

# ARTIST SPOTLIGHT

## Carey Netherton



Talented sculptor, thinker/philosopher, Carey Netherton manages the Minnetonka Center for the Arts Sculpture Studio and teaches three metal sculpture classes (page 15). He is smart, even keeled and easy to be around. In a short time, it's easy to recognize that he's a hands-on fellow, most comfortable doing something, happiest with some sort of tool or material in his hand.

The product of a creative mother and a pragmatic, factory-working father, Carey grew up in east-central rural Illinois with plenty of projects and creative encouragement. "Whatever toys we didn't have, we made," says Carey, "I'd wake up on Saturday morning and build a new spaceship, which was much more fun." Through junior and senior high, his art teacher mentored him through the summers, trading work on farm projects for art projects.

At Eastern Illinois University in Charleston, Ill., he realized his love for sculpture with tools in his hands, thinking, like an inner sigh, "This is my life, this is what I love doing." When he shifted his full focus to the arts, his parents and mentor quickly affirmed his decision. His first studio was part of the garage, partitioned off by his father. While he worked on a piece for a three-dimensional design class, "I realized that I was doing my homework – and I was having a ball! I wanted to stay out there all night." Throwing himself completely into the art program, Carey created giant sculptures for the All Student Art Show and was first to take best in show as a sophomore and then reclaim the title three years in a row. "That was a huge affirmation," says Carey, who graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in Studio Art (3-D) and Philosophy.

His art was always meticulously planned and executed, until 1998 when he created *Griot's Charm*, his first intuitive piece. (A griot is a West African storyteller and keeper of the oral traditions.) Carey started tinkering with a cast-off horn form, brought in some rope and let the rest of the sculpture come together intuitively. It was a revelation and turning point for his art. Like many of Carey's sculptures, *Griot's Charm* has an

animistic quality, standing on its own legs. "Personally, I've never liked using bases on pieces," says Carey. "I want the sculptures to seem like they actually live in our world."

Between undergrad and graduate school, Carey lived for a bit in Champaign, Ill., with good friend and ceramic artist, Ernest Miller before moving to the East Coast to work at the Johnson Atelier Technical Institute of Sculpture in 2000. At that time, it was one of the most prestigious art foundries in the nation and artists came from around the world for the apprenticeship program. Carey had the opportunity to work with sculpture greats like Kiki Smith, Charles Ray and on posthumous works by George Segal. "We were kind of like Oopma Loompas in the professional art world," says Carey. "There are pieces in major museums that I had a hand in making."

After receiving a M.F. A. in Sculpture from Southern Illinois University in Carbondale, Ill., Carey worked with St. Paul public artist Craig David carving large-scale granite pieces. One, a 14-foot fountain created from pylons of granite with glass inserts, can be found on Raspberry Island under the Wabasha Bridge in St. Paul.

"I've spent a lot of time helping make large-scale art and public art for other artists," says Carey. "I felt like it was time to see if I could find a voice for making public art myself." He's landed an Artist Initiative Grant (his second) from the Minnesota State Arts Board this year to do just that. "It's radically different to be a public artist than a gallery artist – the factors of consideration multiply." This grant will enable Carey to navigate through that transformative process. At the end of a year, he will have six fully-designed public sculptures rendered in 12- to 14-inch maquettes, visually placed in six theoretical sites in a complete, ready to propose, presentation.

Carey connected with the Minnetonka Center for the Arts in 2009 through his friend Ernest Miller, a ceramics artist-instructor (see his classes on pages 10-11). Like the Art Center, Carey strongly believes

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  - Wood shop with table saw, band saw and variety of hand tools
  - An outdoor workspace to take advantage of nice weather and for constructing larger works
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that the arts are an essential component of society. Instead of going to the movies for \$80, take the family to an art crawl and spend \$50 on a piece of art, or \$20 on two or three. "That money does so much good," says Carey.

"It helps the artists pay their bills but also makes them feel appreciated and keeps them going. And the more artists we keep afloat, the greater the richness of our society."

