

# BLANTON MUSEUM OF ART

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## THE BLANTON'S REINSTALLED COLLECTION GALLERIES NOW OPEN TO THE PUBLIC



*Highlights Include More Art, New Acquisitions,  
Works That Have Rarely or Never Been on View, New Areas of Focus for Museum*

AUSTIN, Texas—February 14, 2017—The Blanton Museum of Art at The University of Texas at Austin announces the opening of its comprehensively reinstalled permanent collection galleries. The presentation offers visitors a fresh experience with the museum’s holdings and features nearly twice as many works of art as were previously on view, innovative interpretive materials, renovated galleries, and spotlights on new areas of focus, including art of the Ancient and Spanish Americas, and Native American art. The reinstallation also launches three rotating galleries: the *Paper Vault*, Film & Video, and the *Contemporary Project*. A free community celebration, the *Blanton Block Party*, celebrating the reinstallation, will take place on March 25, 2017.

“The reinstallation of the museum was my first priority when I became director six years ago,” said Blanton Director Simone Wicha. “Working with the museum’s curators, educators, collections team, and digital technology specialists, we looked in depth at what our collection is and should be for Austin. My challenge to the team was for us to reconsider the museum in a way that was more visually arresting, more thought provoking, and nationally innovative. The reinstallation brings the museum to a new level, one that reflects the quality and vibrancy of our city.”

A rehang of the museum's **European Art** galleries features paintings and sculpture created between 1350 and 1800. With the Blanton's renowned Suida-Manning collection at its core, the new installation presents many works that have rarely been on view. The museum's iconic masterpieces are showcased in gallery sections that have been completely reorganized by themes, media, and styles. To evoke the original viewing experience of the paintings, the display incorporates modes of presentation found in churches and princely estates before the twentieth century.

For the first time, the Blanton is dedicating galleries to its renowned collection of **Latin American modern and contemporary art**. These galleries trace the vibrant Mexican art scene between the 1920s and 1940s, the rise of geometric abstraction, new approaches to figuration in South America, conceptual practice, as well as politically engaged art in Latin America. Showcased within the Blanton's new Latin American galleries are significant works from the collection of Judy and Charles Tate, which was recently gifted to the Blanton. This gift features many of the artists who were key to the creation of modernism in Latin America and allows the Blanton to tell in-depth stories of modern and contemporary Latin American art for the first time.

The Blanton will further broaden and strengthen its commitment to collect, study, and exhibit art from Latin America by devoting three new galleries to art from the **Ancient and Spanish Americas**. This comprehensive presentation of art from the region begins with ancient artifacts and expands into Spanish colonial art. A new area of focus within the collection, the latter connects to a larger cross-campus initiative at UT aimed at bringing greater emphasis to Spanish colonial visual culture, catalyzed by the long-term loan of works from the Carl & Marilynn Thoma Collection to the Blanton.

The Blanton's **Modern and Contemporary Art** galleries feature nearly one hundred works of art spanning from the early 1900s to the present. Recent acquisitions such as Sonya Clark's *Madam C.J. Walker*, Charles White's *Wanted Poster Series #6*, and Ramiro Gomez's *The Broad* will be on display, underscoring the Blanton's continued commitment to collecting art devoted to social justice. The museum's iconic *Seepage* by El Anatsui, the only two-sided work by the artist in a museum collection, is now exhibited for the first time with its regal, predominantly red side displayed.

Another new area of focus for the museum is **Native American** art, now showcased in a gallery that mixes historical and contemporary works. Nineteenth-century Navajo textiles and Kiowa ledger drawings are paired with more recent works by modern and contemporary artists of Native American descent, revealing overlaps and continuities that cross cultural, geographic, and historical boundaries.

New rotating gallery spaces will provide ongoing opportunities for visitors to return to and engage with the Blanton's holdings in fresh and unexpected ways:

- *The **Film & Video Gallery*** is a rotating space dedicated to video, film, and new media works. The space is inaugurated with a short film by Javier Téllez, *Letter on the Blind For the Use of Those Who See* [*Carta sobre los ciegos para uso de los que ven*], 2007.

- The **Paper Vault** showcases the Blanton's collection of more than 16,000 prints, drawings, and photographs. Curators will rotate selections throughout the year, engaging visitors with prints and drawings that are rarely on view. The first rotations include twenty-four mezzotints illustrating John Milton's epic poem in *John Martin: Paradise Lost*, and *Red Chalk Drawings*, a rotation focusing on the chalk medium and its impact on the history of drawing.
- The **Contemporary Project** highlights international contemporary art and features new acquisitions. The first rotation presents Turner Prize-winning artist Susan Philipsz's *Part File Score*, an immersive experience of sound and image. Large prints feature redacted FBI files from the McCarthy era concerning Austrian composer Hanns Eisler, while isolated violin notes from Eisler's early Hollywood film scores spill from twelve speakers. The result is a haunting landscape that captures the tragic biography of a composer whose life and art were repeatedly under siege.

Additional highlights of the reinstalled galleries include new acquisitions, works that have rarely or never been on view, and works that have recently undergone conservation efforts.

- **Thomas Glassford, *Siphonophora*** (2016): First installed at Museo Universitario del Chopo, part of the National Autonomous University of Mexico, *Siphonophora* is inspired by the giant ocean creatures of the same name. Now hanging in the Blanton's Rapoport Atrium, *Siphonophora* appears to represent a single organism. Its namesake in the natural world, however, is comprised of interdependent communities of different animals, each with different functions that allow the organism to flourish. For this work, individual natural forms have been painted with white cement and strung together, merging into one enormous floating colony. The work, like the ocean organism, serves as a metaphor for our interdependence with the natural world and, by extension, our ecological survival.
- Beyond the restructuring of the galleries, the Blanton has worked to activate interstitial spaces between the galleries. In addition to *Siphonophora*, two works by **Tavares Strachan—*You Belong Here (Yellow)***, 2012 and ***We Belong Here (Blue)***, 2012—now hang prominently in two separate spaces on the Blanton's mezzanine, activating those spaces with art.
- **Fletcher Martin, *Down for the Count*** (1936–37): Rarely exhibited before, this painting opens the Blanton's newly reorganized Modern Art galleries. Thanks to recent conservation, the power of this social realist painting has been restored. A boxing scene, *Down for the Count* reflects the artist's autobiography (Martin was a boxer himself for a time) as well as his commitment to social justice. His tenure at the Works Progress Administration brought him in contact with Mexican muralist David Alfaro Siqueiros, whose influence can be felt here both in palette and in Martin's empathy for the oppressed.
- **Luisa Roldán, *Education of the Virgin*** (ca. 1689–1706): After careful examination and research, this small sculpture, previously thought to be a later copy of Luisa Roldán's original work, has been attributed to the master herself. Roldán was the only female artist to be appointed court sculptor to the King of Spain, and

her religious works drew praise from artists and writers. The Blanton's polychrome terracotta is now one of only ten of her works in public institutions in the United States.

**The Blanton Block Party, Saturday March 25, 2017, 11am–11pm**

Explore and celebrate the Blanton's new presentation of its reinstalled collection galleries at a day-to-night community festival. The *Blanton Block Party* will acquaint visitors with the museum's collection, and will offer outdoor family art activities, a museum studies symposium, live music, food, and tours throughout the day. Artist Nina Katchadourian will give a talk and sign copies of her catalogue in conjunction with her concurrent exhibition *Nina Katchadourian: Curiouser*. The party will culminate with an evening celebration, complete with live music and dancing, a cash bar, and light bites. Admission to the *Blanton Block Party* is free.

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**About the Blanton Museum of Art**

Founded in 1963, the Blanton Museum of Art holds the largest public collection in Central Texas with nearly 18,000 objects. Recognized for its modern and contemporary American and Latin American art, Italian Renaissance and Baroque paintings, and encyclopedic collection of prints and drawings, the Blanton offers thought provoking, visually arresting, and personally moving encounters with art.

The museum is located at the intersection of Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard and Congress Avenue and is open Tuesday through Friday from 10–5, Saturday from 11–5, and Sunday from 1–5. Thursdays are free admission days and every third Thursday the museum is open until 9. Admission Prices: Adults \$9, Kids 12 and under FREE, Seniors (65+) \$7, Youth/College Students (13–21) \$5. Admission is free to members, all current UT ID-holders. For additional information call (512) 471–7324 or visit [www.blantonmuseum.org](http://www.blantonmuseum.org)

Image caption:

Tavares Strachan (b. Nassau, The Bahamas, 1979)

*You Belong Here (Yellow)*, 2012

Blocked-out neon and glass

24 x 61 in.

Blanton Museum of Art, The University of Texas at Austin

Gift of Jeanne and Michael Klein, 2016