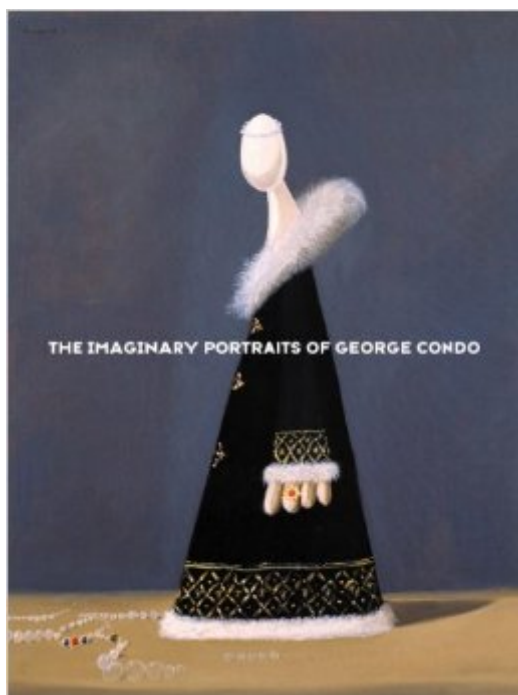


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# The Imaginary Portraits Of George Condo



## Synopsis

Since the mid-1970s, George Condo has been painting portraits of people inhabiting his imagination. By transposing the techniques of the Italian Renaissance, Spanish Baroque, French Impressionism, Surrealism, 1950s Modernism, and Pop Art, Condo has created an original movement, which he calls Artificial Realism - the realistic representation of that which is artificial. In his first artist's monograph, *The Imaginary Portraits of George Condo*, the painter showcases an incredible selection of subjects - from Madonnas and Clowns to Metaphysical mannequins and Antipodular Beings - which had previously existed only on the periphery of his consciousness. Condo painted while on the move, and the imaginary characters were made manifest in hotel rooms during his travels throughout Europe. The result is a carnivalesque collection of creatures, the likes of which will most surely surprise, provoke, confuse, and delight.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Not because of the artwork but because of the reproduction quality. There are about a half dozen images that are out of focus. It's not my eyesight....some of the paintings shown are soft and fuzzy while others are crisp and sharp. If you're putting out an art book at the very least make sure you have clear scans or sharp photographs. The publishers should have just omitted the blurry images rather try and pad the book out. There's not much in the way of text or essays in here just lots of pictures (some out of focus). I would recommend the George Condo "Mental States" book for a good overview on Condo's painting. For Condo fans still enjoyable, but if you're looking for an entry point into Condo's work this is not the book to start with.

This book has 126 full-page color illustrations of the work of George Condo. I must say I was amazed by his work. There are several series of paintings presented here in rough chronological order so that the viewer has a sense of the development of the paintings. One of the first themes is that of the clown face. The clown face is a much over used image in art. In Condo's work, the features become a predominant element in that the eyes, noses and lips are free standing, not integrated into the head structure, but lay on the surface plane of the heads like small eggs or jelly beans glued to larger eggs or balloons. The features are not integrated into the anatomical structure but are free standing objects in their own right, casting shadows on the balloon like heads. This treatment of the features makes them appear to float and thus they become somewhat frightening. They don't give the impression of being harmless. A smile that looks like a red rubber band floating on a large egg shaped head is not really an anatomical smile but a threatening object. The clown image in Condo's hands becomes an ambiguous presence, who may or may not bring harm to the viewer. In "Infantile Memories" the quality of the painting is compelling as the two clowns smile at each other with odd collars of some unknown material. "Portrait of Monika" is certainly a nightmare on canvas. A pin headed witch with a long neck appears as if she is a tree or stem growing from a large apple rather than a torso. With a dark blue moody sky, it evokes dark and pensive moods. "Witchbulb" is a wonderful painting where it appears that Condo constructed a female like object but the torso and shoulders appear more like an upholstered chair and the neck and head of the witch appear to be a table lamp set upon the back of the chair. It is if a child made a witch from objects in grandmother's living room and then painted the objects, adding additional ambiguity and mystery. Both paintings are very fine. Condo also explores the features as a complex geometry that may or may not be integrated into the head structure. The geometry is highly compelling as the face is deconstructed and then pieced together loosely like building blocks. "The Tiger" is a superb painting of a dog's face with wonderful highly playful dog ears forming shapes of great playful energy. Condo is influenced by Picasso and Bacon and explores these influences openly, extracting new lessons from these masters. But as Picasso attempted to deconstruct the human face and then reconstruct it from pieces taken at different angles so that there is confusion as to the planes of the face, Condo mixes it up further, pushes the pieces further, and comes through with two master works that are influenced by Picasso but have moved into new territory. "Untitled, 1999" and "Memories of Picasso, 1989" are fantastic works. Condo's work amazes with the dark primal un-pretty "Polyphemus" which is as strong a painting as has been painted in the last 20 years. Dark cave-like background gives way to the odd body of Polyphemus with one giant eye upon a stalk staring at the viewer. "Blue

Clown", a vulnerable silly elf-like bumpy headed creature in blue is cast against a big black a blue world. Genet and Sartre burst through these images, they are the illustrations of French existentialism from a previous generation."Girl with a Pixie" has disorganized the human face to the point of a grid of shapes and colors, bound by a wonderful black shape evoking hair. The quality of the paint is superb, luscious, always showing the mistakes and the backtracking of the artist, revealing the acts of discover that emerge in Condo's work. The graphic quality of the work and the painterly brushstrokes and the masterful control of offbeat colors reveal Condo to be an artist of the top order. "Expanding Brown Dog" evokes Picasso and every cartoon strip in the 1960s. "Grey Seated Female Composition" is another painting that is as strong as any painting of the last 20 years. Condo goes from exploring Picasso to exploring the completely blank face, odd egg like portraits. These are followed by a wonderful series where Condo takes an odd cartoonish face composed of ball like blobs for checks, eyes, nose, etc and rearranges the shapes to reconstruct the concept of the face. This book is exceptional, a fully developed look into various conceptions explored by Condo, a most talented and excellent modern master.

This book is really beautiful and has all my favorite Condo paintings. It looks great on a coffee table and people always seem to want to flip through it.

Excellent reproductions of George Condo's work--would thoroughly recommend--many illustrations.

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