



This guide features three public artworks located throughout Houston. Take it with you to explore each site and reflect on the accompanying prompts. You can make it a holiday outing with friends or family, or enjoy it as a quiet solo experience. The tour can be completed in just a couple of hours, or extended with a meal stop along the way.

This mindful art tour invites you to slow down, observe with intention, and consider how art in shared spaces can nurture both presence and resilience. When we look with awareness, we open ourselves to seeing not only the art differently, but ourselves as well.

In therapeutic settings, mindfulness is often guided through breathing exercises, body scans, or focused attention practices. These approaches are backed by neuroscience and clinical research, which show that regular mindfulness practice can reduce stress, anxiety, and depression while improving attention, emotional regulation, and overall well-being.



Stop 1: Cloud Column

Artist: Anish Kapoor

Location: Lillie and Hugh Roy Cullen Sculpture Garden, Museum of Fine Arts Houston

Address: 1001 Bissonnet Street, Houston, TX 77005

Year: 2006

Anish Kapoor's Cloud Column, like a luminous, vertical fragment of sky, is made from stainless steel and polished to a mirror finish. The sculpture bends light, clouds, and viewers into its curving surface. While it is a cousin to Kapoor's later and more famous Cloud Gate in Chicago, Cloud Column holds its own as an exploration of perception, materiality, and space. The sculpture's mirrored surface erases boundaries between art and environment, and what is seen within it is never static but constantly remade by shifting weather, light, and human presence.

Rooted in Kapoor's ongoing investigation of the void and the sublime, Cloud Column carries a spiritual charge. The artist has long described his work as a means of engaging with the self and the non-object, seeking to evoke the threshold between the physical and the metaphysical.

Mindful Viewing: Pause. Take a breath. Let your eyes roam across this reflective form towering before you. Cloud Column was hand-fabricated. Its stainless steel surface hammered and welded by human hands, not machines. It reflects not just the sky, but the textures of its surroundings, the movement of clouds, the feel of the plaza, and your own image, bringing you into the work.

Notice: The mirror-like surfaces, but also the subtle irregularities, the hand-worked tremors, the patches where welds meet. How do these make the form feel more alive, more personal?

Reflect: The way the sky is captured in steel, clouds passing, light changing. How does this remind you of impermanence, of how things shift and reflect back to us?

Feel: How do you feel seeing your own reflection merged with the environment, trees, buildings, clouds? Is there calm? Surprise? A sense of being seen?

Connect: This column, like many of Kapoor's works, invites you to consider thresholds between sky and earth, between self and surroundings, between permanence and flux. What does this invitation awaken in you about your own life?

Take one more deep breath. As you exhale, imagine the sculpture's reflection settling within you, reminding you that every moment carries both clarity and shadow, form and intangible space.

Stop 2: Spirit of Montrose

Artist: Kill Joy

Location: Freed-Montrose Neighborhood Library

Address: 1001 California Street, Houston, TX 77006

Year: 2024

Spirit of Montrose, a mural by Filipina-American artist Kill Joy, who now lives in Houston, anchors the Freed-Montrose Library with a vibrant exploration of Montrose's layered history. Drawing on the stories of Indigenous peoples, early 20th-century BIPOC residents, and the LGBTQIA+ community, the installation uses hand-painted surfaces and textured panels to guide viewers through centuries of cultural evolution. Scenes begin with maize honoring the Karankawa and Akokisa tribes, early inhabitants of Houston, and ascend toward a symbolic live oak tree, sheltering figures engaged in teaching and storytelling, a visual tribute to Montrose's enduring legacy of learning and resilience.

On the library's third floor, historical bungalows reflect the neighborhood's transformation into a thriving haven for LGBTQIA+ people, immigrants, and artists. A rainbow arch and lively figures on the west wall celebrate Montrose as a safe gathering space, including nods to Houston's Pride Parade. House Sparrows, symbols of global unity, perch atop rainbows, while imagery drawn from archival photos and research from organizations like



ALMAAHH and the Transgender Foundation of America enriches the mural. Each scene honors Montrose's distinct spirit and the diverse voices that continue to shape its identity.

Mindful Viewing: Take a moment to pause and truly see. Breathe in, feel your feet on the ground, and let your attention rest on this vibrant mural honoring Montrose's spirit, its Indigenous roots, creative energy, and community resilience.

Notice: What catches your eye first? Can you see the corgi dog on the rainbow? Can you see the trumpeteer riding the bird? Can you see the tiny nymphs in the corn husks?

Reflect: How do the maize, the oak, and the rainbow connect to stories of growth, belonging, or hope?

Feel: What emotions do you feel as you take in these scenes of care and transformation?

Connect: How does this artwork mirror the resilience and diversity of your own community?

Take one last deep breath. As you exhale, imagine your own roots grounding you in this moment, and your branches reaching outward in strength and compassion.



Stop 3: Tolerance

Artist: Jaume Plensa

Location: Buffalo Bayou Park

Address: 3600 Memorial Drive, Houston, TX 77019

Year: 2011

Jaume Plensa's *Tolerance* is a group of seven monumental seated figures installed along Buffalo Bayou Park. Each sculpture is composed of interlocking stainless-steel letters drawn from multiple alphabets, including Latin, Hebrew, Arabic, Chinese, Cyrillic, and Hindi, forming human silhouettes that glow from within at night. *Tolerance* embodies Plensa's belief that art can foster empathy and unity through shared experience. The sculptures' kneeling postures evoke humility and contemplation, while their luminous interiors suggest the inner light of the human spirit.

In 2006, Houston-area teenager David Ritcheson survived a racially motivated hate crime that left him with severe injuries, requiring more than 30 surgeries. Although he lived, the long-term physical and emotional trauma ultimately contributed to his death by suicide a few years later. His experience brought national attention to the urgent need for education, empathy, and understanding across communities. Following his death, Houston civic leaders and philanthropists commissioned Jaume Plensa's *Tolerance* sculptures as a public symbol of hope and unity. The seven radiant figures honor Ritcheson's memory and all who have suffered from intolerance or prejudice.

Chester Street Foundation continues the work of healing that Tolerance represents. Dedicated to raising awareness about the effects of childhood trauma, the foundation provides education and outreach programs for professionals who work with children, fostering greater understanding of trauma's long-term impacts and pathways to recovery.

Mindful Viewing: Pause here. Take a slow breath in, and let your eyes soften as you take in the seven towering figures before you, human forms made of interlocking stainless-steel letters from languages around the world.

Notice: The quiet posture of each figure, seated, open, and reflective. What words or shapes draw your attention first?

Reflect: The letters come from many alphabets, yet together they form a single human shape. What might that say about communication, understanding, or shared humanity?

Feel: As sunlight passes through the figures, notice the shifting shadows. How does the light and openness affect your sense of peace or curiosity?

Connect: "Tolerance" stands as a gathering place, an invitation to empathy, dialogue, and coexistence. How does this idea of tolerance resonate in your own life or community?

Take one more deep breath. As you exhale, imagine the sculpture's reflection settling within you, reminding you that every moment carries both clarity and shadow, form and intangible space.

Take one more deep breath. As you exhale, imagine your heart expanding like the open forms of these figures, spacious enough to hold difference, compassion, and connection.

*This guide and the photography has been provided by local artist and CSF's Development Manager, Sasha Dela.



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