

World-class lineage

Carl Milles' influence on local artist Betty Davenport Ford seen in Fairplex exhibit

By Rick Mortensen | Staff Writer

THE EXHIBIT opening today at the Millard Sheets Gallery at Fairplex in Pomona not only pays tribute to Swedish sculptor Carl Milles, but also shows the influence an established master has on those who study at his or her feet.

In his teens, Milles worked in Auguste Rodin's studio, and Milles' early pieces, which line the walls of the Sheets Gallery, bear traces of Rodin's impressionistic style.

By the time he created his most famous works, Milles had abandoned impressionistic sculpture in favor of detailed figures in the style of ancient Greek or Renaissance sculpture, and he became known for his fountains.

Toward the end of his life, he created sleek, rail-thin figures paired down to their most essential parts. The Sheets Gallery displays bronze scale models from all three periods.

It also displays a half-dozen sculptures by Claremont resident Betty Davenport Ford, who studied sculpture at the Cranbrook Academy of Art in Michigan during Milles' tenure there as artist-in-residence. Ford remembers watching Milles work while she studied there in the late 1940s, and his

MASTER OF FORM: CARL MILLES

When: Today through March 31.

Gallery hours: 11 a.m. to 5 p.m., Tuesday through Sunday.

Where: Millard Sheets Gallery at Fairplex, 1101 W. McKinley Ave., Pomona.

Tickets: \$5 voluntary donation.

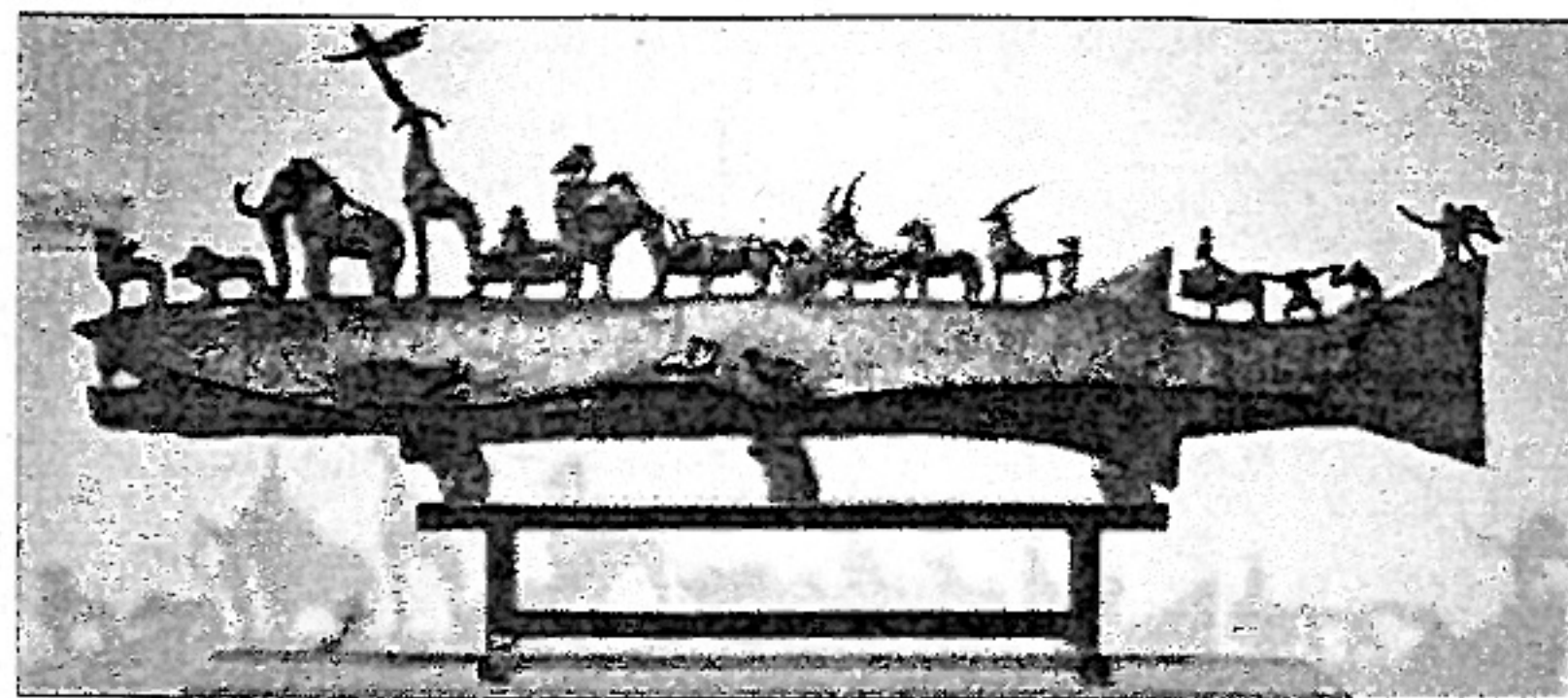
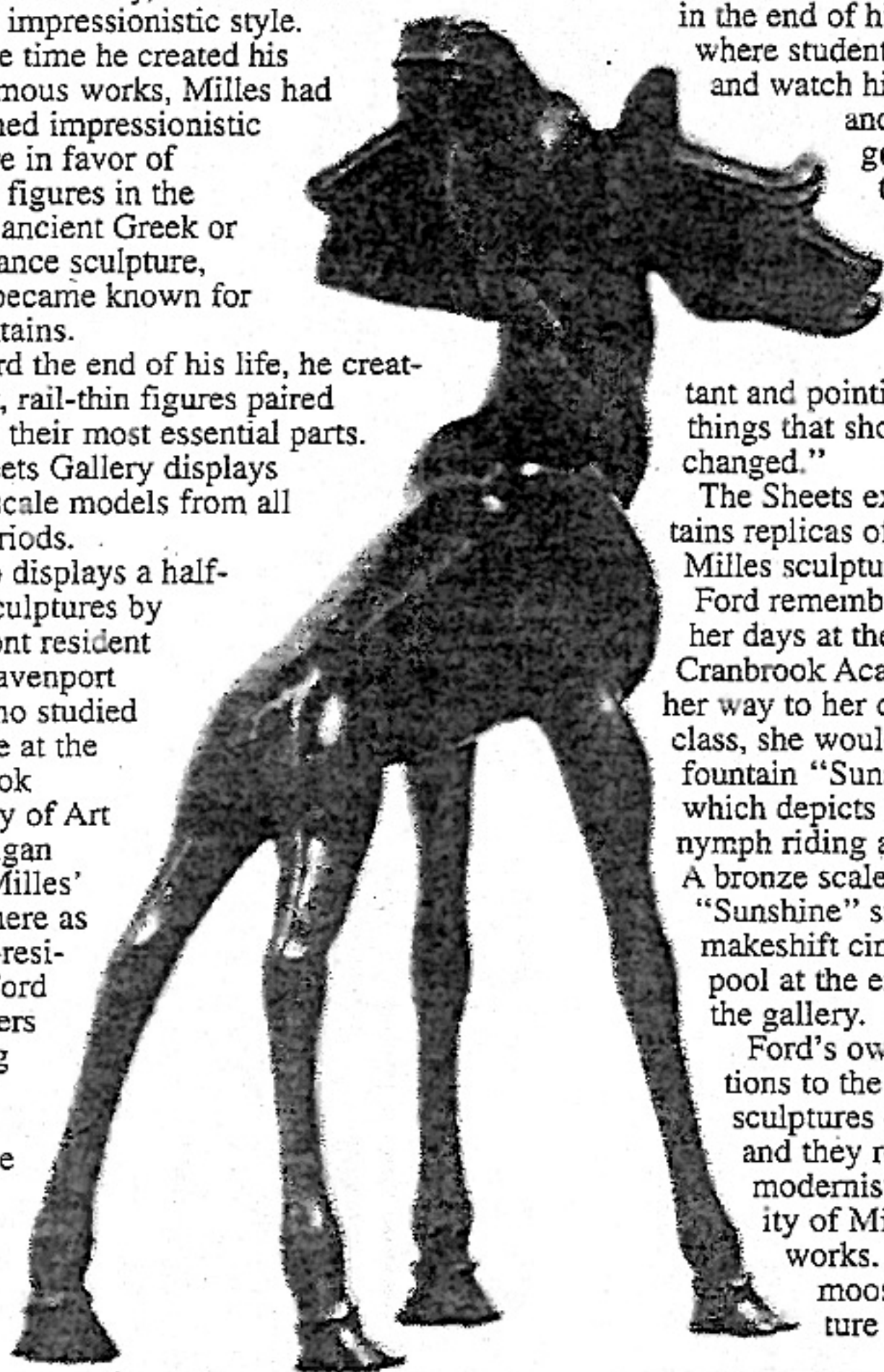
influence on her work is unmistakable.

"I had known his work for years before I went to Cranbrook, and I was glad of all the contact that I had with him," she said. "There was a window in the end of his studio where students could go and watch him at work, and I would go and look through this window and see him talking with his assis-

tant and pointing out things that should be changed."

The Sheets exhibit contains replicas of many Milles sculptures that Ford remembers from her days at the Cranbrook Academy. On her way to her ceramics class, she would pass the fountain "Sunshine," which depicts a water nymph riding a dolphin. A bronze scale replica of "Sunshine" sits in a makeshift cinder block pool at the entrance to the gallery.

Ford's own contributions to the exhibit are sculptures of animals, and they reflect the modernistic simplicity of Milles' later works. Milles' moose sculpture displays



PHOTOS BY TERRY PIERSON/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

TOP: Sculptor Betty Davenport Ford of Claremont stands next to "Jungle Cats," one of her works on display at Millard Sheets Gallery at Fairplex. **ABOVE:** Carl Milles' sculpture "Creation." **LEFT:** "Young Moose" by Milles.

the same angular sensibility as Ford's cloud leopard and wild boar.

"That's my adaptation to the modern trend; you sharpen your edges, flatten your surfaces, and you simplify your form," Ford said. "I consider

it somewhat simplified from the actual subject, but I do like subject matter, and I feel that pieces should contain subject matter. I often start with

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