

## Porcelain by Edward Marshall Boehm

In recognition of the important part that art has had in the Mayo Clinic environment since the original Mayo Building was finished in 1914, *Mayo Clinic Proceedings* will feature some of the numerous works of art displayed throughout the buildings and grounds on the Mayo Clinic campuses.

Edward Marshall Boehm (pronounced Beam) born in Baltimore, Maryland, in 1913 (died 1969), was a self-taught porcelain maker. Because his parents separated before his birth and his mother died when he was 7, Boehm was raised in an orphanage<sup>1</sup> known as the McDonogh School, a “farm school for indigent ‘boys of good character,’”<sup>2</sup> where he lived until the age of 16.<sup>1</sup> He studied farm management at the University of Maryland,<sup>1</sup> working mainly with cattle. He led a rehabilitation program for the US Air Force after World War II, where he taught Natural History and discovered his interest in clay through its arts and crafts room<sup>3</sup> and was the manager of Longacres Farm in Maryland for many years.<sup>1</sup> After marrying in 1944, he and his wife moved to Trenton, New Jersey,<sup>3</sup> the permanent location of his porcelain studio.<sup>4</sup> He also had a 6-month apprenticeship with the studio of sculptor Herbert Haseltine.<sup>1,3</sup> One of the greatest honors afforded to Boehm was having a museum wing at the Vatican in Rome named after him, the only American to achieve such a tribute.<sup>1,3</sup>

Boehm attributed his attraction to porcelain most to its sense of timelessness. He stated:

Porcelain is a permanent creation. If properly processed and fired, its colors will never change; and it can be subjected to extreme temperatures without damage. It is a medium in which one can portray the everlasting beauty of form and color of wildlife and nature.<sup>5</sup>

Mayo Clinic’s collection of *Boehm Porcelain* reflects both this ideal as well as Boehm’s



amazing talent for capturing the delicacy and beauty of nature. From the powerful wings of the swan to the fragile petals of the lotus flower, detail and realism abound. Especially attractive is the clarity, truth, and consistency of the vibrant colors present on each bird’s breast or Monarch butterfly’s wings. Boehm’s skill is also revealed in the intricate detail of each variegated plant frond or avian wing feather.

A gift from Dr and Mrs Milton M. Hurwitz, *Boehm Porcelain* is located on the subway level of the Siebens Building in Rochester, Minnesota.

**Margaret R. Wentz, BA**

1. Edward Marshall Boehm. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edward\\_Marshall\\_Boehm](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edward_Marshall_Boehm). Accessed April 18, 2013.
2. Behind the Scenes Tour of the McDonogh School. <http://www.baltimoreheritage.org/2012/05/behind-the-scenes-tour-of-the-mcdonogh-school/>. Accessed April 18, 2013.
3. Discovery through the beauty of nature. Arts and Leisure website. <http://arts.hersamacom.com/5289/discovery-through-the-beauty-of-nature/>. Accessed October 14, 2013.
4. Boehm Sculpture Studio website. <http://boehmporcelain.com/>. Accessed April 23, 2013.
5. Fine Art Collector: <http://fineartcollector.info/edward-marshall-boehm-porcelain-sculpture/>. Accessed April 18, 2013.