

# Into The Light

Feb 13th, 2009 | By [Sam](#) | Category: [bRILLIANT Blog](#)

(Part I of II)

By Jacob Roeschley



## **Suzanne Deal Booth and James Turrell**

The first art piece Suzanne Deal Booth shows me upon entering her riverside home in Austin is the James Turrell installation in her dining room. At first glance, it merely looks like a frameless magenta rectangle hung on the wall. Moving closer, though, I realize that it is not an object mounted on the wall, but, rather, a shallow space cut into it. The vibrant color, which changes throughout the day, is produced not from paint but L.E.D. lights projected onto a plane beyond the wall, creating an illusionary two-dimensional effect from the three-dimensional installation.

This theme of space and the physicality of light often appears in Turrell's work. He comes from a generation of West Coast artists who rose to prominence in the 1960s as the "California Light and Space Movement." For over 40 years, he has used light and sky rather than paint and canvas to create his art. From his light-projection pieces to performance art to his magnum opus, the work-in-progress Roden Crater—a 400,000-year-old, two-mile-wide extinct volcano near Flagstaff, Arizona—his work invites viewers to experience light and space in a new way. Deal Booth, a Texas native, with her husband David owns one of the largest Turrell collections in the country, including another awe-inspiring installation in the office lobby of David's investment management company, Dimensional Fund Advisors in

Austin. “It changes our perception of space dramatically,” Deal Booth says of Turrell’s artwork.

While studying at Rice University in her twenties, Deal Booth came under the tutelage of Houston’s prided art collector and philanthropist, Dominique de Menil. As founder of the Menil Collection and the Rothko Chapel in Houston as well as her role bringing the Dalai Lama to the United States in 1979, de Menil was instrumental in acquainting Texas with a new brand of culture. She became an inspirational mentor for Deal Booth while at Rice, and then later, when Deal Booth lived with her for two years in New York City while attending graduate school. “She was such a model of what ultimate patronage is,” says Deal Booth.



### **Suzanne Deal Booth**

Like her mentor, Deal Booth has long been committed to promoting art and cultural heritage around the world. Deal Booth, who recently moved back to Texas from Los Angeles, serves on several historical and cultural boards around the world, including the Humanities Advisory Board at Rice, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, and the American Academy in Rome. Her background also includes work as a conservator at the Centre National d’Art et de Culture Georges Pompidou in Paris; founding a boutique publishing company, Orsini Press; and the Friends of Heritage Preservation, a non-profit group dedicated to protecting and preserving cultural heritage around the world. Partnering with several organizations and institutions, the FOHP raises awareness toward endangered works, artifacts, and sites. With 29 preservation and conservation projects spanning four continents, the organization has helped restore works from an 18th century chapel in San Miguel, Mexico, to old master paintings and sculptures in Europe, as well as Buddhist Temples in India, and the modern concrete sculptures of Donald Judd in Marfa.

“I think this is something that comes out of a tradition in Texas—collecting and art patronage that is very strong and has quite a pedigree line,” Turrell explains. “To make an art scene, it always starts with the collectors. This is how a scene begins and starts to grow, and it’s well underway in Texas. You see that in music in Austin, and you see it in art in Houston in a very big way. It’s impressive to watch.”