**Suzanne Deal Booth**

***A tribute from Veronica Roberts, John and Jill Freidenrich Director, Cantor Arts Center, Stanford University (and friends!)***

Anyone who has spent time with Suzanne can attest: it is always unforgettable and unfailingly fabulous. When she’s not on a beautiful adventure of her own—art or otherwise—she’s busy creating exquisite spaces and memorable cultural experiences for the rest of us. And like a true Texan, there’s always another seat at her table.

Suzanne was set on her path while a student at Rice University in Houston, working under the tutelage of Dominique de Menil, and like Dominique, she has always thought big. Suzanne helped bring a Turrell Skyspace to her beloved alma mater, Rice; she ensured that the Rothko Chapel at the Menil received a much-needed welcome house; and near and dear to my heart, she was instrumental in realizing *Austin*, Ellsworth Kelly’s transcendent and joyful chapel of light at the Blanton Museum. As our friend, artist Deborah Roberts, puts it: “What I respect about Suzanne is that she helps bridge the gap between the artistic community and the general public. Her philanthropic devotion fosters a deeper understanding of different cultures and ideas which is invaluable to society.”

Very few contemporary art supporters have training in art conservation, and something I most admire about Suzanne is how far her interests go back in time. In addition to championing contemporary artists, she is devoted to history, and founded Friends of Historic Preservation in 1998. Their work spans centuries of cultural heritage, from an architectural retrofit of a Napoleonic coffee house in Venice to the preservation of Donald Judd’s concrete sculptures in Marfa, as well ancient traditions like a stone carving training program they supported in Jordan for Syrian refugees.

But I haven’t shared enough about Suzanne’s adventurous spirit! At her core, underneath her insatiable curiosity and commitment to excellence, is a fun person. Of course we’ve spent countless hours together inside Kelly’s chapel, and at museums she loves like LACMA and the Menil, but Suzanne is also the person who introduced me to swimming in a cenote, who was always ready to meet at Barton Springs, or two-step until dawn at The White Horse, a honky-tonk in Austin.

One of her oldest friends and -partners-in-crime is the inimitable artist and Houston native Mel Chin. If anyone can capture (and match!) Suzanne’s sense of adventure and coolness, it’s Mel:

Back then, on a Texas Juneteenth night, we jumped out of our seats spontaneously without any cue except the wail of an accordion, click of a washboard, and exuberant Creole command from the King of Zydeco, Clifton Cheiner. We filled the aisle of that outdoor theater, busting moves with a young prince from Senegal.

It is fortunate to have a friend who never puts on royal airs, who keeps proving that joy is to be shared and not constrained by protocol or class. It’s also good to have a comrade to back you up in spirit and action as you connive your passage through a super VIP line for the Miley-in-Miami Art Basel art party without the required ultra-special colored wrist ribbon.

Since we leapt from our seats, Suzanne has constantly moved to expand her knowledge, deepen her sensitivity, but seems to have always known that snooty, and lack of representation of people of color, ain’t never where it’s at. She’s always known that to include and care are the hip things to nurture the heart and art.

So cheers to Skowhegan, and to you, Suzanne, for what you both do to ensure that artists are supported for all they bring to our communities, and for bringing so many of us along on your memorable adventures.