

**BLANTON MUSEUM OF ART  
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN  
January 2007**

The Blanton Museum of Art at The University of Texas at Austin is **one of the foremost university art museums in the country**, and has the largest and most comprehensive collection of art in Central Texas. The museum welcomes and engages all visitors by offering extraordinary experiences that connect art and ideas, reaching within and beyond the university campus to stimulate the thriving creative community that is Austin, Texas.

With the opening of the new Blanton in April 2006—following a 2 ½ year building project—the museum was for the first time able to house all of its collections under one roof, enriching the already vibrant cultural life of Austin. Over 22,000 people visited the Blanton in its first week, including 13,000 at the 24-hour public opening. Since the grand opening, membership has risen from 1,200 to 9,200 households.

### **Museum Collection**

The Blanton's **permanent collection of more than 17,000 works** is recognized for its modern and contemporary American and Latin American art, European Old Master paintings, and an encyclopedic collection of prints and drawings. Over the last several years, the museum has built its collection at an extraordinary pace, acquiring more than 4,000 works of art in all collecting areas. Today the Blanton's expansive permanent collection includes:

- *Modern and contemporary American art, featuring the Mari and James A. Michener Collection.* The collection traces the history of artistic achievement in the United States from the mid-19th century until the present day, with particular breadth in paintings and prints. It is distinguished by its range of important works by both major and lesser-known artists, as well as by a number of historically significant private commissions.
- *Modern and contemporary Latin American art, including the Barbara Duncan Collection.* The Blanton's holdings comprise one of the oldest, largest, and most comprehensive collections of Latin American art in the country, and include works by many artists not represented elsewhere in U.S. collections.

- *15<sup>th</sup> century – contemporary prints and drawings, featuring the recently acquired Leo Steinberg Collection.* The museum's 13,500 prints form the only encyclopedic print collection in Texas and one of the finest on an American campus. These prints reflect the history, characteristics, and processes of the medium from the Renaissance to the present day.
- *European Paintings, including the Suida-Manning Collection of Renaissance and Baroque art.* The Blanton's collection features approximately 300 European paintings, predominantly Italian Old Master works. Highlights include numerous works by masters from Sebastiano del Piombo, Parmigianino, and Veronese to Rubens, Claude Lorrain, and Guercino, as well as many more by such lesser-known painters as Giulio Cesare Amidano, Orazio Riminaldi, and Giuseppe Passeri.

### **Education and Research**

The Blanton serves as a **vital component of the cultural life of Austin**, the capital of Texas and, with a metropolitan population of 1.5 million, one of the fastest growing cities in the nation. As the most established art museum in the Austin area, the Blanton contributes to the high quality of life and vitality for which the city is known, and enriches the cultural life of the entire state, helping people throughout Texas appreciate the history and role of the arts in their personal lives, work, and communities. In its new home, with its rich and versatile collections, magnificent galleries, diverse programming, and an enthusiastic and committed group of staff and volunteers, the museum is able to present a broad range of offerings to the general public and university community.

The Blanton has also distinguished itself as a **leading center for innovative research programs**, for training scholars in the history of art, and for preparing individuals for careers as museum professionals. In 2003, the Blanton organized a thorough examination of the viability and impact of mobile technologies on museum learning. The museum, in collaboration with UT's Information Technology Department, developed, implemented, and evaluated the *iTour*—an interactive handheld museum guide (Pocket PC). These devices contained rich content that included newly commissioned videos of artists and curators, textual information, and creative play components. They were available to visitors in conjunction with the exhibition *Visualizing Identity* during a three-month study on interpretive technology. The museum collected data via written surveys, observations, usability testing, and iTour usage tracking.

Among the museum's additional recent research initiatives is "New Perspectives on American Art." This three-year research residency program, made possible by the Henry Luce Foundation's American Collections Enhancement initiative, brought together prominent artists, art historians, and critics to examine 20<sup>th</sup>-century American art represented in the museum's permanent collection.

Another initiative is devoted to modern Latin American art. Since 1999, the Blanton and the Caracas- and New York-based Colección Patricia Phelps de Cisneros have enjoyed a multifaceted loan and research program, the aim of which has been to showcase the work of Latin American artists in a major U.S. teaching and research museum, and to promote research on modern and contemporary Latin American art. With components for students, scholars, and the general public, the project has included exhibitions, publications, seminars—including the recent Cisneros Graduate Research Seminar, scholarly symposia, and public programming.

The Blanton also has a strong history of **preparing emerging scholars for successful careers in the arts** by immersing them in the full range of the museum's activities. Its internship program offers students of conservation, art history, and art education at The University of Texas at Austin the opportunity to pair rigorous academic training with practical, hands-on experience curating exhibitions, writing catalogues, developing interpretive materials, and interacting with museum audiences. Former Blanton interns have held curatorial and education positions in institutions such as the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; the Dallas Museum of Art; the Phoenix Museum of Art; the Museum of Contemporary Art, San Diego; the San Jose Museum of Art; the Contemporary Arts Forum, Santa Barbara; and the Blaffer Gallery at the University of Houston.

**Educational outreach initiatives** in collaboration with area school districts include a diverse group of programs designed to enhance understanding of the range of cultures and ideas that art objects represent. The Blanton's *Art Enrichment* program was established in 1977 and is recognized as a national model for K–12 art education. *Art Enrichment* engages students in grades four through six in art-based curricula through multiple museum visits and studio art projects. The museum's *Expanding Horizons* and *Curriculum Connections* programs integrate art into social studies and language arts curricula for students in 4<sup>th</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> grades.

## **The New Blanton**

The Blanton's new two-building museum complex, designed by Kallmann McKinnell & Wood Architects, Inc., includes the following:

- **The Mari and James A. Michener Gallery Building**, a 124,000-square-foot space that houses the permanent collection and temporary exhibitions, which opened to the public in April 2006.
- **The Edgar A. Smith Building**, a 56,000-square-foot building, is slated to open in early 2008. It will feature a café, museum shop, classrooms, auditorium, and offices.
- **A Public Plaza and Garden**, a 145,000-square-foot space designed by acclaimed landscape architect Peter Walker, will connect the two buildings of the new museum facility.

Encompassing at least 100,000 more square feet than the previous space, the Blanton's new home enables the museum to present more of its permanent collection than ever before and allows greater access to this vital cultural resource for the university and general public. With state-of-the-art spaces for exhibitions, teaching, and research, the museum is now able to strengthen the Blanton's position as a cornerstone of the cultural community in Central Texas. Upon completion of the Edgar A. Smith Building, the new Blanton will offer a gathering place for the community and visitors from across the country, offering for the first time space for traveling exhibitions and visitor amenities including a café, museum shop, and auditorium.

## **History**

In 1927, philanthropist Archer M. Huntington donated more than 4,000 acres of land along Galveston Bay to The University of Texas at Austin with the directive that the land was to be sold to fund an art museum. In 1938, the university established the College of Fine Arts, and funds from the Huntington endowment supported art exhibitions held in buildings throughout the campus. In 1963, the University Art Museum, with a modest collection of only a few hundred works of art, opened to the public in the newly constructed Art Building. Rapid growth, most notably the gift of the Mari and James A. Michener Collection of 20<sup>th</sup>-century American paintings, resulted in further expansion in 1972. At this time the museum moved its permanent

collection to the first two floors of the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, maintaining its Print Study Room and galleries for temporary exhibitions in the Art Building.

In 1980, the University Art Museum was renamed the Archer M. Huntington Art Gallery, and a decade of growth and achievement followed, with the acquisition of a number of important antiquities and European works from the Renaissance and Baroque periods. The museum also continued to build upon its strengths in the fields of modern and contemporary American art, contemporary Latin American art, and prints and drawings. By the mid-1990s, with growing collections and expanded programs serving university students and the general public, the museum had outgrown its facilities.

In 1997, a campaign was announced to build a major new facility for the museum, which was renamed the Jack S. Blanton Museum of Art after the former Chairman of the UT Board of Regents and longtime advocate and patron of the arts in Texas. The long-held vision of a new museum building became a reality with the groundbreaking in October 2003. The first section of the new two-building complex, the Mari and James A. Michener Gallery Building, opened in April 2006. The second of the two buildings, the Edgar A. Smith Building, is scheduled to open in early 2008.

### **Visitor Information**

Museum hours: Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday, Saturday 10 a.m.–5 p.m.; Thursday 10 a.m.– 8 p.m.; and Sunday 1–5 p.m. Closed Mondays and major holidays. For information about exhibitions, programs, parking, and hours, call 512-471-7324 or visit [www.blantonmuseum.org](http://www.blantonmuseum.org).

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