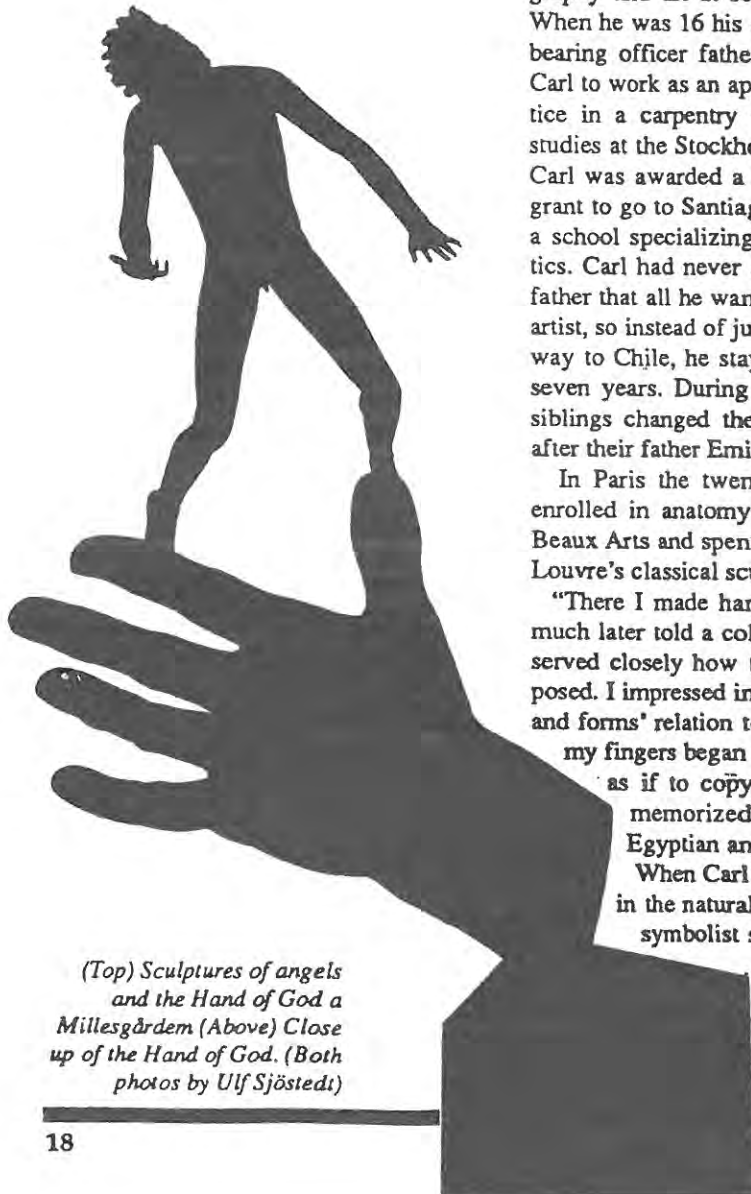


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# MILLES SCULPTURE



(Top) Sculptures of angels and the Hand of God at Millesgården (Above) Close up of the Hand of God. (Both photos by Ulf Sjöstedt)

When you travel in North America and in Sweden you are bound to come across a few Milles sculptures. Some are huge like the *Meeting of the Waters* in St Louis and the *Fountain of Faith* outside Washington D.C. or so prominent, like the *Orpheus Fountain* outside the Stockholm Concert Hall or the *Poseidon Fountain* in Gothenburg (on the cover), that you cannot miss them. Yet most of us know little about the artist behind them.

Carl Andersson was born on Midsummer Eve in 1875 in the countryside not far from the university town of Uppsala. He was a dreamer who loved to wander in the woods, and who only excelled in geography and art at school. When he was 16 his overbearing officer father put Carl to work as an apprentice in a carpentry workshop. Following studies at the Stockholm Technical School, Carl was awarded a 200 kronor travelling grant to go to Santiago in Chile to manage a school specializing in Swedish gymnastics. Carl had never dared to tell his strict father that all he wanted was to become an artist, so instead of just visiting Paris on the way to Chile, he stayed there for the next seven years. During this time he and his siblings changed their surname to Milles after their father Emil's nickname "Mille".

In Paris the twenty-two year old Carl enrolled in anatomy classes at Ecole des Beaux Arts and spent countless days in the Louvre's classical sculpture department.

"There I made hardly any sketches," he much later told a colleague. "Instead I observed closely how the statues were composed. I impressed in my memory the lines and forms' relation to one another. In time my fingers began to move involuntarily, as if to copy them. In this way I memorized the whole of the Egyptian and Greek collections."

When Carl Milles had a sculpture in the naturalistic impressionist and symbolist style of Auguste Rodin refused at the Salon, Rodin himself praised him and invited the Swedish artist to work in his studio.

Supporting himself as a cabinet-maker on the side, Milles eventually managed a sculpture accepted by the Salon and he received his first commission for a monument to Sten Sture in Uppsala.

In 1906 Carl Milles, newly married to the Austrian painter Olga Gramer, returned to Sweden. He had bought land on a hill overlooking Stockholm where he later constructed the manor Millesgården, the national romantic style villa that was currently under renovation. Now began a more active period with more and more commissions that would bring Milles fame. His work from this time is heavy and monumental like the massive sculpture of Gustav Vasa that you see at the Nordiska Museet.



At age 42 Milles becomes dissatisfied with his work and he destroys several works in progress in his Lidingö studio. He introduced a floating movement and a sense of lightness into his sculptures personified in "Sunlitter" in 1918. This sculpture became Milles' favourite, depicts a young girl sitting on a dolphin, and it is now the centerpiece of the Red Room in Millesgården.

The *Europe* fountain in Halmstad and the *Folke Filbyter* statue in Linköping were other steps in the development of his weightlessness. The gracious *Europe* and his horse are anatomically correct, but the movements strive upwards. In the *Europe* fountain with its seven nymphs they do not only strive upwards, but are designed to further emphasize the weightlessness. As Milles never used models, he was not constrained by reality.

The more success Carl Milles had, the more alienated he felt from his so-called envious Swedish colleagues. After prestigious exhibitions in France, Germany, and Michigan, Carl Milles took up residence to work and live at the Scandinavian inspired Cranbrook Academy of Art in Michigan. With a light teaching engagement, Carl Milles perfected his work in the studio with a 24-foot ceiling especially designed for him there. At Cranbrook, Milles was the inspiration for a generation of artists.

One of the works from this period is the enormous 50-ton Mexican white onyx statue in the three-storied dark blue Belgian marble lobby of the St Paul City Hall. The statue depicts five Indians sitting around a fire smoking their pipes of peace. "Out of that smoke of tobacco and fire arise in their imagination their god of peace, talking to them and all of the world."

The *God of Peace* was actually Milles' fourth try. His first submission was of the apostle *Saint Paul* (but the commissioners did not want a clerical theme), then of *Mississippi*, *Father of Waters* (which was impossible to cast in glass as the city fathers wanted) and then of a *doughboy* (as a peaceful soldier returning from war, but the local veterans cried for a more traditional war hero with blood stains, guns and bayonets). When the doughboy was rejected, Carl Milles left on a ferry for Oklahoma, where on a chance visit to a tribe of Indians, he witnessed the peace pipe ceremony. His submission was accepted and while many of St Paul's citizens stood in food lines in the midst of the great depression, local

craftsmen started work on the controversial \$100 000 statue, built in 98 sections.

During the war Carl and Olga had become U.S. citizens but in 1951 they left North America for good and moved to Rome, where the American Academy had offered Milles a studio. The couple spent their summers at Millesgården and it was here that Carl Milles died shortly after his 80th birthday in September 1955.

Towards the end Carl Milles was almost blind and could not see his magnificent sculptures that were as a rule designed to be viewed against the sun and the sky or together with spraying water in the fountains.

The two best places to view Carl Milles' work are the Cranbrook Academy in Bloomfield Hills in Michigan and Millesgården in Stockholm, that Carl and Olga donated to the Swedish people in 1936. In the U.S.A. there are also fountains and sculptures at the University of Illinois' Allerton Park, Fairmont Park in Philadelphia, at Murrels Inlet in South Carolina, in Wilmington, Delaware and many other places including the Art Institute of Chicago, Des Moines Art

Gallery, the Worcester Art Museum and the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art in Kansas City where Milles' last work *St. Martin of Tours* (1955) is placed.

During his lifetime, Milles received numerous awards and honours including an honorary doctoral degree from Yale, and an honorary membership in the Royal Academy in London. He is venerated in Sweden, but Carl Milles is only now gaining the recognition he deserves as a truly international artist who made significant contributions to the history of sculpture.



(On the right) *The Orpheus Fountain in Stockholm with one of the nymphs (on the left)*



(On the right) *The towering 36 foot high God of Peace in the St. Paul City Hall*

