



# MUSINGS ON A MUSE

ACTRESS JESSICA CHASTAIN PLAYS HUMAN  
CANVAS TO FOUR LEADING ARTISTS OF THE DAY.

*By Diane Solway*

## GEORGE CONDO

Though best known for his fiercely wacky portraits, the American artist George Condo is as much a portraitist as he is an abstract expressionist. "I love the idea of two incompatible worlds brought together—opposing forces harmonically melded," he says. When he met Chastain, his plan was to create two artworks—and cast her not as their subject but as a character in them. "I wanted Jessica to become part of the painting and then appear to come off it, as if she were breaking free and leaving behind an empty space," he says. "I liked that the paintings were 3-D." To achieve that effect, Condo designed two simple canvas dresses for Chastain, taping them to the canvas and painting over them so that when they were removed, they would leave a blank space but appear to be a fragment of the piece. Standing in front of the work on the previous page, with her red hair teased to eternity, Chastain blended into the cacophony of line and color, a member of the loopy crew. As Condo studied Chastain posing next to the other figures in the work, he began drawing a cluster of noisy characters close to her head to give the impression "that they were yelling into her ear." While Chastain was having white makeup applied to half her face, Condo grabbed a scrap of paper and created an eye for her to use as a prop. "I thought if she just held it in front of her, it would give a real sort of Stanley Kubrick feel to the experience." The result, of course, is suitably schizoid, just as Condo envisioned. "With that popped-out eye, there are two different sides to her face: one hysterical and the other soulful," he says. "Multiple emotions at the same time."

*This page:* Condo's Spatial Notations, 2012. *Previous:* Condo's Abstract Conversations, 2012. Photographed by Max Vadukul. Styled by Felicia Garcia-Rivera. Hair by Jimmy Paul for Bumble and bumble, makeup by Fulvia Farolfi for Chanel, manicure by Gina Viviano for Chanel. Photography assistants: Reto Sterchi, Carlos Ruiz.



