Permit Bowl by Charles Miner

In recognition of the important part that art has had in the Mayo Clinic environment since the original Mayo Clinic 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.

Charles Miner, founder of the Tesuque Glassworks studio and hot shop in Tesuque, New Mexico, was born on December 7, 1947, in Modesto, California. He studied at Humbolt State College in Columbia, California, from 1969-1970, and Stanislaus State College in Turlock, California, from 1970-1972. He furthered his glass education subsequently at the Pilchuck School of Glass in Stanwood, Washington, from 1990-1991. Miner’s studio was founded in 1975, and it offers educational opportunities and also hosts a fine arts glassworks gallery and coop, where artists trade skills in exchange for use of the equipment [personal communication September 3, 2014]. Although he does glass blowing there, Miner specializes in the process known as lost wax casting and the frit style of glasswork. This process starts with carving the intended image out of a block of wax and covering it in a vented clay mold, which allows the wax to evaporate during the firing process. This then leaves a negative mold from which the sculpture is ultimately created. Finally, the mold is filled with powdered glass and fired in a kiln until the glass melts into the mold.

This process is quite lengthy, depending on the size of the work, and the temperature of the kiln reaches up to 1600 degrees. Miner noted that this particular piece remained in the kiln for 2 months [personal communication September 3, 2014].

Permit Bowl (14 X 23 X 23 inches) portrays a school of fish rapidly swimming in turbulent waters. The frit process and the color of the glass powder chosen by Miner lends the look of an anciently carved piece of jade to this piece. One could imagine finding Permit Bowl among the treasures of an archeological dig site or within the household contents of a newly discovered Chinese royal court ruin. This is deceptive since Permit Bowl is dated from 2013. The opacity and density of the glass also offers the impression of weight and solidity of stone, rather than glass. Fins and tails project around the edge of the bowl, adding to the sense of life and movement within the sculpture.

Permit Bowl is located on the 16th floor of the Gonda Building in Rochester, Minnesota, and was a gift of the Edward F. Anixter Family Foundation in honor of Edith Anixter.

Margaret R. Wentz