

Artist Will Barnet's First Retrospective At Age 100

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The art world can be a fickle beast. A young artist may find themselves rapidly ascending to the top only to feel the sting of Warhol's '15 minutes of fame' after they drift back into obscurity. For New York painter, Will Barnet, this is a phenomenon that he has never had to experience. Barnet will be getting his first retrospective show at the National Academy Museum in New York City at the age of 100. The retrospective, which opens Friday, will showcase his peculiar trajectory, beginning with his period of social realism, to abstraction, to more figurative styles and interestingly enough, back to abstraction in more recent years.

Barnet dropped out of high school to attend the Boston Museum School and then moved to New York City in 1931 at the age of 19, where his first encounter with the art scene was a visit to painter, Arshille Gorky's apartment, whom he knew through a friend. "I went to his studio and knocked on the door... and he took me for a walk," Barnet [tells the Wall Street Journal](#). He then enjoyed a long stint as an artist and professor at the Art Students League, Cooper Union and the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts. His students included Cy Twombly, Eva Hesse and Willem De Kooning, whom he told to rethink organization and structure of his paintings. "It was the only the time he was ever challenged by anybody," Barnet recalls.

What is perhaps most impressive about Barnet's career is his refusal to follow the status quo and his ability to survive regardless. Barnet was an outspoken critic of trendsetting movements such as Abstract Expressionism, opting instead to follow his own course. Even at 100 years old, Barnet still thirsts for the new and undiscovered at a stage in life where many seek out the comforts of nostalgia. "I like freshness, I don't want to repeat myself, that is the one thing I avoid," he proclaims. "I develop an idea and then I move on."

HuffPost Arts has previously covered artists who have enjoyed a renaissance later in life. As David Galenson's piece titled [Late Bloomers in Art and Science](#)" has proven, even if we can't all be Mozarts, some of us can still be Cezannes.

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