

Spiritual Practice @ the Blanton
***Austin* by Ellsworth Kelly**



Ellsworth Kelly was inspired by the Romanesque and Cistercian religious architecture, (humble style, processional entry, side chapels, vaulted ceiling, altar area, and stained glass) yet he specifically stated that *Austin* was not a chapel (Kelly was an atheist).

This secular chapel is stripped of the Holy narrative. A totem is located where a cross and altar would be found. Religious stories are removed from the stained glass and Kelly's abstract version of the Stations of the Cross are spaced around the walls.

Even though all religious imagery has been removed, and the Chapel's purpose is form and not function, people still call it a spiritual place. When people stand in the chapel, the basic elements of color and form have the same effect as a church, inspiring solitude, community, culture, reverence and reflection, forming in us a sense of mystery, meaning and transformation.

Enter the *Austin* "Chapel". Stay in the space as long as you like. Observe the colors, space, and light. Pay attention to your emotions and feeling and thoughts. When you are ready, reflect on the questions below.

1. As you stand in the chapel, do you experience this chapel as secular, spiritual or religious? Why or why not? Where is God present for you? Where is God missing for you?
2. Reflect on Psalm 119: 130. "The unfolding of your words gives light. It gives understanding to the simple." In our age of "spiritual but not religious", are people finding meaning, mystery and transformation through the secular chapels of the world, without the Holy Narrative? What do people miss by removing the name of God? What changes?
3. We are to be a church without walls. Do we need a container or place for the Holy Narrative to be heard and seen? If not, where can we be deeply formed by the God story so that we can function in the world?

When you are ready, proceed to the main Blanton Museum. Most people only spend 17 seconds with any piece of art. As you enter the museum, quickly browse the pieces of art. Stop when one piece pulls you in. Sit with it and journal for about 20 minutes.

1. What did you like about this piece of art? The color, the shapes, the story? What inspired you about this work?
2. Read and reflect on this Bible passage from Psalm 36: 9 . “For in you, oh Lord, is the fountain of life. In your light we see light.” Did the reading of this Holy Narrative change your thinking about this work of art?

Locate the Cildo Meireles “altar” in the Southeast corner of the second floor (The one with the Pennies) This work of art was meant to be a critique of the Jesuit priests who abused their power to convert people to Catholicism. The elements of money (material power), communion wafers (spiritual power) and bones (tragic power) can be abused or used to the Glory of God. You may want to view other altars or chapels in other art pieces throughout the museum.

1. Compare these religious altars/chapels to the secular chapel, *Austin*. What did you notice? What can the religious, spiritual and secular learn from each other?
2. Read and Reflect: Luke 11: 34 – 35 “Your eye is the lamp of your body. When your eyes are healthy, your whole body also is full of light. But when they are unhealthy your body also is full of darkness. See to it then, that the light within you is not darkness.”
3. How do you stay healthy in both the secular and sacred world so that God’s light shines in our world through you? What gifts do you use to reflect God’s light in all aspects of our world?

“God’s light is infused into all of the world. Pay attention to the colors and the shadows it casts and see the world in a new way.” Richard Rohr, A Franciscan friar