

Around The Galleries

## Mock take on urban fantasies

David Pagel

Ever since the avant garde went the way of silent movies, many of the most interesting artists of the last century have cast themselves as lone wolves — solitary souls whose genius is tied to the freedom that comes with being a go-it-alone misfit.

This romantic fantasy is mercilessly mocked by the 10 wickedly original paintings, sculptures and mongrel mash-ups in “Charles Garabedian: Works from 1966-1976.” In L.A. Louver’s upstairs gallery, the 88-year-old artist’s cock-eyed pictures and fractured forms replace the macho bravura of the lone wolf with the scraggly raggedness (and whiplash unpredictability) of a stray dog.

The two earliest works, “Daytime T.V.” and “Restaurant (The Waitress),” are scruffy, ill tempered and out of whack, both compositionally and emotionally. Each cranks up the loneliness of Edward Hopper’s best paintings, transforming the promise of solitude into the despair of distraction gone wrong. Their curdled surfaces look dirty. With uncanny efficiency, Garabedian makes looking feel like leering.



Charles Garabedian  
*Restaurant (The Waitress)*, 1966  
flo-paque on board  
30 x 40 in (76.2 x 101.6 cm) framed



Charles Garabedian  
*Untitled*, 1970  
acrylic, polyester, resin & wood  
12 x 64 3/4 x 10 3/4 in (30.4 x 164.4 x 27.3 cm)

Two resin-coated wall-works recall boarded-up storefronts, their surfaces scarred with graffiti that is both scholarly and scary, its evocation of ancient Greece and modern China prescient and pointed. Two untitled sculptures, from 1967 and 1970, seem similarly out of time. At once up-to-the-minute and profoundly out of step, they leave visitors lost in a no-man’s-land between truth and illusion.

Comic books, movies and other pedestrian pastimes appear in Garabedian’s other works, alongside abstract fragments and ruin-littered landscapes. Adventure, danger and romance may not be what they once were, but they are never far from Garabedian’s gritty vision of life in the big city.