



SHOAL OF THE SOUL

CATEGORY: INTERIOR FEATURE UNDER \$50K - LOCATION: MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA

Shoal of the Soul

- A Nature-Inspired Luminary -

A family's lifelong fascination with ocean life inspired this custom-made artisan luminary. From childhood, life beneath the ocean's surface captured these clients' imagination and set them on a lasting journey to explore the hidden places beneath Earth's waters. That passion became the inspiration for a dynamic, illuminated, ocean-themed sculpture.

The concept centers on a glowing orb drawing a shoal of fish into a suspended vortex—an image that recalls the sunbeams the clients have watched streaming through the heart of large, circling schools of fish. The light at the center represents the soul, or hidden nature, that connects and illuminates us all.

The primary design challenge was to translate that fluid, living motion into a rigid, self-contained architectural element. The result is a bespoke luminary sculpture that holds the beauty of a marine ecosystem in mid-motion.



PRECISION CRAFTSMANSHIP: FROM RIGID MATERIALS TO FLUID FORMS



The Homeowner's cat is mesmerized by the vortex of fish as he thoroughly inspects the workmanship. He stands guard to make sure no fish escape.

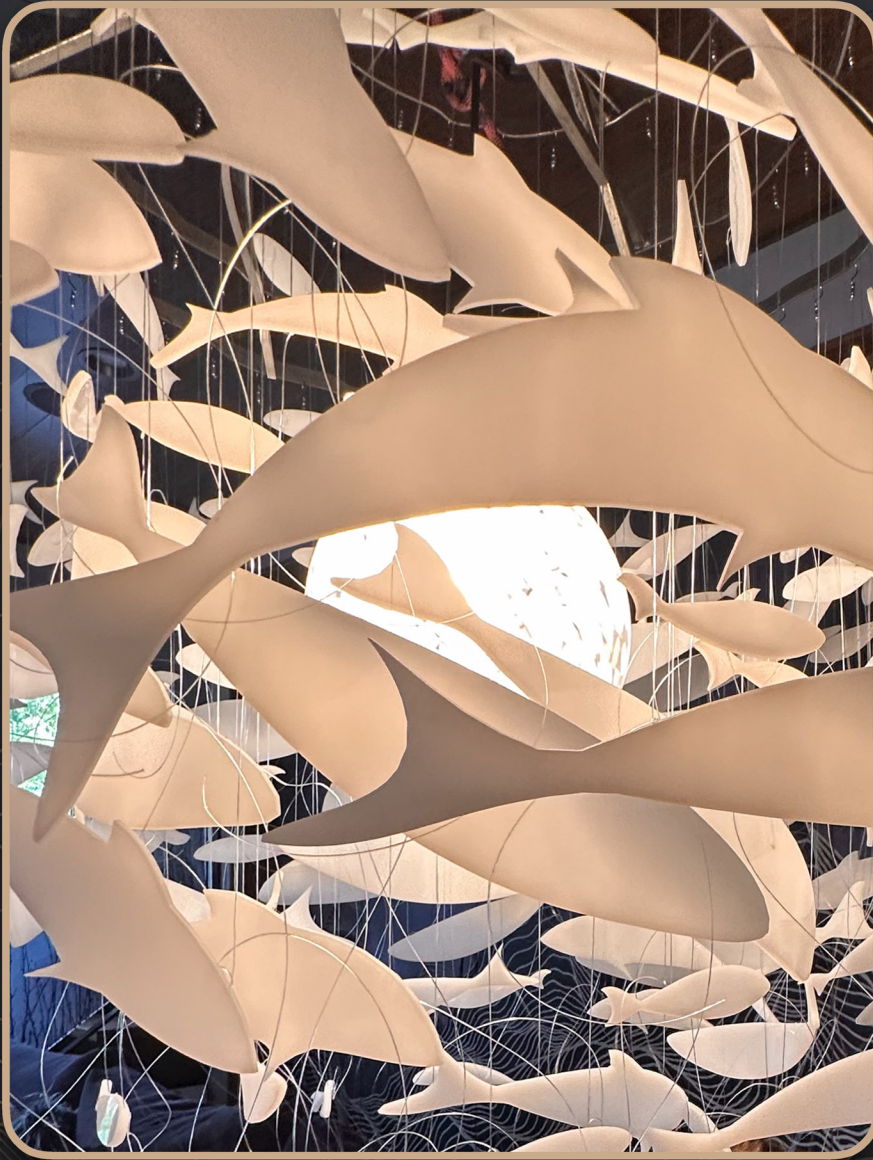
Material selection was essential to the ethereal glow throughout the piece. The blown-glass globe has a natural textural flow that follows the movement of the fish; its patterning and translucence are almost jellyfish-like. The individual fish were cut from translucent white acrylic, chosen for its light-transmission and refraction qualities. Sharp corners were eased along every perimeter so the edges would feel and read as soft rather than sharp and mechanical. To suggest current and motion, each piece was heat-formed by hand and bent to a specific circumference matching its place in the corresponding rings and with added twists to emulate the natural motion of swimming fish. That conversion of a rigid sheet into fluid, dimensional forms was what allowed the sculpture to evoke a school of fish overlapping in the light.

THE RIPPLING STEEL FRAME

Designing the mounting system required careful planning. The structure had to be robust enough to carry the piece, yet remain a visible design element in its own right—echoing the swell and ripple of an ocean surface. A custom steel frame was fabricated in-house from laser-cut plate, rolled into concentric rings and welded to a central hub. The suspension layout was mapped in advance: small holes were placed in the rings at exact coordinates so the support wires would hold each fish in its intended orbit. A hand-applied rustic silver-leaf finish was then added to the metal as the final touch.



Sculpting the Vortex: Balancing Scale and Spacing



The most demanding phase of the project was the physical assembly and the artistic shaping of the shoal around the central blown-glass globe. Nearly 200 fish of varying sizes and shapes had to read as a single, natural school. Because each piece was uniquely sized and bent to a different circumference, hanging them required an organic orchestration of height, spacing, and scale. Every fish was strung individually and adjusted by hand until the school formed a coherent, swirling vortex. Placement and rotation were then fine-tuned so the visual weight of the fixture stayed in balance and the warm light from the core cascaded across the overlapping translucent forms.



What began as a family's lifelong love of the ocean became a bespoke artisan luminary: a glowing glass heart drawing nearly two hundred hand-formed fish into a suspended vortex. Every design and material decision served a single purpose: to hold living motion in a rigid, self-contained form. Assembled and tuned by hand, the piece does more than illuminate a room. It gives lasting shape to the clients' earliest wonder—the sunbeams they once watched pour through large circling schools of fish—and to the quiet understanding at the center of the work: that a shared, hidden nature connects us all.

IT WAS MADE FOR



IN THE ROOM IT WAS MADE FOR