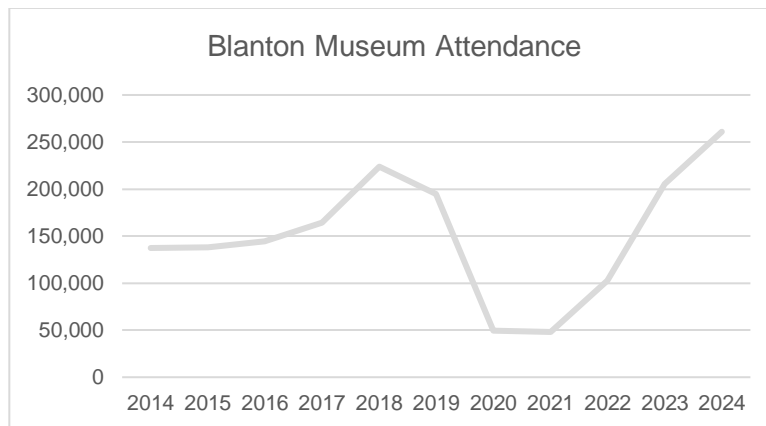


Blanton Museum Bucks U.S. Trend, Sets Attendance Record After Renovation

In 2024, the Blanton Museum at The University of Texas at Austin saw a record-breaking attendance of more than 260,000 visitors, following the completion of the museum grounds.

AUSTIN, Texas — Jan. 14, 2025 — The Blanton Museum of Art at The University of Texas at Austin welcomed **260,899 visitors during the 2024 calendar year**. This record-breaking attendance exceeds prepandemic figures and follows a period of significant growth and transformation that included the museum’s grounds renovation — almost 200,000 square feet of redesigned public outdoor space with new architectural features designed by award-winning firm Snøhetta, large-scale artworks, the Moody Patio and the Butler Sound Gallery.



A recent survey by the American Alliance of Museums indicates that half of U.S. museums reported attendance levels below prepandemic figures. In contrast, the Blanton’s attendance last year exceeded previous highs.

“Over the last decade, initiatives like the opening of *Austin* by Ellsworth Kelly, our groundbreaking exhibitions and education programs, and most recently, the redesign of our grounds by the internationally acclaimed firm Snøhetta, have played a key role in establishing us as one of the most highly attended and prestigious university art museums in the country,” said **Director Simone Wicha**. “As the primary art museum for both UT Austin and the greater Austin community, welcoming and engaging a wide audience is central to our mission. The grounds reinforced this by expanding the museum experience outdoors with the Moody Patio and Butler Sound Gallery. We’re thrilled to see such a positive response from Austinites, the University community and visitors from across the country and world.”

The Blanton Museum has continued to expand its programs in line with the city of Austin’s rapid growth. As the city has become known as a top travel destination and hub for international events and business, the Blanton has seen a significant increase in tourist visitation,

underscoring the museum's role in the city's cultural landscape. In 2024, tourists accounted for more than 50% of paid attendance, the majority of whom visited on weekends.

The grounds project, which opened to the public in 2023 and was completed in 2024, is the most recent initiative to expand the museum's impact and make it a destination for the arts in Austin. The Blanton Museum's national recognition soared with the opening of *Austin* by Ellsworth Kelly in 2018. That same year, the museum set the previous attendance record. In a 2024 feature for *Forbes*, writer Chad Scott highlighted the transformation: "[*Austin*] took the Blanton from good college art museum to a global arts pilgrimage site in an instant."

Its programs, scholarship and community engagement have also garnered acclaim during the past decade. In 2024, *The Washington Post* ranked the Blanton as one of the top five college art museums in the U.S., and notably, the only one located at a public university. Compiled by Pulitzer Prize-winning art critics Philip Kennicott and Sebastian Smee, the rankings are based on the quality of museum collections and programming.

The Blanton Museum offers free access to its grounds, which includes the Moody Patio, Butler Sound Gallery and several notable art installations. The museum also extended its reach to the local community by continuing to offer free admission to its galleries and *Austin* on Tuesdays, a program made possible by the Moody Family Free Day Endowment. In 2024, the Moody Family Free Day welcomed over 40,000 visitors, nearly 75% of whom were from Austin and Central Texas — reflecting the museum's commitment to being welcoming and accessible. Additionally, the Blanton Museum saw its largest-ever attendance on an Austin Museum Day, with more than 7,500 visitors for this citywide free museum admission day.

A University and K-12 Resource

The Blanton serves as a vital resource for the UT community, providing opportunities for academic learning and enrichment. Last year, approximately **27,000 UT students** visited. Of those, 14,000 UT students from all 19 colleges and schools had curricular visits designed in collaboration with UT faculty. These visits supported undergraduate and graduate courses across the University, ranging from world literature to probability and statistics. Additionally, every first-year medical student from the Dell Medical School visited throughout the year for workshops that emphasized observation and empathy. In 2024, a similar collaboration was launched with the School of Nursing.

The Blanton also provides free admission to all UT students, faculty and staff. Last year, 14% of museum visitors were UT ID holders.

The museum's nationally recognized K-12 education program also made a significant impact in 2024, welcoming nearly **9,000 K-12 students** for curriculum-based visits designed by museum educators. These students came from several area districts, including 44% of schools that are classified as Title I and received free admission and transportation.

Exhibitions and Public Programs

A diverse lineup of exhibitions contributed to record attendance, featuring everything from Japanese woodblock prints to contemporary photography from the Americas.

Major exhibitions such as *The Floating World: Masterpieces of Edo Japan from the Worcester Art Museum*; *Anni Albers: In Thread and On Paper*; and *Native America: In Translation* included significant loans from other U.S. institutions. *Melecio Galván: The Secret Artist & His Mexican Contemporaries* and *Long Live Surrealism! 1924–Today*, on view in the museum’s Paper Vault galleries, foregrounded the Blanton’s collection and highlighted original scholarship by the museum’s curatorial team. Contemporary Project exhibitions showcased immersive new works by leading contemporary artists Marie Watt and Tavares Strachan; and the Film & Video gallery featured innovative video works by Mónica de Miranda and UT associate professor of practice R. Eric McMaster.

In addition to exhibitions, the Blanton Museum enhanced visitor access to its over 21,000-piece collection by rotating its collection galleries eight times, including rotations in European art, art of the Spanish Americas, modern and contemporary American and Latin American art, and the new Latino art gallery.

The monthly Blanton All Day program (formerly Second Saturdays) is the museum’s most popular public program, featuring a full day of live music, art talks and interactive activities for a wide audience. Starting in September 2024, Blanton All Day hours and offerings were expanded to accommodate families and young visitors. Additionally, the longstanding B Scene art parties attracted over a thousand attendees while the Blanton Live speaker series captivated a full auditorium and offered a popular livestream option.

Looking ahead, 2025 initiatives include two major exhibitions: *In Creative Harmony: Three Artistic Partnerships*, hailed by *Cultured* as one of the nine U.S. museum shows not to be missed in the first half of 2025, and *Spirit & Splendor: El Greco, Velázquez, and the Hispanic Baroque*, recognized by *The Art Newspaper* as one of the must-see exhibitions worldwide in 2025. Additional highlights include the biannual fundraising gala on March 29 and the grand opening of a new museum café in collaboration with Justine’s Brasserie in Fall 2025.

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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 more than 21,000 objects. Recognized as the home of *Austin* by Ellsworth Kelly, its major collecting areas are modern and contemporary U.S. and Latin American art, Italian Renaissance and Baroque paintings, and prints and drawings. The Blanton offers thought-provoking, visually arresting, and personally moving encounters with art.