

# Alexander Calder

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Whitney Museum of American Art



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# Alexander Calder

*A Concentration of Works from the Permanent Collection  
of the Whitney Museum of American Art*

*Patterson Sims*

*Associate Curator, Permanent Collection*

*A 50th Anniversary Exhibition  
February 17 – May 3, 1981*

Alexander Calder is one of a series of exhibitions celebrating the 50th Anniversary of the Whitney Museum of American Art. Each exhibition concentrates on the work of one artist represented in depth in the Permanent Collection of the Museum. The series is sponsored by Champion International Corporation. The exhibitions were organized and the accompanying publications written by Patterson Sims, Associate Curator, Permanent Collection.

The author gratefully acknowledges his use of Jean Lipman's *Calder's Universe*, the definitive source for much that is contained in this brief text. The assistance of Richard Marshall has also been vital to the present publication.

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All photographs of works by Calder in the Permanent Collection of the Whitney Museum of American Art are by Geoffrey Clements, with the following exceptions: Roy M. Elkind (*Fish*), Bill Finney (*Long-nose*), Seth Joel (*Elephant, Horse, Sea Scape*), and Jerry L. Thompson (*The Arches, Belt Buckle, Constellation with Quadrilateral, Dots and Dashes, Roxbury Flurry, Wooden Bottle with Hairs*). Photograph of Calder courtesy Perls Galleries, New York.

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#### *Cover:*

Alexander Calder, *The Brass Family*, 1927  
Brass wire, 64 x 41 x 8½ inches  
Gift of the artist 69.255

## Introduction

Not until he was in his mid-twenties did Alexander Calder (1898–1976) decide to become an artist. Yet he had been making sculpture for over a decade. From the age of eight, in little workshops in the many houses of his youth, Calder fashioned small toys and gifts from scraps of wood and pieces of metal and wire. They are uncannily prophetic of his mature sculpture. With their characteristic ingenuity, playfulness and whimsy, these childhood amusements are actually early examples of his art.

Calder's boyhood workshops were zones of continuity and consolation amidst a migratory childhood. They were also a son's mimetic response to his father's profession. Calder's father, as well as his grandfather, were accomplished and dedicated sculptors, working within a tradition of heroically scaled and sentiment-laden public figurative monuments. Observing his father's infrequent commissions and the need to move wherever work took him, Calder was left with a wariness about the practicality of art as a livelihood.

After finishing high school in Berkeley, California, Calder made plans to be an engineer. It was a choice his parents approved. He came East and attended Stevens Institute of Technology in Hoboken, New Jersey. Following his graduation in 1919 with a degree in mechanical engineering, Calder, qualified to do something he did not want to do, traveled about for the next four years and held a variety of jobs, often engineering-related. Though in 1922 he took an evening drawing class, it was not until the summer of 1923, spurred on by a family friend, that he acknowledged his real desire, to be a painter. That fall he started attending drawing and painting classes at the Art Students League of New York, where his father taught.

His first art-related jobs were freelance illustration assignments. In 1925, with a press pass from the *National Police Gazette*, he visited Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey Circus. The fluid, stark sketches he made there

over the next two weeks were the start of the first definable phase of his art. As his friend James Johnson Sweeney has noted: "The Circus . . . taught Calder the esthetic of the unfinished, of suspense and surprise" (*Alexander Calder*, New York, The Museum of Modern Art, 1943, p. 18). Within a year, using the medium of wire, the outline drawings sprang into space. Beginning in 1926, he composed many cloth and wire sculptures for the miniature Circus he created and presented, first in paid and later in free performances in Paris, New York and elsewhere through the 1940s. During the rest of the 1920s in New York, Paris and Berlin, Calder's individual wire animals and caricature portraits were often publicly shown, but they seldom sold.

As he had moved between the East and West Coasts of the United States through his early manhood, after 1926 Calder alternated living in France and in America. In Paris in the late 1920s and early 1930s, a series of introductions to other artists encouraged the development of his special gifts. His encounter with the famed English printmaker Stanley William Hayter (on the day of his arrival in Paris, in June 1926) and through Hayter, the figurative sculptor José de Creeft, helped him amplify the use of line and bulbous muscular form in his wooden sculpture. In Paris he thrust aside his initial decision to be a painter (made partly out of respect for his father and grandfather) and thereafter realized his greatest accomplishments in sculpture.

At performances of his miniature Circus, he first met Arp, Pascin, Léger, Kiesler, van Doesburg, and, most important for the new direction of his art, Miró and Mondrian. One of the reasons for Calder's decision, around 1930, to work abstractly was his attraction to the forms of Miró, whom he first visited in 1928. The other was his oft-mentioned visit to Mondrian in the fall of 1930, following the older artist's attendance of a Circus performance. At Mondrian's studio, Calder had a sudden notion

that the Neo-Plasticist's rectangles might "oscillate." Mondrian was not intrigued, but for Calder the visit and its revelation was the "shock that started things."

In his first wire stables of 1931, Calder quickly grasped the means to express his ideas statically with non-objective forms. The introduction of motion took another year, though as early as 1929 he had made "moving pictures" in wire: a goldfish bowl whose occupants, when cranked, swam about. In 1931—in recognition of his immediate mastery of geometric abstraction—he was invited to join the important Paris-based Abstraction-Création group, one of the three Americans among its forty members (the other two were Katherine Dreier and William Einstein). His stables were first exhibited in 1931 in Paris, though the name of these stationary abstract metal sculptures was not coined until a year later, by Arp. In 1932, Calder introduced the mobile in a Paris exhibition of his work, and the name for this most revolutionary of Calder's three-dimensional inventions was suggested by Marcel Duchamp. His earliest mobiles were simple, hand-cranked or motorized machines; the first classic, more graceful, air-moved mobile was created toward the end of 1932.

Calder understood geometric abstraction better than any other American artist in the 1930s. He eliminated a need for direct representation by creating his own universe of forms. Calder's universe was based upon the essential actions, structures and principles of nature, expressed without pandering to obvious representation. An engineer's comprehension of modern materials, tensile strength, and the logic of balance governed Calder's rigidly self-anchored stables and the liberated, asymmetrical equilibrium of his mobiles. By suspending his works from the ceiling and giving his stables a wide support structure, Calder very idiosyncratically solved the twentieth-century problem of liberating sculpture from bases.

Because of Calder's unpretentious, affable appearance and personality, and an inclination

to perceive his sculpture animistically, an aura of humor surrounds his work. This humor, while disguising the seriousness of Calder's art, facilitated its acceptance. He was the first American artist to receive international attention and gain the respect of leading European artists. He quickly absorbed their ideas, and was accepted as a colleague by Miró, Mondrian, Arp, and Duchamp. Pascin, Léger, Masson and Sartre all wrote laudatory introductions to his one-man shows. Prior to 1940, Calder was given four solo shows in Paris, one in Berlin and two in London. He was an international artist before Americans thought in such terms. In New York his work was selected for two pivotal 1936 Museum of Modern Art exhibitions, "Cubism and Abstract Art" (in which he was the only American included) and "Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism." Tellingly, he accepted the invitation to join the Abstraction-Création group, but turned down membership in the comparable American Abstract Artists. Using European artistic ideas, Calder formulated distinctly American sculpture by virtue of its scale, industrial materials and pragmatic fabrication.

Calder established in the early 1930s his basic sculptural vocabulary in the stable and the mobile. Though there were to be numerous variations and combinations—wall-hanging Constellations and Towers, and animal-like pieces (the so-called Critters and Animobiles)—these interlocking concepts are the basis for all his subsequent artistic activity. In Michel Ragon's words, Calder invented "an art that would combine the science of an engineer with the smile of a humorist" (*Calder: Mobiles and Stables*, New York, Tudor Publishing Co., 1967, p. 8). As if these breakthroughs demanded a period of calm and concentration, the Calder family in 1933 purchased their first house, in rural Roxbury, Connecticut. There Calder established his first separate studio space. In 1934 the Calder family began an extended residence in the United States, dividing their time between Roxbury and New York City. Their two daughters, Sandra and Mary, were

born here. Except for a single trip to France and England in 1937–38, they remained in the United States until 1946.

Starting in 1934, nearly annual shows of Calder's work took place in New York, at the Pierre Matisse Gallery and, after 1943, with Curt Valentin. During the war years, because of metal shortages, Calder had been forced to use other materials for his sculpture. He continued to create prodigiously, but the opportunity for exhibitions diminished. In the later 1940s, both his access to materials and exhibition opportunities improved. Calder simplified the problem of shipping pieces by devising collapsible mobiles. A group of these was shown in 1946 at the Galerie Louis Carré in Paris. With the exception of two London shows in 1937 and 1938, this was Calder's first exhibition abroad since 1933.

In 1937, 1939 and 1941 Calder received commissions for large-scale sculpture, and increasingly, with a hiatus during World War II, commissions for monumental public sculpture occupied his time. After 1950, an extraordinary international enthusiasm for his art kept him moving around the world. By the end of his life, at numerous airports and in the public plazas of almost every major city, he would be greeted by his own work.

Amidst a frenetic creative life, Calder had an unusual capacity for camaraderie and friendship. His Circus performances of the late 1920s, 1930s and 1940s had galvanized friends and strangers. During the 1940s at the Jumble Shop café and at their New York apartment and Roxbury house, the Calderes operated an informal social club for expatriate Europeans. Breton, Chagall, the Tanguys, Léger, Masson, and José Luis Sert were entertained and introduced to American artists. Calder celebrated his fortieth birthday with the writer and literary chronicler Malcolm Cowley; he was a close friend of the economic sociologist Matthew Josephson, designed sets for Martha Graham, and collaborated with the architects Marcel Breuer and Sert. In his collaborations and friendships, Calder was like his mobiles: he set

things in rapid motion without the possibility of collision.

In 1953 the Calderes purchased a house in Saché, near Tours, France. Two years later, it became their main residence, though they later built another house and a large studio close by. Owning houses in Roxbury and Saché did not diminish their desire to travel elsewhere. Reading through the chronology published in *Calder's Universe*, one is struck by the quantity and range of Calder's activities and accomplishments in the last twenty-five years of his life—the solo and group shows in which his work was included, the unveilings of his public sculptures, and his regular attendance at these events. Along with an outpouring of miniature to monumental sculpture and great stacks of gouaches, Calder produced nine sets for ballets or musical performances, painted two jet airplanes and a sportscar, designed a gigantic fountain, a sidewalk, several sets of tapestries and an acoustical ceiling. Granted his achievements and success, Calder was nevertheless without calculation, cant, pretense or rivalry. He conveyed anger or sadness only about political matters, protesting the Vietnam War and urging the removal of President Nixon from office. He was a singularly unaffected, uncomplicated person. Almost all his energy was directed into his multi-faceted art, and it has generated more simple pleasure and spontaneous delight than the work of any artist of the twentieth century.

For an artist whose art is so well represented in the collection, Alexander Calder's involvement with the Whitney Museum of American Art started late and was slow to develop. Calder's art was shown for the first time at the Whitney Museum in the 1942 Annual Exhibition, sixteen years after his first solo show in New York City. Though he was regularly seen in Annual Exhibitions thereafter (in all he was included in twenty-one such surveys), it was not until the 1950s that the Museum purchased, from the 1950 Annual Exhibition, its first Calder, the unusual, base-supported mobile *Pome-*

*granate*. The following year *Young Onion Rearing its Toe*, a gouache on paper that it took Calder a decade to title, was given to the Museum by Mr. and Mrs. Samuel M. Kootz. This work is no longer in the collection. Milton and Edith Lowenthal donated *The Mermaid* in 1957. Through the generosity of Mrs. Milton Weill, a drawing entitled *Composition* entered the collection in 1961. That year, under the forceful chairmanship of Howard Lipman, the Museum's Acquisitions Committee decided to buy a major recent mobile and stabile. The purchase funds of the Friends of the Whitney Museum of American Art were enlisted for this project. The mobile *Big Red* was acquired in late 1961 from the Perls Galleries, part payment being realized by trading a lesser 1957 mobile. Early in 1962, the stabile *The Cock's Comb* was bought. It had been seen at the Musée Rodin, Paris, in 1961 by Howard Lipman, and was purchased from the Galerie Maeght.

In 1954 Calder had contacted Hermon More, Director of the Museum, about the possibility of donating his 1926 painting *Firemen's Dinner for Brancusi*, which depicted several members of the Whitney Studio Club. More and the Museum's Registrar drove up to Roxbury, aided by a hand-drawn, multi-colored Calder map which alerted them to "COPS!" in the vicinity of Easton on Route 59. Somehow it took nine years, a new Director and a little encouragement from Howard Lipman to get the painting to the Museum and to formally accept it as a gift from the artist. *Firemen's Dinner for Brancusi* remains the Museum's only oil painting by Calder. The Museum's first Calder print entered the collection four years later, in 1967, donated by Mr. and Mrs. Charles D. Clark.

Great public collections in America are built with unstinting and inspired private support. For Calder and the Whitney Museum of American Art, this support came from Howard and Jean Lipman. Few artists have been so diligently and comprehensively collected as has Calder by the Lipmans. Beyond collecting, in

1972 Jean Lipman organized a special show and edited with Nancy Foote a book on his Circus-related art. In "Calder's Universe" (1976), Mrs. Lipman put together the most comprehensive Calder exhibition, and produced a definitive publication to accompany it. More recently she produced, with Doris Palca, the Museum's 1981 Calder Calendar and a special publication for children called *Sandy Calder and His Magical Mobiles*. Howard and Jean Lipman and the Howard and Jean Lipman Foundation, Inc., have given twenty-one works by Calder to the Museum, promised at least six more, and placed three others on extended loan.

The present excellence of the Whitney Museum's collection of Calder's dates from 1969. At that time, the Lipmans' broadly based patronage of contemporary American art, manifested in their numerous gifts to the Museum of sculpture made during the 1960s, underwent a dramatic shift. They decided to concentrate on pivotal figures, rather than acquire single works by many artists. In the next six months a series of acquisitions was made that decisively transformed the Museum's modest holding of Calder's work into a major one. In two installments, eight works, which had been retained by the artist, were acquired in the winter and early spring of 1969-70. After Calder's own gift of the wire masterpiece *The Brass Family*, the Lipmans purchased for the Museum three other early works—*Double Cat*, *Old Bull*, and the motorized *Half-circle*, *Quarter-circle and Sphere*—one (subsequently traded) piece from 1954 entitled *Split Tower*, and the 1969 stabile *Indian Feathers*. Originally the Lipmans and Calder had considered just the four earliest works. Their later enthusiasm for *Indian Feathers*, which they saw just-completed at Saché, gave as much pleasure to the artist as to his collectors; he was assured that the Museum's and the Lipmans' admiration was not just for his earlier art. In January and March 1970 the Lipmans concluded this group of acquisitions for the Museum with *Snake on a Post* and *The Pistil*. As a culmi-

nation of these efforts, in 1970 the Calder miniature Circus was first installed, under Calder's supervision, at the Museum. This evocative masterwork, accompanied by a film of an actual performance, remains in the lobby today—thanks to the continued generosity of his family.

The Museum's ability to demonstrate Calder's multi-faceted career was further enhanced when examples of his jewelry entered the collection in 1970 and 1971: two pairs of earrings from Katharine Kuh and a necklace from Mr. and Mrs. Marcel Breuer. Then in 1971, the Lipmans, inaugurating a second round of generosity, added another aspect of Calder's work to the collection by giving the tapestry *Glacier with Coloured Petals*. This weaving, along with *Les Masques*, which they gave in 1974, was acquired from the first solo show the Museum held for the artist. On view in the fall of 1971, this exhibition consisted of twenty of the tapestries produced from Calder's cartoons in the previous year. At a dinner given for the opening of this show, Calder linked together the various guests' name tags and fashioned from them two drawings of nudes. Given to the Lipmans, they were subsequently presented to the Museum. The show of tapestries was followed six months later by "Calder's Circus." Organized by Jean Lipman, it contained a range of Calder's circus-inspired pieces, dating from 1928 to 1970, and appeared in conjunction with her book on the subject. On the eve of the show's opening, the artist gave *Chock* to the Museum. "Calder's Circus" later traveled to Bangkok. Thanks again to the Lipmans' generosity, the original gouache for the cover design of the exhibition's brochure is owned by the Museum. Later in 1972 the Lipmans contributed most of the cost of the painted wood mobile *Sea Scope* and the entire purchase price of *Wire Sculpture by Calder*. Early in 1973 the trade of *Split Tower* and additional payment by the Lipmans were used to acquire the superior *Bifurcated Tower*.

*Fish* was among the large number of works presented to the Museum in 1974 on the

occasion of John I. H. Baur's retirement as Director. Also included in this group were the artist's gift of the gouache *Triumph* and Dr. and Mrs. David B. Pall's donation of a 1967 etched self-portrait. Again in 1974, a portfolio of colored etchings was acquired through the kindness of the Lipmans. That year the artist offered the Museum a gouache entitled *Contour Plowing*, in anticipation of its publication as a lithograph to benefit the Museum. In 1975, the Lipmans enriched the collection with the early wood carving *Woman* and the austere late 1930s wire abstraction *Cage within a Cage*. Calder completed the year's generosity by presenting his whimsical gouache *Menagerie*, another instance of his interest in the growth of the Museum's collection of his works.

In October 1976, "Calder's Universe" opened. The exhibition and its catalogue were an unprecedented critical and popular success. In a period of less than four months, almost 250,000 people saw the show at the Museum. In different versions the exhibition traveled to ten U.S. museums and four in Japan. The lithographic version of *Contour Plowing*, issued in conjunction with "Calder's Universe," sold out its edition of eighty within three weeks of the opening. One impression was retained for the Museum's collection. Earlier in 1976, the Calder's close friends Mr. and Mrs. Marcel Breuer had given their imposing untitled 1959 standing mobile to the Museum. A gift of the lithograph *Flying Colors '76*, made to commemorate the second Braniff Airlines plane Calder painted, had also preceded the show.

On November 11, 1976, three weeks after "Calder's Universe" opened, Calder died of a heart attack in New York. On December 6, a memorial service was held at the Museum, with remarks by his friends James Johnson Sweeney, Saul Steinberg, Robert Osborn and Arthur Miller. In the following months, several gifts in his honor were received. Mildred and Russell Lynes presented a copy of the Calder-illustrated limited edition of *Fables of*

*Aesop*, along with one of its original ink drawings. Mrs. Marcel Duchamp donated her sculptural *Belt Buckle*. Through the kindness of Louisa Calder, the large yet delicate mobile *Roxbury Flurry* joined the collection. One of Calder's last lithographs, *The Horse*, was contributed by Brewster Fine Arts, Ltd.

In honor of the Museum's 50th Anniversary in 1980, Mr. and Mrs. Leonard J. Horwich promised *Little Ball with Counterweight*; Mrs. Louise Varèse gave the wire portrait of her husband; and two very rare 1943 wood and wire sculptures, *Constellation with Quadrilateral* and *Wooden Bottle with Hairs*, were purchased for the Museum by Howard and Jean Lipman. Mr. and Mrs. Al Hirschfeld donated a wire sculpture, *Horse*. The Lipmans also gave two of their ink circus drawings, *Le Dompteur et Ses Fauves* and *Two Acrobats*, and promised four others, as well as the litho-

graph *The Red Nose* and a gouache, *Big Bug*. The smallest work by Calder in the collection was among the most recent acquisitions; this cut-metal *Elephant* was placed on deposit and promised as a gift in late 1980 by M. H. Lloyd.

This "Concentration" is the fourth solo show devoted to Alexander Calder by the Whitney Museum, and the accompanying booklet is the Museum's fifth substantial publication on the artist. Attesting to a fruitful thirty-eight year friendship between an artist and an institution, over fifty works by Calder are now owned by the Whitney Museum. From an early miniature elephant to the large-scale mobile *Indian Feathers*, the Museum—since 1950, but most especially in the last decade, spurred by the generosity of Howard and Jean Lipman—has assembled, with mounting success, what is perhaps the premiere collection of Calder's work in the world.



Alexander Calder, *Saché*, 1966  
Photograph by Frank Perls

## Alexander Calder (1898–1976)

1898

Born on July 22, in Lawnton (now a part of Philadelphia), Pennsylvania. Mother, Nanette Lederer Calder (1877–1960), is a painter; both father, Alexander Stirling Calder (1870–1945), and grandfather, Alexander Milne Calder (1846–1923), are well-known sculptors; has one sibling, an older sister, Margaret.

1906–15

With sister, joins parents in Arizona in 1906, where father is recuperating from a heart ailment. Family temporarily settles in Pasadena, California, then begins series of moves back and forth between New York and California.

1915–19

Graduates in 1915 from high school in Berkeley, California. Enters Stevens Institute of Technology, Hoboken, New Jersey, from which he graduates in 1919 with a degree in mechanical engineering.

1922

After a succession of jobs around the country, returns to New York and attends night-school drawing classes. Travels to the West Coast to visit his sister and again supports himself with a variety of odd jobs.

1923–26

Attends the Art Students League of New York; takes classes briefly with Kenneth Hayes Miller, Thomas Hart Benton, Guy Pène du Bois, Boardman Robinson, and George Luks and, more extensively, with John Sloan.

1924

Receives first job as an artist—to cover a boxing match for the *National Police Gazette*, for which a year later he makes his first drawings of the circus.

1926

An instructional book using his drawings, *Animal Sketching*, is published. Given first solo

exhibition, of paintings, at the Artists' Gallery, New York. Begins a period of traveling between Paris and New York. Exhibits at the Salon des Indépendants, Paris.

1927

Starts giving performances of his miniature Circus.

1928

One-man exhibition of wire animal and caricature portraits, Weyhe Gallery, New York. Included in the New York Society of Independent Artists exhibition. Visits Miró's studio in Paris and begins lifelong friendship.

1929

First solo shows in Paris, Galerie Billiet, and Berlin, Galerie Neumann und Nierendorf. Meets Louisa Cushing James, his future wife.

1930

A visit to the studio of Piet Mondrian results in Calder's first abstract works—paintings, drawings and then sculpture.

1931

Marriage to Louisa James in Concord, Massachusetts. They return to Paris, where the first exhibition of his abstract constructions and stables is held, at the Galerie Percier. Joins the Abstraction-Création group. Makes earliest moving, hand-cranked abstract sculptures.

1932

Simple mechanical sculptures are exhibited at the Julien Levy Gallery, New York. Creates first mobile.

1933

First solo museum exhibition, at the Berkshire Museum, Pittsfield, Massachusetts. Purchases a farmhouse in Roxbury, Connecticut, the first house he has ever owned. It remains his American residence for the rest of his life.

**1934**

One-man show, Pierre Matisse Gallery, New York, where he exhibits nearly annually through 1943. Resides full time in the United States through 1937.

**1935**

First child, Sandra, born. Designs mobiles for Martha Graham's ballet *Panorama* and, the next year, pieces called Plastic Interludes for her ballet *Horizons*.

**1937**

Makes first large-scale stabile. Returns to Paris; spends winter in London, where he has the first of two solo shows at the Freddy Mayor Gallery.

**1938**

Given first large-scale retrospective, George Walter Vincent Smith Art Gallery, Springfield, Massachusetts.

**1939**

Second child, Mary, born.

**1942**

Contributes to war effort by doing occupational therapy in veterans' hospitals.

**1943**

Major exhibition held at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, curated by James Johnson Sweeney. Roxbury house destroyed by fire.

**1944**

House and studio at Roxbury are rebuilt. Curt Valentin of the Buchholz Gallery (later the Curt Valentin Gallery) becomes Calder's New York dealer.

**1946**

Exhibition of collapsible mobiles, Galerie Louis Carré, Paris, his first solo show in Paris since 1933. Returns to Europe for the first time since 1938.

**1948**

The Calders travel to Brazil, where exhibitions

of his art are held in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo. The following year his mobiles are used in a ballet, *Symphonic Variations*, in Rio.

**1950**

The Calder family returns to Europe. Galerie Maeght, Paris, holds its first Calder exhibition. Four major shows of his art are held: Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; Galerie Blanche, Stockholm; Institute of Contemporary Arts, Washington, D.C.; Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge.

**1952**

Exhibits at the Venice Biennale, and wins first prize for sculpture.

**1953**

With family spends the year in Aix-en-Provence, France. With the help of Jean Davidson, his future son-in-law, purchases and remodels a house in Saché, near Tours, which is his French residence for the rest of his life. Awarded a prize at the Bienal de São Paulo.

**1954–55**

Travels to Beirut with family to execute a mobile commission. Following the death of Curt Valentin, joins the Perls Galleries in New York. Is invited to India, where, under the sponsorship of the Sarabhai family, Calder works for several months. Visits Caracas, Venezuela, where an exhibition is held at the Museo de Bellas Artes.

**1957**

Buys a house in Brittany, France. Major exhibition held at the Kunsthalle Basel, Switzerland.

**1958**

Builds a new studio at Roxbury. Using Carmen Segre's metalworks shop in Connecticut, begins to produce the large-scale sculptures that increasingly are requested for public installation all over the world. Wins first prize, Carnegie International Exhibition, Pittsburgh.

**1959**

The Calders go to Brazil for the opening of an exhibition at the Museu de Arte Moderna, Rio

de Janeiro. They visit Brasília and return the next year for Carnival. A show of mobiles and stables is organized by the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; it travels to six other European museums.

1960

Awarded the Gold Medal of the Architectural League of New York. Elected to the National Institute of Arts and Letters and, the following year, receives the American Institute of Architects medal.

1962

Studio is constructed at Saché for the creation of the ever more monumental stables. Supervises the fabrication and installation of *Teodelapio*, for Spoleto, Italy. Retrospective organized by the Tate Gallery, London. Begins association with Etablissements Biémont, an ironworks in Tours.

1963

Designs sets for the ballet *La Provocation* at the Comédie de Bourges, France.

1964

"Circus Drawings, Wire Sculptures and Toys," organized by James Johnson Sweeney, held at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. Elected to the American Academy of Arts and Letters, New York. Major retrospective at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; divided in two sections, exhibition travels in 1965 to six other American cities and, somewhat altered, to the Musée National d'Art Moderne, Paris.

1965

With his wife, participates in a march against the Vietnam War in Washington, D.C., first of their protests against the war.

1966

Donates a stabile, *Object in Five Planes (Peace)*, to the U.S. Mission to the United Nations. Monumental stabile, *La Grande Voile*, is installed at the Massachusetts Insti-

tute of Technology. *Calder: An Autobiography with Pictures*, compiled with the aid of Jean Davidson, is published. H. H. Arnason's study of Calder's sculpture, with photos by Pedro E. Guerrero, also published. Awarded an honorary Doctor of Art degree, Harvard University. Seven one-man shows of his art are held. In December, travels to Mexico City to oversee construction of *El Sol Rojo* in Aztec Stadium, site of 1968 Olympic Games.

1967

*Man*—his largest work to date—is installed at Expo 67, Montreal. Makes a stabile for the Havana Museum. Exhibition of his recent gifts to the Museum of Modern Art, New York. One additional museum exhibition and four gallery solo exhibitions are held.

1968

His mobile-populated "ballet without dancers," *Work in Progress*, is presented in Rome. He is made a Commander of the French Legion of Honor.

1969

New house constructed at Saché, to which the Calders move in 1970. Installation of two major stables, *Gwenfritz*, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., and *La Grande Vitesse*, Grand Rapids, Michigan. Awarded honorary Doctor of Engineering degree by Stevens Institute of Technology on the fiftieth anniversary of his graduation; makes a mobile for the school the following year in honor of its centennial. A retrospective organized by the Fondation Maeght, Saint-Paul-de-Vence, France, travels to the Louisiana Museum, Humelbaek, Denmark, and the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam. Works made during his 1955 trip to Venezuela are shown at the Fundación Eugenio Mendoza, Caracas.

1971

Awarded Gold Medal for Sculpture by the American Academy of Arts and Letters, which holds an exhibition of his work. *Calder*, H. H. Arnason's second book on the artist, with

photos by Ugo Mulas, is published, as is *Fêtes*, Jacques Prévert's extended prose poem about Calder, with seven etchings by the artist. Designs sets and costumes for *Amériques*, produced by the Ballet-Théâtre Contemporain, Amiens, France. Show of early work held at the Taft Museum, Cincinnati.

**1973**

Commissioned by Braniff International Airlines to paint a DC-8 jet.

**1974**

Calder Festival held in Chicago celebrating dedication of two major pieces, *Universe* and *Flamingo*; Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago holds a retrospective. Calder awarded

France's Grand Prix National des Arts et Lettres.

**1975**

Calder visits Israel and arranges to create a major stabile for Jerusalem. Braniff International commissions him to paint a second airplane. Receives the U.N. Peace Medal.

**1976**

The Greater Philadelphia Cultural Alliance presents a five-day Calder celebration. "Calder's Universe," a comprehensive retrospective, is held at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.

Dies November 11 in New York.

## Early Work

Constantin Brancusi's third solo exhibition in the United States opened at the Joseph Brummer Gallery in New York City in November 1926. Calder's painting records a party given around the time of the Brummer Gallery show. In a Greenwich Village restaurant decorated with a papier-mâché horse's head, murals and a firemen's pole, Calder and a group of Whitney Studio Club members cavorted in honor of Brancusi. Clockwise about the table are seen Alexander Brook, Yasuo Kuniyoshi, an orating Louis Bouché, a leaping Calder, Niles Spencer, Walt Kuhn, an unidentified figure, Donald Greason, another unidentified figure, Edmund Duffy, Art Young, and, on the pole, the athletic artist-brothers Robert and Charles Howard. Calder shared a studio with Charles Howard and had been included along with most of the others in the March 1926 Whitney Studio Club Annual Exhibition. Inexplicably, he left the guest of honor out of the picture. As Calder wrote of the painting in the letter offering it to the Museum, "It probably is not beautiful—but might be an amusing document" (September 24, 1959, Whitney Museum Artists' Files). This oil on canvas is the only example in the collection of Calder's painting—his preferred medium during his early years.



Firemen's Dinner for Brancusi, 1926  
Oil on canvas, 36 x 42 inches  
Gift of the artist 63.58

## Wood Sculpture

Painting preceded sculpture in Calder's mature work, but in 1925 wire sculpture and in 1926 carving in wood entered his art. Calder's figurative and animal carved wood sculptures were materially and thematically typical of American sculpture of the period, as exemplified by the work of John B. Flannagan, William Zo-



Woman, c. 1926  
Wood, 24 x 6 1/2 x 6 inches  
Gift of Howard and Jean Lipman 75.27



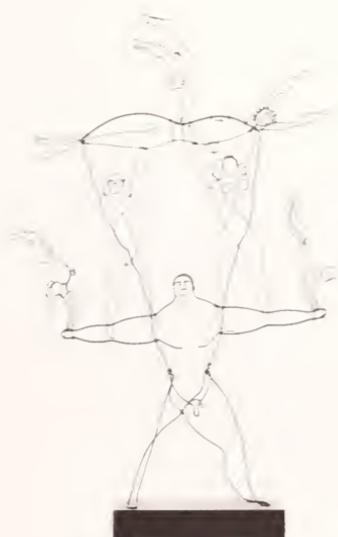
Double Cat, 1930  
Wood, 7 x 5 1 x 4 1/2 inches  
Gift of the Howard and Jean Lipman  
Foundation, Inc. 69.256

Calder, and Calder's friend in Paris, José de Creeft. *Double Cat*, carved—like *Woman*—from one piece of wood, displays greater mastery of technique and, with its heads resting on its tails, greater wit.

## Wire Sculpture

Calder's wire animal and figurative sculptures, made between 1925 and 1931, were the basis of all his later sculptural achievements. He neither sketched nor made models, but worked directly with the wire. Bernice Rose has remarked of Calder's sculpture in all materials that he "always found it easier to think with his hands, to think in terms of specific materials" (*A Salute to Alexander Calder*, New York, The Museum of Modern Art, 1969, p. 8).

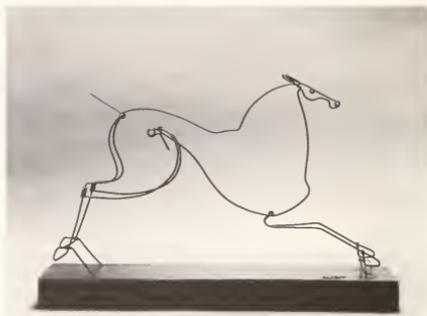
Calder translated the lines of his 1925 circus sketches into three dimensions. In the skeletal yet descriptive mode of his wire sculpture, he conveyed his passion for the circus. *The Brass Family's* seven anatomically candid acrobats are among his wittiest and most ambitious uses of wire. *Horse*, one of several similar wire versions of the subject, was given by the artist to the well-known theatrical portraitist Al Hirschfeld. *Horse* is unusual for its ability to naturalistically pivot—the front legs can be variably attached to its base. *Wire Sculpture by Calder* was made by the artist for his first ex-



The Brass Family, 1927  
Brass wire, 64 x 41 x 8 1/2 inches  
Gift of the artist 69.255

hibition of wire sculpture at the Weyhe Gallery in 1928. Along with circus-related pieces, this show included several wire caricature portraits. Beginning in 1926, Calder recorded in wire the features of his friends, as well as of some of the leading creative personalities of the day. Among the finest of these lively representations is his portrait of the avant-garde composer Edgard Varèse (1885–1965), whom Calder met around 1930 and whose innovative com-

positions he both understood and admired. Calder made this portrait in 1931. He kept it until 1965, when, unannounced, he arrived at Louise Varèse's doorway shortly after her husband's death, and presented it to her. In 1980, Mrs. Varèse passed it along to the Museum in appreciation of Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney's early support of Varèse's New Symphony Orchestra.



Horse, c. 1928  
Wire, 12 1/4 x 22 1/8 x 5 1/2 inches  
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Al Hirschfeld 80.49



Wire Sculpture by Calder, 1928  
Wire, 49 1/2 x 26 x 6 inches  
Gift of Howard and Jean Lipman 72.168



Varèse, 1931  
Wire, 13 1/2 x 13 3/4 x 12 1/4 inches  
50th Anniversary Gift of Mrs. Louise Varèse in  
honor of Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney  
80.25

## Cut-Metal Sculpture

Whereas Picasso had earlier used cut-metal elements in assemblage sculptures, Calder sliced, bent and combined single metal sheets for his sculptures. The Museum owns two early Calder sheet metal beasts, *Old Bull* and *Elephant*, the latter possessed of the lankiest trunk of Calder's numerous circus-inspired elephants. The Museum's *Elephant*, although unsigned and undated, is clearly kin to Calder's 1928 *Elephant Chair with Lamp* (The Museum of Modern Art, New York): both exhibit the same impromptu pencil markings, sheared edges and triangulated, indented feet. *Old Bull*, branded with Calder's initials, portrays his sense of the cow as "a languid, long-suffering beast." The ingenuity of its details, ribbed feet, twisted metal tail and horns, and contoured body, derives dignity from commonplace materials.



**Elephant, c. 1928**  
Sheet metal on wood base,  $2\frac{3}{4} \times 8\frac{1}{2} \times 8\frac{1}{2}$  inches  
Promised gift of M. H. Lloyd P.69.80



**Old Bull, 1930**  
Sheet metal,  $9 \times 18 \times 2\frac{1}{4}$  inches  
Gift of the Howard and Jean Lipman Foundation, Inc. 69.257

## Circus Drawings

Calder's ink drawings of 1931 and 1932, distinct from his 1925 Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey Circus sketches, were not based upon reporting of reality, but on rendering the outlined world of his wire sculptures. Calder turned again to drawing upon finishing the last of his performing Circus figures and animals. His unusual skill at descriptive geometry, for which he received the highest marks ever given at Stevens Institute of Technology, was employed comically in the series. The sliced figure



**The Handstand, 1931**  
Ink on paper,  $22\frac{3}{4} \times 30\frac{3}{4}$  inches  
Promised gift of Howard and Jean Lipman P.33.80



**Juggler with Ball, 1931**  
Ink on paper,  $22\frac{3}{4} \times 30\frac{3}{4}$  inches  
Promised gift of Howard and Jean Lipman P.34.80

and chair of *The Handstand*, the X-rayed dog in *Juggler with Ball*, and the aerialist's peculiar containment in *On the High Wire* blithely render three dimensions in two. Working on both

sides of the sheet, in *Two Acrobats*, Calder joins the salacious with the Surreal.

Calder also drew wire-sculpture-like configurations for his fifty *Fables of Aesop* illustrations. *Fables of Aesop*, using the 1692 Sir Roger L'Estrange translation, was the fifth book issued by Jane Harrison's distinguished private press, Harrison of Paris. Calder's sly drawings were woven in amidst the volume's



**Tumbler on Swing, 1931**  
Ink on paper, 30<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 22<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> inches  
Promised gift of Howard and Jean Lipman  
P.35.80



**Le Dompteur et Ses Fauves, 1932**  
Ink on paper, 21<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 20<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> inches  
Gift of Howard and Jean Lipman 80.50.2



**On the High Wire, 1932**  
Ink on paper, 20<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> x 24<sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> inches  
Promised gift of Howard and Jean Lipman  
P.37.80



**Two Acrobats, 1932**  
Ink on paper (drawing on both sides), 21<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> x 29<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> inches  
Gift of Howard and Jean Lipman 80.50.1

two hundred little tales. Artfully designed and produced under the direction of Monroe Wheeler, the publication has been assessed as one in which “the physical, the aesthetic and the philosophic could hardly have been more felicitously blended” (Hugh Ford, *Published in Paris*, Yonkers, New York, The Pushcart Press, 1980, p. 334). The Museum’s *Fables* is from the deluxe edition of fifty copies. Each copy was sold with one of the fifty original drawings, *A Lyonsess and a Fox* being the one in the Museum’s copy.

Calder

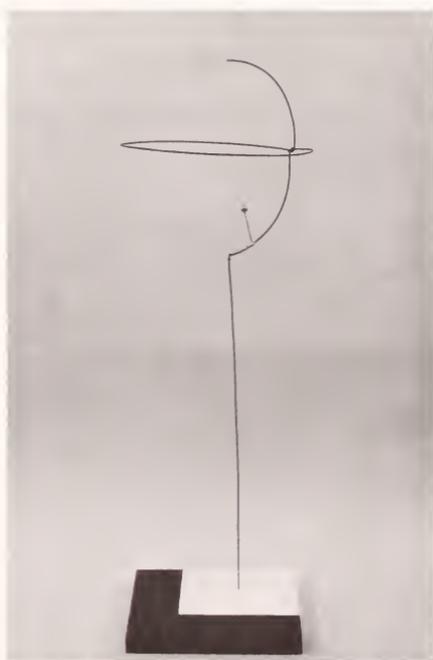


**A Lyonsess and a Fox** (from *Fables of Aesop*), 1931  
Ink on paper, 9<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 7<sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub> inches  
Gift of Russell and Mildred Lynes in memory of the artist 76.42b

**Fables of Aesop, According to Sir Roger L'Estrange**, 1931  
Limited edition book with fifty illustrations by Calder  
Gift of Russell and Mildred Lynes in memory of the artist 76.42a

## Early Stables and Mobiles

Propelled into abstraction and motion by his visit to Piet Mondrian’s studio in Paris in the fall of 1930, Calder quickly responded with works of astonishing invention. *The Pistil* was among the standing constructions, thereafter known as stables, included in his first exhibition of non-objective sculpture. With its distinctive black-and-white painted base and suggested sphere, it typified the essays in circularity that—along with portrait heads in wire and drawings—filled the Paris Galerie Percier in April–May 1931. Not visible in the surviving photo of the installation of the exhibition is *Little Ball with Counterweight*; it was likely completed after *The Pistil*. The shifts of color and scale of its ball elements, its calculated, off-center balance, implied motion, and inter-



**The Pistil**, 1931  
Brass and wire on painted wood base, 40 x 12<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 12<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> inches  
Gift of the Howard and Jean Lipman Foundation, Inc. (and purchase) 70.12

action of circle, square and triangle, communicate a bolder, more sophisticated non-objectivity. Along with several sculptures included in the Galerie Percier show, *Little Ball with Counterweight* was among a group of early objects, pictured in Calder's autobiography, that date from his 1931 affiliation with the Abstraction-Création group.

In early 1932, mechanized motion was introduced into his sculpture. Space is choreographed in *Half-circle, Quarter-circle and Sphere* as a pair of quarter-circles rotate and a quartet of halved circles that form a sphere bob up and down. There were several drawbacks to these mechanized mobiles: their motion was predictable and repetitious and their motors were notoriously unreliable and visually cum-



**Little Ball with Counterweight**, c. 1930  
Sheet metal, wire and wood,  $6\frac{3}{4} \times 12\frac{1}{2} \times 12\frac{1}{2}$  inches  
Promised 50th Anniversary Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Leonard J. Horwich P.9.79



**Half-circle, Quarter-circle and Sphere**, 1932  
Metal, wire and motor,  $7\frac{1}{4} \times 24 \times 13\frac{3}{4}$  inches  
Gift of the Howard and Jean Lipman Foundation, Inc. 69.258



**Cage within a Cage**, 1939  
Metal, wood and string,  $37\frac{1}{2} \times 58\frac{3}{4} \times 27$  inches  
Gift of the Howard and Jean Lipman Foundation, Inc. 75.23

bersome. Beginning in late 1932, motion asserts itself without a motor. Calder learned to harness counterbalance and wind to propel his pieces. These pieces had a standing structure that supported the mobile element. With few exceptions (the earliest occurring around 1934), ceiling-hung mobiles were not regularly made until the 1940s. As in *Cage within a Cage*, the free-swinging, string-attached elements hang from within the structure of the work. The motif of entrapment, seen in the white linear mobile elements of *Cage within a Cage*, appears with some frequency around 1940.

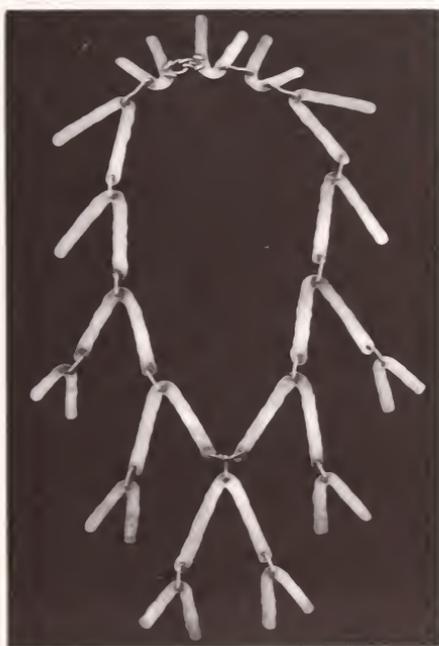


**Belt Buckle, c. 1935**  
 Brass, 8 x 5 1/2 x 1/2 inches  
 Gift of Mrs. Marcel Duchamp in memory of  
 the artist 77.21

## Jewelry

Calder's jewelry was first exhibited as an aspect of his art in 1929 at the Galerie Neumann und Nierendorf in Berlin. It was only shown alone commercially in 1940 and 1941, at the Willard Gallery in New York and, once more during Calder's lifetime, in 1966 at the Perls Galleries. Calder usually distributed his jewelry as gifts. Beginning at the age of eight, he fabricated necklaces, pins, earrings, rings, bracelets, hair ornaments and belt buckles for his family and friends. They were treated to personal adornments made of beaten, turned, twisted and linked bits of gold, silver, brass, zinc, wire string, found objects, and stone. Calder's jewelry is assertively decorative, yet never vulgar. It has great honesty of craft and reverence for material. It is almost never dated and lacks distinguishing stylistic developmental features.

*Belt Buckle*, the two sections of which attach behind its coiled belly, is one of the most sculptural of Calder's ornaments. Mrs. Marcel Duchamp, who donated the buckle to the Museum, married Calder's friend Marcel Duchamp in 1954; she was formerly married to Pierre Matisse, Calder's dealer between 1934 and 1943. The piece was made by Calder



**Necklace, c. 1940**  
 Silver, 19 1/2 inches long  
 Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Marcel Breuer 71.208

around 1935 in Roxbury, during a visit by Mr. and Mrs. Matisse. The flattened silver sections of *Necklace*, like the two pairs of earrings, are more ordinary examples of Calder's jewelry. The earrings have an interesting history, which entwines them with *Belt Buckle*. They were originally owned by Mary Reynolds, an American war widow who was Marcel Duchamp's mistress. Calder had given Mrs. Reynolds these earrings in honor of her work for the French underground during World War II. In 1950 Duchamp went to Paris, where Mrs. Reynolds was dying. He stayed with her through the final weeks of her life and inherited her belongings.

Duchamp, in turn, gave the Calder earrings to Katharine Kuh, whose gallery in Chicago held, in 1938, the first solo show of his drawings and whose interview with Calder is one of the most informative ever published.

## Sculpture of the 1940s

During much of the early 1940s, Calder resorted to alternative materials and approaches for his sculpture. As in *Constellation with Quadrilateral*, *Wooden Bottle with Hairs*, and *Sea Scape*, he turned to wood to replace the metal required for the war effort.

Constellation was the name given to most of Calder's 1940s wire-connected, wood element stabiles. The term and the ideas behind it originated with Arp in the 1920s and it was used again by Miró as a designation for his well-known group of 1939–42 gouaches (first shown in New York after the war). The name Constellation best suits Calder's wall-mounted



Earrings, c. 1947  
Iron, 2 inches diameter  
Gift of Mrs. Katharine Kuh 70.45a

Earrings, c. 1947  
Brass with iron, wire and stone, 2 x 1 inches  
Gift of Mrs. Katharine Kuh 70.45b

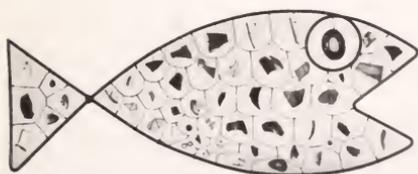


Constellation with Quadrilateral, 1943  
Wood and wire, 15 x 18 x 7<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> inches  
50th Anniversary Gift of the Howard and Jean Lipman Foundation, Inc. 80.28.1

pieces, where the brightly painted wood orbs appear as planets or stars of some distant celestial system. *Wooden Bottle with Hairs* is one of Calder's most Miró-esque, peculiar and haunting objects. It alone qualifies him for his uneasy designation as a Surrealist. He considered doubtfully his Surrealist affiliations, though they were circumstantially established through friendships and regular inclusion in



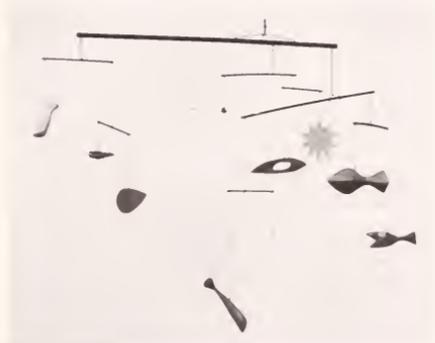
**Wooden Bottle with Hairs, 1943**  
Wood and wire, 18 x 9 x 3 inches  
50th Anniversary Gift of the Howard and Jean Lipman Foundation, Inc. 80.28.2



**Fish, 1944**  
Metal, wire, glass, mirrors and beads, 16 1/4 x 40 inches  
Promised gift of Richard S. Zeisler in honor of John I. H. Baur P.10.74

the movement's exhibitions. In *Constellation with Quadrilateral* and *Sea Scape*, Calder's palette widens from post-Mondrian primaries to subtler hues. The more cheerful mobile *Sea Scape* reveals why static rather than moving pieces predominated during this period. Wood's heaviness and its rigidity, especially when used for support rods, made for overly stolid and tritely balanced compositions.

As in the sheet metal sun or starfish of *Sea Scape*, Calder developed an alternative to carved wood in small found objects, particularly glass. For their scale-like shininess and pattern, pieces of glass—held within a cord or wire mesh—were especially useful for the small fish mobiles created by Calder during the 1940s. In *Fish*, a simple metal outline of a mouth, eye and tail (the tail seemingly formed from the cutout of the mouth) becomes a frame for glass shards, beads and bits of mirror, and assorted objects. It has been suggested by Jean Lipman that Calder's preoccupation with jewelry in the 1940s inspired him to work with found objects and to create a greater delicacy in his 1940s sculpture. In fact, both his jewelry and sculpture of the war years reflect equally his need to use whatever was on hand when cut off from his usual supplies. In 1944 Calder made a series of very simple plaster stabiles and mobiles. About fifteen were cast and exhibited in the fall



**Sea Scape, 1947**  
Wood, string, metal and polychrome paint, 36 1/2 inches high x 60 inches diameter  
Gift of the Howard and Jean Lipman Foundation, Inc. (and purchase) 72.120

at the Buchholz Gallery in New York, along with others still in plaster. *Snake on a Post* was not in that show; it was cast a quarter-century later when the Perls Galleries exhibited examples of his 1944 series, at which time it was purchased.



*Snake on a Post*, 1944 (cast 1969)  
Bronze, 24 x 32 x 12 inches  
Gift of the Howard and Jean Lipman Foundation, Inc. 70.3



*Roxbury Flurry*, c. 1948  
Painted sheet metal and wire, 100 inches high x  
96 inches diameter  
Gift of Louisa Calder 77.85

*Roxbury Flurry* and *Pomegranate* exemplify how, during the late 1940s, Calder returned—with increased delicacy, refinement and scale—to materials and concepts unused during the war years. As Jean-Paul Sartre wrote in his text for Calder's 1946 Paris show, the stables of the late 1940s were flowered with peaceful elation and intricate movements. Monochromatic or more limited color was employed in these pieces. A Calder mobile such as *Roxbury Flurry* imitates the action of falling snowflakes. This exceedingly complex piece was rediscovered in a tangle on Calder's Roxbury studio floor, and reassembled for the "Calder's Universe" exhibition.

The base-supported mobile *Pomegranate* is an exploratory form within Calder's sculpture. Only a few others like it, one made as early as 1940, are known. *Pomegranate's* base is so intrinsic to the piece that one wishes it were designed by Calder. The varying shapes and cutout form of *Pomegranate's* components are particularly attractive, and such components typify those of Calder's remarkable group of late 1940s sculptures.



*Pomegranate*, 1949  
Painted sheet aluminum, steel rods, and wire,  
72 inches high x 68 inches diameter  
Purchase 50.6

## Sculpture, 1950–1960

An increased scale and commercial fabrication identify Calder's sculpture of the 1950s. *Bifurcated Tower* is one of the Tower series of wall-hung, linearly triangulated wire structures with diminutive mobile attachments that Calder made around 1950. The Towers are a coda to the delicate complexity of late 1940s ceiling-hung mobiles and mobile-stabiles. The major stabiles *Longnose*, *The Arches*, and *The Cock's Comb*, the stabile-mobile *Untitled*, 1959, and the mobiles *Dots and Dashes* and *Big Red* better convey Calder's artistic development during this decade. Calder's titles continued to be descriptive with a humorous twist. As Calder began to utilize commercial metalwork facilities, his shapes became more standardized and his color simplified again, as arrestingly apparent in *Big Red*, to single primary tones. Black was favored for the large

stabiles and gave them an impenetrable massiveness and teasing sense of menace, especially when installed out-of-doors. Within their dark, organic masses the impinging shapes intersect, joining and separating as the viewer



*Longnose*, 1957  
Painted steel plate, 98 x 103 x 64 inches  
On extended loan from the collection of  
Howard and Jean Lipman



*Bifurcated Tower*, 1950  
Painted metal and wire, 58 x 72 x 53 inches  
(variable)  
Gift of the Howard and Jean Lipman Foundation, Inc. (and exchange) 73.31



*The Arches*, 1959  
Painted steel plate, 106 x 107 $\frac{1}{2}$  x 87 inches  
On extended loan from the collection of  
Howard and Jean Lipman

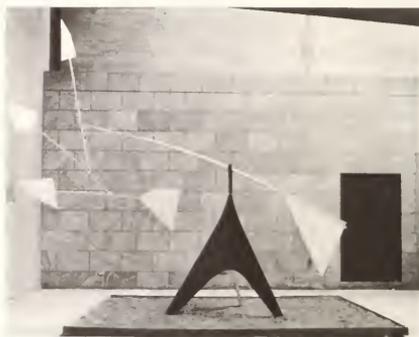
moves about them. Calder's works refute the lingering frontality of most sculpture: the stables puncture space, the mobiles punctuate it.

His mobiles were made by hand, one-by-one in his studios; the large stables were produced by others. By 1958 Calder had three Connecticut metalshops doing work for him. After 1958 he turned to Carmen Segre's Connecticut shop to produce his big pieces. Beginning in 1962, the Etablissements Biémont performed this function in France. The method of production of the big pieces remained the same throughout

his life. Small, much adjusted sheet aluminum maquettes were taken to the fabricator and enlarged in steel plate to Calder's chosen scale. When the basic sections were finished, Calder returned to add the fittings, gussers and ribs, and to make additional adjustments. The piece was then stabilized and, starting in 1954, Calder's distinctive monogram signature was applied. In works such as *Untitled*, 1959, the expansion of an intimate maquette to a monumental sculpture seems more awkwardly apparent.



**Big Red, 1959**  
Painted sheet metal and steel wire, 74 inches high x 114 inches diameter  
Gift of the Friends of the Whitney Museum of American Art 61.46



**Untitled, 1959**  
Painted sheet metal and stainless steel rods, 148 x 156 x 88<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> inches  
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Marcel Breuer 76.6



**Dots and Dashes, 1959**  
Painted sheet metal and wire, 60 inches high x 60 inches diameter  
On extended loan from the collection of Howard and Jean Lipman



**The Cock's Comb, 1960**  
Painted sheet iron, 119<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 145<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 98<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> inches  
Gift of the Friends of the Whitney Museum of American Art 62.18

## Works on Paper, 1945–1976

As in Calder's 1931–32 drawings, his work on paper is at its best when strong shapes, depth and perspective are emphasized—a testament to his predominantly three-dimensional vision. In addition to making oil paintings, Calder sketched, drew, painted and made etchings, woodcuts, linoleum cuts and numerous lithographs. Calder liked speed and strong, hard-edged shapes; painting in gouache on paper best suited these needs. He did make watercolors, but as in *The Mermaid*, they are often faint and flat. The Rorschach-like forms of *Composition* were created in Aix-en-Pro-

vence in 1953. In the works on paper he produced there, Calder "would moisten the paper with a flow of water and wait until it dried a bit but not too much; then I would draw on it with a brush full of China ink—this would develop clouds and trees and fungi and things of that nature" (*Calder: An Autobiography with Pictures*, New York, Pantheon Books, 1966, p. 214). The following year at his newly purchased residence at Saché, Calder established what he affectionately called his "gouacherie."



*The Mermaid*, c. 1945  
Watercolor and ink on paper, 18<sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 23<sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub> inches  
Gift of Edith and Milton Lowenthal 57.49



*Composition*, 1953  
Watercolor on paper, 28 x 42<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> inches  
Gift of Mrs. Milton Weill 61.15



*Big Bug*, 1971  
Gouache on paper, 29 x 43 inches  
Promised gift of Howard and Jean Lipman  
P.40.80



*Cover Design*, 1971  
Gouache on paper, 11<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 11<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> inches  
Gift of Howard and Jean Lipman 72.53

The Museum owns five of his 1970s gouaches—*Big Bug*, *Contour Plowing*, *Four Black Dots*, *Triumph* and *Menagerie*. He turned out many such gouaches in the final years of his life. With their bright colors straight from the jar and unaltered by mixing or brushwork, Calder's gouaches were rapidly accomplished, declarative and pleasing.

His production of lithographs is enmeshed with that of his gouaches. Printed on the same paper, lithographs like *Fronton*, *Contour Plowing*, *Flying Colors '76* and *The Horse* were transferred by a master colorist to zinc plates—one per color—from the original Calder gouache. Calder oversaw the process, but his direct involvement ended when he

handed over the gouache, and only began again when he approved and signed the edition.

As in *Fables of Aesop*, or in the sets of etchings *La Proue de la Table* and *Fêtes*, illustrations for written texts resulted in some of Calder's most interesting prints. *La Proue de la Table* took the form of a short imaginary newspaper, with text by Yves Elléounët and seven line illustrations by Calder. It was issued in an edition of fifty-five. *Fêtes*, of which two hundred copies were printed, is a lengthy prose poem about Calder by Jacques Prévert. Calder cut component metal shapes that were inventively placed on the press to produce its striking embossed etchings.

**Nude, 1971**

Ink on paper, 10½ x 3¾ inches  
Gift of the artist 71.261

**Nude, 1971**

Ink on paper, 13 x 6½ inches  
Gift of the artist 71.262



**Contour Plowing, 1974**  
Gouache on paper, 29¼ x 43⅛ inches  
Gift of the artist 74.91

**Triumph, 1974**

Gouache on paper, 29½ x 43¼ inches  
Gift of the artist in honor of John I. H. Baur  
74.63



**Four Black Dots, 1974**  
Gouache on paper, 29½ x 43 inches  
Gift of the Howard and Jean Lipman Foundation, Inc. 74.94



**Menagerie, 1975**  
Gouache on paper, 29¼ x 42 inches  
Gift of the artist 75.42



Fronton, 1965  
Lithograph, 18<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 25<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> inches  
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Charles D. Clark 67.52

Fêtes, 1971  
Book with seven etchings by Calder, 12<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 9<sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub> inches each  
Gift of the Howard and Jean Lipman Foundation, Inc. 74.123

Contour Plowing, 1974  
Color lithograph, 26<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 38 inches  
Purchase 75.31



Flying Colors '76, 1976  
Lithograph, 25 x 35<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> inches  
Gift of the employees of Braniff Airways, Inc. 76.20



La Proue de la Table, 1967  
Etching, 6<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 9 inches  
Gift of Dr. and Mrs. David B. Pall in honor of John I. H. Baur 74.78



The Horse, 1976  
Lithograph, 29<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 21<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> inches  
Gift of Brewster Fine Arts Ltd. 77.90



The Red Nose, 1969  
Color lithograph, 29<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 42<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> inches  
Promised gift of Howard and Jean Lipman P.39.80

## Tapestries

Around 1950, Calder began using his gouache designs for rugs. His interest in translating his designs into weaving was encouraged by his wife, Louisa, who eventually published a book on crochet. Though in 1965 two rug editions were commercially produced, the majority of deep-pile Calder weavings are owned by close friends or members of his family.

From 1960 on, Calder's commercially produced rugs and tapestries were made in Aubusson, the center of weaving in France since the twelfth century. In 1962, under the direction of

Pierre Baudoin, nine different tapestries, all with fringed edges, were produced. (By French law, tapestry editions are limited to six per design with two artist's proofs.) In 1970, Calder began his association with the firm of Pinton Frères, which by 1971 had woven twenty-six Calder tapestries. Twenty of these, including *Glacier with Coloured Petals* and *Les Masques*, were shown in the fall of 1971 in the artist's first solo exhibition at the Whitney Museum, "Alexander Calder: Tapestries." Subsequently, Calder made twenty-four more Aubusson tapestries. Pinton Frères' monogram is incorporated into all of Calder's post-1970 designs.



*Glacier with Coloured Petals*, 1971  
Tapestry, 66 x 93 1/2 inches  
Gift of the Howard and Jean Lipman Foundation, Inc. 71.220



*Les Masques*, 1971  
Tapestry, 63 1/2 x 97 1/4 inches  
Gift of the Howard and Jean Lipman Foundation, Inc. 74.95

## Later Sculpture

Age did not diminish Calder's activity as a sculptor; it only seemed to increase the ambition and scale of his pieces. *Indian Feathers* (or *Plumeau Sioux*, its original, more poetic and specific title, "Sioux Featherduster") was made when Calder was seventy. Though his new, spacious, hilltop studio at Saché had been completed, Calder continued to take his aluminum maquettes to the Etablissements Bié-mont in Tours for large-scale realization. A comparison of the maquette and the Museum's sculpture reveals that along with increasing the scale, Calder used many gussets, heavier connective fittings and a single metal rod, rather than two, to connect the bottom feather and the circular component. Apart from its marvelously conceived balance, the piece is excep-

tional for the palette of primary colors on five mobile feathers.

Calder also continued to make less monumental sculpture. *Chock* seems to have been intended for private consumption. It was the last of a flock of birds, the first of which dates from around 1950, that were composed from cut and assembled tin cans. The series recalls Calder's general affection for toys and his brief commercial forays into their manufacture. Yet when suspended in air, the birds are closer to mobiles, albeit of an unusually representational character. Predating Jasper Johns, Calder employed coffee and beer cans for high art—in the case of *Chock*, an Italian coffee container. The Museum's vibrant metallic fowl, a gift from the artist, is one of the few of the flock presently outside of family ownership. Signatory initials dangle provocatively from its belly.



*Indian Feathers*, 1969  
Painted sheet aluminum and stainless steel  
rods, 136 $\frac{3}{4}$  x 91 x 63 inches  
Gift of the Howard and Jean Lipman Founda-  
tion, Inc. 69.260



*Chock*, 1972  
Metal, 11 x 28 x 22 inches  
Gift of the artist 72.55

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