



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

KARL BENJAMIN — His Students' Work 1953–1960s

Opening Reception: Saturday, January 3, 2026 | 6:00–9:00 PM

Location: Ginger Elliott Center at Garner House

Address: 840 N Indian Hill Blvd., Claremont, CA 91711

The exhibition will continue through Saturday, January 31, 2026, with a closing reception from 6:00–9:00 PM.

Exhibition Explores the Early Work and Teaching Legacy of Artist Karl Benjamin

This exhibition highlights the formative years of noted artist Karl Benjamin (1925–2012), focusing on works created during the 1950s — the decade that launched his 45 year artistic career — alongside artwork by his 5th- and 6th grade students in Bloomington and then Chino, CA public schools. The exhibition places Benjamin's own early explorations in direct dialogue with the creativity of his students, illuminating the reciprocal exchange that helped inspire both teacher and pupils.

Although Benjamin earned his bachelor's degree from the University of Redlands in English literature, history, and philosophy, his path to painting began unexpectedly in the classroom. When he began teaching in 1949, he was required to provide 45 minutes of art instruction weekly. Encouraging his students to move beyond conventional representational imagery, he urged them simply to "fill up the space with pretty colors." Their inventiveness sparked his own interest, and by 1950 Benjamin was painting seriously himself — holding his practice to the same discipline he asked of his students.

Largely self-taught, Benjamin immersed himself in art magazines, museum collections, and the work of artists such as Piet Mondrian, Paul Cézanne, and Arshile Gorky. His early paintings range from energetic abstract expressionist studies to playful, cubist-inflected landscapes and architectural forms. These exploratory works laid the foundation for the bold geometric style that would soon define his career. In 1959, Benjamin emerged as a central figure in the Hard-Edge painting movement, gaining national recognition.

He received his MFA from Claremont Graduate University in 1960 and later taught at CGU and Pomona College from 1979 to 1994. His work has been featured in major exhibitions and is included in the permanent collections of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; the Art Institute of Chicago; the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution; and the Whitney Museum of American Art, among many others.

We acknowledge with gratitude the invaluable support of Beth Benjamin. This exhibition reflects Karl Benjamin's belief in the creative potential of his students and his hope that their work would one day be seen and appreciated within a broader cultural and historical context.

Louis Stern Fine Arts is the exclusive representative of the Estate of Karl Benjamin.