

KARL BENJAMIN (1925 – 2012)

A Hard Edge painter renowned for his meticulously orchestrated arrangements of color and form, Karl Benjamin was born in Chicago, Illinois in 1925. He began his undergraduate studies at Northwestern University in 1943, but his education was interrupted by service in the U.S. Navy during WWII. Benjamin moved to Southern California in 1946, where he returned to his studies with the support of the G.I. Bill. He earned his BA in English Literature, History, and Philosophy in 1949 from the University of Redlands, and began his career as a public school teacher with no intention of becoming an artist. Benjamin's pursuit of visual art began in the early 1950s, when he was required to develop art lessons for his young students. This inspired his own interest in color relationships and prompted him to pursue an MFA from the Claremont Graduate School (now Claremont Graduate University), which he obtained in 1960.

Benjamin's work blossomed amid the lively mid-twentieth century art, design, and architecture scene in Los Angeles. He had his first major solo exhibition in 1954 at the Pasadena Art Museum, now the Norton Simon Museum. Numerous exhibitions of his work during this decade culminated in his inclusion in the ground-breaking 1959 exhibition *Four Abstract Classicists*, curated by Jules Langsner. Featuring the work of Benjamin, Lorser Feitelson, John McLaughlin, and Frederick Hammersley, the exhibition opened at the San Francisco Museum of Art (now SFMOMA) and traveled to the Los Angeles County Museum in Exposition Park (now LACMA). It then traveled internationally to the Institute of Contemporary Arts in London, England and Queen's University in Belfast, Northern Ireland under the title *West Coast Hard-edge*.

The exhibition garnered national attention for Benjamin, and the artist's work was subsequently included in a number of major exhibitions, including the Whitney Museum of American Art's *Geometric Abstraction in America* in 1962 and *The Responsive Eye* at the Museum of Modern Art, NY in 1965. After decades balancing time in the studio with his work as an elementary and middle school teacher, Benjamin joined the faculty of Pomona College in Claremont, California in 1979 as artist-in-residence and was appointed the Loren Babcock Miller Professor of Fine Arts in 1991. He was granted emeritus status upon his retirement in 1994.

Karl Benjamin was awarded the National Endowment for the Arts Grant for Visual Arts in both 1983 and 1989. His work has been featured in numerous museum exhibitions and is included in the public collections of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C.; Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; and the Whitney Museum of American Art, NY, among many others.

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