

Hear an inspiring work at 'Clean, Well-Lighted' event

No SXSW badges needed for this.

Having some fun with an important but overlooked Austin art legacy, the Texas Biennial launches “A Clean, Well-Lighted Place,” a three-day public performance event and virtual event, March 10-12.

Artists, art historians, curators, museum officials, collectors, art patrons, museum educators, gallerists and a few others will read something that they find most salient to their understanding and appreciation of contemporary art.

Readings take place 4 p.m. to midnight, March 10 and 6 p.m. to midnight, March 11 and 12 and will be streamed online at www.texasbiennial.org.

The entire event is free and happens at 823 Congress Ave.

There's more than a few layers of clever innuendo with the project.

First, it's titled after the short story by Ernest Hemingway published in 1933, an

enigmatic narrative that touches on the necessity of public spaces for conversation.

Jump ahead a few decades: Hemingway's story in turn provided the inspiration for the name that Dave Hickey gave to an art gallery he and then wife, Mary Jane Taylor co-founded in 1967, in Austin.

Though short lived, Hickey's Austin gallery nevertheless proved to be influential.

Last fall, after a distinguished career as a provocative critic, Hickey very publicly and with considerable art media attention, announced that he was quitting the art world, declaring that it had become “too obsessed with money and celebrity” and was “calcified, self-reverential and a hostage to rich collectors who have no respect for what they are doing. ‘Art editors and critics — people like me — have become a courtier class.’”

But wait, there's more: For 16 years, the

first floor of 823 Congress Ave. — an office tower — was home to the Austin Museum of Art.

Museum leaders always claimed the downtown space — once a bank branch and still equipped with a giant vault that had to be hidden behind new walls — was a temporary site as the institution looked to build a stand-alone museum downtown.

But “temporary” grew to Texas-sized proportions as the museum's leadership failed to deliver.

In late 2011, AMOA merged with contemporary arts center Arthouse.

If you'd like to participate in “A Clean, Well-Lighted Place” by reading a text, contact acwlp@texasbiennial.org.

Readings of texts by Hickey are welcome, but not required. Edits to the Wikipedia article on Hemingway's story are also encouraged.

More info at www.texasbiennial.org.



The former Austin Museum of Art at 823 Congress.