

ELLSWORTH KELLY
AUSTIN
BLANTON MUSEUM OF ART

8: The Windows and Stained Glass

Hello, this is Carlotta Stankiewicz, Director of Marketing and Communications at the Blanton Museum of Art.

The three stained-glass window compositions on the front and side façades of *Austin* are among its most impressive technical feats. Ellsworth Kelly had never worked in glass before, but the windows were integral to the building's concept from the beginning and are one of its strongest links to art history, since stained glass is closely associated with Medieval European architecture.

To create the windows, Kelly worked with a company that specializes in architectural glass, Franz Mayer of Munich, Germany. Ellsworth and Michael Mayer, the head of the company, both knew that hand-blown glass was the right material because of its historical associations and the beautiful textures inherent to the process of creating it.

Master glass blowers literally blow a tube from a blob of molten glass, which they must constantly rotate in order to create the shape. The tube is then cut and flattened in a kiln to create a single sheet of glass. The size of the sheet is limited, literally, by how much weight the glassblower can bear as they turn the molten material.

Colors are created through complex chemical reactions using metal oxides added to the molten glass. The process of refining the colors for each window was a long one with Ellsworth, who was sent dozens of samples. He would line up and layer the samples in one of his garage windows, in essence mixing the colors himself through the layering of different hues.

Because of the thickness of the walls of *Austin*, Ellsworth wanted the glass panes to be flush with both the interior and exterior walls. As a result, Mayer created two sandwiches of glass for each side of the wall, with space in between filled with inert gas. Thus, each individual color you see when looking at one of the windows is actually made of four slightly different hues of that color that combine when light passes through them.