

CLAREMONT MUSEUM OF ART TO OPEN WITH EXHIBIT BY PAINTER KARL BENJAMIN

Claremont, CA (October 2, 2006)—The Claremont Museum of Art will open its doors to the public early next year with a retrospective of the work of internationally renowned painter Karl Benjamin. The Museum will also present “Building a Legacy,” an exhibition of art from the permanent collection.

Housed in the historic Claremont Packing House in the new Village expansion, the Museum will have three exhibit areas, totaling about 3,500 square feet, as well as a museum shop, offices and a space for classroom use, lectures and meetings. Representatives of the Museum last week signed a long-term lease with Arteco Partners, the developer and owner of the Packing House, located at First Street and Indian Hill Boulevard.

“Conversation with Color: Karl Benjamin, Paintings 1953-1995” is the first in a series of special one-person and group exhibitions planned for the new museum. Spanning five decades, the retrospective will include 45 to 50 works that trace Benjamin’s development as an artist, from a 1953 oil painting of Bud’s Bike Shop in Claremont to paintings of international significance that reflect his influence as one of the founders of abstract classicism.

“Karl Benjamin is a seminal figure in abstract classicism, more commonly known as ‘hard edge’ painting,” said Steve Comba, interim curator and registrar of the Museum. “Because of his inventive nature and intuitive, creative instincts, he became part of a group of artists who invented a new form of abstract painting in the early and mid fifties. In 1959, his work was part of a landmark exhibition at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art that traveled to Europe and secured a national and international reputation for Benjamin.”

A resident of Claremont, Benjamin began painting in 1951 while working as a public school teacher. He became an artist-in-residence and professor of art at Pomona College in 1979 and was professor of art at the Claremont Graduate School from 1979 until his retirement in 1994. His paintings have been exhibited throughout the United States and are part of private and public collections that include the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Seattle Art Museum, Whitney Museum of American Art, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art and the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles.

Artwork donated to the permanent collection will be displayed in “Building a Legacy,” an exhibition that will also highlight the origins of the museum. The collection, which is still being assembled, will feature significant work of leading artists and artisans who have a connection to Claremont.

“The permanent collection will run the gamut from traditional to experimental, from works on canvas and bronze to photography and new media to furniture and fine crafts. We want the Museum to fully reflect the diversity and variety of art in the region,” said Comba. A third exhibition area, still in the planning stages, will showcase experimental work and new media by local artists.

Museum organizers have set a fundraising goal of \$1.2 million by the January opening, according to Frank Chabre, acting executive director and treasurer of the Museum. About \$800,000 has been raised from businesses, civic clubs and individuals, including a major gift by an anonymous donor.

Gifts to the “Museum Builder Fund,” launched earlier this year, will help defray the cost of developing the collections and executing specific exhibitions, finishing the interior gallery spaces, administering operations and creating the educational programs.

The Claremont Museum of Art is a community cornerstone for collecting, preserving, sharing and celebrating the legacy of Claremont artists and their most significant and enduring work. It is also a catalyst for providing the community with excellence in art education at all levels. The Museum’s outreach program will promote learning by developing and providing specialized classes and lectures, a resource library, activities and events, in-classroom visits, tours, and a wide assortment of print and on-line materials. The Claremont Museum of Art is a nonprofit California corporation, fully tax exempt under IRS code 501(c)(3). Visit the Claremont Museum of Art website at claremontmuseum.org

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