

ELLSWORTH KELLY  
**AUSTIN**  
BLANTON MUSEUM OF ART

## 2: *Austin* Comes to Austin

Hello, this is Simone Wicha, Director of the Blanton Museum of Art at The University of Texas at Austin.

Ellsworth Kelly first conceived of the building that would become *Austin* in 1987, when a patron in California asked the artist to design a chapel for his vineyard. The structure was never realized, but Kelly had conceptualized the work extensively through drawings and plans, and the structure you see now remains true to his original vision.

Kelly felt strongly that this major, unprecedented artistic statement must be stewarded, cared for, and available to a wide public. In the city of Austin, at the Blanton, Kelly found his site. He often titled his works after places to which they are connected, and this last great artwork is named for the city in which it stands.

Kelly's relationship with the Blanton began in 2012, when we started an in-depth exploration of the project. Over the course of two years and countless phone calls and visits to his studio in Spencertown, New York, we worked through the design with him. Though Kelly had drawings and two handmade models for the original commission from 30 years prior, his architectural renderings needed to be converted into construction documents. The process required resolving technical challenges inherent in creating a public building while remaining true to his artistic vision for all elements of the artwork—including how to fabricate the first-ever Ellsworth Kelly windows and where to source the marble for his black and white panels. It took a large team of collaborators to navigate this, key among them Jack Shear, president of the Ellsworth Kelly Foundation.

Ultimately, Ellsworth made every aesthetic decision, from the scale, proportions, and orientation of the building to the type of exterior stone. On December 18, 2015, I called him to confirm the final details for the concept documents, which captured all of his decisions—in essence, it was our road map for what to build. I let him know that, with enthusiastic support from UT leadership—most especially former President Bill Powers—and several significant funders, construction for *Austin* was starting. Nine days later, Ellsworth passed away. Although Kelly never had the opportunity to walk through his masterpiece he knew, with certainty, that it would be realized and that it was being built exactly as he envisioned.