

VANITY FAIR

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On Art



The PICASSO ISSUE

COLLUSION, 2017
—BY GEORGE CONDO
~A WORLD~

EXCLUSIVE

FEATURING: MY FAVOURITE PICASSO by 50 ART-WORLD LUMINARIES; PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST AS A YOUNG BRAND by PETER YORK; MADE IN MONTMARTRE by SUE ROE; PICASSO—KING WITHOUT HEIR? by FRANCIS OUTRED; SUN XUN, LARRY GAGOSIAN, LARRY BELL, JOHN RICHARDSON, CLAIRE TABOURET; and SO MUCH MORE!

IN ASSOCIATION WITH CHRISTIE'S

PORTRAIT OF AN ARTIST

George CONDO

By DORIAN MAY



As the world grapples with frightening new levels of terrorism, racism and global political unrest, George Condo says he has ironically never felt more inspired. The artist, best known for his fantastical depictions of debauchery and comedic contorted caricatures of subjects both real and imaginary, explains that the

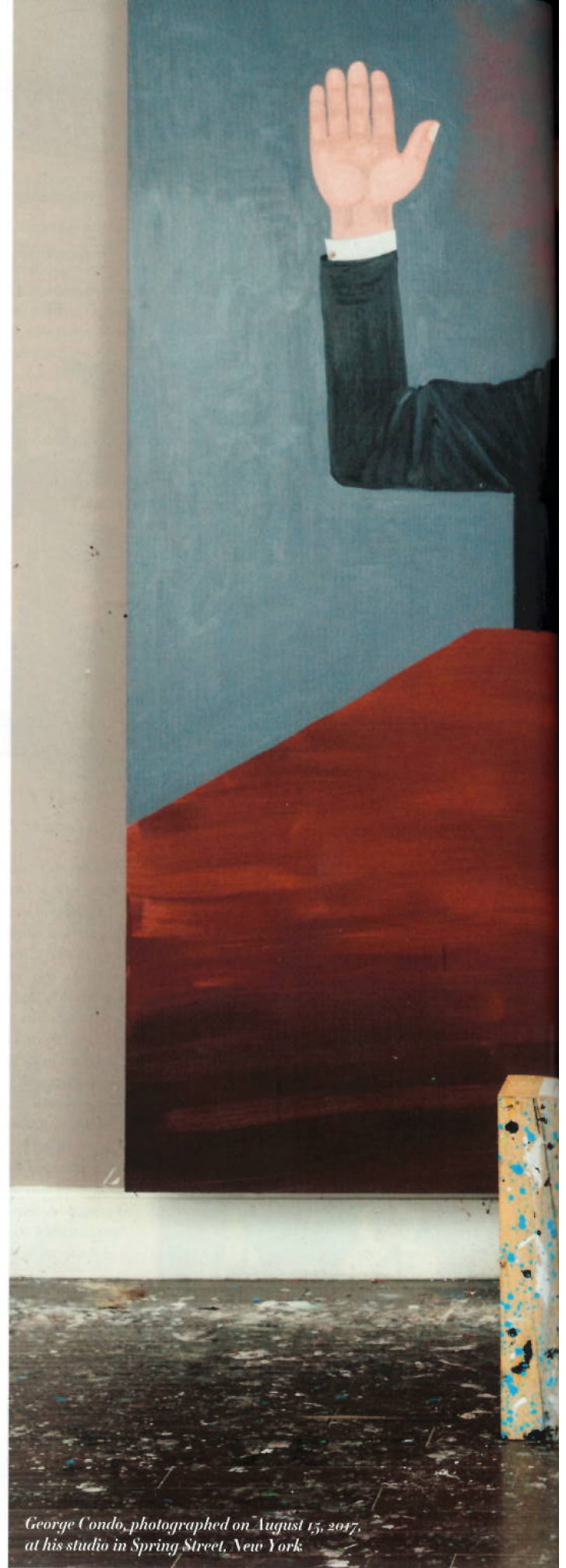
current unstable environment lends artists a creative advantage.

In his Soho studio, Condo is affable and energetic, enthusiastically sharing the genesis for some of his latest works. Blaringly absent is any reference to the man others have endlessly lampooned. Condo says he doesn't paint Donald Trump because he leaves him no room for creativity. "If I had to paint Donald Trump, I would paint him exactly the way he is because I can think of nothing worse," he explains with a smile.

Recognized as one of the most influential living American artists—he has worked for Warhol, befriended Basquiat, exhibited alongside Picasso and conjured controversy with his "Cabbage Patch" portrait of Queen Elizabeth and provocative album cover for Kanye West—Condo's hybrid of candour, illusion, madness and beauty is a genre he himself named "Artificial Realism" back in the 1980s. In this case, it seems that life imitates art and now this term invented by the collectors' darling has seemingly swept over the entire world. "Fake news has become the norm and I think now art is the only truth and everything else is a lie," explains Condo. "I see today's world as it is! Absurd and exaggerated and I need to turn it into something truthful. As an artist you are a mirror, but simply reflecting today's culture is not enough, it has to come through as a visual correction."

Interestingly, Condo's predecessor Pablo Picasso, to whom he is frequently stylistically contrasted, believed the contrary; that art is the lie that makes us realize truth. Nonetheless, Condo is humbled by the comparisons and says the father of Cubism has played a major role in his work. "Picasso forced others into new directions, that was one of his greatest influences," muses Condo, who has fused many of these historical movements into his original psychological cubist style. "In relation to Cubism, I want to see a human face from four different perspectives and four different emotional perspectives. I want to get into their head."

According to Condo—who is low key and modest despite his encyclopedic knowledge of art history, current affairs and mythology—the secret behind his evocative canvases is fairly simple. "There are characters that live within your mind and I want to bring them to light. If you think about how the *mind* as opposed to the *eyes* see people, that is the image I want to create." □



George Condo, photographed on August 15, 2017, at his studio in Spring Street, New York

