

AVIGDOR ARIKHA

— *b. 1929, Rădăuți, Romania — d. 2010, Paris, France*

French painting, which Arikha loved so deeply that he chose to settle in Paris and live in its company, has, since the seventeenth century, been a painting of reality—and indeed of the ordinary. One thinks of the Le Nain brothers' peasants, The Wafer Dessert, Chardin's domestic interiors... Impressionism, the last great flowering of this painting, somewhat altered this tradition by transforming the everyday into a Byzantine mosaic of luminous brushstrokes, a glory of light and colour, an impulse that naturally continued in Bonnard and, in another way, in Matisse and the Fauves.

Arikha, by contrast, returns to the ordinary without embellishment. Indeed, he goes further in his attention to the prosaic and the everyday than perhaps any painter before him. His own almost comically ageing body, worn shoes, ordinary clothes, cracks in a wall, yesterday's newspaper already fit for the fire—but also a rose, or the woman he loves: everything becomes a worthy subject for painting. Everything deserves attention, becomes a play of colours and forms, textures and light, waiting to be grasped and preserved.

Oil paint, pastel, engraving and ink are thus enlisted to render this prose of everyday life. The aim is not to beautify the world the painter inhabits, but to restore its presence—to make it present again. The painter seeks fidelity, not embellishment. And yet such is the mystery of painting that we find ourselves unable to take our eyes off this life suddenly restored, recreated before us. Without quite understanding why, we are compelled to admit that it is beautiful.

Before the pastel depicting folded, yellowing newspapers, where a French viewer can still recognise, upside down, the Gothic lettering of the masthead of Le Monde, an entire world suddenly returns to life: Parisian existence, the 1980s and 1990s, paper itself—the painter's essential material, now become his subject—long winter evenings, the civilisation of print. And all this, although the picture consists of little more than grey, yellow and green surfaces, almost abstract, paper upon paper. Such is the miracle of painting, which, whenever it truly succeeds, is always nothing less than a new creation of the world.

—Benjamin Olivennes

FIRST FLOOR

1. Avigdor Arikha
Self-portrait in white vest, 1987
Pastel on paper
65 x 50 cm

2. Avigdor Arikha
Left Hand Study, 2010
Graphite on paper
25.5 x 30 cm

3. Avigdor Arikha
Nude self portrait with black socks, 1992
Pastel on paper
91 x 19 cm

4. Avigdor Arikha
Winter, 2000
Pastel on board
32.4 x 24 cm

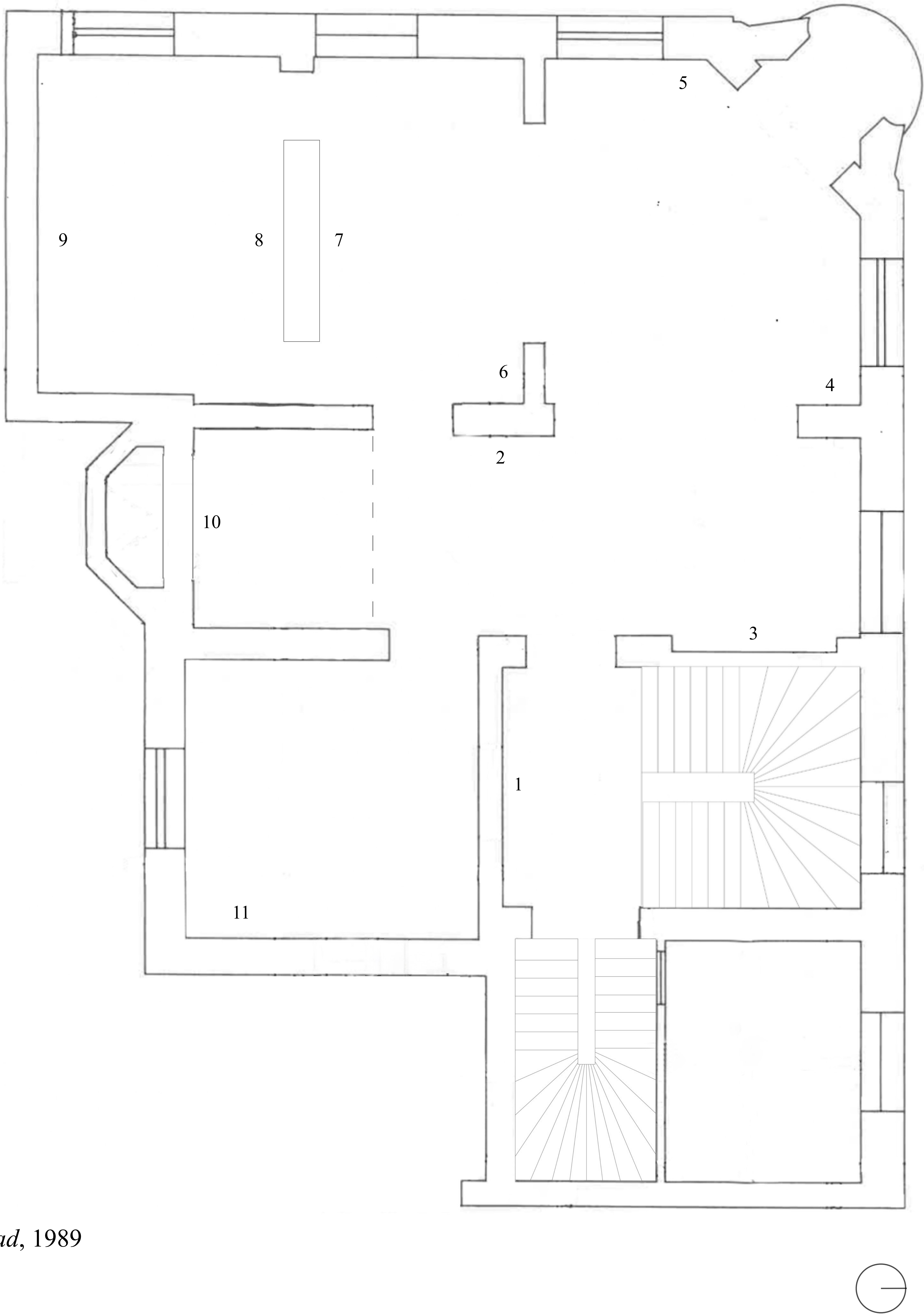
5. Avigdor Arikha
Studio corner with crack in the wall, 1985
Pastel on velvet paper
37 x 29 cm

6. Avigdor Arikha
Bags and Chair,
Sumi ink on paper
24 x 32 cm

7. Avigdor Arikha
Self portrait with a blue sheet and a towel on head, 1989
Pastel on paper
41 x 50 cm

8. Avigdor Arikha
Nude portrait of the artist in profile on a pink background, 1975
Oil on canvas
45.5 x 38 cm

9. Avigdor Arikha
Winter Coat, 1986
Pastel on velvet paper
46.5 x 50 cm



10. Avigdor Arikha
Self portrait with blue shirt,
Oil and oil stick on canvas, artist steel frame
12.5 x 16.5 cm

11. Avigdor Arikha
Autoportrait torse nu avec chevalet, 1986
Graphite on paper
53.5 x 59.5 cm