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Carl Milles (1875-1955)

In 1931 Swedish sculptor Carl Milles came to Cranbrook Academy of Art in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan as its first sculptor-in-residence. He stayed at Cranbrook with his wife Olga until 1951. The Academy was formally founded in 1932 with architect Eliel Saarinen as its first president. Cranbrook Academy of Art is a 150-student graduate program that grants master of fine arts degrees in nine disciplines as well as master of architecture degrees.

At Saarinen's recommendation, Cranbrook founder George Booth enticed Milles to Cranbrook, and Booth ultimately agreed to purchase a significant selection of his work in 1934. Strategically placed by Saarinen and Booth around Cranbrook's 319-acre campus, the bronze mythical figures created by Milles became nodal forms between the architecture and landscape. His sculptures are anthropomorphic elements that contrast with the simple geometric structures and surrounding sweep and color of Cranbrook's National Historic Landmark campus.

At approximately 80 pieces, Cranbrook has the **second largest collection of Milles sculptures** outside Millesgarden, the home of Carl and Olga Milles near Stockholm, Sweden. Millesgarden was built in 1908, the same year Cranbrook founders George and Ellen Booth built their arts and crafts manor home Cranbrook House in Bloomfield Hills, Mich. Among the most visible Carl Milles Cranbrook sculptures are:

- *Jonah and the Whale*, at the north end of Academy Way, and his first American work, 1932
- *Orpheus Fountain*, in front of Cranbrook Academy of Art and Art Museum, 1936
- *Tritons and Mermaids*, outside Cranbrook Institute of Science, 1930s
- *Triton Pools* outside Cranbrook Academy of Art and Art Museum, ca. 1934

Carl Milles studied in Paris and was accepted into his first Salon exhibition in 1899. Shortly thereafter he worked in the studio of Auguste Rodin. Milles won a sculptural competition for the Stockholm Concert Hall with his exuberant interpretation of the Orpheus myth. The completed monument includes eight figures, their heads slightly cocked as they strain to hear his music. Another casting of the eight figures was installed at Cranbrook in 1938 where the harmonious sounds of splashing water evoke the songs of the absent Orpheus.

Cranbrook Educational Community received the Michigan Historic Preservation Network 2003 Cultural Landscape Award for restoration of the Carl Milles sculpture *Jonah and the Whale*, which depicts the whale from the Old Testament story and a very surprised Jonah. The two are rising from the ocean's spray and a school of fish. A replica of *Jonah and the Whale* can be found at Millesgarden in Sweden. The basin is decorated with bas-relief depicting Jonah's stay in the whale. The two Sea Life Urns (1929) on either side of the fountain are interpretations of the relief around the basin of the Poseidon fountain in Gothenburg, Sweden.

Carl and Olga Milles lived in a home adjoining Saarinen House, Cranbrook's Art Deco masterpiece, home of Eliel and Loja Saarinen and their children Eero and Pipsan Saarinen. Today Milles House is used for Cranbrook events and receptions. Tours of Saarinen House, and Cranbrook architecture and sculpture, are available from May through October. For details or to schedule a tour, please call 248 645.3361.

Cranbrook is an internationally renowned educational community dedicated to excellence in the arts, education and science. Cranbrook is located at 39221 Woodward Ave. in Bloomfield Hills, Mich. and comprises its Academy of Art, Art Museum, Institute of Science, Schools, House & Gardens and other affiliated cultural and educational programs.