

BLANTON MUSEUM OF ART

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BLANTON MUSEUM RECEIVES 76 WORKS OF ART BY ELLSWORTH KELLY THROUGH SEVERAL SIGNIFICANT DONATIONS



Robust collection of 76 works establishes the Blanton as a leading center for Kelly scholarship

AUSTIN, Texas—May 31, 2019—Seventy-six works of art by Ellsworth Kelly have been gifted to the Blanton Museum of Art at The University of Texas at Austin. Sixty-seven of the works are gifts from the late artist and Jack Shear, president of the Ellsworth Kelly Foundation. The remaining works come from the famed television producer and art patron Douglas S. Cramer of Martha’s Vineyard; longtime art collectors Jan and Howard Hendler of Scottsdale, Arizona; Austin-based, internationally regarded collectors and Blanton National Leadership Board members Jeanne and Michael Klein; and businessman, philanthropist, and art collector David G. Booth, also of Austin.

“Not only do these works complement and enhance visitors’ understanding of *Austin*—now a cornerstone of the Blanton’s collection—but they also help to strengthen the museum’s role as a center for the study and appreciation of Kelly’s work,” stated Blanton director Simone Wicha. “The Blanton is deeply grateful to the individuals, including Ellsworth Kelly and Jack Shear, who are supporting the museum’s ongoing commitment to building a world-class collection of works by Kelly and continuing to celebrate the artist’s great legacy.”

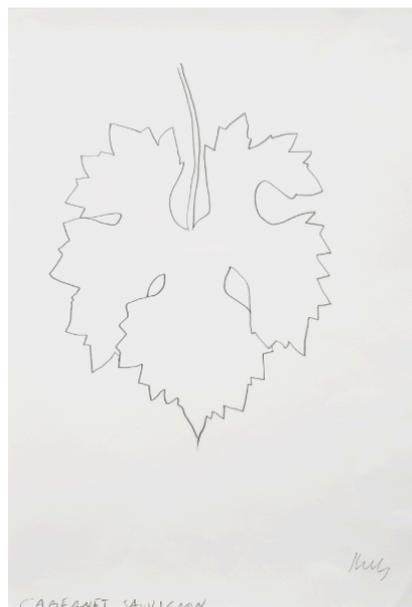
Ellsworth Kelly’s *Austin* opened at the Blanton in February 2018, and has become an internationally-acclaimed landmark with 171,000 people visiting since its opening. This generous group of gifts helps to further establish the museum as a repository for the artist’s work and a center for Kelly studies. Included

in the gift are paintings, sculptures, drawings, and prints spanning Kelly's seven-decade career. In particular, the gift provides additional context for *Austin*, Kelly's last work and the culmination of many themes present throughout his career, including the integral connection between his work and architecture and space; an interest in art history, especially Romanesque and Medieval art and architecture; and a career-long exploration of form and color.

A Gift from the Artist

Many of the 67 works gifted to the museum by the artist and Jack Shear relate directly to Kelly's monumental last work *Austin* and help illuminate the conceptual and actual origins of the building. Especially significant is an architectural model of the project's original design from 1986, along with numerous other drawings in which the artist worked out the concept and design in great detail during the mid-1980s. Several works in the gift also date from the formative period the artist spent in France between 1948 and 1954 and include Kelly's explorations of Christian themes inspired by his numerous visits to churches and cathedrals, such as the early figurative painting *Mother and Child* (1949).

"Since *Austin's* opening in February 2018, the Blanton has been the epicenter of the Ellsworth Kelly universe," said Jack Shear, president of the Ellsworth Kelly Foundation and Kelly's husband. "It's been personally pleasing to see the Blanton's focus on Kelly's work and scholarship, and as a steward of his legacy, I'm happy to do what I can to sustain it."



Plant Drawings

The works in Douglas Cramer's gift are exceptional examples of Kelly's plant drawings. The drawings are of varieties in Cramer's former vineyard, which was the original proposed site of Kelly's design for the structure that would become *Austin*. "I'm delighted that Douglas Cramer has given us these works that are connected to *Austin's* origin and that commemorate his role in this project," said Wicha.

"Kelly's plant drawings form a sustained series that span his career, and show how his abstract work was nonetheless deeply rooted in close observation of the natural world. Having these outstanding examples will allow us to share a crucial aspect of Kelly's creative thought," commented Blanton deputy director for curatorial affairs Carter E. Foster.

Painting and Sculpture

The Blanton also received as gifts three sculptures and two paintings by Kelly. Jeanne and Michael Klein promised gifts of a bronze sculpture, *Untitled* (1997–98), and an oil sketch on paper, *Red, Green, Blue* (1964). Phoenix collectors Jan and Howard Hendler gifted the Blanton two relief sculptures: *Grey Panel* (1982) and *Dark-Red Violet Panel* (1982). They are from the limited-edition series of aluminum panels produced by Gemini GEL of Los Angeles, *Painted Wall Sculptures* (1981–82), and are especially significant as examples of relief sculpture. Similarly, *Red Relief with White* (2007), a promised gift of David G. Booth, is an example of Kelly's late painting style featuring multiple joined panels, a format he explored richly in the last years of his life.

Additional Resources

The Blanton is also excited to announce the launch of an in-depth multi-media essay and eight-part video series about Ellsworth Kelly's *Austin*, which can be found at kellyattheblanton.org. Authored by Blanton deputy director for curatorial affairs Carter E. Foster, the essay traces the origins, development, and construction of *Austin* from Kelly's first encounters with European religious architecture during his travels in France between 1948 and 1954 to the building's opening at the Blanton in 2018.

As a companion piece to the essay, the video series documents the making of *Austin* through interviews with key figures involved in the project including Jack Shear, UT Presidents Bill Powers and Gregory L. Fennes, Jeanne and Michael Klein, Judy and Charles Tate, Ralph Coburn, and Douglas Cramer. The videos also share behind-the-scenes footage of fabrication and construction of *Austin* and its components, such as the handblown glass windows, redwood Totem sculpture, and the exterior's limestone cladding.

Finally, in summer 2019, the Blanton and Radius Books will publish a book dedicated to Ellsworth Kelly's *Austin*. A hardcover version will be distributed by Distributed Art Publishers (D.A.P.), and the Blanton and Radius Books will also publish a softcover version, which will be available exclusively in the Blanton Museum shop. The book will feature an in-depth essay about *Austin's* origins and development by Carter E. Foster, as well as extensive photography of *Austin*.

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The Kelly &... Series

Launched in conjunction with the opening of Ellsworth Kelly's *Austin* in 2018, *Kelly &...* is an informal series of lunchtime talks at the Blanton that explore interesting facets of Kelly's practice.

Kelly & Postcards – Friday, June 14 at noon

Tricia Paik, Florence Finch Abbott Director of the Mount Holyoke College Art Museum, will speak about Kelly's postcard collages

Kelly & Shadows – Friday, September 13 at noon

Roberta Bernstein, art historian, will explore how the contrasts of light and shadow in Ellsworth Kelly's photographs relate to shapes used in his paintings and sculptures

Kelly & the Apocalypse – October, Date TBD

Christian Wurst, Blanton curatorial assistant to the deputy director for curatorial affairs, discusses Ellsworth Kelly's 1948 drawings of 12th century Apocalypse manuscripts and how they influenced his use of color and composition

Kelly & Stamps – Friday, November 8, 2019 at noon

Blanton curator Veronica Roberts in conversation with Derry Noyes, Artistic Director for the United States Postal Service about her design of the 2019 Ellsworth Kelly stamps and thirty years of experience designing art stamps

Kelly & the Ghost Army – Date TBD

Elizabeth Sayles, co-author of the book *The Ghost Army of WWII*, returns to discuss Kelly's connection to the tactical deception unit

About Ellsworth Kelly's AUSTIN:

In January 2015, the renowned American artist Ellsworth Kelly gifted to the Blanton the design concept for his most monumental work, a 2,715-square-foot stone building with luminous colored glass windows, a totemic wood sculpture, and fourteen black and white marble panels. Titled *Austin*, honoring the artist's tradition of naming particular works for the places for which they are destined, the structure is the only building the artist designed, and will be his most lasting legacy. Envisioned by Kelly as a site for joy and contemplation, *Austin* is a cornerstone of the Blanton's permanent collection and will enrich the lives of visitors from around the world. The building is open during regular museum hours; entry is included with museum admission. For more about *Austin* and the artist, visit KellyattheBlanton.org

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 captions: Ellsworth Kelly, *Romanesque Series*, 1973–76, published 1976, series of twenty-four lithographs with embossing (twelve with intaglio), dimensions vary, Blanton Museum of Art, The University of Texas at Austin, Gift of the artist, 2018, ©Ellsworth Kelly Foundation

Ellsworth Kelly, *Cabernet Sauvignon*, 1982, graphite on paper, 22 x 15 in., Blanton Museum of Art, The University of Texas at Austin, Gift of Douglas S. Cramer, 2017, ©Ellsworth Kelly Foundation

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