Marilyn Codding Boysen

“Totem of My Obsession”

I graduated Ringling School of Art in the mid 60’s and then worked as a commercial artist in Orlando, Florida for ten years. I participated in local art festivals but ultimately found fulfillment in studio work focusing on three major series with fiber art to include shibori work with full sized kimonos using indigo dyes in the mid 1980’s. My work transitioned in the 1990’s to creating full headdress masks in a series entitled “Southern Illinois Woodland Masks” which are in the permanent collection at Cedarhurst Center for the Arts in Mt Vernon, IL. I also created a series of masks with intricate beading and feathers in the colors and textures of the four seasons which are in my private collection.

One day last summer while organizing, I made a mental list of the things that would be considered trash to include dryer sheets, florescent shop light bulbs, and a large amount of wooden laser cut drops given to me by my friend Molly Alter. In playing with the wood pieces, an idea formed to cover a shop light bulb in the style of a totem. The dryer sheets were used to give the glass surface more texture to hold the pieces of wood. This process quickly became very addictive and challenging in finding ways to fit the pieces together in the shape of medallions and then filling the gaps with tiny, tiny round ones.

The design is simple and straight forward, the texture is exquisite, the color soothing, and the overall totem is opulent. Naturally, the first question is, “how long did it take?”. I wish that I had kept track of the hours put into the piece, but I worked on it most evenings for two months. The second question is, “Will I make another one?”. Yes, maybe, but not anytime soon. If and when I do, I will keep a time sheet.