

Anthony Benjamin RE

1931—2002

A Selection of works



B R O A D B E N T

Anthony Benjamin 1931 - 2002

During his career Benjamin showed at some of London's most exciting and reputable galleries, He consolidated this with travel abroad to Canada and the USA. His work was collected by the top institutions and museums in Britain and abroad. He died though before he was able to confirm his place in the upper echelons of British art.

Rather than wanting to "belong", Benjamin the working-class anarchist and pugilist, felt a creative compulsion which was difficult to constrain or pigeon-hole. The strength of his inner voice meant he was unfazed by the changing political and visual fashions for Kitchen sink art, flat painting or the abstract expressionist style. In the late 50s he was invited to St Ives by Peter Lanyon. Although as a modernist he enjoyed the siren call of St Ives, where he befriended artists such as Francis Bacon, he stayed but never belonged. This seemed his pattern, while often invited to throw in his lot with groups of artists he always declined.

Most important in his early career were his international ventures to France and Italy, where for him the contemporary art outlook seemed broader and the historical art deeper. In Paris he studied with Fernand Leger and a few years later produced work at Stanley Hayter's innovative Atelier 17 print studio. Here he would have met artists such as Giacometti, and other "next generation" artists such as Sam Francis. In Italy he connected with the work of the early renaissance artists of Florence and Sienna. In a way these are his roots. In the 1960s the opaque structure of tiles and haloes in his drawings and paintings were derived from early Italian Renaissance architecture. Solid and physical the emergence of geometric order in the tiled decoration of churches and palaces matched an emergent identity in Benjamin's work.

His was an imaginary, non-conformist mindscape which during the 60s and 70s he represented pictorially either in a strangely biomorphic fashion or in a stage-set style constructed landscape. This curious spatiality seemed to have roots in the European surrealism of Yves Tanguy or Joan Miro which he must have picked up on his travels to Europe. This imagined spatiality became real though when he moved to the plains of Calgary in Canada where he taught as visiting professor for 7 years in the 1970s.

In his mid-career he seemed happiest in a creatively shared space. He collaborated extensively with his partner Nancy Patterson to make sculptures which combined noble materials such as bronze with contemporary materials such as Perspex. These three-dimensional works (emphatically NOT sculptures according to Benjamin) again defied classification and are often as architectural as sculptural. In this period he had major installation shows at the ICA, Museum of Modern Art Oxford and Manchester City Art Gallery.

As a printer his output was high and ventures included tributes to Brian Eno in the form of the *Roxy Suite* prints and W.S. Graham in the *Seven Letters* suite; his prints from this period show again the common thread present through his career of deep, vivid saturated colours, which in the case of the *Roxy Suite*, he achieved by whitening out areas before painstakingly screening over again in colour. And which in the *Seven Letters* suite was a technique learnt at Atelier 17 Studio.

In the late 1980s he created virtuoso graphite pieces which had intensity and huge technical variation. The works developed out of ideas found in some of his earlier experimental works where he would merge scribbled expressionist passages with more deliberate marks.

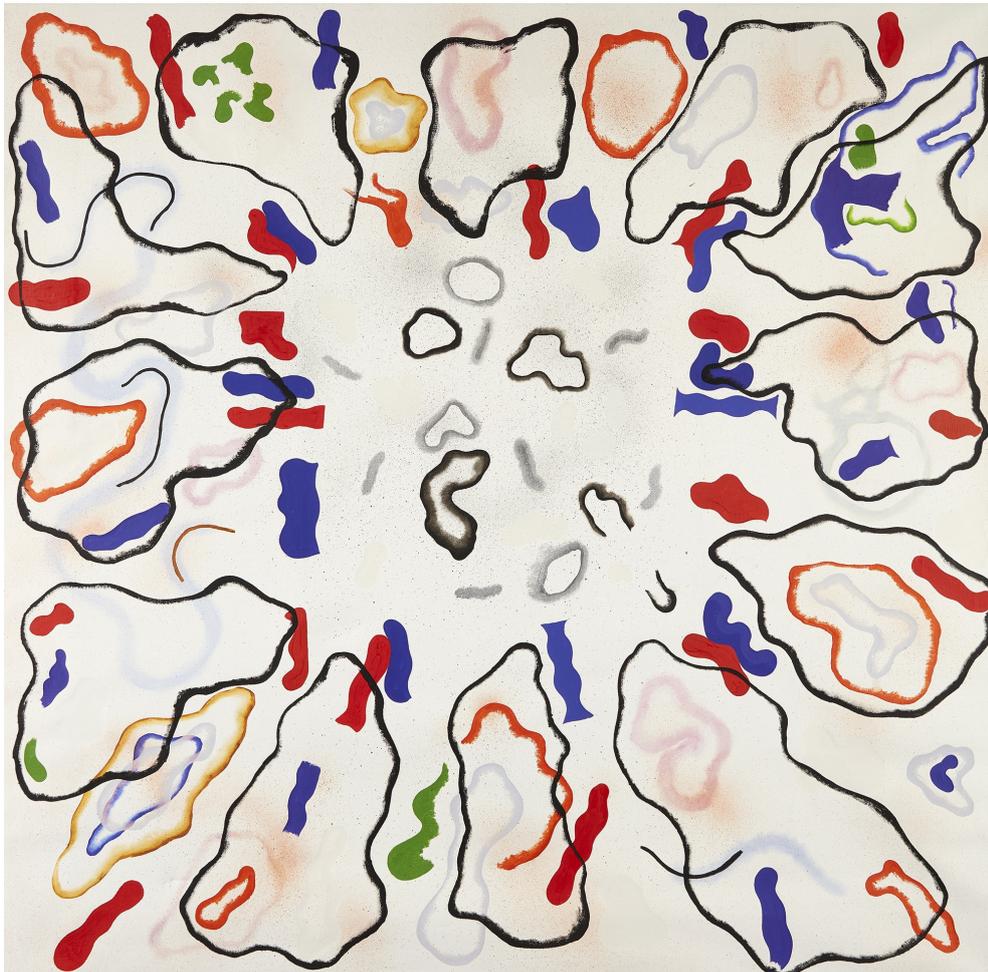
After his engagement with monochrome he returned to unalloyed colour and produced the exuberant works of his later and too swiftly, last years. These later colour canvases and works on paper seem to reconcile Benjamin to his personal journey. A putting aside of his collaborative spirit and his tendency to joint enterprise; a disregard for fashionable discourse. The work is unfettered and free-wheeling and harks back to his younger self from the 1960s. In these works internal dialogue seems to have been eliminated; the directness of the work is luminous and confounding.

Aside from his long term partner, Nancy Patterson, and close artists like Brian Wall, Two of the people closest to him creatively were the friends W.S. Graham, a Scottish poet, who was based in St Ives and the avant-garde musician Brian Eno. In a similar spirit to these creators, Benjamin was an outsider who was always on the inside; a collaborator with his own strong views. He, like Graham and Eno, had a strong internal voice that trumped the fashionable noises of the crowd. His career is testament to his creative force; at times this veered close to the mainstream, at other times away to the edge.

Paintings



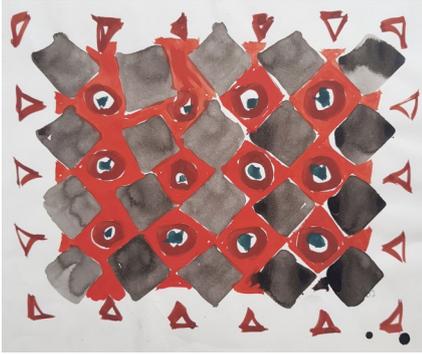
Abstract Nude, 1957 oil on paper 20 x 32.5cm



Overlayers for meddlers 1965 155 x 155cm Oil on canvas

Haloes Tiles and Roads

Gouache and watercolour on paper



Untitled (tiles and columns) 1962
19.7 x 22.5cm



Untitled Haloes (ABD372)
1962 19.5 x 17.8cm



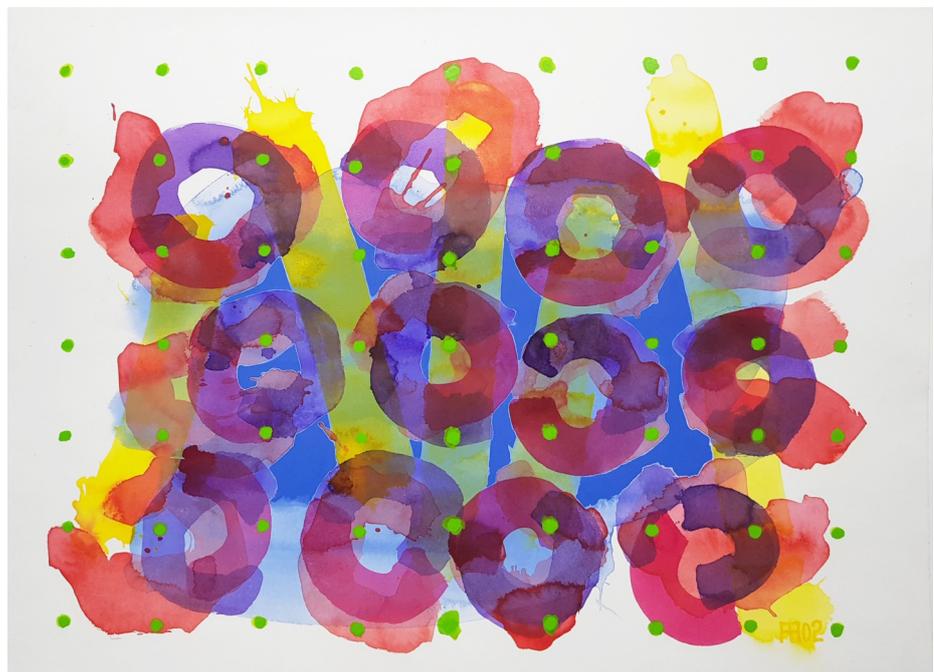
Untitled ABD0022 1961
17.5 x 12.2cm



Five x Seven 1961/2 24 x 34.5cm



4 x 16 Grey 1961/2 27 x 31.5cm

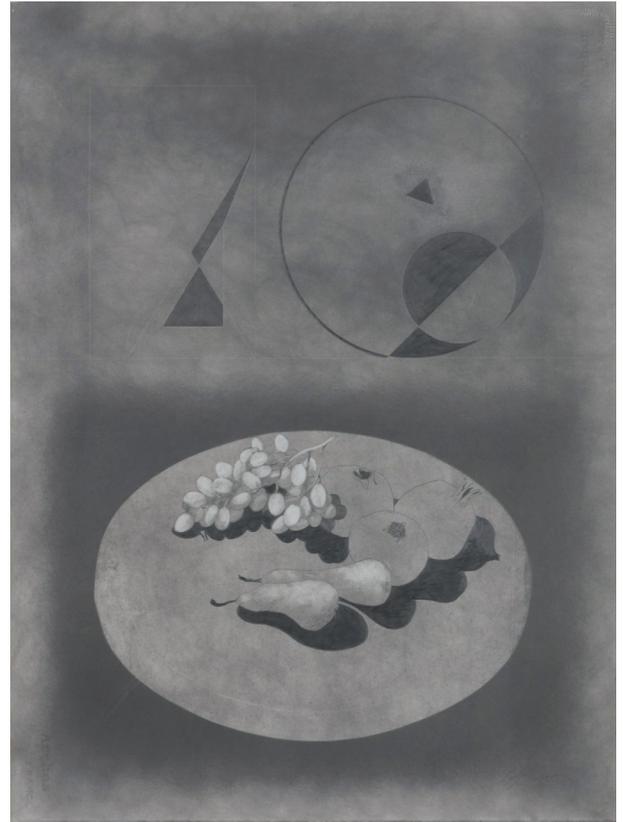


Tensift 2001 70.5 x 52cm

Drawings 1



Purple Fingers signed Benjamin and dated VIII IX (lower right), pencil 25 x 20cm



Still life signed and dated 'Benjamin 90' (lower right) pencil 76.3 x 57cm



Urban Sculpture No. 12 Mixed media Signed and dated '69 63 x 76cm

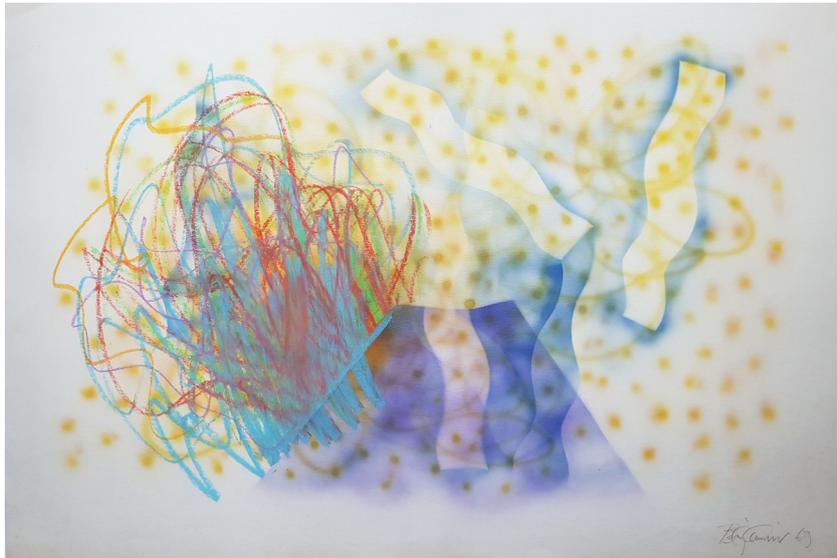
Drawings 2



Untitled (ABD331) 1963 mixed media on paper 56 x 72cm



Untitled (ABD332) 1963 mixed media on paper 56 x 72cm



Untitled (ABD362) 1969 mixed media on paper 66 x 96.5cm



Untitled (ABD361) 1969 mixed media on paper 66 x 96.5cm

Etchings & Drawings from the 50s & 60s



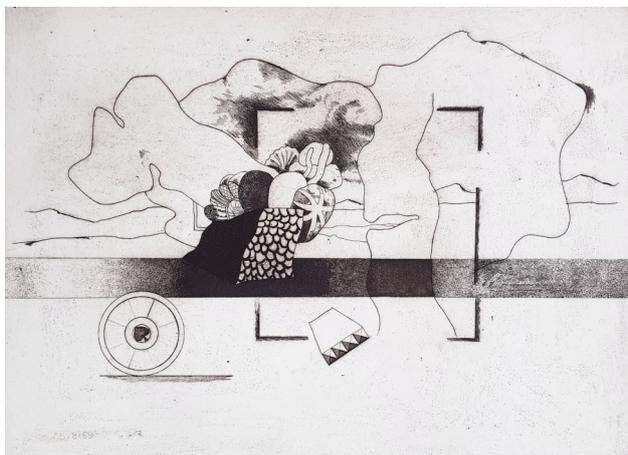
Untitled 1961 ink and Gouache on paper
50 x 36.5cm



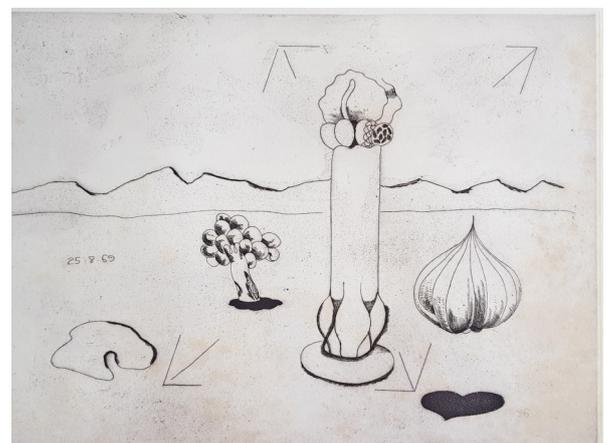
Untitled trial proof 1959 39 x 28cm



Untitled 1958 ink and gouache on kraft paper 56 x 75cm



Untitled 25.8.69 from the Alberta Prairie Series 1969
Etching 42 x 57cm



Untitled 25.8.69 from the Alberta Prairie Etching Series #3
Etching 42 x 57cm

Eden Gate Prints



Eden Gate Suite V (Savoy II) serigraph on astralux 1966
64 x 90cm edition of 50



Eden Gate Suite III serigraph on astralux 1966
64 x 90cm edition of 50



Eden Gate Suite untitled (Yellow) serigraph on paper 1966
64 x 90cm A/P



Eden Gate Suite untitled (orange) serigraph on paper 1966
64 x 90cm A/P



Eden Gate suite serigraph on paper 1966
64 x 90cm A/P

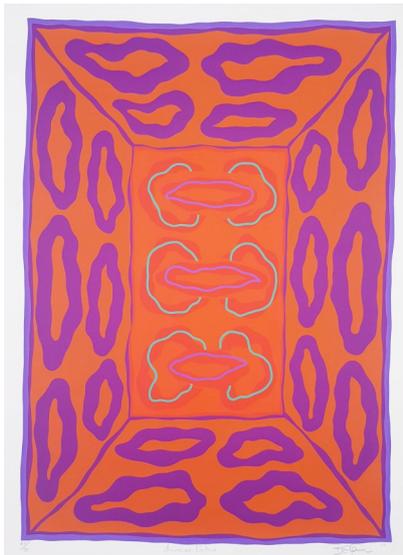
Roxy Bias Prints



'O' Factor 1972 screenprint 105 x 76cm
Edition of 95



Multi Mode Jitter 1972 screenprint
105 x 76cm Edition of 95



Inverse Echo 1972 screenprint 105 x 76cm
Edition of 95

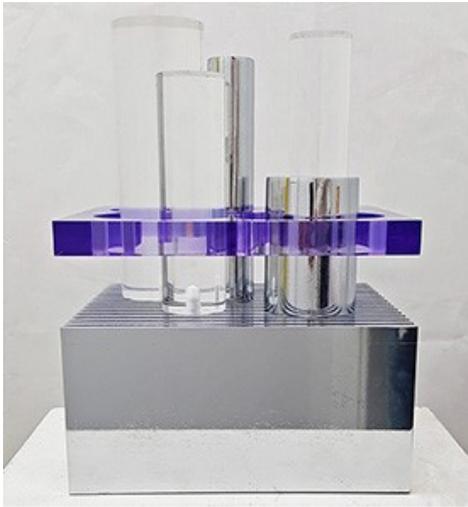


Ringing Filter 1972 screenprint 105 x 76cm
Edition of 95



Egyptienne 1972 screenprint 105 x 76cm
Edition of 95

Sculptures



District VIII 1969 Chromed Steel and Perspex
35.5 x 25.5 x 19.6cm



Small Zig 1976 Laminated birch ply and marble
115 x 48 x 12cm



ZigZagZig 1978 Laminated birch ply and marble
141 x 64.50 x 26cm

Selected Museum Collections

Aberdeen Art Gallery UK
Albright-Knox Gallery Buffalo USA
Arts Council of Great Britain UK
Art Gallery of New South Wales Australia
Art Gallery of Western Australia Australia
Berkshire County Council UK
Birmingham City art Gallery UK
Brant Art Gallery Canada
British Council UK
Canada Council Art Bank Canada
Cleveland Education Committee UK
Confederation Art Gallery Canada
Contemporary Art Society UK
Department of External Affairs Canada
Dudley Art Gallery UK
Essex County Council UK
Glasgow Museum & Art Gallery UK
Inner London Education Authority UK
Joseph H Hirschorn Collection USA
Kent Education Services UK
Kestner-Gesellschaft Hanover Germany
Kirklees Museum Service UK
Laing Art Gallery Newcastle UK
Leeds City Art Gallery UK
Lincolnshire Education Committee UK
Manchester City Art Gallery UK
Museum of Contemporary Art Nagaoka Japan
Museum of Contemporary Art Skopje Yugoslavia
Museum of Modern Art New York USA
National Museum of Art Cracow Poland
National Museum of Art Warsaw Poland
Norwich Castle Museum UK
Oldham Art Gallery UK
Portsmouth City Art Gallery UK
Reading Art Gallery & Museum UK
Salford Art Gallery UK
Seneca College Toronto Canada
Sheffield City Art Gallery UK
Southampton City Art Gallery UK
Stockport Education Committee UK
Tate Gallery London UK
University of Alberta Canada
University of Calgary Canada
University of Leicester UK
University of Liverpool UK
University of London UK
University of Manchester UK
University of Manitoba Canada
University of Saskatchewan Canada
University of Sussex UK
University of Victoria Canada
University of Warwick UK
Usher Art Gallery Lincoln UK
Wakefield City Art Gallery UK
Warwickshire Education Committee UK
Winnipeg Art Gallery Canada
York University UK

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