

ELLSWORTH KELLY
AUSTIN
BLANTON MUSEUM OF ART

6: The Exterior Stone

Hello, this is Ray Williams, Director of Education at the Blanton Museum of Art.

When Ellsworth Kelly was thinking about how to create an exterior for *Austin* that would work in the Texas climate, he turned to books on Romanesque and Medieval stone architecture from his personal library for inspiration. One quality he admired in these structures was the nonregularity of the stone—the somewhat random, organic quality of individual placement created because numerous anonymous masons worked on these buildings over many decades.

To achieve the aesthetic that Kelly desired, the architects of Overland Partners designed individual stone panels with nine different widths and three different heights. A computer program determined random sequencing for each stone so that every piece would have a unique placement in the overall coursing.

Kelly had used chance as a compositional tool early on in his career, and he loved the effect it created for the stone courses of *Austin*. For the stones themselves, Kelly chose a grey limestone from the Bateig quarry in Alicante, Spain. Each stone had to be individually cut, numbered, and precisely finished in order to fit together within the metal framework that would hold them all in place. The cutting was especially tricky for the curved surfaces of the barrel vaults. In all, 1,569 stone panels make up the exterior of *Austin*.