

Be inspired.

For 46 years, the Rothko Chapel has been a beloved and internationally recognized Houston landmark.

The Rothko Chapel inspires people to action through art and contemplation,

OPEN YOUR MIND

nurtures reverence for the highest aspirations of humanity, and provides a forum for global concerns. The Chapel is a sacred space that supports human rights and is a rallying place for all who are concerned with peace and freedom throughout the world.

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Photo by Alison Pruitt

Dear Friends —



On behalf of the Rothko Chapel, we extend our deepest appreciation for the generosity shared this year in support of the Chapel's mission to engage the human spirit and our community through art, spirituality and the promotion of human rights. We are grateful to the hundreds of individual and institutional donors who ensure that the Rothko Chapel is open to all every day of the year—free of charge. The Chapel invites people from all backgrounds and walks of life to explore how best to address the diverse and complex needs of the world in ways that enhance mutual respect, understanding and collective action.

This has been a very exciting year complete with the reinstallation of Barnett Newman's *Broken Obelisk* after a ten-month conservation period and the development of a master-plan to guide the restoration of the Chapel and new site expansion. Once achieved, the *Opening Spaces* campaign will yield critical improvements to the Chapel interior, helping to fulfill Mark Rothko's original vision for the installation, while bolstering our stewardship of the art and building entrusted to our care. A north campus expansion will house key new facilities that will better support our efforts to engage with the community and serve the more than 100,000 annual visitors to the Chapel. We hope that you will learn more about and consider supporting this important campaign.

During this year, the Chapel's public programming made visible the transformative power of art, spirituality and human rights central to the Chapel's mission. Significant programs included Ford Foundation President Darren Walker's address on the role of art in confronting inequality presented on the occasion of the Frances Tarlton "Sissy" Farenthold Endowed Lecture in Peace, Social Justice and Human Rights; an evening of music and conversation in collaboration with Houston Grand Opera for the premiere of *Some Light Emerges*, the opera inspired by the Rothko Chapel and its founders John and Dominique de Menil; and the 2017 Rothko Chapel Symposium *An Act of Justice: Undoing the Legacy of Mass Incarceration* which brought together criminal justice reform experts, religious leaders, artists, activists, formerly incarcerated individuals and their families united in the common cause of equitable and sustainable reform. Throughout the year, the Chapel also hosted numerous meditations, concerts and interfaith gatherings, including the annual Houston Interfaith Thanksgiving Service that collectively inspired and nourished the human spirit.

As highlighted in this report, the Rothko Chapel serves as a sanctuary where peace, justice and the highest aspirations of humanity are lifted up and cultivated daily. We thank you for your support and look forward to our future work together.

Sincerely,

Christopher Rothko
Chair

David Leslie
Executive Director



PROGRAM ENGAGEMENT

Highlights



Brené Brown headlines *Concept of the Divine Series*

In launching the *Concept of the Divine*, the Chapel embarked on a two-year series in which speakers from different faiths and backgrounds share their spiritual journeys, offering a unique opportunity to sit with prominent thinkers, creators, and impactful leaders whose stories of faith and change inspire us to forge our own lives of commitment and connection.



The inaugural program, *Certainty, Vulnerability, and the Gift of Mystery*, featured Dr. Brené Brown, nationally renowned author and Research Professor at the University of Houston, in conversation with The Jung Center's Executive Director, Sean Fitzpatrick. Brené interwove her professional research on vulnerability, shame, and empathy into a personal narrative of spiritual challenge and growth.

In December, Rabbi Samuel Karff and Archbishop Joseph Fiorenza, eminent Houston religious leaders and longtime partners as human rights activists, explored the intersection of faith and social justice in their own lives with moderator and award-winning journalist Melanie Lawson in *Social Justice, Social Change in the Presence of the Divine*. In February, *Through the Spoken Word—Reflections on the Sacred* offered a program of poetry and conversation with Willis, Aiki, and Tony Barnstone, relatives of Howard Barnstone,

one of the original architects of the Rothko Chapel. In the concluding installment in May, Asma Uddin, writer, attorney, and Director of Strategy for the Center on Islam and Religious Freedom in Washington, D.C. presented *Feminist Perspectives of the Divine in Islam* and described her compelling, personal journey as a feminist and Muslim woman of faith.

Concerts in the Chapel

Our Concerts in the Chapel series harnesses the transformative power of art and music, inspiring people to move from being observers and listeners to agents of change. The season offered a unique blend of programs, including: *Spirit of Embrace: A Sacred Interfaith Music Experience* curated by Bethany Baxter in partnership with Da Camera; *Anecdote for the Spirit*, an original, introspective composition inspired by the words of Rothko, performed by Misha Penton, soprano and Thomas Helton on double bass; an *Evening with Adam Tandler* featuring works on piano by Earle Brown and Philip Glass; and Houston's own Loop 38 experimental piece, *Music in Darkness*, played by 24 musicians in complete darkness.

Frances Tarlton “Sissy” Farenthold Endowed Lecture
in Peace, Social Justice and Human Rights

***Yes Justice, Yes Peace:
The Role of Art in Confronting Inequality***

October 3, 2016

The Chapel celebrated the 90th Birthday of Rothko Chapel Honorary Director Sissy Farenthold by convening the second annual Frances Tarlton “Sissy” Farenthold Endowed Lecture in Peace, Social Justice and Human Rights, presented in partnership with the Rapoport Center for Human Rights and Justice at UT’s School of Law.



Left to right: Daniel Brinks, Karen Engle, Sissy Farenthold, Darren Walker, Sarah Lewis, David Leslie

The Farenthold lectures, which honor Sissy’s many years of work as an advocate for social justice, bring to Houston and Austin internationally renowned scholars, activists, and policy experts, and invite audiences to respond to challenges in our communities with creative thought and action.

This year, Ford Foundation President Darren Walker took up the symbiotic relationship between art and social justice in a rousing discussion of the power of art to imagine the possible and create connection through empathy. Following his remarks, Walker sat down with Sarah Lewis, bestselling author, curator,

and Assistant Professor at Harvard University, in a conversation that further explored the intersections of art and activism.

“We know by reason and by intuition that art has a role in advancing justice in the world.”

—Darren Walker, Ford Foundation President

“Artists push us to think radically and deal with uncomfortable reality, uncomfortable truths. [They] interrogate the world as it is, and how it could be.”

—Darren Walker



Annual Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Birthday Celebration

January 15, 2017

To honor the life and work of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., the Chapel's *Annual MLK Birthday Celebration* began with a ceremony on the plaza to welcome the return of Barnett Newman's *Broken Obelisk* following nearly a year's absence for conservation treatment. The event included remarks from Rev. Dr. Marcus Cosby, Wheeler Baptist Church Senior Pastor; Harris County Precinct One Commissioner Rodney Ellis; Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee; Gary Tinterow, Director of the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; performances of spiritual hymns by Edwina Hubbard; and original poems recited by Jackson Neal, 2016 Meta-four Houston Youth Poetry Slam team member, and Fareena Arefeen, City of Houston's Youth Poet Laureate. Commissioner Ellis addressed the history of John de Menil's dedication of the *Broken Obelisk* to the memory of Dr. King and framed the celebration as a call to action.

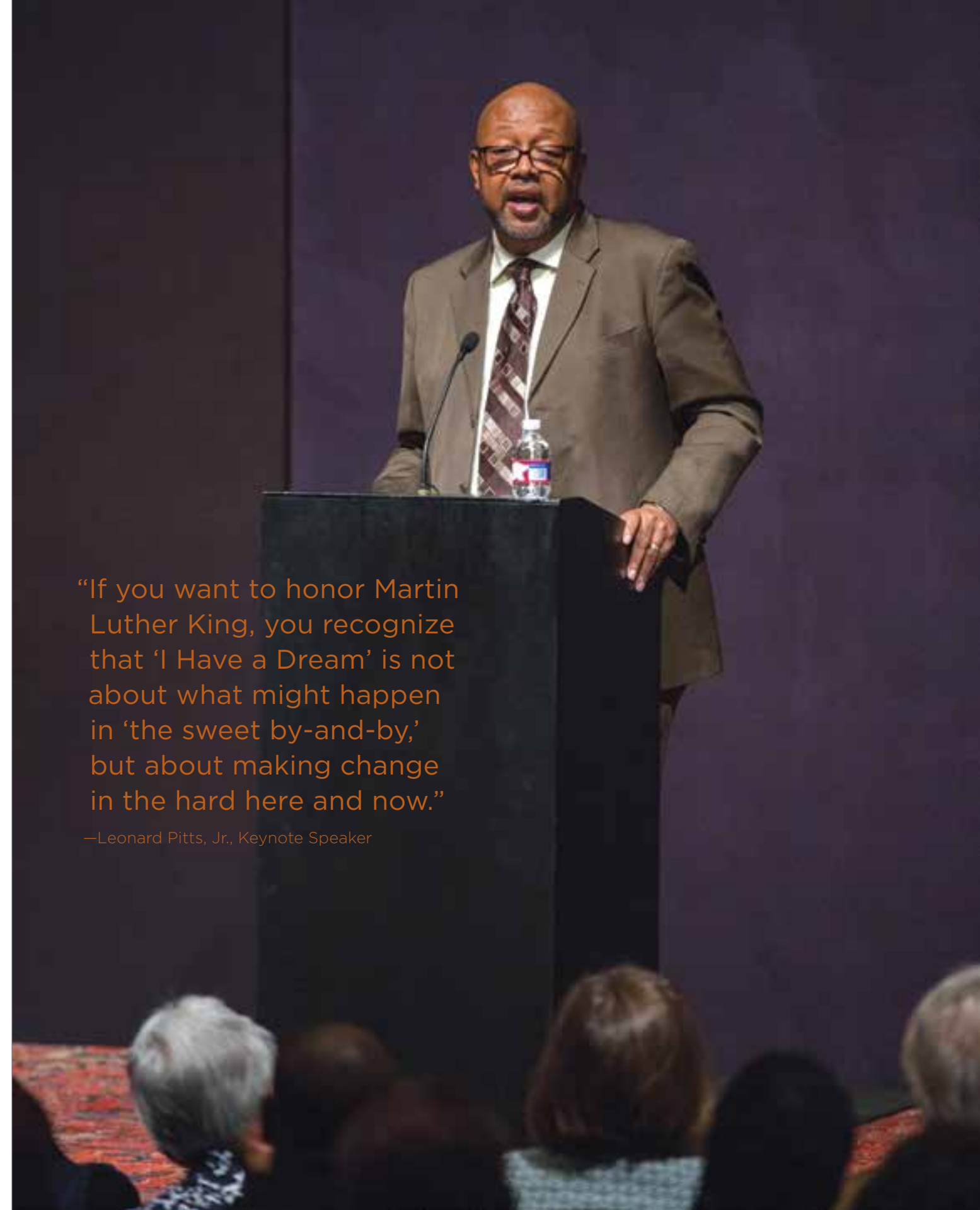


Left to right: Fareena Arefeen, Leonard Pitts, Jackson Neal, Commissioner Rodney Ellis, Edwina Hubbard, David Leslie

Following the ceremony, a lecture by Pulitzer-prize winning journalist and novelist Leonard Pitts, Jr., situated this year's MLK Birthday celebration in the post-election state of the nation, and emphasized the need to renew our commitment to inclusion of all races, genders, and identities. "The dream that Dr. King articulated," he reminded attendees, "was not an excuse to wait, but an obligation to work," despite the difficulties we face as we confront injustice, violence and division in our historical moment.

"In honor of Dr. Martin Luther King, in honor of the great de Menils, their legacy and independent voice, remember no matter how bad things may get, that you and I have fought too hard and we've come too far to let things go back to the way they used to be."

—Rodney Ellis, Harris County Commissioner



"If you want to honor Martin Luther King, you recognize that 'I Have a Dream' is not about what might happen in 'the sweet by-and-by,' but about making change in the hard here and now."

—Leonard Pitts, Jr., Keynote Speaker

2017 Spring Symposium

An Act of Justice: Undoing the Legacy of Mass Incarceration

March 30 – April 1, 2017



Symposium workshop *Disobedient Narratives: Art as a Tool for Social Change*

In 2015, the Rothko Chapel held its first symposium on income inequality, examining its wide-ranging ramifications for social and economic justice. Building on these conversations and opportunities for productive engagement, the Chapel partnered with the Criminology, Law and Society Department at the University of St. Thomas to host a three-day symposium addressing the human rights issues associated with the criminal justice system in the United States. The symposium engaged a diverse audience of 300 attendees by exploring the complexities of the criminal justice system and mass incarceration; its effects on individuals, families, communities and the nation; and the efforts of community organizations and individuals to work together for equitable and sus-

“This is about all of us—not ‘the other;’ not ‘someone else’s problem.’ This symposium is rooted in the truth that we have a shared responsibility about what has been created, as well as what will be developed into the future.”

—David Leslie, Executive Director

tainable reform. Participants included academic researchers, activists, religious leaders, artists, experts in criminal justice reform, and formerly incarcerated individuals and their families, who addressed issues in criminal justice through the framework of human rights, spirituality, art, and non-violent action.



Morning reflections with Activist and Death Row Exoneree Anthony Graves



The symposium kicked-off with *Decriminalization and Decarceration: Getting There from Here*, the keynote address by Margaret Burnham, Northeastern University School of Law Professor. Burnham discussed how the United States has become the most incarcerated nation in the world; illuminated the roles that race, social class, and economics continue to play in systemic incarceration; and presented some of the visionary reform efforts underway.

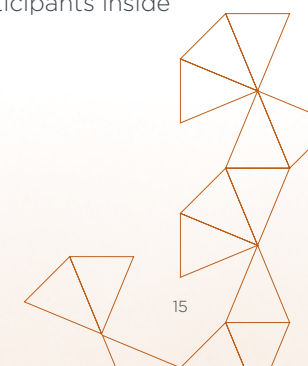
The first full-day began with morning reflections in the Chapel from individuals who shared their own stories of arrest, incarceration, and release and the continuing impact of these experiences on their lives and relationships. The reflections were followed by panel discussions that brought together perspectives from law enforcement officers, public defenders, educators, and community service providers to discuss the challenges in the process of arrest, incarceration and re-entry, as well as the unique circumstances faced by incarcerated juveniles, women and their families. Participants attended breakout sessions, joining conversations ranging from *Art as a Tool for Social Change* to *Ending the Torture of Solitary Confinement in Prisons*. The day closed with a poetry reading by Writers in the Schools on the Chapel Plaza and

“The heart of this issue is our heart. It is who we are as a country and who we want to be as a country; it pulls on our deepest visions and hopes for the future, and what we want to hand down to our children.”

—Margaret Burnham, Keynote Speaker

a second keynote address, *Dismantling the System: What Juvenile Decarceration Can Teach Us About Undoing Mass Incarceration* by Vincent Schiraldi, Senior Research Fellow, Criminal Justice Policy and Management at Harvard University.

On the final day, participants heard the personal story of wrongly imprisoned death row exonerée Anthony Graves, in a reflection on maintaining hope, resilience, and a spirit of faith in the midst of incarceration. After the reflection, panels on alternatives to incarceration and reform efforts, and legislative and public policy perspectives concluded the symposium. A powerful component throughout the weekend was an on-site virtual reality experience presented by the National Religious Campaign Against Torture, placing audience participants inside a solitary confinement prison cell.



EXPANDING THE
CHAPEL'S REACH



Partnership with Houston Grand Opera

Some Light Emerges

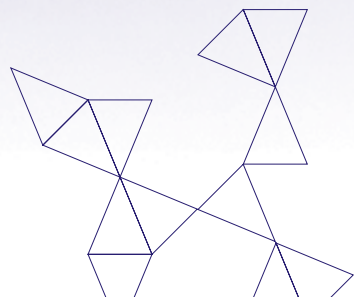
February 28, 2017



In collaboration with Houston Grand Opera (HGO), and in conjunction with the world premiere of the chamber opera *Some Light Emerges*, the Rothko Chapel hosted a performance and talk. Chapel Executive Director David Leslie moderated a conversation with composer Laura Kaminsky, Co-librettist Mark Campbell, Conductor Bradley Moore, and Stage Director Robin Guarino exploring their creative process and experience with the interdependent relationships of art, spirituality, and social transformation. Two of the cast members (and HGO Studio Artists), Yelena Dyachek and Zoie Reams performed excerpts from the opera, treating the audience to a special preview of the work.



HGO presented *Some Light Emerges* on March 16 and 17 at the Ballroom at Bayou Place under the auspices of HGOco, which connects the company's creative resources with the diverse and vibrant Houston community.



“The Chapel has its own music.”

—Laura Kaminsky, composer of *Some Light Emerges*



Mezzo-Soprano Zoie Reams



The Guild

The Chapel Guild celebrated its 5th anniversary in 2017, honoring eight Founding Guild members who have served since 2012 and welcoming 35 new members. Many of the Founding Guild members have taken on leadership positions to advance the Guild program, serving as Mentor to new members, Educational Lead, and Social Lead. In 2017, the Guild provided invaluable support for daily Chapel operations and events. Guild members welcome guests, orient visitors to the Chapel, provide indispensable support for our public programs, and represent the Chapel in offsite community festivals and events.

“We’ve experienced profound moments while sitting quietly and bearing witness to people inside the Chapel as they process their own experiences. It’s an honor to be a small part of that journey and to hold space in such a powerful and beautiful place.”

—Guild Member Sara Eakens

Guild members took part in educational opportunities throughout the year to enrich their own knowledge and experience of the Chapel, including a sacred spaces tour of Houston-area mosques, a presentation by Menil conservators on the restoration of the *Broken Obelisk*, and a presentation from Chapel Advisor Stephen Fox on the architecture and sacred spaces of Philip Johnson.

The Guides

The Chapel Guides are a specially trained group of volunteers within the Guild who serve as ambassadors and educators for the Chapel. Guides represent the Chapel in the community by leading guided tours and providing on-site enrichment to visitors from all over the globe. Through their vast knowledge of the Chapel and its history, Guides invite visitors into a deeper, more engaging and meaningful Chapel experience, extending the reach of the Chapel’s mission and strengthening its impact. This year, ten chapel Guides volunteered for regularly scheduled shifts stationed on the Chapel plaza, as well as specially requested guided tours. The Guides led numerous tours for organizations including local Cub Scout troops, senior citizen art clubs, students from the Architectural Association of London Undergraduate School, and a group from American Opera Projects in Brooklyn who visited Houston to attend the Houston Grand Opera performance of *Some Light Emerges*.



“The Chapel gets more beautiful the closer you get. Discovering the Chapel’s fascinating history and its present stellar role in the community is truly a worthwhile endeavor.”

—Chapel Guide Monica Yancey

Interfaith Outreach



The Chapel continually opens its doors to host various faith communities celebrating religious holidays or marking important occasions. In January, Congregation Shma Koleinu held a Shabbat service in the Chapel to commemorate International Holocaust Remembrance Day. In March,

Covenant Baptist Church held their annual Ash Wednesday service, and the Zoroastrian Association of Houston celebrated Nowruz, the Persian New Year. Later in the year, the World Community for Christian Meditation concluded their annual silent retreat, *The Inner Room*, with a morning meditation in the Chapel.

For the 33rd Annual Houston Interfaith Thanksgiving Service, the Chapel brought together leaders and members from nine faith traditions including Judaism, Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, Sikhism, Zoroastrianism, Baha'i, Hinduism and Jainism, to offer prayers of thanksgiving and sacred readings centered on the importance of developing interfaith relationships.

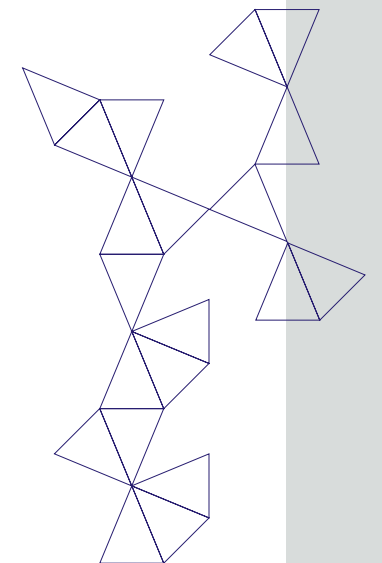


Annual Interfaith breakfast and dialogue

Since 2005, at noon on the first Wednesday of each month, the Rothko Chapel has presented contemplative practices from different faith traditions, featuring teachers and religious leaders from throughout the greater Houston community. The *Twelve Moments: Experiencing Spiritual and Faith Traditions* series provides opportunities for visitors to learn more about specific spiritual or religious traditions and to experience a related contemplative practice, such as prayer, chanting, singing, or silent meditation. In August, community partners, faith leaders, and past *Twelve Moments* series presenters were invited to join the annual interfaith breakfast and dialogue to discuss the meanings and importance of sanctuary.

“We are all reflections of each other. And if we help to see the good in each other, automatically we will see our own faults. And, if we see our own faults, we have improved our reflections.”

—Imam Mujtaba Hasan Siddiqi, Islamic Society of Greater Houston, Annual Interfaith Thanksgiving Service





OPENING spaces

A Campaign for the Rothko Chapel

2017 saw the completion of the Rothko Chapel Master Site Plan. The plan maps our vision for an expanded campus, new facilities, and restoration of the Rothko Chapel to the artist's original intent, while addressing long-term

"Rothko's paintings are like openings into the infinite...They bring us onto the threshold of the unfathomable mystery of the cosmos."

—Dominique de Menil

growth, sustainability, and preservation needs. The Chapel's Site Plan Committee, chaired by Christopher Rothko and comprised of architects, conservators, scholars and senior staff have worked closely with a design team led by principal architects ARO (Architecture Research Office) in collaboration with George Sexton Associates, lighting design, and landscape architects, Nelson Byrd Woltz. The Master Site Plan was generously funded by many individuals, The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, Houston Endowment, John P. McGovern Foundation, and George and Mary Josephine Hamman Foundation.

Illuminating the Next 50 Years

The Chapel Board launched the *Opening Spaces* campaign earlier this year to support the implementation of the master plan. This vital capital project focuses on significantly enhancing the visitor experience, serving our growing audience and setting the stage for programmatic expansion. The improved campus will re-invigorate the Chapel as a renowned cultural and spiritual resource as we look to the 50th anniversary in 2021.

Visitors to the Chapel continue to reflect an impressive cross-section of the international, national, and local community. The energizing diversity of the Chapel's audience extends to the range of themes that inform the Chapel's programming and are reflective of the historical moment in which we live. The master site plan is the Chapel's blueprint for enhancing the spaces in which the Chapel welcomes visitors and program participants from the global community, inviting contemplation and engagement with the concerns of a complex world.

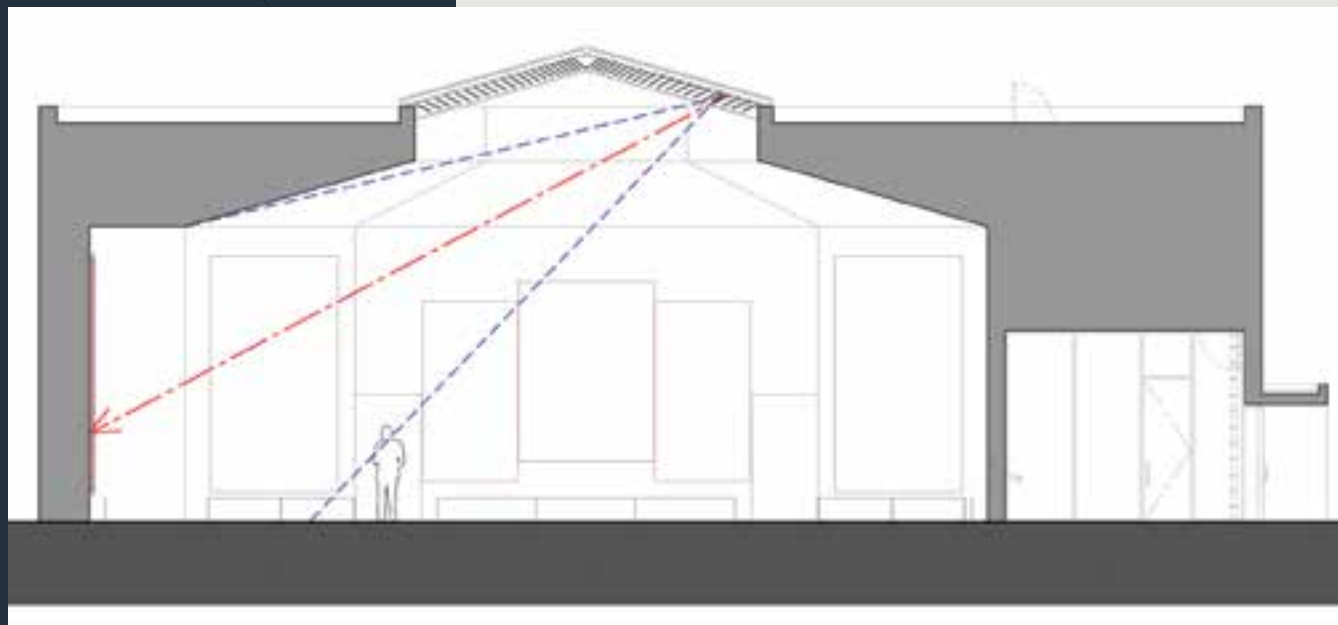


Concept in the works

Major Project Elements

Barnett Newman's *Broken Obelisk* reinstalled

With the much-anticipated return of Barnett Newman's iconic *Broken Obelisk* to the Chapel's campus, a key component of the first phase of the master plan was achieved. The restored sculpture returned to a fully renovated reflecting pool that both complements its stature and helps ensure its preservation thanks to the generous support of The Menil Collection and Houston Endowment. Reinstalled in time for the 2017 celebration of Martin Luther King Day, Newman's sculpture, dedicated to Dr. King, again serves as a focal-point for the Chapel's human rights work.



Chapel Restoration: Bringing Light

Critical preservation initiatives and improvements to the lighting in the Chapel will ensure that Mark Rothko's extraordinary paintings may be experienced as the artist intended. The skylight and lighting design will be reconfigured to better illuminate the works and reconnect the sanctuary to natural light. The plan also redesigns the vestibule in accord with its original format, providing a more open space as the viewer passes the threshold from the plaza into the sanctuary.

Visitor Welcome and Community Engagement Building

How visitors are welcomed to the campus impacts and informs their experience as they enter this unique and sacred space. A new, multi-purpose building, envisioned as the gateway to our expanded campus, will be situated on the north side of Sul Ross, with a design that respects and complements the neighborhood. The building will be used to host programs, retreats, workshops, and conferences, allowing the Rothko Chapel to increase and diversify its event offerings while ensuring that the Chapel itself remains a peaceful refuge. The site plan also includes guest housing for Chapel speakers and performers in one of the historic bungalows.

Landscape

We recognize that the Chapel grounds are an extension of the Chapel itself. The master plan envisions new greenspaces to make the campus a more welcoming landscape, and to frame the Chapel, Broken Obelisk and reflecting pool as a unified ensemble. The landscape design will provide additional spaces for sanctuary, contemplation, as well as lively engagement, while improving the integration of the campus into the surrounding neighborhood.

Administration and Archives Building

As we devote our efforts to expand program offerings for a growing audience, the Rothko Chapel's infrastructure and institutional functions continue to increase and diversify. The master site plan will help to meet growing spatial requirements for these critical auxiliary functions with a new building for administrative offices, archives, library, and conference rooms. The facility will support the Chapel's administrative operations, program research and documentation of institutional activities. Dedicated archive space will allow greater access to scholars while preserving our historical record.

A Grand Occasion Gala

May 11, 2017



On a festive evening in May, *A Grand Occasion* honored Frances “Sissy” Farenthold and Lynn Wyatt, two extraordinary women who have been instrumental in advancing the mission, governance and preservation of the Rothko Chapel. Their contributions have helped shape the social justice movement and arts and culture landscape in Texas and beyond. Over 200 guests attended the gala at the stunning Astorian in support of the Chapel and were treated to an exciting sneak preview of the Chapel’s master site plan, a new phase of growth and expansion for the Rothko Chapel to better meet the needs of its diverse programs and community participants.

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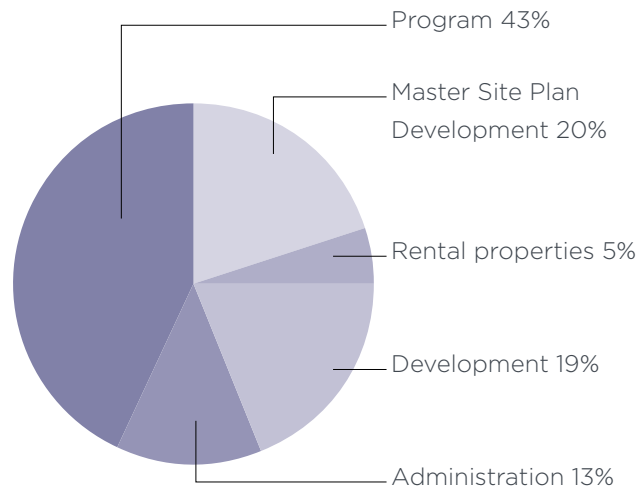
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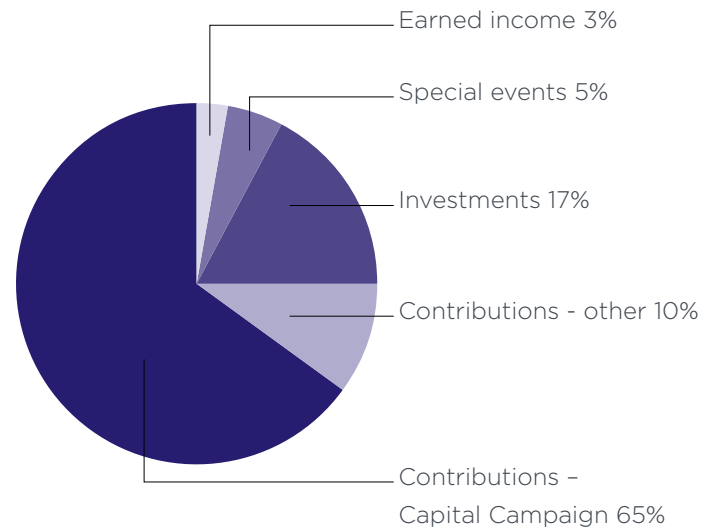
By The Numbers

For Fiscal Year 2017 July 1, 2016 - June 30, 2017

The data are derived from the audited financial statements of the Rothko Chapel as of June 30, 2017.



Operating Expenditures
\$1,732,143



Sources of Funding
\$3,911,047

Chapel visitors **103,196**
 Program participants
 and guided tours **10,594**
 Volunteer hours **1,805**

Our Supporters

July 1, 2016 - June 30, 2017

The Rothko Chapel would like to thank those who have contributed in 2016-2017.

For more information about making a gift, please contact the Advancement Office at 713.660.1409.

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Rothko Chapel
1409 Sul Ross
Houston, Texas 77006



Photo by Alison Pruitt

Visit

Rothko Chapel
3900 Yupon Street
Open daily 10am-6pm

Contact

Office

713.524.9839

Mailing Address

1409 Sul Ross
Houston, TX 77006

rothkochapel.org

info@rothkochapel.org

