ALMINE RECH

George Condo
The Mad and the Lonely

Jun 18 — Oct 31, 2024 | DESTE Foundation Project Space, Slaughterhouse, Hydra, Greece

The DESTE Foundation is pleased to present *The Mad and the Lonely*, an exhibition of works by George Condo. The show will be on view at DESTE's Project Space, a former Slaughterhouse on the island of Hydra, between June 18th and October 31st, 2024.

The Mad and the Lonely will feature a number of small-scale paintings and sculptures selected from the artist's long-standing career. Following in the tradition of portraiture, the works in the exhibition offer depictions of the disparate souls in life, who have been rejected by society and who linger between states of madness and loneliness. Victims of their own internal circumstances, these characters are rendered in the abstracted, often eerie but, at the same time, humanoid-like manner that is distinctive of George Condo's idiosyncratic style.

While exploring the art of the past, from the Renaissance and the Baroque, to Cubism, Surrealism, and Pop Art, Condo creates his own visual language by breaking from the formality of traditional portrait painting and the vocabulary of Modernism and abstraction. At first sight, works such as *Woman with Bear* (1997) seem to be borrowing from the principles of Cubism, by which subjects are broken down and depicted from multiple perspectives at once. In fact, however, the distorted figures in such works are composed of an array of simultaneous emotional states and are brought to life through what the artist himself refers to as "Psychological Cubism". Contrasting states of emotions such as joy and agony are similarly concurrently revealed in sculptures aptly titled *Lunatic* (2009) and *Renegade* (2009), as well as in portraits like *Don Rodrigo* (2010) and *The Jester* (2019), which seem to allude to Velázquez and Rembrandt and where deformed, grotesque figures with exaggerated features take center-stage, blurring the line between figuration and abstraction.

While Condo's cast of characters are all fictional, figments of his own imagination, they embody the social uncertainties, the psychological realities, and the anguish that are characteristic of our time and age. By reflecting upon the volatility of human emotions and the precarious nature of our mental states, Condo offers a psychological investigation of human nature and an empathetic critique of modern life. While exploring the complexity and vast emotional spectrum of the human psyche, his portraits become mirrors of our era. In this special installation of works, Condo has combined the ancient element of polychromatic Greek painting in a new and unseen method. He has taken the idea of minimalistic sculpture and combined it with the shocking, unthinkable presence of these haunting portraits. It will be a new presentation of his work especially made for the DESTE Foundation. One will have to see it to believe it as the exhibition will focus not only on ancient principles such as multicolored walls in the animal cages but also wild animal-like sculptures and paintings hanging within them.

By making his pariahs the subject of his exhibition on Hydra and bringing them into the spotlight, Condo manages to glorify and dignify them. Set in the confined, uncanny space of the Slaughterhouse, these constructed minimalist objects with paintings incorporated as part of his conceptual reasoning will make for an intimate show that brings viewers vis-à-vis Condo's fragmented characters and forces them to confront the frenziness and the realities of the present while engaging in a dialectic experience. As a backdrop to *The Mad and the Lonely*, Hydra complements Condo's works in all its contradictions. A mythical island that harmoniously combines elements of both ancient and modern times, it echoes the paradoxes that simultaneously abound in Condo's work—beauty and the grotesque, humor and drama, comedy and tragedy, delight and horror, joy and despair, all find their way into Condo's work and coexist in symphony.