



# Smithsonian

*Archives of American Art*

## A Finding Aid to the Karl Benjamin Papers in the Archives of American Art, 1958-1980.

Stephanie Ashley

Funding for the processing and digitization of this collection  
was provided by the Frederick Hammersley Foundation.

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## Collection Overview

<b>Repository:</b>	Archives of American Art
<b>Title:</b>	Karl Benjamin papers
<b>Date:</b>	1958-1980
<b>Identifier:</b>	AAA.benjkarl
<b>Creator:</b>	Benjamin, Karl
<b>Extent:</b>	13 Items
<b>Language:</b>	English .
<b>Summary:</b>	The papers of painter and educator Karl Benjamin consist of thirteen items dating from 1958-1980 and include correspondence and clippings relating to Benjamin's career as a painter and teacher, and one photograph.

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## Administrative Information

### Acquisition Information

Donated 1980 by Karl Benjamin.

### Available Formats

The collection was digitized in 2021 and is available on the Archives of American Art website.

### Processing Information

The papers, with the exception of one letter from Benjamin to Paul Karlstrom dated 1975 Feb. 28, were microfilmed upon receipt on reel 2786. The collection was processed, prepared for digitization, and described in a finding aid by Stephanie Ashley in 2021 with funding provided by the Frederick Hammersley Foundation.

### Preferred Citation

Karl Benjamin papers, 1958-1980. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

### Restrictions

This collection is open for research. Access to original papers requires an appointment and is limited to the Archives' Washington, D.C. Research Center.

### Conditions Governing Use

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## Biographical / Historical

Karl Benjamin (1925- 2012) was a painter and educator in Claremont, California, known for his Hard Edge geometric and vibrantly colored abstract paintings.

After serving in the United States Navy in World War II, Benjamin graduated from Southern California's University of Redlands in 1949 with a BA degree in English literature, history and philosophy. He relocated to Claremont, where he taught in public schools and subsequently at Pomona College, and began painting and exhibiting his work. Following the 1959 exhibition *Four Abstract Classicists: Karl Benjamin, Lorser Feitelson, Frederick Hammersley and John McLaughlin* at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Benjamin became known as one of the region's leading Hard Edge painters.

Benjamin received the National Endowment for the Arts Grant for Visual Arts in 1983 and 1989. His work has been featured in numerous exhibitions and can be found in the collections of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, Museum of Modern Art, Israel, Oakland Museum, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, Seattle Art Museum, and the Whitney Museum of American Art, among others.

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## Scope and Contents

The papers of painter and educator Karl Benjamin consist of thirteen items dating from 1958-1980 and include correspondence and clippings relating to Benjamin's career as a painter and teacher, and one photograph.

Nine letters, seven of which are written by Benjamin and four of which are photocopies, are to a variety of people and relate to the beginning of Benjamin's career as a painter, his feelings about teaching, and his exhibitions, including the origins of the 1959 show *Four Abstract Classicists*. Included are a resignation letter to the Chino school district in 1977, and an exchange with a former student who recalls Benjamin as an art teacher.

Three clippings include a newspaper article from the *Chino Champion* regarding a beautification project Benjamin was involved in at Gird Elementary in Chino, California and a printed letter written and submitted by Benjamin to the *Los Angeles Times* in August, 1978 regarding Proposition 13. Also found is a 1977 photograph of Benjamin's baby granddaughter.

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## Arrangement

Due to the small size of the collection, the papers are arranged as one series.

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## Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:

Subjects:

Hard-edge

Names:

Hammersley, Frederick, 1919-2009

Occupations:

Educators -- California -- Claremont

Painters -- California -- Claremont

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## Container Listing

### Series 1: Karl Benjamin Papers, 1958-1980

#### 13 Items (Folder 1)

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Folder 1 [Karl Benjamin Papers, 1958-1980](#)

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