

# Charles Garabedian

## Outside the Gates

15 July - 31 August

a collaborative online exhibition  
presented by L.A. Louver  
and Betty Cuningham Gallery



**Venice, CA / New York, NY** -- In a bi-coastal collaboration, L.A. Louver and Betty Cuningham Gallery are pleased to present *Charles Garabedian: Outside the Gates*. Drawing from both galleries' long histories with the artist, this exhibition brings together two dozen paintings from the last three decades of Garabedian's life. The artist's ability to tap into the collective unconscious renders the work timeless; while many of the figures may be familiar from myth, their staging speaks to our common lot as humans. With distinctive humor and pathos, Garabedian takes us on a trip as he moves toward finding himself in history, mythology, and by accident.

Garabedian embraced grand themes in his idiosyncratic and compelling body of work. Inspired by Armenian manuscripts, Biblical stories, and the epic poetry of ancient Greece, his iconoclastic approach to figuration breathes vibrant, pulsating life into these old tales. His works are populated with warriors and gods, bathing beauties and epic journeys. Abstractions lie unsettlingly at the edge of recognition, seeming to take on the unknowable logic of Olympus. A hallmark of Garabedian's style is his Mannerist approach to the body. Twisted and elongated figures lounge, bend, and stretch across his compositions. That nearly all of his figures from this period are nude reinforces a feeling of otherworldliness. He treats the body as something malleable, something that can be distorted or even truncated. For example, the painting *Man in the Brick Wall* features a fleeing figure, a brick bust, and a torso with legs but no upper half.

Several of the works gathered here feature Prometheus, a Titan who gave humankind the gift of fire. Displeased with this sharing of sacred knowledge, Zeus and the other gods chained Prometheus to a rock and an eagle, an emblem of Zeus, came daily to feast on his liver. Every night the liver grew back, and every day the eagle returned. Garabedian also turned to the tale of Sisyphus. The titular figure pushing his stone uphill appears only in the background; the main focus is instead an imposing brick stela ringed in Tuscan columns, their imperviousness standing in for the futility of Sisyphus' task. Most of the works are on paper, a material the artist embraced for its flexibility and fluidity. As his concepts developed Garabedian affixed additional sheets to the original page in order to achieve his desired composition. This expansive narrative approach may be seen in works such as *You Should have Looked at Me and Outside the Gates*, and led to marked vertical and horizontal formatting which is evidenced too in the rare multi-canvas mural-scale painting *Willie Snake*. According to Garabedian, "I find the paper more liberating, it's not as formal a concept. I like to think of it as more of a physical experience."



**Charles Garabedian** was born in Detroit in 1923, and moved to California at age nine. He served in the United States Air Force during World War II, and thereafter studied literature and philosophy at UC Santa Barbara, and history at the University of Southern California, earning his BA in 1950. Encouraged by his friend Ed Moses, Garabedian studied with Howard Warshaw, and at age 34 entered the University of California, Los Angeles. In 1961, he graduated with an MA in art, and stayed to teach at the university until 1973.

Garabedian's work has been seen internationally, with inclusion in important museum exhibitions including the Whitney Museum of American Art Biennial, 1975 and 1985; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, CA, 1976; the Venice Biennale, 1976 (also 1982, '84 and '85); "Bad" Painting, curated by Marcia Tucker, New Museum of Art, New York, NY, 1978; The High Museum Atlanta, GA, 1980; the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., 1984; Brooklyn Museum of Art, NY, 1989; the Sezon Museum of Art, Tokyo, Japan, 1991; the Corcoran Biennial, Washington, D.C., 1993; and in the Getty Museum initiative Pacific Standard Time exhibitions: L.A. Raw: Object Expressionism in Los Angeles, 1945-1980, from Rico LeBrun to Paul McCarthy, Pasadena Museum of California Art, 2011, and Under the Big Black Sun: California Art, 1974-81, Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, CA, 2011. He was also included in Drawing in L.A.: The 1960s and 70s, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, CA, 2015. Garabedian received a National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship in 1977, a John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation Fellowship in 1979, and the American Academy of Arts and Letters award in 2000. Garabedian has also been honored with several solo museum exhibitions: The La Jolla Museum of Contemporary Art presented a survey of Garabedian's work in 1981; and in 1983, the Rose Art Museum at Brandeis University, Massachusetts held a mid-career retrospective. In 2003/2004, a survey exhibition of works on paper was presented at the Luckman Gallery, California State University, Los Angeles (traveled). A retrospective of his works, curated by Julie Joyce, was presented by the Santa Barbara Museum of Art, CA in early 2011.

L.A. Louver has represented Charles Garabedian since 1979. Betty Cunningham began working with Garabedian in 1982, and Betty Cunningham Gallery has represented the artist since 2004.

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images: (front) Charles Garabedian, *Arrows*, 1986, acrylic on paper, 57 1/4 x 43 3/4 in. (145.4 x 111.1 cm)

(above) Charles Garabedian, *Willie Snake*, 1985, acrylic on canvas (three panels), Overall: 7 ft. 6 1/2 in. x 33 ft. 6 in. (229.9 x 1021.1 cm)