



...n), it was structured in three phases, each lasting two weeks, preceded by two weeks of installation—a sort of workshop common identity could be forged out of the individual artists' actions. But before the three phases were initiated, there was a story action that consisted of refurbishing the old elevator and bringing it back to life after years of inactivity. More to the project, this gesture turned out to have a strong resonance throughout the process, tangentially addressing the disappearance of local industries in Barcelona and metaphorically inverting the existing trend.

Each phase had to do with creating different modes of experiencing the exhibition space. In the first stage, a complex scaffolding prevented the viewer from stepping onto the gallery floor, everything—from hanging pieces of fabric to different sets of objects on the ground—to be seen from a distorted perspective. Walkways and scaffolding, one would find a sheet of paper with a text that was supposed to give a clear explanation of what was at stake, only to find a bunch of abstract and poetic clues. "We are the space between bodies," it read (in Spanish) in one paragraph. In the second phase, viewers could be conscious only of their own transit through the space as plastic walls isolated them in claustrophobic corridors. In the last phase could the spectator feel something close to a more direct confrontation with art—or, at least, with objecthood: a number of what someone called "crying shelves," mysterious, captivating dripping-wet wooden pieces stuck to the walls, a slippery terrain into which Black Tulip's utterly suggestive work took us ever deeper.

—Javier Hontoria

together footage of Paris, Tokyo, and New York into a seamless view of passing cityscapes so that changes of locale are noticeable, if at all, only to viewers who are familiar with the architectural fabric of the three cities or in the rare moments when an icon such as the Eiffel Tower appears.

In *Elevator Pitch*, 2011, and *Lost Garden*, 2008, two installations that appeared upstairs here, Leandro similarly relies on seemingly mundane tropes to create disquieting situations with permeable boundaries. *Elevator Pitch* is a faithful reproduction of an elevator door that opens at ten-second intervals to reveal video footage of people—actors—in an elevator in Buenos Aires, accompanied by generic music that plays while the doors are open. Among the twenty-two different vignettes repeatedly shown are those of a mother and two children; a crowd of people trying to avoid eye contact with one another; a couple kissing; and a teacher with a group of school children. Many viewers probably didn't keep looking long enough to perceive the loop. But even for those of us who did, the scenes went by too fast for us to fill in the narrative suggested by the fact that certain faces appeared more than once: When was the elevator going up or down? Were the kids holding balloons going to, or coming from, a birthday party? And so on. Temporality is deconstructed and the elevator is stripped of its function. The red light of the call button never goes off and, in the artist's own words, the elevator is "a machine that has no rest."



Leandro Erlich, *Lost Garden*, 2008, metal, bricks, glass, mirrors, fluorescent lights, artificial plants, dimensions variable.

*Lost Garden*, the only work of the three in the show without any video element to it, was the least entertaining but the most intriguing. Two windows look out onto a small skylit courtyard with plants. With the use of mirrors, Erlich makes the visible space appear much larger than it really is and brings viewers into the work as their reflected bodies filter in and out of one's field of vision. The participatory role of the spectator clearly gives the work its strength. In each of these three pieces, Erlich establishes a space in which to question the permeable boundary between reality and fiction, but *Lost Garden* in particular epitomizes his exploration of perceptual frontiers.

—Camila Belchior

## Leandro Erlich

BRITTO GALERIA

...artist Leandro Erlich's show "*La Invención*" comprised three works, each of which highlights the way that ordinary things can become extraordinary when, recontextualized, the quotidian is transformed into a space for inquiry. Because the show was split between two locations—an upstairs exhibition space and a ground-floor office—viewers were left for the viewer to realize that the video *Global Express*, shown in Luciana Brito's office on an LED screen housed in a structure resembling a train window, was even part of Erlich's installation. This is the first time since an exhibition by Brazilian artist Tiago Tebet was shown in the adjacent main gallery. In *Global Express*, Erlich edited

## BEIRUT

### Paul Guiragossian

BEIRUT EXHIBITION CENTER

At its best, to be Lebanese meant to be multicultural *avant la lettre*, having to cohabitate with seventeen different religions and several ethnicities and languages—all in an area not much larger than Delaware. The Armenians, descendants of Great War refugees who suffered an acute trauma in the 1915 genocide that decimated their communities and stripped them of their ancestral home in Anatolia, form one of the smallest Lebanese communities. They are thoroughly urbanized, cosmopolitan, and polyglot.





Paul Guiragossian,  
*Portrait of Juliette*,  
1978, oil on Masonite,  
78 1/2 x 39 3/4".

This was the culture from which Paul Guiragossian emerged, and that his life and art encapsulated. Born in Jerusalem in 1925 to a family devastated by the Armenian genocide, he experienced exile both as heritage and destiny when his family relocated to Beirut in 1947. Lebanon became his home, and its multilayered cultures his cloak of many colors. He excelled in assimilation, learning many languages and espousing both Armenian and Arab causes while embracing European mores, ideas, and artistic modes. Yet Guiragossian was a fundamentally transpolitical artist, an introspective individual for whom the love of family represented the surest anchor in the shifting world of identity politics in Lebanon between the 1950s and 1993, the year of his death. Guiragossian was recognized during his lifetime as one of the most singularly cerebral Arab painters and exhibited widely. But his work had never been so comprehensively shown as it was in the recent retrospective "Paul Guiragossian: The Human Condition." Ambitiously curated by Art Reoriented, a team consisting of Sam Bardaouil and Till Fellrath, this show brought together nearly two hundred drawings and paintings, in addition to photos and documents chosen from the archives of the Paul Guiragossian Foundation. Shunning chronology, the curators arranged the works in eight open sections titled "Self," "Family," "Woman," "Theater," "Faces," "Faith," "Despair," and "Life," all revolving around a circular central zone that featured the monumental painting *Antiques*, 1970—the sole surviving panel of a triptych Guiragossian made for a theater play—suspended from the ceiling. But to avoid being overly didactic, they provided cleverly chosen openings between the sections to create vantage points from which the viewer could glimpse from a distance a painting that might complement or complicate the one at hand. This strategy was well suited to an oeuvre already steeped in self-reflexivity.

Modern to the core, Guiragossian's art is characterized by a fluidity engendered by his constant search for the expression of the artistic and the emotional moment through the immediacy of charcoal or China ink, the transparency of watercolor, or the gestural boldness of heavy lines and thickly layered oil paint. He moved between naturalism and the abstractly figurative without fixating on either. But he focused almost exclusively on the human form, which he claimed to "worship, warts and all, from the head to the toes." His oeuvre includes depictions of himself, members of his family (especially his mother, Rahel, and wife, Juliette, whose stunning full-length portrait from 1978 greets the visitor at the show's entrance), and people he admired, as well as almost fully abstracted figures. These are often little more than attenuated color stripes—friezelike sequences of which populate his most celebrated compositions, such as the somberly evocative *Hiver* (Winter), 1991. Guiragossian's most emotionally piercing works, however, retain more evident figural contours. *La Victime*, 1958, for instance, shows a group of figures tinted in strong earthen hues reacting in various ways to the accidental death of a boy whose body occupies the central foreground. This masterpiece recalls, more than any twentieth-century source, frescoes at sites along the Silk Road, such as those from the first century BC in Dura-Europos, Syria, or from the fourth century AD in Penjikent, Tajikistan. Guiragossian's modernity had deep roots. This exhibition revealed him as a sort of phenomenologist who dug deep

into his own consciousness to construct an intimately concerned and profoundly humanistic oeuvre. "A true painter paints the interior of the human being," as Guiragossian himself declared. It is time he was critically appreciated on the international scene.

—Nasser Rabbani

## NEW DELHI

### Atul Dodiya

NATIONAL GALLERY OF MODERN ART

Atul Dodiya's "Experiments with Truth" was the first survey show of a living Indian artist at the National Gallery. Curated by Ranjit Hoskote, the exhibition looked back on three decades of Dodiya's practice and showcased more than eighty works, including paintings on paper, canvas, laminate boards, and rolling shutters, and assemblages housed in glass cabinets. The show wasn't expansive enough to be considered a retrospective, particularly because a few significant bodies of work—"Cracks in Mondrian," 2005, and "Broken Branches," 2003, to name two—were not represented. Still, "Experiments with Truth" was an informative summary of the vertiginous turns in Dodiya's practice.

One of India's most important artists, Dodiya is known for the ease with which he borrows from the canons of both Indian and Western art. Packed with references, his works bring the local and the international, high art and popular culture, into conversation with each other, often with a dose of wit and humor. For more than fifteen years, Dodiya has been obsessed with the figure of Mahatma Gandhi. In keeping with this preoccupation, the exhibition borrowed its title from one of Gandhi's autobiographies and showcased Dodiya's earliest reference to the leader of India's anticolonial struggles, the 1997 painting *Lamentation*. Made for the fiftieth anniversary of India's independence, it presents an ambivalent view of the future—Giotto's weeping angels mourn the departure of Gandhi as the young girl from Picasso's 1943 canvas *Les Femmes d'Alger* learns to walk.

Hoskote eschewed chronological order in favor of loose thematic groups. At the entrance, the viewer encountered never-before-seen realist portraits of Western masters, including Cézanne, Seurat, and Braque, made in 1981, when Dodiya was a student. Hoskote placed this series near three realist portraits of Indian artist Bhupen Khakhar, created in 2013, demonstrating how styles and images recur throughout Dodiya's oeuvre. Many other paternal figures loom large in the works from 1996—*Snail on the Shoulder* (In Memory of Prabhakar)

