

Blanton: the man behind the name

Jack S. Blanton, 78, continues to love the fine arts

By Ingrid Norton
Daily Texan Staff

Jack Blanton can't remember the first piece of art he bought.

He knows it was in Houston, sometime in the mid-1950s. His first wife, Laura Lee Scurlock of Scurlock Oil, whom he married in 1949, loved art. During the early years of their marriage, she began taking him to museums. Though he's sure his mother took him and his six brothers to see art during their childhood, he doesn't really remember visual art making an impression on him until he met Scurlock.

Blanton now owns bronze sculptures, cowboy art, carved stone yard sculptures and European portraits. With the doors of the museum he helped create opening to the public this Saturday, Blanton hopes a new generation of UT students will have the opportunity to be exposed to art.

Over coffee at the Four Seasons overlooking Town Lake, the 78-year-old Blanton took a printout of an e-mail out of his black binder. It had been forwarded to him by museum director Jessie Hite and contained Student Regent Brian Haley's description of the student preview. In it, Haley described art students sprawled out and sketching, engineering students conversing loudly about the meaning of art, and many stepping outside to call their parents on their cell phones to tell them about the museum.

Blanton beamed over the piece of paper. "This is when it becomes an important part of the University," he said.

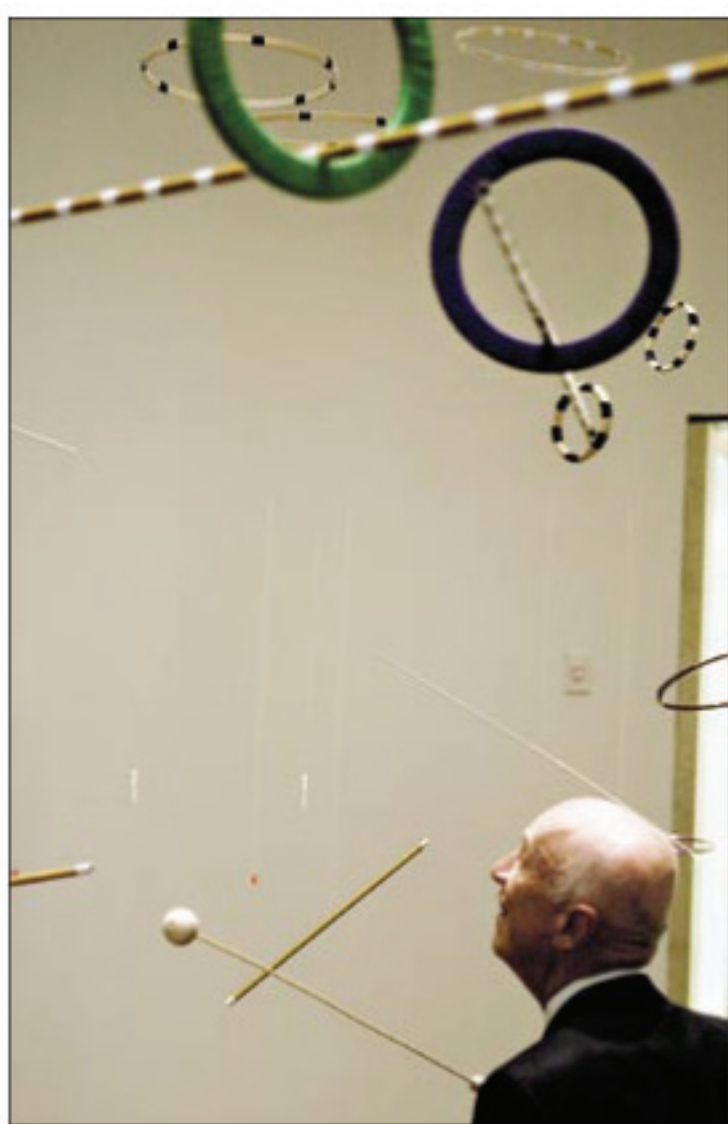
Blanton's 52-year-old son, Jack Blanton Jr., recalled being dragged around to museums as a boy.

"My dad loves art, but it's more about providing art to broaden the culture of the people of Austin," said Jack Jr., the middle child of three. "He feels that's very important, that they get to see it."

Zest for life

Born in 1927, Blanton grew up in Houston and attended UT as an undergraduate and for law school. After pressure from his father-in-law upon graduating, he joined Scurlock Oil. Eight years later, he was elected president. Outside of work, Blanton turned his financial resources to arts, public schools and the city of Houston.

"The Blanton family is really one of the leading families of the city, and Jack Sr. is really one of the most respected men in the city,"



said Shelby Hodge, society columnist for the Houston Chronicle. Hodge frequently sees Blanton at black-tie galas. She described him as a great dinner partner.

Since giving up an active position with Scurlock in the mid-1980s, Blanton says he has been unemployed. Since then, he has sat six corporate boards and countless civic and charitable organizations. Blanton served on the UT System Board of Regents from 1985 to 1989, chairing it during a 26-percent budget reduction. It was then that the plans for the art museum began.

People who know him describe him as gracious and dedicated.

"He's really seemed the same to me in all the years I've known him. He lost two wives, but he hasn't ever lost his zest for life," said Harry Reasoner, an attorney in Houston who met Blanton 30 years ago and serves on many of the same boards as him. "I've never seen him impose his grief on others."

In 2002, a year and a half after they married, Blanton's 67-year-old second wife Cindy died from a heart problem. But Blanton doesn't like to talk about the past and neglected to say much about Cindy. He married his current wife Ginger, whom he met at church, three years ago. Blanton said he

and Ginger are happy, and the two travel a lot.

"I really don't dwell," he said. "I don't have a lot of down in my life — I try not to let them get the best of me."

Jack Jr. said one of the things that makes his father special is his commitment to the family. Of Blanton Sr.'s children and 20 grandchildren and great-grandchildren, all but two live in Houston.

Blanton makes the effort to keep his family close-knit, Jack Jr. said. He said his father has a reunion every two years in Colorado — though they live in the same city, family members are very busy. Jack Jr. said that even though they work in the same office building and run into each other often, his father calls him every other week. In the summer, his father tries to get as much of the family together as possible to have lunch at the River Oaks Country Club. He said that he's sure the waiters must get frustrated as, over the course of the afternoon, the initial party of five expands to 15.

"He'll just call around and add people — the more people that are there, the happier he is," Jack Jr. said.

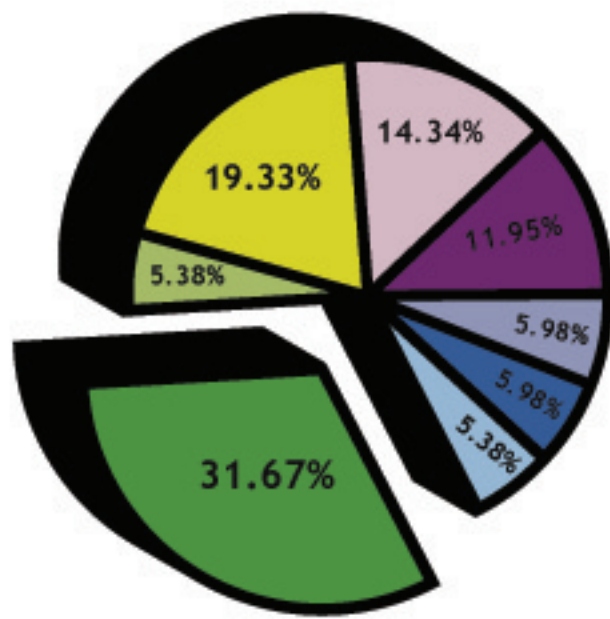
Besides his main home in River Oaks, Blanton has second homes



Left, Jack S. Blanton, who contributed \$5 million to the UT art museum, has remained involved at the University since graduating. Far left, Jack S. Blanton looks up at "The Invisible Jump" by Daniel Joglear, which runs until July 9 in a flexible exhibit called Workspace Friday.

Peter Franklin
Daily Texan Staff

Blanton contributions



—Information from the Blanton Museum of Art, graphic by Ann Enders and Jason Sweeten

Houston Endowment Inc. The grants engine is the largest foundation in Texas, and Jack Blanton used to chair it. The endowment kicked in another \$3 million for the University generally: \$12 million
Mari and James A. Michener. Austinite and best-selling author of a book about the Lone Star State and his art enthusiast wife also contributed a collection of Western art: \$10 million
Mr. and Mrs. Jack S. Blanton: \$5 million
Bernard and Audre Rapoport: Waco insurance care millionaire and philanthropist: \$5 million
Edgar A. Smith: Houston The gold tycoon will have the staff office building named after him: \$4.5 million
Additional donors: University of Texas \$26.5 million
Donor contributions: Interest earned: \$4.5 million
Austin donors: \$16.17 Million
Total: \$83.67 million

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Acclaimed director shows students tricks of the trade

Master Class speaker discusses 'opening doors' in film

By Bhargav Katikaneni
Daily Texan Staff

Gus Van Sant is considered one of the true icons of American independent cinema. After numerous experimental films in the '70s and '80s, the Louisville-born director emerged from the underground with the 1989 picture about drug addiction, "Drugstore Cowboy."

Though he received some mainstream exposure and critical acclaim, it was 1997's "Good Will Hunting," the Oscar-winning script penned by Matt Damon and Ben Affleck, that proved his box-office potential.

Van Sant spoke to radio-television-film students Monday night as part of UT professor John Pierson's Master Class series, which brings industry professionals to the University. Van Sant, a soft-spoken man whose voice oddly resembles that of actor Stellan Skarsgård, sat down in Studio 4D in the Jesse H. Jones Communication Center for an "Inside the Actor's Studio"-style chat with Pierson. The two have had a professional relationship for more than 15 years, since meeting at the Toronto Film Festival for the premier of "Drugstore

Cowboy."

Van Sant chatted on topics ranging from ways to direct actors, pitching scripts and his personal filmmaking style, while reflecting on his career so far. The purpose of the three-hour talk was to largely teach students how to break into the industry, and the director reflected on his initial experiences in the studio system. The success of "Drugstore Cowboy" opened doors, he said, but progress was slow.

"[Matt Damon and I] were like, 'Where's the scripts?' And we had burned it the night before."

Gus Van Sant, director

"I had meetings, and I thought I was getting somewhere, but I was wrong. If studio executives don't take meetings, they're not working," he joked.

He said "Drugstore Cowboy" was a large change from his independent films, in terms of budget, crew size and expectations. The bigger budget was made possible because of the exposure garnered from his

VAN SANT continues on page 5B



Gus Van Sant talks to a radio-television-film Master Class about his work on such films as "Good Will Hunting."

Joey Castillo
Daily Texan Staff

BLANTON: Former University regent 'never dreamed' of namesake museum

From page 8B

the Hill Country, Galveston, San Antonio, San Marcos, San Springs and New York City but he stressed that they are for everyone. "If somebody just heard that we have four other houses, they'd think I'm crazy," he said. "But the thing is that they're used well by members of my family."

Jack Jr. said his father was very supportive of him when he was a child and came to all his soccer games.

"The only quirky thing was that he wanted us all to go to UT," he said.

Eyes on The University of Texas

Blanton served on the Commission of 125 that gave rec-

ommendations for curriculum reform, and he recently made a contribution to the athletics department, in his youngest son Eddy's name, for tennis — Eddy's sport. Blanton said he can't imagine his life without the University.

"I expect my involvement with UT to be lifelong, and that's just the word I mean," said Blanton.

"It became clear that to become

a first-rate institution we'd need to have an art museum," said Blanton.

He made a \$5 million personal contribution to the UT art museum project, and "behind his back," the board of the Houston Endowment, which he used to direct and where former UT President Larry Faulkner now works, contributed \$12 million.

Blanton is enthused about the museum's various art collections and the beauty of the building. He said he has seen the museum more than 25 times this year, sometimes making a special trip and sometimes just stopping by when he was in town for a football game. When he got in from Houston this weekend, he drove by the building on the way to the Four Seasons,

which he's been in and out of all week for various opening events.

Blanton said he was amazed when he heard that the museum would be named after him.

"It blows my mind," he said, banging his hands on the table at the Four Seasons so that the porcelain coffee cups rattled. "I tell you, I never dreamed that anything like this would ever happen!"

Peas to perform in South Africa

Johannesburg concert will raise awareness for charity group

By The Associated Press

NEW YORK — The Black Eyed Peas, inspired by a 2004 trip to South Africa, will headline a benefit concert next month in Johannesburg to raise awareness for their charity foundation in the region.

The Grammy-winning hip-hop group announced Monday it will perform alongside South African artists and dancers on May 28 at Johannesburg Stadium. It is the first major event for the Peapod Foundation, formed by



Jim Cooper | Associated Press

The Black Eyed Peas, on the roof of Sony Studios in New York on May 2, 2005, will headline a benefit concert next month in Johannesburg, South Africa, to publicize their charity foundation's work in the region.

the group in association with the Entertainment Industry Foundation.

"Two years ago, we played to commemorate 10 Years of Freedom in South Africa and I made a promise that we would

return to give a free show for the people who may never have the chance to get down and celebrate with the Black Eyed Peas, in the true spirit of the Peapod," group member will.i.am said in a statement Monday.

Tickets will go on sale Wednesday starting April 26 at 8 a.m. through a South Africa-based text-messaging system. Proceeds from each text message will benefit the Adopt-a-School program.

VAN SANT: Flexible director has filmed without script

From page 8B

previous work. The awards didn't hurt either.

"Producers and assistants questioned whether I could handle the movie," said Van Sant. They were convinced of his talent, he said, as a result of the awards and recognition garnered by "Drugstore Cowboy."

Following the film's moderate success, Van Sant chose to direct music videos for David Bowie and the Red Hot Chili Peppers, among others, and indie gems such as "My Own Private Idaho" and "Even Cowgirls Get the Blues."

Van Sant's first flirtation with studio filmmaking was the Nicole Kidman thriller "To Die For." He later scored a hit with "Good Will Hunting." That film's massive success was followed by a disappointing remake of "Psycho," an almost shot-for-shot replica of Alfred Hitchcock's film and the social drama "Finding Forrester."

The 2003 release of "Elephant"

and the recent release of "Last Days," which is loosely based on the life of Kurt Cobain, have largely confirmed Van Sant's indie icon status. "Elephant," a sparse high-school drama inspired by the Columbine, Colo., high school shootings, won him Best Director as well as the Palme d'or at the 2003 Cannes Film Festival.

Van Sant, who is widely known as an actor's director, said this skill came naturally to him. He's immensely flexible on set and is quick to abandon elaborate plans. While shooting the 2002 film "Gerry," Van Sant's improvisational style led to shoots without a script.

"[Matt Damon and I] were like, 'Where's the script?' And we had burned it the night before," he said, drawing laughter from the audience.

As a director, Van Sant said his biggest goal is to "make people involved in the story." During a badly made movie, he said, "You're watching the holes, rather than focusing on the story."

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SOUNDBITES



Artist: Matt Nathanson
Album: *At the Point (Dig)*
Label: High Wire Music

Matt Nathanson has the right idea, but he needs to get to the point. In his new live album, ironically titled *At the Point (Dig)*, Nathanson gets too caught up in dirty dialogue with the audience and fails to focus on one message with his music.

The disc begins with "Decade of Hits," which consists of little more than Nathanson discussing his music while telling jokes to the audience. His attempt at humor distracts rather than enhances his performance. Despite these interludes of dialogue — which at times make him seem obsessed

with anything inappropriate — Nathanson redeems himself with welcome vocal talent. With a voice similar to that of a darker James Blunt, he dazzles us with his mellow sound while boring us with melancholy and marginally unoriginal lyrics. Nathanson scores with the laid-back tune of his first few songs, but soon the album starts to drag — at least until "Answering Machine" rolls along. This upbeat track marks the first risk Nathanson takes on the album for its use of backup vocals, which add much-needed depth to the music and serves as the high point of the entire disc.

At the Point (Dig) is a too-modest attempt at an album by an immature artist. Let's hope in the future that Nathanson steps outside of his musical box and grows up.

—Emily Watson

Artist: Plane of Existence
Album: *Kinetic*

Label: Plane of Existence Music
Local soft-rock quartet Plane of Existence has been making a name for themselves, playing shows alongside Pushmonkey and Vallojo. They've also kept busy writing and recording their latest EP, *Kinetic*, which will be released next month. But with lyrical content that primarily centers on relationship woes and heartache, the disc provides a generic pop sound that comes off as sappy and contrived to listeners.

Although the song structures are somewhat diverse, the context of each is surprisingly similar: They all share a story about a guy getting his heart broken by a girl and the resulting difficulties. The guitar licks and drumbeats combine in a concerted effort to rock, but don't quite reach that level of sound.

This is not to say the individual band members possess no talent, but perhaps on future efforts, the band should consider branching out to other subjects. There is definitely more to life than feeling depressed about your last break-up.

On the cover, the four bandmembers stand onstage in spot-

lights, as if they have a heavenly light cast upon them. If heaven is truly as it is depicted here, one can only hope that its sounds will be more multifaceted and less one-sided than this latest offering from Plane of Existence.

—Jacob Payne

Artist: Gutbucket
Album: *Sludge Test*
Label: Cantaloupe

Bizarre textures and outlandish harmonics comprise *Sludge Test*, the latest from New York's 7-year-old jazz/rock quartet Gutbucket. Wordlessly loud, the album screams at its listeners, prompting outbursts of movement. Its unique flavor provides the perfect inspiration to dance.

Past Gutbucket recordings prove that off-the-wall song titles are the common thread in this band's composition style. The new disc is no different, with the weaving movements on tracks such as "Punkass Rumble Dink" and the sultry, yet creeping, vibes of "Where Have You Gone, Mr. Squeegsman?" Each track showcases each member's considerable effort toward the music, although saxophonist

Ken Thomson is more prominent on the jiving disc-opener "Money Management for a Better Life." Drummer Paul Chuffo displays his talents on the circus march tune "Plague of the Legions."

Ambient themes give this effort an intrinsic value, as the band has little problem in finding their identity. The group boasts a big band style that grips the roots of contemporary jazz, but also takes elements of classic rock to create a feel that is witty and original.

Surmounting the odds against longevity in a genre known for requiring great persistence, Gutbucket maintains its level of prestige with this third installment in their discography.

—Jacob Payne

Artist: Shawn Nelson and the Ramblers

Album: *Live from Antone's*

Label: Shawn Nelson and the Ramblers

The temperature is rising, summer is on its way to Austin and Shawn Nelson and the Ramblers' latest album will be a perfect soundtrack for the fun of the season.

In *Live at Antone's*, Nelson sings renditions of his best songs recorded live on June 24, 2005, at Antone's, a classic Austin venue. *Live* keeps audiences entertained with the styles that the band incorporates into its sound — anything from the traditional gospel of "Down By the Riverside" to the down-home, bluesy feel of "Troubadour." The music exudes the optimistic, laid-back nature of Nelson. In "Walkin' Down the Line," a cover of Bob Dylan's original song, Nelson encourages audiences to forget their troubles as he croons, "Been walkin' down the line / feelin' just fine." In "The Junkies," Nelson makes a clever analogy, equating falling in love to being a junkie, singing, "She's got me running with the junkies searching for something / too far gone to come back down." Even while talking about love, it seems Nelson waxes optimistic.

Lyrics such as these promise comfort and relaxation despite the dreaded summer heat. The music of Shawn Nelson and the Ramblers is sure to appear at backyard barbecues, beer joints and Barton Springs, as Austinites enjoy themselves touring the summer.

—Emily Watson

Tribute concert planned for killed Indiana University students

Five music students died in plane crash

By Deanna Martin
The Associated Press

BLOOMINGTON, Ind. — Garth Eppley and Georgina Joshi had planned to join about 300 other chorus members and an orchestra Sunday to perform Beethoven's Ninth Symphony

at Indiana University's Musical Arts Center.

Instead, the concert will be dedicated to them and three other graduate students from the university's school of music who died in a plane crash late Thursday.

As the investigation into the crash continued, family and friends were planning tributes to the students.

"We're at the beginning of a long process," said Gwyn

Richards, dean of IU's Jacobs School of Music. "It's very, very difficult to get your mind around the events of this last day and around the magnitude of the loss."

The students were in a single-engine Cessna that crashed in dense fog near the Monroe County Airport as they were returning to Bloomington after a rehearsal for a concert in West Lafayette, about 90 miles north

of the school.

Federal aviation officials have moved the wreckage from the crash site to an undisclosed airport, where they were laying out the parts of the airplane to look for information about the wreck, said Ed Malinowski, an air safety investigator for the National Transportation Safety Board.

The students killed in the crash were identified as Joshi, 24, of South Bend; Eppley, 25,

of Wabash; Zachary Novak, 25, of Anderson; Robert Samels, 24, of Medina, Ohio; and Chris Carducci, 28, of Monroe, Mich.

Autopsies were completed Saturday, although officials were still awaiting the results of toxicology tests. All five died instantly, the Monroe County coroner's office said.

Sunday's concert may now feature more than 300 singers, Richards said, because many

other students have requested to be a part of the tribute performance.

"It's a way to give memory to our students," Richards said.

The school of music has also created a Web page with the students' photographs and biographies.

The university's music school, with about 1,600 students, is one of the nation's largest with programs in opera, jazz, orchestral music and early music.

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