort to bring the human essence back into the picture and empathetically solve the virus and our own inner turmoil has turned into a much bigger picture over these last so many months since I left the city. The virus turned deadly and its attack amplified the flaws in humanity, the ruthless denigration of people simply for what they look like and where they come from.

The protests were justified. I protested with my paintings. In a psychological sense, I lit them on fire and turned them upside down in revolt and sickness, 'Internal Riot,' which I'm naming this exhibition is about that feeling of just wanting to turn your world upside down and burn it to the ground... and hope a new planet will be born. It's about that transcendental moment when all things are everything.

Other paintings and works on paper are my interpretations of the abstract web humanity is caught up in. Compositions moving diagonally on the canvas from right to left or left to right, the polarization, no straight up and down, an endless saga of going one way or another, ending nowhere. Clashing profiles, both reasonable and unreasonable, anger, mistrust, and fear. 'Father and Daughter With Face Mask' captures the staring eye of the insane father as the younger child is rendered over a silver mask. His protective maniacal head is trapped in a diagonal construction site over which he has no control. 'There's No Business Like No Business' is what appears to be an out of work, unemployed man who could have once stood out in front of a Broadway theater handing out pamphlets. Covid-19 has shut all those theaters down. Now, he too, is trapped in diagonal suspension, waiting endlessly for the lights to turn green and his job to return. Perhaps it never will.

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All the paintings relate to the spontaneous, improvisational nature of the works on paper, their immediacy. The painting *Internal Riot* and the drawing *Portrait of Virginia Woolf*, are totally interrelated. I worked on a daily basis, dating each piece when it was finished. Some took days, others weeks. Some took only hours. And then the days of doing nothing seemed longer, the elasticity of time became apparent to everyone I know. People call on the phone and can't remember what day it is anymore, can't remember what they 'used to do' or know what in fact they ever will do. There is a migratory sense in the air. People want to move... with no clear path in sight. This is the moment for change. As an artist I know I can right wrongs in my paintings and that is what I do. I unite every form and color and harmonize it to the point where it sings like a choir. I'd love to see the world do that.'

For additional information, please contact:

Irene Kopitov, Hauser & Wirth, irenekopitov@hauserwirth.com, +16467401887 (USA)

Andrea Schwan, Andrea Schwan Inc., info@andreaschwan.com, +1 917 371 5023 (USA)

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Internal Riot

2020

Acrylic, pigment stick and metallic paint on linen

208.3 x 203.2 cm / 82 x 80 in

Father and Daughter with Face Mask

2020

Acrylic, pigment stick, metallic paint & wax
crayon on linen

208.3 x 203.2 cm / 82 x 80 in

There's No Business Like No Business

2020

Acrylic, pigment stick and metallic paint on linen

208.3 x 203.2 cm / 82 x 80 in

George Condo studio photo of:

Portrait of Virginia Woolf

2020

Crayon, aquarelle wash and gold spray paint on
paper

152.4 x 101.6 cm / 60 x 40 in