

ELLSWORTH KELLY
AUSTIN
BLANTON MUSEUM OF ART

9: The Marble Panels

Hello, this is Claire Howard, Assistant Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art at the Blanton Museum of Art.

As you look around you can see fourteen black and white marble panels lining the walls of *Austin* by Ellsworth Kelly. He conceived of them as a series called “Stations of the Cross.” Like the building itself, these artworks reference past traditions while using Kelly’s thoroughly modern vocabulary of form.

The Stations of the Cross have been a popular subject for art in the context of the Catholic religion and can be found in churches and cathedrals throughout the world. The stations represent a set series of events that depict what happened to Jesus Christ leading up to his crucifixion. Kelly followed the set order closely and although his panels are abstract, he did reference the visual traditions of this subject, which often featured the cross itself as a strong diagonal element whose position changes throughout the story.

The marble panels were created under the supervision of Kelly's longtime fabricator, Carlson Arts LLC, who also fabricated the redwood Totem. It was important to the artist that the panels retain the feel of stone when transformed into works of art, and he chose marble specifically because it has an extremely rich history in art and architecture.

In fact, the white marble was taken from a famous quarry in Carrara, Italy that was the source for many buildings and statues by Renaissance artists, including Michelangelo. The black marble comes from a small quarry in Namur, Belgium. Kelly had made precise pencil drawings for each panel, showing the exact measurements and proportions of the black and white areas, and each one is a perfect square measuring 40 by 40 inches.