

Charles Garabedian

L.A. Louver
Venice, California

It's impossible to summarize ten years of Charles Garabedian's high-spirited work in a mere ten pieces, but this exhibition resonated well beyond its size. Focusing on the early years (1966–76) of the 88-year-old late bloomer, who shows no sign of fading, this eclectic sampling of paintings and sculptures made the point that he was a fiercely independent talent from the start.

In *Daytime T.V.* (1966), a mixed-media vision of mayhem, Garabedian fills most of the picture plane with an image of a television set airing a weirdly disjointed brawl. A gun—not quite connected to a pair of hands that may or may not belong to a man in a black hat—points at a nude woman's head as her legs fly up in the air. Goofy, yes, but the slapstick violence has grim echoes outside the TV room. In a murky street scene on the left side of the painting, a man drags an enormous cross toward a slain figure.

Primarily known as a figurative artist, Garabedian often applies strange narrative twists and quirky humor to themes drawn from history, mythology, and pop culture. *Jack Nicholson* (1973) is a collagelike portrait of the actor as a happy gambler, equipped with dollar bills, liquor bottles, dice, and a bowling pin. But other works wax lyrical and almost abstract. A roughly painted wood construction seems to be an ode to the material itself. *Wood China Wall* (1968), in acrylic and resin on wood, with "China" printed across the top, may be as close as the artist ever gets to a Minimalist aesthetic, though the large white panel was inspired in part by a book on Chinese houses and gardens.

Succinct as it was, this survey reminded viewers that Garabedian has always been a freewheeling expressionist, blissfully out of fashion but perpetually relevant and refreshing.

—Suzanne Muchnic



Charles Garabedian, *Daytime T.V.*, 1966,
Flo-paque and ceramic on board, 41 $\frac{1}{8}$ " x 61 $\frac{1}{8}$ ". L.A. Louver.