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**CLAREMONT MUSEUM OF ART TO OPEN APRIL 15, 2007
INSIDE RENOVATED CITRUS PACKING HOUSE**

Claremont, CA (February 26, 2007)—The tree-lined college town of Claremont, California, will gain a museum of its own when the Claremont Museum of Art opens its doors to the public on Sunday, April 15, 2007. Located inside a renovated citrus packing house, the museum's inaugural exhibit will be a retrospective of the work of world-renowned Claremont painter Karl Benjamin.

“Claremont is home to a remarkable number of internationally-acclaimed artists, many of whom settled here to teach at the prestigious Claremont Colleges,” said Executive Director William Moreno, former director of The Mexican Museum in San Francisco. “The result is an impressive body of work and significant arts community that will now have an institution dedicated to celebrating this on-going legacy.”

The inaugural exhibit, *A Conversation with Color: Karl Benjamin, Paintings 1953-1995*, will feature 46 paintings spanning 42 years that trace Karl Benjamin's career, from his early experiments with cubism to works that represent his role as one of the founders of abstract classicism.

The permanent collection, *Building a Legacy: Founding a Museum, Building a Collection*, will occupy the smaller of the two museum galleries with works exhibited on a rotating basis. The inaugural showing of the collection will present work by Jean Ames, Aldo Casanova, Rupert Deese, Betty Davenport Ford, James Grant, Susan Lautmann Hertel, Norm Hines, James Hueter, William Manker, Harrison McIntosh, Roland Reiss, Albert Stewart, James Strombotne, Milford Zornes, and other notable local artists.

“With our great space in the Packing House and location in the heart of Claremont near the Metrolink station and the colleges, the museum has the potential to become an important regional influence and an educational forum and center for all members of the community,” said Moreno. “We plan to embrace Claremont's history in the arts, building on that tradition and ultimately working to expand the scope of the museum well beyond the region into the international arena.”

In addition to a diverse slate of exhibits, the museum will feature a sizeable gift shop that will include arts and crafts from local artists. A comprehensive lineup of educational programming and events will be offered for all ages.

The April 15th public opening will take place from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. The event will include free admission, curator tours, live music, and family art activities.

The Packing House

With 3,500 square feet of exhibition space, a store, sculpture garden, and offices, the museum will occupy the west end of the historic citrus Packing House currently being restored and redeveloped as part of the Village expansion project. The renovated 1922 building will also house a jazz club, restaurants, shops, galleries, and live/work lofts.

“The spirit in which this building was originally conceived – a cooperative effort of citrus ranchers who came together to pack and ship their fruit – is similar to what’s happening with the Claremont Museum of Art,” said Architect Mark von Wodkte, also a founding board member of the museum. “That the Claremont Museum of Art is located within the Packing House is a celebration of this place and its history.”

For the first half of the 20th century, citrus was the primary industry for Claremont and many other cities in Southern California. By the late sixties, however, housing tract development had become more lucrative, and the citrus industry began to dwindle. In 1972, the last packing house closed its doors. This building, known as the College Heights Lemon Packing House, is the same packing house that stands today and is home to the Claremont Museum of Art.

The building includes a notable number of ‘green’ features, including significant daylighting, several operating windows, energy-efficient insulation, and many original materials, including the old hardwood floors, some windows, structural timbers, metal trusses, beautiful hardwood sliding doors, and the corrugated metal ceiling. The landscaping is drought-tolerant, and later this year, solar electric panels will be installed atop the roof. Perhaps the two most environmentally friendly aspects of the development, however, are that the building itself was recycled instead of demolished, and that it’s located in a pedestrian- and bike-friendly location, right in downtown (known as the “Village”) and within walking distance from the train station.

A Conversation with Color: Karl Benjamin, Paintings 1953-1995

Beginning with his earliest experiments with cubist-inspired pictorialism and stimulated by the works of Piet Mondrian, Joan Miró, and Lionel Feininger, *A Conversation with Color: Karl Benjamin, Paintings 1953-1995* will follow Benjamin's trajectory through his breakthrough hard edge works and international exposure with the landmark exhibition *Four Abstract Classicists* in 1959 to the serial explorations with patterns, systems, letter shapes, stripes, and natural forms in the 70's and 80's.

The exhibition will culminate with examples of his often overlooked later works where he returned to compositions harkening back to his innovative early paintings, this time infused with a rich and complex palette, refined by decades of observations and ‘conversations’ with color.

Emblematic of the mission of the Claremont Museum of Art, Benjamin is truly a “regional artist of international importance,” said Curator Steve Comba. “Though known and respected as an inventive painter, Benjamin's influence as a supportive and munificent teacher – and persuasive advocate for painting’s long-standing relevance and currency – will also be his legacy. His paintings and his persona share a common trait, one where give and take is rewarded, where the conversation is open and generous.”

A resident of Claremont since 1952, a professor of art at Pomona College from 1979 to 1994, and a nurturing and unwavering supporter of emerging and established artists, Karl Benjamin continues to be a significant and profound influence on a generation of artists.

About the Museum

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, visits to the schools, tours, and a wide assortment of print and on-line materials. The Claremont Museum of Art is a nonprofit, 501(c)(3) organization.

Museum hours are Wednesday through Monday from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. It is closed on Tuesday. The museum store is open seven days a week from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. The museum and store are open until 8 p.m. the first Friday of every month and are closed on Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year’s Day.

Admission to the Museum is free through the end of May. Beginning June 1, admission is \$3.00 for adults; under 18 free.

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