

Charles Garabedian

L.A. Louver

Venice, California

Charles Garabedian has been perfecting and elaborating his peculiar meld of neo-classicism, expressionism, and surrealism for a good 40 years. Such eclecticism has widespread currency among artists young enough to be his grandchildren, but Garabedian's paintings manifest all their wit and effervescence without a trace of confusion or self-consciousness.

As demonstrated here in two mural-size paintings and new works on paper,



Charles Garabedian, *September Song*, 2000-4, acrylic on canvas, 13' x 25'.
L.A. Louver.

Garabedian makes a kind of pact with the viewer: if you allow me my excesses and diversions, I promise to realize them well enough that we can all have a good time. He makes sure that every work, large or small, has been composed, colored, and painted not just prettily and expressively, but solidly, carefully, and completely. Nudes on the beach in the enormous *The Spring for Which I Longed* (2001-3) may be entirely out of scale with the ocean and islands beyond them; a nude figure in *The Eunuch* (2003-4) may be improbably contorted in an awkward, yoga-esque pose before a flat, setlike landscape; and the oddly flayed figure in *Danaë* (2003-4) may dissolve into clouds behind her own glittering cascade—but all of this makes visual and narrative sense because Garabedian reasons out his concepts thoroughly and lavishes the same degree of attention on every part of every picture.

Such awkward, seemingly offhand figuration requires not virtuosity but unstinting care. Garabedian displays both; and as a result, his paintings may be car-

toonish but they do not devolve into cartoons. The eccentricities are measured, knowing, and consistent, keeping the appearance vibrant and the storytelling lighthearted. He is comparable less with the video-game-addled tyros, whom he bests easily, than with the modern masters of the lightness of being: Henri Rousseau, Florine Stettheimer, and Edward Gorey.

—Peter Frank