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Rice builds bridges with local museum community

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Providing a dynamic union of art and education is the goal of Rice University's newest partnership with the museum community of Houston. Rice University-Museum Collaborative Partnership representatives celebrated their union and joint ventures at a luncheon March 15 at Cohen House.

Partnership representatives include the President's Office; the School of Humanities, including the departments of Visual Arts and Art History and the Rice Art Gallery; the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; the Menil Collection; and the Glassell School of Art.

The partnership, led primarily by the School of Humanities, brings together Houston's museums, with their wealth of original art, photography and unique documentation, and Rice's scholarly and educational resources to develop programs and studies of Houston's unique artistic holdings.

Suzanne Deal Booth '77, who received her bachelor of arts degree in art history from Rice and has many years of experience in art conservation, made a significant gift to help launch Rice's participation in the partnership.

"Suzanne Deal Booth's major gift to the School of Humanities launches a series of joint ventures with the museum community in Houston," said Gary Wihl, dean of the School of Humanities, the Francis Moody Newman Professor in Humanities and professor of English. "It is the culmination of a year's worth of planning and discussion. Suzanne's gift will enhance and develop every



Photo by Jeff Fitlow

Members of the Rice University-Museum Collaborative Partnership celebrated the union at a March luncheon. Pictured are, standing from left, Joe Manca, Rice; Kim Davenport, Rice; Brad Boucher '69, Glassell School of Art; Joe Havel, Glassell School of Art; Karin Broker, Rice; Josef Helfenstein, Menil Collection; Gwen Goffe, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; Bill Camfield, Rice; and Liz Howard '76, Rice; seated from left, Rice University President David Leebron, Suzanne Deal Booth '77 and Gary Wihl, dean of humanities.

aspect of the visual arts at Rice University. Greater ties to the museum community will create opportunities for new research of national and international caliber, expand our offerings in studio arts and give our unique Rice Gallery a much greater presence in the art world. Suzanne's gift is the capstone of a building effort that will have lasting benefits to our students and faculty and to Rice as a whole in connection with President David Leebron's new vision of our role in Houston."

After obtaining a master of arts degree and certificate in art conservation from New York University, Booth began her work at the J. Paul Getty Museum in California and subsequently spent several years organizing international conservation education projects at the Getty Conservation Institute. She is currently an art consultant and founder of the Friends of Heritage Preservation, a small, private association of members based in Los Angeles, dedicated to the recognition, preservation and conservation of artistic and cultural heritage.

Booth has a longstanding interest in the Houston arts community. While a work-study student at Rice, she was an assistant to the late Dominique de Menil, founder with her husband, John, of the Menil Collection that houses their vast art collection. At the time Booth was working with her, Menil was organizing exhibitions of her art collection at Rice's "Art Barn."

As an alumna, Booth has been actively involved in the Rice Art Gallery and serves as a member of the Humanities Advisory Board and on the University Art Committee.

"I'm delighted to be in a position to donate to this initiative," Booth said. "It's a great way to expand the artistic richness of the Houston community and strengthen the city's cultural and community ties with Rice."

Possible future joint undertakings include appointing fellows from the Glassell School to teach courses in the Department of Visual Arts; the joint production of major scholarship in the field of art history and through symposia and exhibits; establishing postdoctoral fellows to conduct research on specific holdings at the museums; jointly sponsored lectures and publications; and establishing two new positions at the Rice Gallery, curator of education and director of outreach.