Recognizing the contribution art has had in the Mayo Clinic environment since the original Mayo Clinic Building was finished in 1914, Mayo Clinic Proceedings features some of the numerous works of art displayed throughout the buildings and grounds on Mayo Clinic campuses as interpreted by the author.

Harriet Whitney Frismuth (1880-1980) was born on September 17, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. As a child, she moved with her mother and sisters to Paris, France, living there for 6 years and alternating between France and Switzerland during the winters.

It was in Switzerland where Frismuth was introduced to sculpting through an acquainted sculptor’s wife, who perhaps also was a sculptor. She subsequently studied sculpture under many masters, most notably, Auguste Rodin, who taught her to focus on silhouette and to consider the transition from one mood to another through movement. Interestingly, she also performed dissection at the College of Physicians and Surgeons, in New York, New York.

Frismuth became best known for her skillful rendering of the female figure and preferred dancers as her models. She also was vocal about her dislike of modern art: “It is so easy to do the ugly and distort beauty. Eccentricity and caprice are no substitute for style and mastery in modeling. Beauty is everywhere in this world, it always has been. Maybe today’s eyes have not been trained to see, for if the artist has an appreciation and understanding of nature, he cannot go far afield from truth and beauty, which are the pillars of great art.”

Call of the Sea, a 46x20-inch bronze, in which the model was a young dance student, was originally cast in 1923 as part of a fountain in a swimming pool on which the opposite side contained a sculpture of Pan, the Greek god of the wild. Frismuth noted this lent the feeling of being “called to come on over” and spoke to her own attraction to the sea. It is fitting that the installation of Call of the Sea at Mayo Clinic places it across from another well-known sculpture—Boy With Dolphin.

Call of the Sea was gifted to Mayo Clinic in 2017, and is located on the southeast corner of the Mayo Building on Mayo Clinic’s campus in Rochester, Minnesota.

Margaret R. Wentz, BA