

LUHRING AUGUSTINE

531 WEST 24TH ST NEW YORK 10011 tel: 212 206 9100 fax: 206 9055 web: www.luhringaugustine.com

George Condo
Existential Portraits
May 5- June 3, 2006
Opening reception: Friday May 5, 6-8pm

For immediate release:

Luhring Augustine is pleased to announce an exhibition of new paintings and drawings by George Condo. The show will run from May 5 through June 3, 2006.

Condo has always been interested in what it means to be an American painter within the inherited tradition of European painting spanning from the Raphael to Duchamp in particular. The distinctively American concept of hybridization is manifest in Condo's work which he calls Artificial Realism, a term he coined in the early 80s when he emerged as painter on the New York art scene. This unique painterly language has greatly influenced the generation that follows him.

In this new body of work, all from 2005 and 2006, Condo executes orgies, couples and portraits informed by his powerful sense of irony and multifarious imagination. Utilizing the traditional medium of oil on canvas, his work recalls art historical portraiture. The subjects he paints are as elegant and alienating as they are absurd and comical; any notion of the classical is subverted through an outrageous morphology. Condo enjoys the playful interweaving of the high and low, an idea which is reinforced in this exhibition by the punctuating of his paintings with faux-gilt frames.

Condo imbues the characters in his portraits with a psychological complexity which arises from his poignant observations on humanity. His figures are based on memory, imagination as well as archetypes from real life. In discussing the title of the show *Existential Portraits* with Ralph Rugoff, Condo states: "*I feel that there's no real limit as an artist. And I think that, again this is one of the existential aspects of painting as a practice. The freedom that you face when choosing what to paint can be overwhelming... But that freedom is also one of the great things about art.*" A vast array of invented characters surround the main figure *Jean Louis*, a French aristocrat whose multiple personalities include figures such as a driver, a barber, several maids, a chef and a host of relatives. Other characters such as *Batman and Bunny*, *Uncle Joe* or *The Truck Driver* are also represented as social conformists laced with existential despair that are gently exposed or mercilessly scrutinized by Condo.

George Condo was born in 1957 in Concord, New Hampshire. He has exhibited extensively in both the United States and in Europe including exhibitions at The Whitney Museum, The Museum of Modern Art, NY, Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston TX, The Guggenheim, Albright Knox Museum, Fonds National d'Art Contemporain, Ministere de la Culture, Paris, Museu d'Art Contemporani, Barcelona The Museum of Fine Art, Houston and most recently at the Kunsthalle Bielfeld in Germany.

A new book *George Condo Existential Portraits* has been published by Luhring Augustine on the occasion of the exhibition and will feature a conversation with by Ralph Rugoff.

For further information please contact Vanessa Daugherty at 212 206 9100 or vanessa@luhringaugustine.com.