

Crystal City

Lia Halloran and Sarah Strauss have created a "cave" of huge "crystals," on display at Artisphere

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"The question we've had all week long," says Lia Halloran of the large "crystals" currently on display at Arlington's [Artisphere](#), "[is] what are these made of?"

Indeed, the crystals baffle people -- in part because they appear to be too large. "When you see them, it's stunning to imagine that they are actually made out of wood," says the artist, who worked with Sarah Strauss to make the replicas out of a lightweight wood composite using 3D modeling technologies.

The pair, who formed the new collaborative group Collider, were inspired by 500,000-year-old natural crystals discovered a decade ago in Mexico. "The Cave of Crystals is underneath one of the largest silver mines in the world," says Halloran. "[Before] they discovered it, our understanding of crystals was that some of the largest were only eight to ten feet long. [But in Mexico] the longest crystal is 37 feet long. The sense of scale is just so out of proportion with our perception, it creates this just unbelievable sense of discovery and awe."

"Folding Unfolding: Collider" is the first time Halloran, a photographer, painter and fine-art professor in Los Angeles, and Strauss, head of an architecture firm in Brooklyn, have officially worked together since graduate school, where they bonded over the wonders of nature and science intersecting with art. Or as the two lesbians' mission statement puts it: "Their work is a result of over a decade of conversations about science, energy, gravity, lesbians and skateboarding."

"I taught Sarah how to skateboard when we were at Yale," says Halloran, whose photographic series "Dark Skate," also at Artisphere, features photos she took while skateboarding in the dark. And lesbians? "We only let lesbians work on our stuff," laughs Halloran, adding about the Collider exhibit: "It was all built by girls!"

"Folding Unfolding: Collider" is on display through Jan. 12 at Artisphere, 1101 Wilson Blvd., Arlington. Call 703-875-1100 or visit [artisphere.com](#).