

CHARLES GARABEDIAN

AND HIS CONTEMPORARIES

11 FEBRUARY – 1 APRIL 2017

OPENING RECEPTION: SATURDAY, 11 FEBRUARY, 3-6 PM



Charles Garabedian, *Study for the Iliad*, 1991, acrylic on canvas, 84 x 242 in. (213.4 x 614.7 cm)

Venice, CA -- A tribute exhibition celebrating the life of Charles Garabedian (1923-2016), presents paintings, works on paper and sculptures the he created over six decades. These works are juxtaposed with those by a select group of his contemporaries: John Altoon, Larry Bell, Tony Berlant, William Brice, Vija Celmins, John Chamberlain, Richard Diebenkorn, Sam Francis, Robert Heinecken, Robert Irwin, John McCracken, John McLaughlin, Ed Moses, Ken Price, Don Suggs, Peter Voulkos and Tom Wudl.

A lover of art history, literature, opera, jazz, horse racing, sports, golf, poker, cigars, Scotch, and later in life, daily visits to Peet's Coffee and Tea in Santa Monica, Charles Garabedian was beloved both as an artist and a teacher. Described by critic Christopher Knight as "among the best painters Los Angeles has produced," Garabedian, or "Chas" as he was known by his friends, created paintings that featured awkwardly posed figures or abstractions that spoke to the human condition. Embracing grand themes, his paintings were idiosyncratic and compelling.

The exhibition touches on the wide-ranging subjects and approaches that Garabedian tackled over his lifetime. Early works from the '60s mark the beginning of his career, with wildly imaginative depictions that reflect popular culture from that era, including *Jean Harlow*, 1964 and *Pinball Baseball*, 1966. Towards the late '60s and early '70s, nearly eight years out of art school, Garabedian began to break away from literal associations in his works. Abstract sculptures emerged, such as *Untitled*, 1970, which Garabedian created after seeing an exhibition of Japanese sculpture in 1965. Like many of the Light and Space and Minimalist artists during this time, Garabedian experimented with resin, but unlike his counterparts, utilized the material's translucency to build representational imagery. This includes *Woman in the Bathroom*, 1973, a large-scale resin painting last seen in his 2011 retrospective at the Santa Barbara Museum of Art. He also developed a fascination with Greek and Chinese cultures. A book on Chinese gardens held Garabedian's imagination for several years, which led to a series of paintings that implied a sense of collage like *Chinese Mr. Hyde*, 1975 and *4*, 1976. The largest painting in the exhibition, *Study for the Iliad*, 1991 (84 x 242 in. [213.4 x 614.7 cm]), illuminates his deep appreciation for the Greek tragedies, as do the paintings on paper *The Red Wine Dark Sea*, 2011 and *Clytemnestra & Iphigenia*, 2015.

Beyond providing a look at the six decades of Garabedian's career, this exhibition serves as a tribute to the artist: his life's work and the artists he admired for their conviction, dedication to their practice and lifetime achievements.

Ed Moses urged him early on to pursue art, while Vija Celmins was a close friend of Garabedian's since the '60s. William Brice was one of Garabedian's professors at UCLA, and Tom Wudl became a student of Garabedian's while at UCLA. Richard Diebenkorn was also a UCLA colleague, and when he moved out of his Santa Monica Ocean Park studio (located in a building occupied by other artists including James Turrell), Garabedian took over his unit, which shared a common space with Sam Francis. Apart from the studio, Garabedian fostered



Charles Garabedian, *Woman in the Bathroom*, 1973
resin, 88 1/2 x 136 in. (224.8 x 345.4 cm)

lasting friendships with artists of all generations. Sharing a love for the track, Robert Irwin and Garabedian once co-owned race horses, and Don Suggs, along with Robert Heineken, played poker with Garabedian on a regular basis.

Garabedian highly regarded all the artists in this exhibition, and although they represent a vast range of methodologies and movements, each share a distinct link to Southern California, and have contributed to the thriving environment for art and academia that continues to reverberate here in Los Angeles, and beyond.

Charles Garabedian came to painting at age 32, and was almost 40 before he had his first solo exhibition. His career as an artist followed his service as a Staff Sergeant and gunner during World War II, during which he flew 30 missions in Europe. He subsequently worked for the tire company B.F. Goodrich, assembling cars for Chrysler, and as a clerk for the railroad. Garabedian studied literature and history at USC, and encouraged by his friend Ed Moses, he took art classes with Howard Warshaw, which led him to UCLA. Upon graduating with a MA in 1961, he stayed on to teach at the university. He also taught at the College of Creative Studies at UC Santa Barbara, and other established art institutions throughout the 1960s, '70s, and '80s.

In 1962, Garabedian began showing with the Ceeje Gallery in Los Angeles. He had his first solo museum exhibition in 1966 at the La Jolla Museum of Art, and his first retrospective at California State University Northridge in 1974. In 1978, Marcia Tucker, former Senior Curator at the Whitney Museum of American Art, included Garabedian's work in the exhibition, "*Bad*" *Painting* at the New Museum in New York, which she had founded just a year prior. Numerous solo and group gallery and museum shows followed, and culminated in a survey exhibition curated by Julie Joyce at the Santa Barbara Museum of Art in 2011, which drew widespread critical acclaim. In 1979, Garabedian joined L.A. Louver. Over 36 years of representing Garabedian, L.A. Louver mounted 17 solo exhibitions, including his last, *Sacrifice for the Fleet* in October-November 2015, which featured 18 works that Garabedian created over the last two years of his life (catalogue available).

Garabedian has shown with Betty Cunningham in New York and Gallery Paule Anglim in San Francisco. His work is included in the collections of Los Angeles County Museum of Art; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; The Broad Collection; San Francisco Museum of Art; Museum of Contemporary Art, San Diego; Santa Barbara Museum of Art, CA; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; Whitney Museum of American Art; and The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, among many others.

A memorial celebration for Charles Garabedian will be held on Saturday, 11 February 2017, 11am at The Broad Stage, 1310 11th Street, Santa Monica, CA 90401. Please call (310) 822-4955 to RSVP.