

Hook 'Em Museums

When inquiring minds want to know, the UT-Austin campus can provide answers at public museums covering the fine arts, presidential politics, and natural history.

Blanton Museum of Art

In the 1960s, the university opened a public art museum on campus to show its modest collection of a few hundred works. The holdings blossomed in the 1970s when author James A. Michener donated his collection of 20th-century American paintings. The museum's permanent collection now boasts 17,000 pieces focusing on European works from the Renaissance and Baroque periods, American and contemporary art, modern and contemporary Latin American art, and prints and drawings from all periods.

In 1997, the museum got a new name (to honor former UT regent and arts patron Jack S. Blanton), as well as plans for a new 135,000-square-foot facility set to open in early 2006 at Martin Luther King Boulevard and Congress Avenue.

The Blanton continues to exhibit selected works in its current campus location--the Art Building at 23rd and San Jacinto—through May of 2005, when it will close to prepare for the move to new facilities. For details and hours, call 512/471-7324 (www.blantonmuseum.org).

[RESOURCE: www.blantonmuseum.org; Blanton PR: Sherry Scarborough, 512-475-6784; s.scarborough@mail.utexas.edu]

Texas Memorial Museum

After two years of renovations, Texas' first state museum (created in the 1930s) boasts three floors of new natural history exhibits. The Hall of Geology and Paleontology displays 550 dinosaur, fossil, rock, and mineral specimens. One area features dinosaur tracks discovered in 1934 near Glen Rose of a 30-foot-long

Mosasaur, the seagoing relative of today's lizards. Another area lets visitors chat with a professional paleontologist preparing fossils for exhibit.

Another new exhibit area showcases the most noteworthy of the museum's 5.7 million specimens. The show-stopper is a 40-foot-long Texas Pterosaur that lived 65 million years ago in what's now Big Bend National Park. It remains the largest flying creature ever discovered.

The museum's new Biodiversity Discovery Hall claims the nation's only immersive 3-D virtual reality exhibit, which allows three-dimensional views outside and *inside* of specimens.

Texas Memorial Museum is at 2400 Trinity Street, two blocks north of the UT stadium. For hours and details, call 512/471-1604 (www.tmm.utexas.edu).

[RESOURCE:

<http://www.tmm.utexas.edu/>

http://www.tmm.utexas.edu/press_room/press_releases/2004/re_opening.html

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LBJ Library and Museum

Lyndon Baines Johnson's legacy is Texas-big. So is the LBJ Library and Museum which chronicles the Texan's presidency and times. The library houses 40 million pages of historical documents...a treasure trove for researchers. And the museum features permanent and traveling historical and cultural exhibits which have attracted more than 12 million visitors since opening day in May of 1971.

The LBJ houses an array of expected and quirky exhibits.

There's a seven-eighths-scale replica of the Oval Office during the Johnson presidency—plus a life-size moving and talking figure of LBJ telling some of his famous stories.

Some 4,000 original news cartoons editorialize about LBJ's political career and the issues he faced. There are also 10,000-plus items of political memorabilia dating from George Washington's inauguration to the present. There's even the 1968 stretch Lincoln limousine that transported LBJ in Washington and Austin.

The LBJ Library and Museum is at 2313 Red River Street. For hours and details, call 512/721-0200 (www.lbjlib.utexas.edu).

[RESOURCE:

•<http://www.lbjlib.utexas.edu/johnson/museum.hom/museum-main.shtm>

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--Randy Mallory