

BLANTON MUSEUM OF ART

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BLANTON MUSEUM OF ART COMPLETES \$23 MILLION FUNDRAISING CAMPAIGN AHEAD OF THE DEBUT OF ELLSWORTH KELLY'S *AUSTIN*



Monumental Building Opens to the Public February 18, 2018

AUSTIN, TEXAS --The Blanton Museum of Art at The University of Texas at Austin has completed its \$23 million campaign for the construction and fabrication of Ellsworth Kelly's *Austin*, a monumental, freestanding structure that will open to the public on February 18.

"This is a very important moment for the Blanton, our community, and for the arts in Austin," said Blanton Director Simone Wicha. "We were able to realize this singular and monumental work of art for our community--and visitors from around the world--thanks to the donors who generously joined forces to help fund the creation of Ellsworth Kelly's *Austin*. Passionate Longhorn alumni Jeanne and Mickey Klein, Judy and Charles Tate, and the Blanton family came together early in the project to provide visionary support. They were joined by David Booth and Suzanne Deal Booth of Austin, as well as UT alumni and Kelly collectors from coast to coast."

After Ellsworth Kelly gifted the building design to the Blanton in 2015, the museum began working to realize *Austin*, one of the artist's last works, and certainly one of his greatest. The 2,715-square-foot stone building has luminous glass windows on three façades. Inside are a wood totem sculpture and black-and-white marble panels featuring signature Kelly shapes.

Blanton Museum visitors will be able to enter the work, an experience akin to visiting the Rothko and Matisse chapels, in Houston and Vence, France, respectively. Kelly stated that he conceived the project "without a religious program," and envisioned it as a site for joy and contemplation. It is the first and only building the artist designed.

"The opening of *Austin* further cements the Blanton as an international cultural destination," continued Wicha. "The broad geographic support we received for this project is reflective of the audience we anticipate visiting Kelly's monumental achievement."

Austin will open alongside *Form into Spirit: Ellsworth Kelly's Austin*, a Blanton exhibition that will contextualize the museum's important new addition by telling its story in relation to Kelly's broader career. One section will explore Kelly's use of the color grid, for example. This motif can be seen in *Austin's* front façade windows, and in *Form into Spirit's* Spectrum IV (1967), a significant painting that will come to the Blanton from New York's Museum of Modern Art. Yet another section will explore Kelly's totems.

"This is an exhibition that will satisfy newcomers and Kelly aficionados alike," said Carter E. Foster, the Blanton's Deputy Director for Curatorial Affairs and curator of the show. The conceptual underpinnings for this work can be traced back to Kelly's time studying in France on the GI Bill from 1948 to 1954, a seminal part of his early life. The lasting influence of his experience there is evident in *Austin*.

A dedication ceremony for *Austin* is planned for February 18, featuring remarks by dignitaries such as City of Austin Mayor Steve Adler and The University of Texas at Austin President Greg Fenves, along with other activities.

Austin was made possible as a gift of the artist, with funding generously provided by Jeanne and Michael Klein, Judy and Charles Tate, the Scurlock Foundation, Suzanne Deal Booth and David G. Booth, and the Longhorn Network. Additional funding provided by The Brown Foundation, Inc. of Houston, Leslie and Jack S. Blanton, Jr., Elizabeth and Peter Wareing, Sally and Tom Dunning, the Lowe Foundation, The Eugene McDermott Foundation, Stedman West Foundation, and the Walton Family Foundation, with further support provided by Sarah and Ernest Butler, Buena Vista Foundation, The Ronald and Jo Carole Lauder Foundation, Emily Rauh Pulitzer, Janet and Wilson Allen, Judy and David Beck, Kelli and Eddy S. Blanton, Charles Butt, Mrs. Donald G. Fisher, Amanda and Glenn Fuhrman, Glenstone/Emily and Mitch Rales, Stephanie and David Goodman, Agnes Gund, Stacy and Joel Hock, Lora Reynolds and Quincy Lee, Helen and Chuck Schwab, Ellen and Steve Susman, and other donors.

Form into Spirit is organized by the Blanton Museum of Art. Major funding for the exhibition is provided by the Ford Foundation. Generous funding also is provided by Jeanne and Michael Klein, the Scurlock Foundation Exhibition Endowment, the Alice Kleberg Reynolds Foundation, and Lora Reynolds and Quincy Lee.

About the Blanton

Founded in 1963, the Blanton Museum of Art at The University of Texas at Austin has the largest and most comprehensive collection of art in Central Texas, encompassing nearly 18,000 objects. The Blanton is recognized for its modern and contemporary American and Latin American art, Italian Renaissance and Baroque paintings, and encyclopedic collection of prints and drawings. For additional information call (512) 471-7324 or visit blantonmuseum.org

Image Caption:

Ellsworth Kelly, *Austin*, 2015 (model; exterior view)

Artist-designed building with installation of colored glass windows, marble panels, and redwood totem

60 ft. x 73 ft. x 26 ft. 4 in.

Blanton Museum of Art, The University of Texas at Austin

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