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# ALEXANDER CALDER

# TEATRO DE ENCUENTROS\*

\*THEATER OF ENCOUNTERS



# Alexander Calder: Theater of Encounters

**ALEXANDER CALDER. TEATRO DE ENCUENTROS**  
8 de septiembre 2018 – 13 de enero 2019

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**Embajada de los Estados Unidos de América en Argentina.**

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**Fundación Proa, Buenos Aires en colaboración con Calder Foundation, New York**

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*Crittter innommable*, 1974

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# Press Release



*Untitled, 1941*  
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**September 8, 2018 – January 13, 2019**  
**Organized by: Fundación Proa, in collaboration with Calder Foundation, New York**  
**Curated by Sandra Antelo-Suárez**  
**Sponsored by Tenaris – Ternium - Tecpetrol**  
**With support of the United States of America Embassy in Argentina – United Airlines – Diario La Nación**

Theater of Encounters, an exhibition of approximately sixty artworks by Alexander Calder (USA, 1898 - 1976), spans six creative decades of the artist's life and presents the diversity of his work, revealing his multifaceted approach as an artist. Constituting an extensive panorama, the show is a testament to Calder's enduring contemporaneity and

the importance of his artistic contributions.

Calder is known as the inventor of the "mobile," a type of suspended sculpture made of sheet metal and wire that captures movement in an ever-changing series of forms, offering radical alternatives to the language of abstraction and existing concepts of art; he is also renowned for his "stabiles," static sculptures with implied movement. From his mobiles of the 1930s to his monumental stabiles of the 1970s, Calder profoundly impacted the history of twentieth-century art.

Curated by Sandra Antelo-Suárez, the exhibition explores Calder's work through a series of curatorial 'propositions,' in which visitors experience the 'continuous becoming' of the works of art in relational and emotionally energetic ways. Rather than relying on the firm chronology or thematic constructs around which exhibitions are typically organized, Antelo-Suarez invites visitors to explore the work from unconventional lenses: the metaphysical, the social-conceptual, or through what she terms 'uncertainty and explosive kinetics.' Visitors new to Calder will traverse the major themes in his work, from wire sculpture and the circus to radical abstraction, sound-mobiles, and monumental sculpture. Those already initiated to Calder's work will find new ways of looking at and understanding it through Antelo-Suarez's original thesis of Calder as the forebearer of Relational Aesthetics.

# Introduction

*Alexander S. C. Rower*

Calder is celebrated as the first truly international artist of the twentieth century. Between 1926 and 1933, he crossed the Atlantic twelve times. Vanguard audiences in Europe and the United States eagerly embraced the Cirque Calder, his pioneering work of performance art, and his abstract mobiles, which began a kinetic revolution in modern art. In 1948, for his first of three visits to Brazil—nearly ten years after his 1939 debut at the III Salão de Maio—he held highly successful exhibitions in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo. In the following decades, Calder fulfilled important commissions across the globe, from Venezuela to Lebanon to Australia. Today, his work can be found in over four dozen countries.

Despite his widespread acclaim, it was not until 1971 that Argentinian audiences were directly introduced to Calder. The Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes staged *Escultura, acuarelas y dibujos, grabados, libros ilustrados y joyas de la colección del Museum of Modern Art de Nueva York*, a traveling exhibition organized by MoMA that was also presented in Colombia, Uruguay, Chile, and Mexico. And now, almost fifty years later, we are thrilled to have Calder return to Argentina in *Theater of Encounters* at Fundación PROA. The exhibition comprises over sixty works, from wire sculpture to mobiles to jewelry, that span six decades of Calder's oeuvre; this accompanying catalogue, with twenty-two historical and contemporary texts that date from 1932 to the present day, offers a wide-ranging exploration of the artist's prodigious output. We would like to thank PROA, a forward-looking institution of international renown, for making this possible.

Calder embraced a constantly evolving dynamics of the senses. He rejected fixed or rigid meanings. He wanted his works to be experiences, not objects for consumption. Curator Sandra Antelo-Suarez has been exploring the work of Calder for over a decade. To see her academic ideas seize into a fine project is at once extraordinary and expansive. With *Theater of Encounters*, she decodes open questions inherent in Calder's work, revealing glimpses of his sculptures' ephemeral interactions and quantifying his genius.

**Alexander S. C. Rower**  
**President**  
**Calder Foundation, New York**

## Adriana Rosenberg

“La obra de Alexander Calder sitúa el acto estético en el encuentro, en un juego mental sin límites ni guiones, pleno de colaboraciones en desarrollo, especulaciones y expectativas. La obra no es un producto sino un evento, un momento de la vida misma haciéndose...” escribe la curadora Sandra Antelo Suárez, en su introducción.

Nada más apropiado que denominar este proyecto como *Teatro de Encuentros*, dada la suma de acontecimientos a lo largo de casi dos años que hoy se concentran en las salas de Proa, para presentar públicamente las obras de Alexander Calder, el catálogo y un sólido programa de actividades públicas.

En la historia de nuestra Fundación, cada temporada nos ocupamos de mostrar aquellos hitos que la historia del arte de la centuria pasada consagró, tal como hicimos con el Futurismo, con Marcel Duchamp, con Malevich y tantos otros en únicas y extraordinarias exhibiciones para la mirada, el estudio y la comprensión de los movimientos más destacados y el vínculo de estos con nuestros artistas.

Alexander Calder era una de las figuras pendientes por ser un creador revolucionario respecto de la escultura tradicional, porque une el arte con la ingeniería e inaugura un espacio donde el movimiento azaroso es parte constitutiva de la obra, porque integra al espectador en ese territorio plástico y porque su creatividad alcanza zonas imperceptibles, desde el teatro, la música contemporánea y el diseño hasta el espacio público.

La primera y única exhibición de sus obras fue en 1971 en el Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, integrada por piezas pertenecientes a la colección del Museo de Arte Moderno de Nueva York. Quienes tuvieron la oportunidad de verla, recuerdan el fuerte impacto que provocó en el medio local y latinoamericano, dado que la muestra fue itinerando por varios países.

*Teatro de Encuentros* dista 47 años de aquel momento y mucho se ha investigado y estudiado acerca de Calder, dado que es un artista que, al ser creador y partícipe de grandes rupturas, su obra se convierte en un continuo devenir.

Estos dos años fueron de mucho trabajo junto con la curadora y la Calder Foundation desde que acordamos efectivamente presentar las obras en Proa. Como todo proyecto, transitó por contundentes etapas de diálogo, lecturas, desarrollo de textos, proyectos y diseños, así como la comprensión específica de nuestro entorno, dado que Teatro de encuentros solo es exhibida en Buenos Aires desde el 8 de septiembre de 2018 hasta el 13 de enero de 2019.

Sandra Antelo Suárez seleccionó obras que dan cuenta de la amplitud de la propuesta creativa del artista, recuperando la idea de teatro y de escena con el registro de dibujos, piezas y videos del famoso *Cirque Calder* que el artista crea, relata y diseña como un demiurgo de su propia obra. Estamos en la década de 1930, en París, cuna de las vanguardias históricas.

Sobre una sutil línea de tiempo llegamos a los momentos preliminares de la invención del móvi –término dado por su amigo Marcel Duchamp– y en una pieza fundacional oímos la música que compone una pelotita moviéndose, en un desplazamiento lento y azaroso; estamos ante la presencia de *Small Sphere and Heavy Sphere* (1932/1933). Las obras de Calder se alejan de la escultura como mera

representación y dan lugar a una obra autónoma, como señaló Jean-Paul Sartre: “Calder no sugiere nada: atrapa auténticos movimientos vivos y les da forma. Sus móviles no significan nada, no nos remiten a nada que no sean ellos mismos: son, eso es todo. Son absolutos”.

Según escribe Arnauld Pierre:

“La invención de móviles confirmará, de manera más fuerte, esta tendencia: si el movimiento constituye la esencia y la condición del espectáculo, entonces el móvil, que integra tanto las causas como las manifestaciones, es espectacular en sí mismo y aún, por así decirlo, a pesar de sí mismo. Se ofrece, no para representar algo, sino para ser representación en sí misma: el móvil, para retomar un término forjado por Fernand Léger y que hubiéramos creído inventado por Calder, es sin duda el ‘objeto-espectáculo’ por excelencia”.

Las piezas dibujan el espacio, cada mirada crea una nueva forma que, en diálogo con sus sombras, fascinan en su lento desplazamiento. Las obras de los setenta, muestran la etapa en que el artista participa activamente de la escena de la New York School, junto con John Cage, Marta Graham y Earl Brown, y compone objetos, escenografías, joyas, piezas en miniatura y algunos de sus personajes monumentales culminan la exhibición extasiando al visitante.

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*Teatro de Encuentros* es organizado por Fundación Proa en colaboración con Calder Foundation. Los equipos de trabajo de ambas instituciones lograron efectivizar el proyecto. El apoyo de Alexander S. C. Rower fue decisivo y la riqueza conceptual de la curadora Sandra Antelo Suárez logró una única y distinguida exhibición, con piezas históricas de un valor incalculable.

La decisión de producir esta publicación que reúne las palabras del artista y un conjunto de textos históricos y contemporáneos, convierte a la edición en un libro de estudio obligado sobre la vida y obra de Calder en español.

La Embajada de los Estados Unidos de América en la Argentina colaboró para cuidar y resguardar las obras que enriquecen el patrimonio artístico de su país, junto con United Airlines, el transportador oficial.

La Organización Techint, a través de sus empresas, Tecpetrol, Tenaris y Ternium está presente en estos dos años, apoyando el evento desde el exterior y desde aquí con requerido asesoramiento.

Fundación Proa agradece a los equipos de trabajo de ambas fundaciones y a nuestros colaboradores y auspiciantes, y pone a disposición una de las más significativas exhibiciones de Alexander Calder construidas en los últimos tiempos.

A todos, ¡muchas gracias!

Adriana Rosenberg

Presidente

Fundación Proa

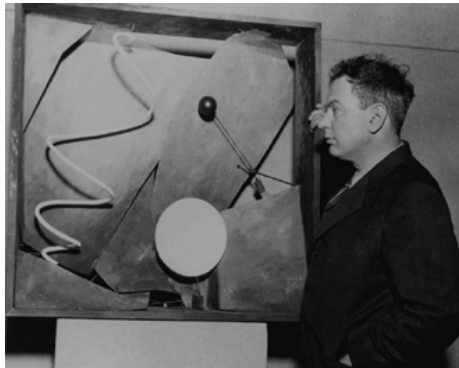


# Biography

## ALEXANDER CALDER

Alexander Calder (1898-1976) is one of the most acclaimed and influential sculptors of the 20th century. Born into a family of celebrated, though more classically trained artists, Calder utilized his innovative genius to profoundly change the course of modern art. He began by developing a new method of sculpting: by bending and twisting wire, he delineated mass by suggesting its volume, essentially “drawing” three-dimensional figures in space. After a visit to Mondrian’s studio in October 1930, where he was impressed by the environmental installation, he created his first completely abstract compositions and invented a form of kinetic sculpture known as the “mobile,” a term coined by Marcel Duchamp in 1931 that refers to both “movement” and “motive” in French. Calder’s first mobiles operated through a system of motors, but he abandoned these mechanisms after developing mobiles that responded to air currents, light, humidity and human interaction. He also created stationary abstract works that Jean Arp called “stables.”

In 1948, Calder made his first of three trips to Brazil - passing through Mexico City - where successful exhibitions of his work were presented in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo. In 1952, he accepted a commission to design Acoustic Ceiling (1954) for Aula Magna, the auditorium of the Central University of Venezuela. The same year, he represented the United States at the Venice Biennale, winning the Grand Prize for sculpture. Towards the end of the fifties, Calder devoted himself to making outdoor sculpture on a grand scale from bolted steel plates. These majestic titans, including El Sol Rojo (1968), commissioned for the Olympic Games in Mexico City, continue to grace parks and public plazas around the world. During his life, major retrospectives of his work were presented at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York (1964); The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston (1964); Musée National d’Art Moderne, Paris (1965); Fondation Maeght, Saint-Paul-de-Vence, France (1969); and the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (1976). Calder died in New York, in 1976, at seventy-eight years of age.



*Calder with Black Frame*, 1934, Mobiles by Alexander Calder, The Renaissance Society of the University of Chicago, 1935  
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INFORMATION ABOUT THE LIFE AND WORK OF ALEXANDER CALDER CAN BE FOUND ON THE CALDER FOUNDATION’S WEBSITE:  
<http://www.calder.org/>

# Teatro de Encuentros

## Sandra Antelo-Suárez

Del trabajo de Alexander Calder surge una riqueza de colaboraciones abiertas y múltiples niveles de participación. A fines de 1931, durante una de las visitas que hizo Marcel Duchamp al estudio de Calder, comienza una colaboración abierta entre los dos. Este fue un encuentro entre mentes afines que durante muchos años se nutrió de juegos —que incluían juegos de palabras— y humor. Cuando Calder le preguntó a Duchamp qué nombre darle a uno de sus objetos motorizados, Duchamp sugirió el término *mobile* (móvil), que, como el *readymade* de Duchamp, “le daba nombre a esta manifestación particular” y designaba una nueva categoría artística.<sup>1</sup> El nuevo término —un juego de palabras en francés que significa, a la vez, movimiento y motivo, o “la fuerza detrás de una acción”<sup>2</sup>— sugería desde muy temprano que el trabajo de Calder buscaría situarse en un espacio dialéctico entre causa y efecto, o trataría, tal vez, de abarcar los dos.

Como figuras en su propio juego de mesa, Calder y Duchamp instalaron una plataforma de paradigmas de posibilidades. Resistiendo la insistencia que hacía el arte moderno en la especificidad de los medios tradicionales, el móvil no se apoyaba en los materiales sino en la proposición de una acción —tanto en el juego como en el escenario, actos lúdicos en ambos casos—.<sup>3</sup>

En esos actos lúdicos, la obra de Alexander Calder sitúa el acto estético en el encuentro, en un juego mental sin límites ni guiones, pleno de colaboraciones en desarrollo, especulaciones y expectativas. La obra no es un producto sino un evento, un momento de la vida misma haciéndose, un *becoming* —un continuo devenir sin comienzo ni fin—. Es la existencia perpetua de las relaciones entre los elementos de la obra de arte y la imaginación del espectador, moderada solo por el azar y el tiempo. El mundo de Calder es un teatro de encuentros en el cual sus múltiples desplegamientos constituyen un compromiso con el presente.

*Small Sphere and Heavy Sphere* (Pequeña esfera y pesada esfera), 1932/1933, el primer móvil colgante de Calder, es una proposición con un programa abierto y colaborativo. El espectador partic-



*Small Sphere and Heavy Sphere*, 1932/33  
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ipa en el acto creativo, como lo expresó Duchamp: “Después de todo, el artista no es el único que lleva a cabo el acto creativo; el espectador pone la obra en contacto con el mundo exterior al descifrar e interpretar sus cualidades internas, contribuyendo así al acto creativo. Esto se vuelve todavía más obvio cuando la posteridad da su veredicto final y a veces rehabilita artistas olvidados”—o, en este caso, obras olvidadas—. <sup>4</sup>

*Small Sphere and Heavy Sphere* marca un momento decisivo en la obra de Calder, no en relación con cuestiones formales sino porque aclara su búsqueda del potencial que existe en la acción, la reacción y la interacción. Adicionalmente, marca el comienzo de su ruptura con el marco y las manifestaciones tradicionales de la escultura.

Como lo expresa George Baker en su ensayo “Calder’s Mobility”:

Calder absorbe la base en sus construcciones autónomas, sin distinguir entre la escultura y su entorno. Más tarde, termina eliminando la base o la superficie sobre la cual normalmente se ha colocado la escultura al suspender sus objetos en el espacio, lanzándolos al aire. Desde *Iris, Messenger of the Gods* (*Iris, mensajera de los dioses*) de Auguste Rodin (c. 1895) hasta *Bird in Space* (*Pájaro en vuelo*) de Brancusi (1923), la escultura moderna había considerado esta negación, la necesidad desesperada de desconectarse del suelo para anular la obstinada conexión entre la escultura y su analogía: el cuerpo humano enraizado. Sin este paso, la escultura siempre sería un eco de la figura humana, una estética residualmente figurativa hasta el fin. Para Rodin, la fantasía era un salto, la breve conquista del aire por parte de una bailarina, la diosa volando. Para Brancusi, solo la naturaleza podía hacer este sueño posible, la imaginación del pájaro en vuelo. Pero, Calder hizo de esta fantasía realidad. Y si la escultura ya no era un cuerpo, conectado a la tierra y pesado; si la escultura ahora podía volar o flotar sin amarres, esto conlleva dos negaciones adicionales. A diferencia de la pesada masa de la escultura tradicional, el objeto de Calder mostraba una estética de la ingravidez, una escultura marcada por la liviandad y la fragilidad. En contraste con la terca inmovilidad de la escultura, eternamente estática e inmutable, la obra de Calder acogió el movimiento, una serie de objetos abiertos a la contingencia y el azar. Calder absorbe la base dentro de sus construcciones independientes, sin distinción. <sup>5</sup>

Una proposición (encontrada)

En una carta del 20 de agosto de 1943, Calder le sugirió al curador James Johnson Sweeney que *Small Sphere and Heavy Sphere* se incluyera en su retrospectiva de 1943 en el Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) de Nueva York. La obra no fue incluida en la exposición en el MoMA. Era, tal vez, una obra compleja para su tiempo y complicaba la estrategia que desarrollaron el director del MoMA, Alfred

H. Barr, Jr., los curadores y las curadoras y el MoMA como institución para expandir el canon del arte moderno y mover su centro a Nueva York.<sup>6</sup>

Small Sphere and Heavy Sphere se expuso en 1933 en París, pero pasaron siete décadas antes de que se volviera a mostrar públicamente. Aunque todas las partes del móvil estaban intactas, el vínculo que faltaba era la carta ilustrada de Calder, que conecta las partes de la obra y su proposición, pero que se descubrió recientemente en los archivos de Sweeney. Nosotros, en esta exposición y en este ensayo, nos acercamos a la obra de Calder desde esta perspectiva.<sup>7</sup>

La visita de Calder en octubre de 1930 al estudio de Mondrian, que lo impactó como instalación ambiental, se convirtió en un punto crítico en los estudios de destacados historiadores de arte sobre la evolución de Calder y sus contribuciones críticas. Como Small Sphere and Heavy Sphere se re-descubrió recientemente, la mayoría de estas discusiones no incluyen esa obra.

Small Sphere and Heavy Sphere es una pieza clave que cambia nuestra relación con la obra de Calder hoy en día y sugiere las rutas posibles que su trabajo pudo haber tomado si la obra se hubiera incluido en la exposición del MoMA. La pregunta que queda pendiente es ¿cómo podemos reescribir la historia para reintegrar la proposición sobre la obra y la carta de 1943, escrita durante el periodo de la Segunda Guerra Mundial, y así renegociar su existencia?<sup>8</sup>

En una parte de la carta de 1943, el artista le escribe a Sweeney:

Se me olvidó mostrarte este objeto.

Uno hace que la esfera roja (de hierro) se mueva en un pequeño círculo este movimiento + la inercia de la barra y la extensión del hilo crean un patrón de movimiento sumamente complicado—. La impedimenta cajas, platillo, botellas, latas, etc. — contribuyen a la complicación, y además añaden sonidos de golpes secos, choques, etc. Esta es una reconstrucción de la que tenía en París en 1933.

Voya bajarla e instalarla para que la puedas ver.

La llamo "Small sphere + Heavy sphere".<sup>9</sup>

El plan de acción es simple: se cuelga una barra del techo y se colocan objetos en el piso. El conjunto incluye un vector —la barra de hierro— y objetos cotidianos que Calder llama "impedimenta": cinco botellas de vidrio, un platillo (gong), una lata y lo que describe como "cajas", aunque ahora solo hay un cajón de madera.

Los objetos no son importantes. Lo que importa es la proposición y su complicación: la impedimenta, la inercia, las distintas extensiones, los sonidos de golpes secos y choques que se generan cuando se activa la pieza.<sup>10</sup>

De los extremos de la barra cuelgan un hilo y un alambre. El hilo sostiene una esfera liviana de madera blanca. Al otro lado de la barra, el alambre sostiene una esfera roja más grande y pesada de hierro fundido, que le hace contrapeso y equilibra la barra, poniéndola en posición horizontal —perpendicular al techo y el suelo—. El hilo y el alambre cuelgan libremente hacia el suelo. El hilo es más largo que el alambre. Uno podría discernir un rectángulo en el espacio: al colgar, también crea un escenario. No hay un lugar fijo para los objetos; el performer de la obra decide dónde colocarlos.

La vulnerabilidad reina en el escenario a medida que Calder transfiere el control del artista al público. La expectativa del espectador es todo lo que importa.<sup>11</sup> La comunidad está integrada y, como tal, desestabiliza la autoría del artista.

En cuanto el espectador extiende su mano para tocar la (fría) esfera roja de hierro, experimenta la sensación de estar cometiendo una infracción, algo usualmente prohibido en un museo. Por un momento, el rectángulo y su marco se desestabilizan y se borran.

La energía resuena a medida que la esfera más pequeña y liviana se despierta. La esfera acaricia los objetos o los golpea fuertemente, creando un sonido seco —aunque la mayoría del tiempo no los toca, generando suspenso y expectativa—. La esfera se balancea del vidrio, a la madera, al gong. Entre estos objetos, puede detenerse en ciertos momentos. No existe guion. A veces, el móvil se enreda en la impedimenta, pero luego se recupera continuando su camino. Hay momentos sensuales en este encuentro entre las partes, un acto casi sexual que ocurre en público. Hay una fusión entre el objeto y el público, y los límites se borran, como al hacer el amor.

El baile de la bola marca el tiempo y dibuja líneas efímeras en el espacio, aún cuando no acaricia la impedimenta y solo activa el aire, sólo la energía. Estos silencios intermitentes, estas vacilaciones entre la acción y la no-acción, el arte y el no-arte, dentro de la coreografía natural, son momentos bellísimos. Son, tal vez, los mejores momentos de la obra: encarnan su precario becoming, su devenir, que transcurre sin documentación alguna, dando fé del momento, del presente, visto sólo por quien está ahí.<sup>12</sup>

En el cruce entre escultura, proposición, instrucción, performance y participación, *Small Sphere and Heavy Sphere* ocupa un espacio desconocido. Desde este momento en adelante, vemos que Calder desarrolla obras de arte semiautosuficientes y autónomas. El público ya no participa físicamente; la participación es sobre todo mental, pues la facilita la intervención del medio ambiente —el viento, por ejemplo—, como ocurre sobre todo en los móviles colgantes de los años cuarenta y cincuenta. Así comienza la esplendorosa era del objeto-ballet semiautosuficiente<sup>13-14</sup>

#### La disparidad como método

La plataforma operativa de Calder se encuentra en ese espacio intermedio entre el móvil y el stabile, o entre el movimiento y el movimiento implícito. Durante otra de sus colaboraciones abiertas, que ocurre en febrero de 1932, Calder

adopta el término sarcástico que usa Jean Arp para nombrar los otros stables en su obra: “Pues, ¿qué son esas cosas que hiciste el año pasado [para la exposición en la galería Percier], stables?”<sup>15</sup>

Los stables en la obra de Calder son planos de chapa, tridimensionales y multidimensionales diseñados para lugares específicos, puestos sobre una mesa o en el cruce entre dos calles. Las intersecciones de los ángulos entre los planos de acero balancean las distintas partes, creando una sensación de presencia en sus puntos de encuentro y enmarcando situaciones en el medio social, con sus frecuencias de incertidumbres sobre el escenario, en un juego de permutaciones.

Algunos stables son formas biomórficas de planos ensamblados que esculpen el aire a su alrededor. Otros permiten que el espectador entre literalmente, pasando por aberturas o bajo arcos o ángulos. Estas obras son escenarios in situ y llevan a una revolución en el arte público que se dará de 1936 en adelante a medida que se expanden las estrategias de la Guerra Fría, incluida la integración arquitectónica del utopismo moderno.

En su obra, Calder creó, para el siglo XX, un pensamiento visual experimental y una participación marcados por una nueva disparidad. Construyó esculturas sociales —en cuanto el objeto artístico y el público funcionan como actores o intér-



Ugo Mulas  
*Teodelapio*, (1962). Spoleto, Italy, 1962  
[Artwork © 2018 Calder Foundation, New York / Artists Rights Society \(ARS\), New York / SAVA Buenos Aires; Photo © Ugo Mulas Heirs.](#)

pretos y como arquitectura, confundiendo los papeles en un juego inmaterial— lo cual altera los valores estáticos de un purista o formalista, sometidos a una reevaluación crítica. Como escribió Calder mismo: “Para mí, lo más importante en la composición es la disparidad”.<sup>16</sup>

La disparidad es el método de Calder en contra del determinismo. Es su regla de composición. Como una especie de “experiencia estética, se enfoca en la complejidad sensual de la realidad. Por realidad, quiero decir la realidad física y la fantasía, ‘es un caso de transición’, explicó Gilles Deleuze, ‘de un cambio’, un becoming, un devenir, pero que perdura, un cambio que es la sustancia misma”.<sup>17</sup> La lógica es insuficiente en este juego. En vez, tenemos una liberación intelectual.

En la disparidad, el deslizamiento del equilibrio es una experiencia en vivo que ocurre en un espacio y tiempo particular y que solo se aproxima al “ideal” de la obra, pues esta es siempre una variante de sí misma.<sup>18</sup>

Formalmente, las obras de Calder están compuestas por mecanismos

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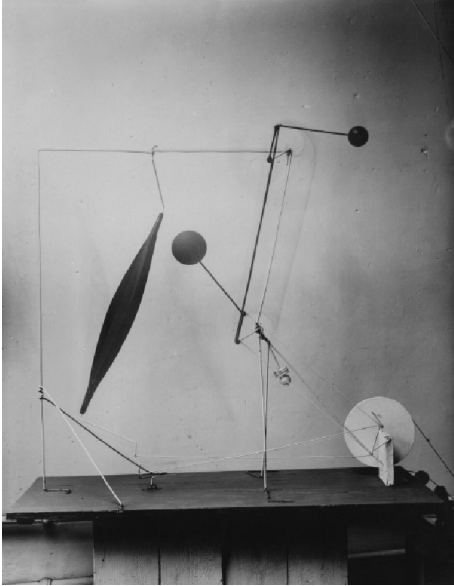
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conectados y articulados, totalmente expuestos. Una parte altera las demás. La ingeniería de la obra facilita la interacción y, a su vez, la ingeniería social. Son modelos de relaciones que problematizan los valores modernistas de la experimentación. El aspecto más radical del trabajo de Calder es su renuncia al estilo. Como observa Susan Sontag, los recursos estilísticos son técnicas de evasión.<sup>19</sup> Sin embargo, los modelos (móviles y stables) de Calder encarnan más que el estilo: tienen múltiples capas y, a la vez, están fijos, son, al mismo tiempo, eróticos y evasivos, a veces fugitivos, silencios sinfónicos.

La obra de Calder resiste las convenciones de la clasificación. En el intento mismo de demarcar su espacio, escapa a sus propias reglas en búsqueda de una constante: la incertidumbre.



Marc Vaux  
Alexander Calder,  
*Untitled*, 1931  
Artwork © 2018  
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Bibliothèque  
Kandinsky, Centre  
Pompidou, fonds  
Marc Vaux.

#### La erótica de la duda

En 1964, Sontag hizo un llamado para que se reestructuraran obsoletas jerarquías críticas y evaluativas y escribió que “en lugar de una hermeneútica necesitamos un ‘erótica del arte’”.<sup>20</sup> En 1996, aclaró que esto significaba la presencia del intelecto, que ofrece una experimentación especulativa, un placer intelectual, y la presencia del arte como pensamiento apasionado en medio de lo que sería, de lo contrario, un vacío de circunstancias estáticas y respuestas concretas. Yo propongo una “erótica de la duda” como la columna vertebral de la fuerza creativa en la obra de Calder.

Calder revela y se goza el potencial y las posibilidades de su medio. La disparidad está entremezclada con una “erótica de la duda” en la cual la duda se mueve de la especulación a la participación. La duda es el motor del pensamiento y la observación.

Esa incontenible “erótica de la duda” se convierte en el *modus operandi* de la obra de Calder. Cualquier móvil o stable fragmenta el espacio. Fragmentadas y articuladas, evasivas y opacas, sus obras comunican el poder expresivo de fuerzas poéticas y diagramáticas. Están listas para participar en circunstancias de infinita variación, en un devenir continuo, fertilizado por los encuentros.

En palabras de Calder: “Siempre me ha encantado la manera en que las cosas enganchan las unas con las otras... Es igualito a un diagrama de fuerzas”.<sup>21</sup> El móvil, un diagrama/modelo de relaciones, está listo para “engancharse”<sup>22</sup> con un encuentro violento o con su contraparte, un itinerario de viaje que resulta en encuentros sensuales y armoniosos, ensayados sobre el escenario de la vida —increíblemente, también es casi siempre explícitamente personal—. Calder dice lo siguiente acerca de este enganche: “Al manipularlos —es decir, al tocarlos con la mano para ponerlos en movimiento— se debe considerar la dirección en la que el objeto está diseñado para moverse, y la inercia

de su masa... En todo caso, 'suave' es la palabra clave".<sup>23</sup>

#### Fuerzas fugitivas

En 1926, en su constante búsqueda de un encuentro en el medio social (por medio de colaboraciones abiertas, de acciones y reacciones), Calder publicó un intrigante dibujo-manual titulado *Animal Sketching* (Bocetos de animales). Es otro ejemplo de la complicidad que estableció con otros artistas: en ese libro articulará los principios básicos del dibujo. A pesar de que es una especie de manual, también es una proposición que presenta una estrategia para sintetizar gestos.

La clave de estos esbozos didácticos es la reducción del dibujo a líneas gestuales en el espacio cuyo fin es definir la acción. Como eco de la caligrafía japonesa, las líneas son gestos rápidos y pequeños en los cuales la pincelada de

tinta no se detiene en el camino. Si estos dibujos no estuvieran sobre el papel habría un parecido directo con las esculturas de alambre, en las cuales la línea define el volumen.

Como esculturas de alambre, las líneas van desempacando sus actos sobre el escenario; sus siluetas y sombras se hacen eco unas a otras, volviendo líquida la arquitectura en la que existen.

Las obras de Calder, desde su *Cirque Calder* (El circo de Calder) y las esculturas de alambre hasta los móviles y los stables, son puentes que borran la separación entre el escenario y el auditorio y, más generalmente, entre el arte y el mundo. Como tal, el componente social-conceptual de la presentación en vivo de su obra se reactiva constantemente en un esfuerzo por generar encuentros fortuitos con la materialidad fundamental del mundo:

los objetos y sus propiedades, el espacio y el tiempo, la causa y el efecto, la posibilidad y la certeza.

En su forma de acercarse tanto al arte como al mundo, Calder es un relativista, un realista protoespeculativo que marca la ubicación espacio-temporal de todas las posibles circunstancias de actuación para un objeto.

Calder se cercioró de que cada incertidumbre y toda la kinética explosiva en las relaciones espaciales y conceptuales que se debaten y se exploran en sus objetos se desarrollara, se desplegara y se amplificara al participar en la ceremonia de cada recreación activa.

A la vez, su obra reúne una comunidad —personas y objetos— hecha de

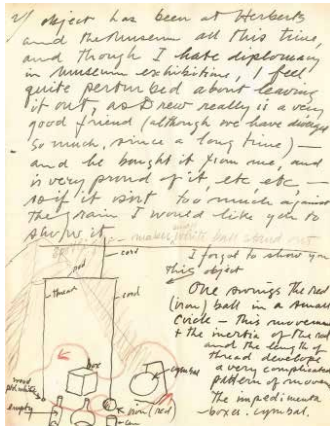


Fred Hamilton  
*Calder presenting  
Cirque Calder*, 1926-  
1931, New York, c.  
1942  
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sujetos entrelazados en la que no existen dos variantes iguales o reproducibles y la energía y la resonancia de cada objeto cargado se condensa en una económica poesía de la acción, en esa esencia de frecuencias vacilantes que es la sintaxis de Calder.

Además de la dimensión física de sus obras, Calder capta nuestros sueños, magnifica nuestros miedos y muestra fracasos y límites, pero sus presentaciones también nos ofrecen la posibilidad de evitar la estática suficiencia institucional de una galería de arte o un museo. Al evitarla, nos activamos en la reunión de ese teatro de encuentros.



En otra carta a Sweeney, esta del 19 de julio de 1934, Calder propone:

Estoy muy interesado en desarrollar una especie de ballet propio y buscar la forma de grabarlo para que pueda reproducirse.

Uno se sienta en el frente + ve lo que está pasando (mi marco es blanco)

Los fondos pueden cambiar y las luces se pueden variar.

Los discos pueden moverse a cualquier lugar dentro de los límites del marco, a cualquier velocidad.

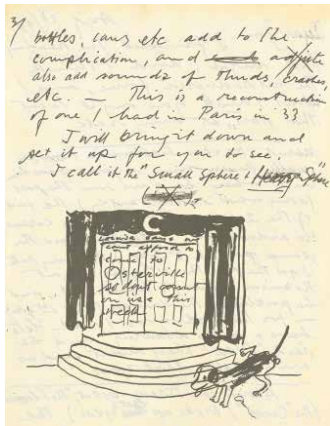
Cada disco y las poleas que lo sostienen están en un plano vertical separado, paralelo al marco.

El número de discos puede incrementarse indefinidamente —dependiendo del espacio que se necesite para que pasen.

Además de los discos hay banderines de colores (de tela), con pesas en cada uno, que vuelan a altas velocidades— y varios objetos sólidos, pedazos de manguera, resortes, etc. Por cierto, Jim, te importaría guardar esta carta en algún lugar donde la puedas encontrar si en algún momento fuera conveniente conseguir una patente (¿suena esto como Archipunko?). Para conseguir la patente lo mejor es tener una descripción escrita, como esta con fecha y testigo. (Así que sería bueno que tú y Laura firmaran y fecharan cada hoja).

Esto lo tenía en París en la primavera de 1933 y se lo mostré a Massine —junto con muchas otras cosas, y es lo que quería hacer para los Ballets Russes.

Claro, el verdadero problema es cómo magnificar el movimiento a un proscenio de tamaño natural— pero se me ocurren varias formas de hacerlo.<sup>24</sup>



Letter from Calder to James Johnson  
Sweeney illustrating  
A Merry Can Ballet  
(1933), 19 July,  
1934, pp. 1 - 4.  
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York / SAVA Buenos  
Aires.

Como tal, Calder es un gran reformador del teatro, quien desdibuja límites y carga los objetos presentes con duda en los semiobjetos y con un erotis

mo casi real.

Entretanto, tú y yo trazamos nuestra experiencia colectiva sobre un teatro de encuentros en expansión, extasiados sobre el escenario de la exposición, el espacio social donde todo (objetos, público y espacio) actúa, como en el concepto de Bruno Laour, en el que el actor transforma, modifica, perturba o crea otro actor momentáneo. La exposición se convierte, por lo tanto, en el registro de la coreografía y la sinfonía de todos nosotros. “La sinfonía se completa cuando se suman el color y el sonido, haciendo un llamado a que nuestros sentidos sigan una partitura invisible”, escribe Duchamp sobre la obra de Calder.<sup>25</sup>

Al idealismo y a su compañera de viaje, la duda, los mueve una creencia falsa en la perfección. Si la perfección y el idealismo son satisfactorios, el fracaso y la duda nos enganchan, son una fuerza creativa concreta, y uno de los dos —o am-

#### Notas

- <sup>1</sup> Duchamp, Marcel, *Apropos Ready-made*. La obra que le llamó la atención a Duchamp en el estudio de Calder fue un móvil motorizado de 1931. De este solo existe una fotografía tomada por Marc Vaux (ver p. 28 en este libro). Duchamp ya había creado su pintura *Nude Descending a Staircase* (Desnudo bajando una escalera) en 1913, pero también estaba interesado en las estrategias de los móviles y en los juegos semánticos.
- <sup>2</sup> Farago, Jason, “Same Work, Always Different”, en *The New York Times*, 9 de junio de 2017.
- <sup>3</sup> Para Calder, el medio es tan solo un soporte técnico. Como dice Rosalind Krass, “el ‘soporte técnico’ queda abierto, con la posibilidad de elaborarse hacia las reglas del automatismo de Cavell. Su uso del automatismo es una versión más generalizada del medio es otro síntoma del abandono posmodernista del medio específico... El automatismo me resulta tentador, pues implica una serie de reglas, a pesar de que comparto la ambivalencia de Cavell. [...] Es solo la palabra medio la que conjura la naturaleza recursiva de un nuevo soporte técnico... y ella propone que se debe ‘insistir en la absoluta necesidad de prolongar el medio específico como base de la coherencia estética’”. En Krauss, Rosalind, *Under Blue Cup*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, MIT Press, 2011, p. 19.
- <sup>4</sup> Duchamp no especificó que la intención con la obra debía ser física; en el caso de Calder, sí implica el aspecto físico de la obra. Duchamp, Marcel, “The Creative Act”, presentación en la reunión del American Federation of the Arts, Houston, abril de 1957, reproducido en *Art News*, vol. 56, nº 4, verano de 1957. Duchamp, que se autodenominaba un “mero artista”, participó en una mesa redonda con William C. Seitz de Princeton University, Rudolf Arnhem de Sarah Lawrence College y Gregory Bateson. Duchamp mismo tradujo la conversación al francés, la cual se publicó en Sanouillet, Michel y Peterson, Elmer (eds.), *The Writings of Marcel Duchamp*, Boston, Da Capo Press, 1973, pp. 138-140.
- <sup>5</sup> Baker, George, “Calder’s Mobility”, en *Alexander Calder and Contemporary Art: Form, Balance, Joy*, exh. cat., Chicago, Museum of Contemporary Art, 2010, pp. 97-98. Reproducido en este libro, pp. 29-48.
- <sup>6</sup> Durante estos años comenzó la expansión cultural de los Estados Unidos en la Guerra Fría. Los Estados Unidos necesitaban mandar una señal clara al mundo —por eso, Nueva York le robó la escena a París, por así decirlo—.
- <sup>7</sup> Calder hizo dos reconstrucciones, una de las cuales (*Une boule noire, une boule blanche* [Una bola negra, una bola blanca]) se exhibió en la galería Maeght en 1969.
- <sup>8</sup> El recorte curatorial es crítico, especialmente en muestras de mitad de carrera. Uno se pregunta qué habría pasado con la obra de Calder si esta pieza se hubiera incluido en la exposición. ¿Leeríamos el trabajo de Calder solamente a través de una perspectiva constructivista o tal vez más a través de una perspectiva dadaísta?
- <sup>9</sup> Carta de Calder a James Johnson Sweeney, 28 de agosto de 1943, archivos del Calder Foundation.
- <sup>10</sup> Se usa el término “proposición”, pues a través de *Small Sphere and Heavy Sphere*, Calder activó tres aspectos de una proposición: es una declaración, es la propuesta de un esquema para que otra persona lo ejecutara en su totalidad —desde el montaje hasta su activación— y también es similar a una insinuación sexual que lleva a la intimidad.
- <sup>11</sup> Se podría mencionar una generación más joven de artistas brasileños y brasileñas que crecieron viendo el trabajo de Calder desde su primera exposición en Brasil en 1939; aunque para ellos es algo *second nature* (natural), tal vez no se dan cuenta de que puede haber un vínculo por explorar con Calder. En sus cartas, Lygia Clark y Hélio Oiticica discuten el concepto de la obra de arte como mediadora para la participación; en su proposición, es el objeto (de arte) el que se convierte en el esquema para que otra persona lo ejecute, la obra se transpone como mediadora. Lygia Clark y Hélio Oiticica, *Cartas*

1968-1969, 26 de octubre de 1968. Participación, edición de Claire Bishop, p. 110.

12. La situación gestual de la obra, que uno podría llamar la obra misma, se encuentra en este itinerario de viaje. Sin embargo, ¿existe como obra solo para las personas que la han visto? ¿O es suficiente saber que ocurrió? Como parte de una generación posterior de artistas, Gabriel Orozco dice lo siguiente: “Me gusta considerar mi trabajo como el resultado o derivado o la sobra de situaciones específicas. Creo que esta es la razón por la cual no puedo separar la fotografía de mi práctica como escultor. No sé con anterioridad si voy a necesitar la fotografía o si al final se va a convertir en objeto. [...] y en una conversación con Benjamin Buchloh, le pregunta: Como Turista Maluco (1991) [una fotografía que capta la colocación de naranjas individuales en las mesas de un mercado cerrado al aire libre]: ¿sería este un buen ejemplo de cómo usar la fotografía para documentar una acción? Orozco: Sí, en términos sociales, la obra estaba ahí, en Chachoeira (Brasil), y cuatro personas la vieron. Esa fue la acción. Pero entonces, por medio de la fotografía, la obra realmente empieza a funcionar como un signo en términos más generales y circula entre más personas. Así que de pronto tenemos que preguntarnos si cuatro personas son suficientes para darle el nombre de “obra”. Pero entonces, cuando mil personas han visto la fotografía, ¿es otra cosa, como las noticias en un periódico? Orozco, Gabriel, “Interview with Benjamin Buchloh, 1998”, en Claire Doherly (ed.), *Situation, Documents of Contemporary Art.*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, MIT Press, 2009, p. 91.
13. Calder es un precursor de la desintegración de formas estáticas y fijas. No podemos negar las posibles influencias que tendría una obra como *Small Sphere and Heavy Sphere* —o las dos cartas relacionadas que enmarcan mi práctica curatorial en Teatro de encuentros (y en este ensayo)— en

las prácticas artísticas de la época de los años sesenta a los años noventa, las cuales siguen retando, de tantas maneras distintas, el modelo formalista de la obra autosuficiente y autónoma como objeto unificado, compuesto, estable, intrínsecamente compacto, a favor de la apertura y las interacciones. Como sostiene Nicolas Bourriaud: “El arte relacional no es el ‘renacimiento’ de un movimiento o estilo. Nace de la observación del presente y de una reflexión sobre el destino de la actividad artística. Su postulado fundamental —la esfera de las relaciones humanas como lugar para la obra de arte— no tiene ejemplos en la historia del arte, aunque aparezca a posteriori como el segundo plano evidente para la práctica estética y el tema modernista por excelencia: basta con volver a leer la conferencia de Marcel Duchamp en 1954 sobre ‘el proceso creativo’, para convencerse de que la actividad no es una noción nueva. Lo nuevo está en otro lado: esta generación de artistas no considera lo intersubjetivo y lo interactivo como juegos teóricos de moda, ni como tratamiento (coartada) de una práctica tradicional del arte: los toma como punto de partida y como resultado, como los informantes principales de su actividad. El espacio en el que las obras se despliegan es el de la interacción, el de la apertura que inaugura el diálogo (Georges Bataille habría escrito ‘desgarro’)...” Nicolas Bourriaud, *Estética relacional*, Fabián Lebenglik (ed.) y Cecilia Beceyro y Sergio Delgado (trad.), Buenos Aires, Adriana Hidalgo Editora, 2006, p. 53.

14. Para mayor información sobre los objetos-ballet en la obra de Calder, ver Arnaud Pierre, “Las puestas en escena del movimiento: dispositivos espectaculares en la obra de Calder”, pp. 57-85.
15. Arp, citado en Jean Davidson (ed.), *Calder: An Autobiography with Pictures*, Nueva York, Pantheon Books, 1966, p. 130. Es interesante cómo Calder permitió que otros artistas colaboraran con él para nombrar sus obras. Pocos artistas estarían dispuestos o dispuestas a reconocer y

desarrollar estas colaboraciones.

16. Calder, Alexander, “A Propos of Measuring a Mobile”, manuscrito, archivos de Calder Foundation, 1943. Reproducido en este libro, pp. 186.
17. Raskin, David, “Disparity is a method”, en Donald Judd, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2017, p. 65. Es interesante que una nueva generación de artistas, tal como Donald Judd, se apoyen en la disparidad. Explicar la transición entre Calder y Donald Judd en relación con la disparidad de acuerdo a la lectura de David Raskin.
18. En “A Propos of Measuring the Mobile”, Calder habla sobre la aproximación al ideal en relación con el papel vital de la disparidad: “Es preciso admitir la aproximación, pues no se puede esperar llegar a la precisión absoluta”. Calder, “A Alexander, Propos” op. cit., p. 186.
19. Sontag, Susan, “Contra la interpretación”, en Horacio Vázquez Rial (trad.), *Contra la interpretación y otros ensayos*, Barcelona, Seix Barral, 1984 [1966], p. 23.
20. *Ibid*, p. 27.
21. Calder, citado en Gray, Cleve, “Calder’s Circus”, en *Art in America*, vol. 52, n.º 5, octubre de 1964, p. 25.
22. Taillandier, Yvon, “Calder: Personne ne pense à moi quand on a un cheval à faire”, declaraciones de Alexander Calder, XVe Siècle, n.º 2, 15 de marzo de 1959. Reproducido en este libro, p. 225.
23. Calder, Alexander, op. cit. p. 225.
24. Carta de Calder a Sweeney, 19 de julio de 1934, archivos del Calder Foundation.
25. Duchamp, Marcel, “Alexander Calder”, en *Collection of the Société Anonyme*, New Haven, Yale, 1950.

# Biography Sandra Antelo-Suárez



Photo © Maxine Henryson

Sandra Antelo-Suárez is a curator and editor. She has conducted in-depth research into the 1990s art scene in Argentina. In 1986, she coordinated the first exhibition of work by Guillermo Kuitca, Alfredo Prior, and Rafael Bueno, at the Americas Society.

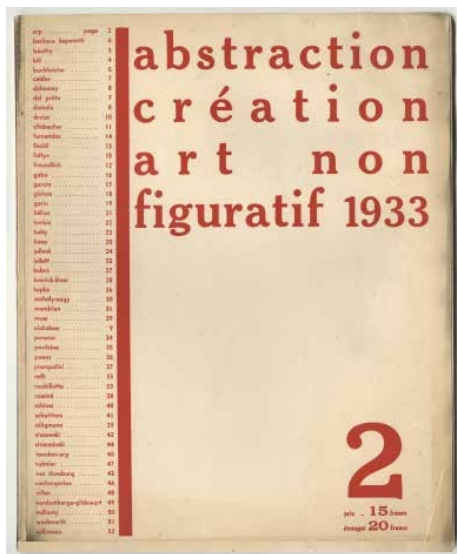
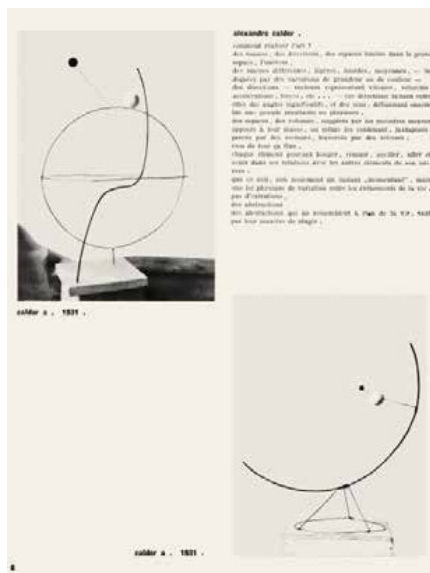
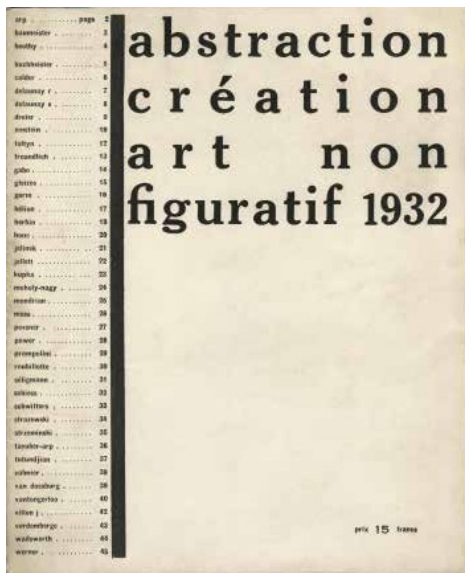
Antelo-Suarez takes a global interdisciplinary approach. She curated the first exhibition including work by artists of the Americas that transcended cultural classifications, "Space of Time: Contemporary Artists from the Americas," at the Americas Society in 1993. It was held concurrently with MoMA's show "Latin American Artists of the Twentieth Century," and included work by artists Pablo Siquier, Marcelo Pombo, and others. In association with the exhibition, she organized a seminal symposium, entitled "Fugitive Anxiety: Implications Nomadic Cultural Production," at the Americas Society, and served as moderator with Michael Madore. Panelists included Carlos Basualdo, and Thomas McEvilley.

In 1995 Antelo-Suarez founded the non-profit organization TRANS> and the journal TRANS> arts.cultures.media, of which she was editor. The first interdisciplinary and multilanguage publication with a focus of the cultural contextualization of American cultures, TRANS> arts.cultures.media published seminal essays by Ernesto Laclau, Judith Butler, Juan Goytisolo, and Silvère Lotringer; and discussions on art accompanied by published artwork, such as the TRANS> gum edition by Paul McCarthy, which served as the cover of TRANS> arts.cultures.media no. 8, 2008. Among the editors were Carlos Basualdo, and translators and writers with whom she closely collaborated included Nicolas Guagnini, Reinaldo Laddaga, and Fabian Marcaccio.

In her Chelsea, New York, exhibition space, TRANS> area, which Antelo-Suarez founded in 2001, she curated the first solo exhibitions in New York by such artists as Anri Sala, Yang Fudong, Daniel Guzmán, Joan Jonas, Marine Hugonnier, Mircia Cantor, Koo Jeong-a, and numerous others.

She curated and produced Smile Without a Cat: A celebration of Ann Lee's Vanishing, a fireworks project by Pierre Huyghe and Philippe Parreno, Art Basel Miami Beach, 2002; Don't Trust Anyone Over 30: Entertainment by Dan Graham, Tony Oursler and Rodney Graham, 2006, a 60-minute rock opera puppet concert, which toured to the Walker Art Center, Art Basel Miami Beach, the Whitney Museum, Staatsoper Berlin, and the Festival of Vienna; "You and Me, Sometimes...", an exhibition of social conceptualists at Lehmann Maupin Gallery, New York; "Off Modern," a year-long exhibition (in progress was the concept) at the High Line; and "Gego: Autobiography of a Line," a two-part exhibition at Dominique Lévy, New York, and London, 2016. Recently, she curated an unprecedented exhibition, "Kinetics of Violence: Cady Noland and Alexander Calder," at Venus Over Manhattan, NY. Ms. Noland accepted the proposition and participated for the first time since 2008 in the installation of her work as an exhibition. A book with the same title is forthcoming. In a review of the show, Andrea Scott of the New Yorker called Antelo-Suarez a "thoughtful curator."

Currently, Antelo-Suarez is the curator of Alexander Calder: Theater of Encounters at Fundación PROA, Buenos Aires, opening September 8, 2018 as well as working on a Reader book on Calder to be launched in Spring 2019.



# Texts by Alexander Calder

Portada de Abstraction-Création, Art Non Figuratif, n.º 1 (1932)

Calder, "¿Cómo hacer arte?", Abstraction-Création, Art Non Figuratif, n.º 1 (1932), mostrando Croisière, 1931 (Trayectoria) y Arc I, c. 1931 (Arco I)

Portada de Abstraction-Création, Art Non Figuratif n.º 2 (1933)

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# “What Abstract Art Means to Me”

by Alexander Calder, in *Museum of Modern Art Bulletin* 18, no. 3 (Spring 1951), pp. 8–9

My entrance into the field of abstract art came about as the result of a visit to the studio of Piet Mondrian in Paris in 1930.

I was particularly impressed by some rectangles of color he had tacked on his wall in a pattern after his nature.

I told him I would like to make them oscillate—he objected. I went home and tried to paint abstractly—but in two weeks I was back again among plastic materials.

I think that at that time and practically ever since, the underlying sense of form in my work has been the system of the Universe, or part thereof. For that is a rather large model to work from.

What I mean is that the idea of detached bodies floating in space, of different sizes and densities, perhaps of different colors and temperatures, and surrounded and interlarded with wisps of gaseous condition, and some at rest, while others move in peculiar manners, seems to me the ideal source of form.

I would have them deployed, some nearer together and some at immense distances.

And great disparity among all the qualities of these bodies, and their motions as well.

A very exciting moment for me was at the planetarium—when the machine was run fast for the purpose of explaining its operation: a planet moved along a straight line, then suddenly made a complete loop of 360° off to one side, and then went off in a straight line in its original direction.

I have chiefly limited myself to the use of black and white as being the most disparate colors. Red is the color most opposed to both of these—and then, finally, the other primaries. The secondary colors and intermediate shades serve only to confuse and muddle the distinctness and clarity.

When I have used spheres and discs, I have intended that they



*Untitled, c. 1940*  
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should represent more than what they just are. More or less as the earth is a sphere, but also has some miles of gas about it, volcanoes upon it, and the moon making circles around it, and as the sun is a sphere—but also is a source of intense heat, the effect of which is felt at great distances. A ball of wood or a disc of metal is rather a dull object without this sense of something emanating from it.

When I use two circles of wire intersecting at right angles, this to me is a sphere—and when I use two or more sheets of metal cut into shapes and mounted at angles to each other, I feel that there is a solid form, perhaps concave, perhaps convex, filling in the dihedral angles between them. I do not have a definite idea of what this would be like, I merely sense it and occupy myself with the shapes one actually sees.

Then there is the idea of an object floating—not supported—the use of a very long thread, or a long arm in cantilever as a means of support seems to best approximate this freedom from the earth.

Thus what I produce is not precisely what I have in mind—but a sort of sketch, a man-made approximation.

That others grasp what I have in mind seems unessential, at least as long as they have something else in theirs.

## “Mobiles”

by Alexander Calder, in *The Painter's Object*, edited by Myfanwy Evans (London: Gerald Howe, 1937), 62–67.

When an artist explains what he is doing he usually has to do one of two things: either scrap what he has explained, or make his subsequent work fit in with the explanation. Theories may be all very well for the artist himself, but they shouldn't be broadcast to other people. All that I shall say here will be about what I have already done, not about what I am going to do.

I began by studying engineering. But after four years I decided that engineering did not allow enough play of ingenuity on my part. When I was working in a logging camp I first started painting. I went to New York, and then to Paris, where I started making wire toys—caricatures of people and animals, some of them articulated. Then I made things in wood, taking a lump of wood and making very little alteration in its shape—just enough to turn it into something different. Then I made a circus with elephants, horses, a lion, Roman chariots and so on: basically of wire, but with cork and wood and bright colours added. Most of these objects also were articulated, so that they made characteristic gestures. The material for this was based on my observation at the circus, and on drawings of it. I was always interested in circuses.

My father was a sculptor and my mother a painter, but it was quite accidentally that I became mixed up with modern art. Through a neighbor who knew about modern art—he had read the books, and so on—I went to see Mondrian. I was very much moved by Mondrian's studio, large, beautiful and irregular in shape as it was, with the walls painted white and divided by black lines and rectangles of bright colour, like his paintings. It was very lovely, with a cross-light (there were windows on both sides), and I thought at the time how fine it would be if everything there moved; though Mondrian himself did not approve of this idea at all. I went home and tried to paint. But wire, or something to twist, or tear, or bend, is an easier medium for me to think in. I started with a few simple forms. My first show was at the Galerie Percier, of simple things ranged on a plank against a wall. In a way, some of those things were as plastic as anything I have done. They did not move, but they had plastic qualities. Then I made one or two things that moved in a slight degree. I had the idea of making one or two objects at a time find actual relationships in space.

I did a setting for Satie's Socrate in Hartford, U.S.A., which I will describe, as it serves as an indication of a good deal of my subsequent work.

There is no dancing in it. It is sung by two people—a man and a woman. The singing is the main thing in it. The proscenium opening was 12 feet by 30 feet. There were three elements in the setting. As seen from the audience, there was a red disc about 30 inches across, left centre. Near the left edge there was a vertical rectangle, 3 feet by 10 feet, standing on the floor. Towards the right, there were two 7 foot steel hoops at right angles on a horizontal spindle, with a hook one end and a pulley the other, so that it could be rotated in either direction, and raised and lowered. The whole dialogue was divided into three parts: 9, 9, and 18 minutes long. During the first part the red disc moved continuously to the extreme right, then to the extreme left (on cords) and then returned to its original position, the whole operation taking 9 minutes. In the second section there was a minute at the beginning with no movement at all, then the steel hoops started to rotate toward the audience, and after about three more minutes they were lowered towards the floor. Then they stopped, and started to rotate again in the opposite direction. Then in the original direction. Then they moved upwards again. That completed the second section. In the third, the vertical white rectangle tilted gently over to the right until it rested on the ground, on its long edge. Then there was a pause. Then it fell over slowly away from the audience, face on the floor. Then it came up again with the other face towards the audience; and



that face was black. Then it rose into a vertical position again, still black, and moved away towards the right. Then, just at the end, the red disc moved off to the left. The whole thing was very gentle, and subservient to the music and the words.

For a couple of years in Paris I had a small ballet-object, built on a table with pulleys at the top of a frame. It was possible to move coloured discs across the rectangle, or fluttering pennants, or cones; to make them dance, or even have battles between them. Some of them had large, simple, majestic movements; others were small and agitated. I tried it also in the open air, swung between trees on ropes, and later Martha Graham and I projected a ballet on these lines. For me, increase in size—working full-scale in this way—is very interesting. I once saw a movie made in a marble quarry, and the delicacy of movement of the great masses of marble, imposed of necessity by their great weight, was very handsome. My idea with the mechanical ballet was to do it independently of dancers, or without them altogether, and I devised a graphic method of registering the ballet movements, with the trajectories marked with different coloured chalks or crayons.

I have made a number of things for the open air: all of them react to the wind, and are like a sailing vessel in that react best to one kind of breeze. It is impossible to make a thing work with every kind of wind. I also used to drive some of my mobiles with small electric motors, and though I have abandoned this to some extent now, I still like the idea, because you can produce a positive instead of a fitful movement—though on occasions I like that too. With a mechanical drive, you can control the thing like the choreography in a ballet and superimpose various movements: a great number, even, by means of cams and other mechanical devices. To combine one or two simple movements with different periods, however, really gives the finest effect, because while simple, they are capable of infinite combinations.

## “How can art be realized?”

by Alexander Calder, in *Abstraction-Création, Art Non Figuratif*, no. 1 (1932), 6. Translated at Calder Foundation, New York.



*Two Spheres Within a Sphere*, 1931  
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SAVA Buenos Aires.

How can art be realized?

Out of volumes, motion, spaces bounded by the great space, the universe.

Out of different masses, light, heavy, middling—indicated by variations of size or color—directional line—vectors which represent speeds, velocities, accelerations, forces, etc. .... these directions making between them meaningful angles, and senses, together defining one big conclusion or many.

Spaces, volumes, suggested by the smallest means in contrast to their mass, or even including them, juxtaposed, pierced by vectors, crossed by speeds.

Nothing at all of this is fixed.

Each element able to move, to stir, to oscillate, to come and go in its relationships with the other elements in its universe.

It must not be just a fleeting “moment” but a physical bond between the varying events in life.

Not extractions,

But abstractions

Abstractions that are like nothing in life except in their manner of reacting.



# Texts

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- Calder's Mobility (fragment) – George Baker
- Alexander Calder (fragment) – James Johnson Sweeney
- Calder's Mobiles – Jean-Paul Sartre
- Alexander Calder Interview – Katharine Kuh
- Varèse on Calder: Excerpt from a Fictional Interview (fragment) – Alexander S. C. Rower

*Crag*, 1974  
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# Calder's Mobility (fragment)

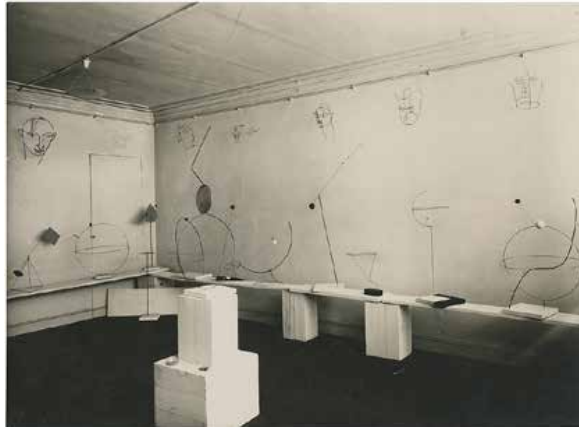
George Baker

Baker, George, "Calder's Mobility," Alexander Calder: Form, Balance, and Joy, exh. cat. (Chicago: Museum of Contemporary Art, 2010).

## BACHELOR MACHINES AND DIAGRAMS

Should Calder be understood, primarily, as an abstract artist? His mature work proposes a series of concerted negations of the tradition of monumental, figurative sculpture. With Calder, we have flat planes instead of three-dimensional forms; linear elements, virtual shapes, and open voids instead of solid volumes in concrete space. In an early stage, like Constantin Brancusi (1876-1957), Calder absorbs the base into his free-standing constructions, making no distinction between sculpture and its surround. Calder then moves to obliterate the base or the ground upon which sculpture has normally stood, suspending his objects in space, lifting them up into the air. From Auguste Rodin's *Iris, Messenger of the Gods* (c. 1895) to Brancusi's *Bird in Space* (1923), modern sculpture had been contemplating this negation, the desperate need to disconnect from the ground in order to void the obdurate connection of sculpture to its analogue, the rooted human body. Without this move, sculpture would always be an echo of the human figure, a residually figurative aesthetic to the very end. For Rodin, the fantasy was of a leap, the dancer's momentary conquest of the air, the goddess in flight. For Brancusi, only nature could support this dream, the imagination of a bird ascendant. But Calder made the fantasy real. And if sculpture was no longer a body, grounded and ponderous; if sculpture now could fly, or float, unmoored: two further negations unfolded. As opposed to the cumbersome mass of traditional sculpture, Calder's objects presented an aesthetic of weightlessness, a sculpture of lightness and fragility. As opposed to the stubborn immobility of sculpture, eternally static and unchanging, Calder's work embraced motion, a series of objects opened up by contingency and chance.

Flatness, immateriality, and virtuality; weightlessness, suspension, and mobility: These are Calder's sculptural innovations, the tactics his work summons us to understand anew. If they are to be understood as simple negations of sculptural con-



Marc Vaux  
Installation  
photograph,  
*Alexandre Calder:  
Volumes- Vecteurs-  
Densités/Dessins-  
Portraits*, Galerie  
Percier, Paris, 1931  
[Artwork © 2018  
Calder  
Foundation, New  
York / Artists  
Rights Society  
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Kandinsky, Centre  
Pompidou, fonds  
Marc Vaux.](#)

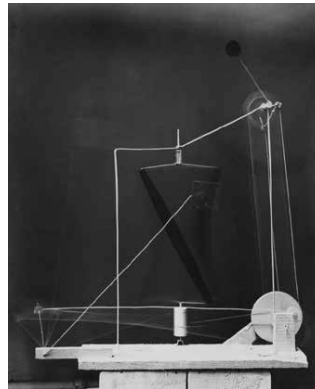
vention, the tactics would seem to call up the modernist project of abstraction. But as opposed to negation, Calder's favorite word for his aesthetic imperative was instead disparity. "To me," Calder wrote, "the most important thing in composition is disparity." He repeatedly chose black and white as the most disparate of tones; red, for providing an equally disparate contrast with them. Contradiction rather than negation seems to be at stake. Fernand Léger (1881-1955) pointed to the humor such contradiction might provoke, the intense disjunction Calder's objects embraced, in his description of the disparity between Calder's body and the sculptural aesthetic he produced:

"It would be difficult to find greater contrast between two things than between Calder, who weighs 220 pounds, and his slender, gossamer mobiles. Calder is something like a walking tree trunk, displacing a lot of air as he moves, and blocking the wind."

Disparity, evidently, points in a different direction than abstraction. It points to a connection, illogical and contradictory, between the most incongruent things. It also points toward one of the repressed dimensions of the origins of Calder's aesthetic, one far afield (disparate) from the landscape of abstract modernism. For everything militates against locating this origin point in the formative visit Calder paid to the studio of Piet Mondrian in 1930, deciding to produce "abstract" work in this visit's wake. Such is the story that every historian seizes upon in announcing the onset of Calder's mobiles. But Calder's mature sculpture originated in relationship to a very different set of artists. These were the artists who, notoriously, named his practice; who recognized it, we might say: Marcel Duchamp (1887-1968) and Jean Arp (1886-1966). It was Duchamp who christened the mobiles; it was Arp, slightly later, who called Calder's stationary works stabiles. It is a recognition that forces us to consider the links between Calder's work and Dada.

If Dada's contribution to modern sculpture can be summed up with Duchamp's word readymade, the connection to Calder's work would seem severely attenuated. Nothing could be further from Calder's aesthetic—no matter his engagement in the 1930s and 1940s with material we might call "found objects"—than the nonproduction, the anti-production, of the readymade. The majority of Calder's early works are instead jerry-built; they showcase the obsessive labors of a tinkerer, being resolutely if intuitively handmade, the products of the workshop and the tool shed. And yet Duchamp focused on something else about Calder's work when he shared with his new friend the word mobile, a term he had previously applied to his own moving objects (some of them readymades). He focused on the unclassifiable nature of Calder's "line": "Calder's line was so distant from any established formula, that there was a need to invent a new name for his forms in motion." Line points away from the readymade and toward Duchamp's and Dada's images—to works like Duchamp's *The Large Glass (The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even)* (1915-23) or Picabia's "mechanomorphs" created in the same time frame as *The Large Glass*—and thus to what has been called Dada's engagement with the "bachelor machine."

As imagined in Duchamp's *The Large Glass*, a bachelor machine contemplates an impossible fusion between bodies and machines. Duchamp's spinning "water mill," his "chocolate grinders," his "malic molds": A bachelor machine operates a logic



Marc Vaux  
Alexander Calder, *Dancing Torpedo Shape*, 1932  
Artwork © 2018 Calder Foundation, New York / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / SAVA Buenos Aires; Photo © Bibliothèque Kandinsky, Centre Pompidou, fonds Marc Vaux

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of conjunction that will never be achieved—the interpenetration of body and machine, the bachelors seeking erotic union with their “bride”—a combination that cannot be resolved. They are machines that thus allegorize states of hybridity, incompleteness, and perpetual motion. Their frustrated drive toward erotic fusion produces both failure and violence—an endless inscription, a kind of “writing,” as Michel de Certeau has asserted, that is also a form of self-abnegation, a ceaseless “torture.” Endlessly spinning, endlessly connecting, endlessly producing, the bachelor machine achieves only a wayward drift. Duchamp composed for them a hymn he called his “Litanies of the Chariot,” the bachelor machine’s incessantly repeated chant: “Slow life. Vicious circle. Onanism. Horizontal. Round trip for the buffer. Junk of life. Cheap construction. Tin, cords, iron wire. Eccentric wooden pulleys. Monotonous fly wheel. Beer professor.”

Inasmuch as Duchamp’s litanies could serve as an uncannily precise theme song for Calder’s early sculpture, we sense the continued presence of the bachelor machine throughout the artist’s production of the 1930s and 40s—especially in his first two “abstract” shows held in Paris, the 1931 Galerie Percier exhibition entitled *Volumes-Vecteurs-Densités*, and the 1932 Calder, *ses mobiles*, arranged by Duchamp at the Galerie Vignon. We sense it in Calder’s descriptions of his early mobiles as “messy,” “sputtering” machines, machines that he called his “babies,” machines described by others as “useless” and that often broke down. We sense it in the mobiles’ pointless spinning, rotated at first by a hand-crank or a home-grown motor and pulleys. But we also sense the bachelor machine’s proximity in the violent confrontations of Calder’s earliest mobiles—the Untitled mobile usually called *The Motorized Mobile that Duchamp Liked* (1931) or its twin, *Dancing Torpedo Shape* (1932)—that imagined geometric shapes encountering a dancing spindle that Calder associated with a torpedo, an evocation of weapons, war, and violence. We sense the bachelor machine’s continuance in the hangman’s gallows that is the suicidal or murderous structure Calder entitled *Object with Red Ball* (1931). We sense it even in many of the earlier stabiles of the so-called constructivist Galerie Percier exhibition.

Consider the quivering waywardness of *Gémissement Oblique* (1931)—a title meaning “oblique moaning” or “groaning,” associating the structure’s nervous swaying and pointless reaching with either unfulfilled or unruly sexual desire. Along these lines, we sense the bachelor machine’s presence in the phallic inevitability of Calder’s dancing torpedo shapes, or the erect supplements he added to earlier stabiles such as *Sphérique I* (1930), a half-circle that evokes an open flower and its pistil or stamen, a gaping mouth and uvula, or a phallic bodily protrusion all at once. Usually these angled lines and spheres are understood in terms of Calder’s interest in planets and geometry, as solar systems and model universes, but the sexualized bachelor machine reading of the first stabiles is always there, shadowing the objects. It is there along with the older figurative wire caricatures that Calder hung above each of his new “abstract” sculptures in the Galerie Percier exhibition, like another version of Duchamp’s *Bride above and her Bachelors below*, the body and abstraction working against each other, undoing each other’s boundaries. And so we sense the human, bodily characteristics of the supposedly abstract Calder constructions, the bachelor machine in another guise—as *Croisière* (1931) for example, sprouts spheres attached to its circular form like antennas, reaching out into space in search of connection; and Calder’s other spherical abstracts evoke open eyes, or gaping orifices. Phallic reachers or inviting cavities, Calder’s open-form “constructions” have been infiltrated by a bachelor machine eroticism. The sculptures are thus irremediably hybrid, abstract and figurative, constructivist and Dadaist at the same time.

# Alexander Calder (fragment)

## James Johnson Sweeney

James Johnson Sweeney, *Alexander Calder* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1951). Revised monograph of 1943 exhibition catalogue.

Exuberance, buoyancy, vigor are characteristics of a young art. Humor, when it is a vitalizing force not a surface distraction, adds a dimension to dignity. Dignity is the product of an artist's whole-hearted abandon to his work. All these are features of Alexander Calder's work, together with a sensibility to materials that induces new forms and an insatiable interest in fresh patterns of order. Calder is an American. The most conspicuous characteristics of his art are those which have been attributed to America's frontier heritage—"that coarseness and strength combined with acuteness and inquisitiveness; that practical, inventive turn of mind, quick to find expedients; that masterful grasp of material things," . . . "that restless, nervous energy," . . . "that buoyancy and exuberance which come with freedom." But Calder is a child of his own time. His vernacular is the vernacular of his age in America—an age in which the frontiers of science, engineering and mechanics have dominated the popular imagination in the same way that the national frontier dominated it a century ago. On the side of tradition, two generations of sculptors—father and grandfather—gave him an intimate familiarity with the grammar and conventions of art. In Paris he came to know the researches of some of the most venturesome contemporary pioneers at a time when he himself was seeking a more radical departure. The result in Calder's mature work is the marriage of an internationally educated sensibility with a native American ingenuity. Through the individuality of his work he has an established place in contemporary art both here and abroad.

The last fifty years have seen a profound reaction against the deliquescence of form which had marked Occidental sculpture since the Renaissance. Calder's art embodies this reaction. From the time of Michelangelo until the opening of the twentieth century, nobility of style and simplicity of technique seemed usually incompatible. The sculptor as often sought to disguise his materials as to demonstrate them. The artist developed a facile virtuosity, which during the Baroque period became a prime quality. Modeling in clay for reproduction in bronze or marble tended generally to replace direct carving. Fluidity of sculptural form reached its highest level with Bernini in the seventeenth century. But, in general, the relaxation of material disciplines led to a decay of sculptural unity and force.

With the twentieth century a desire for simplicity of form and of expression began to reappear. In sculpture the most direct route to both these ends lay through a re-establishment of the discipline of materials. The peculiarities of a raw material—the grain of the wood, the texture and hardness of a stone, the surface qualities of a metal—if respected, would exert a tonic restraint on the sculptor

and his forms. African Negro sculpture was a clear illustration of the advantages of this discipline. It accepted and exploited the cylindrical shape of the tree trunk as well as the incidental suggestions of its grain and knots.

With Brancusi, virtuosity of handling gave way to the barest simplicity and directness. The orthodox materials of sculpture—metal, wood and stone—were employed once again to display their individual properties, not to simulate those of one another. The lightness and apparent insubstantiality of a polished metal surface were exploited to suggest a Bird in Flight or the shimmer of a Fish. Among the younger men who followed Brancusi we find Calder, like Henry Moore, “always ready to share credit for his work with his material.”

Calder’s characteristic material is metal. He has always avoided modeling in favor of direct handling—cutting, shaping with a hammer, or assembling piece by piece. Such an approach has fostered a simplicity of form and clarity of contour in his work. It allies him with Brancusi, Arp, Moore and Giacometti in their repudiation of virtuosity.

At the same time Calder’s concern as an artist with mechanical forms and mechanical organizations, and his use of new or unconventional materials link him with the Russian constructivists of the early twenties. Open composition was their interest, as opposed to the compressed unity of Brancusi. Their aim was to expand the conception of sculptural form, so long tied to nature and to conventional materials. Instead of advocating merely a reform in the use of the orthodox materials of sculpture, the constructivists explored new materials—steel, glass, celluloid, rhodoid and the like.

The Paris cubist painters had felt that a volume could be more truthfully rendered by making its form, or a section of it, transparent. In this way features on the other side, which would normally be masked, could be seen. The constructivist sculptors carried the theory a step further, employing such transparent materials as glass and celluloid for the same purpose. Transparent surfaces led to surfaces actually nonexistent, but indicated by lines—wires, strips of wood—or merely implied by other planes. These surfaces defined “empty,” or more precisely, virtual volumes. Certain constructions organized enclosed volumes; others, by means of the implied projections of their lines and planes, were designed to organize the surrounding space; or the space within a volume was employed as a foil to a solid in a sculptural composition. Even movement was tentatively introduced by Gabo in 1920 to add a time element and to trace virtual forms in space.

This last problem is the one which Calder has explored more fully than any other artist, after coming to it quite independently of constructivism. But Calder’s most original contribution is his unique enlivening of abstract art by humor. Through humor he satisfies the observer’s appetite for feeling or emotion without recourse to direct representation. The appeal of representation had evidently been the culprit in upsetting the balance between form and subject in art. In the effort to readjust this balance the temptation had been to limit representational appeal drastically, even to expunge it. As



a result the art produced by the extremists was often chilly to the point of torpor. Every living experience owes its richness to what Santayana calls “hushed reverberations.” Even without direct representation, natural materials—wood and stone—all have their funded associations for us. The “machine age” emphasis in the constructivists’ materials was a limitation. Where associations existed they were usually of an impersonal, scientific or industrial character. For their esthetic effects the constructivists could look only to formal relations of a geometrical, architectural character. Calder, however, with similar materials found a means to give a new vitality to his structures, without compromising the nonrepresentational approach. Toys pointed the way. If one can enjoy certain qualities that predominate in a toy, such as unfamiliar rhythms and provocative surprise, why should these features not be embodied in more ambitious esthetic expressions—provided, of course, they are held in proper balance with form and material?

The result in Calder’s work is the replacement of representational interests by a humor that stirs up no specific associations and no emotional recollections to distract the observer’s attention from the work of art itself. Through this conscious infusion of a playful element, Calder has maintained an independence of the doctrinaire school of abstract art as well as of orthodox surrealism. At the same time the humor in his work is a protest against false seriousness in art and the self-importance of the advance-guard painter, as well as of the academician. From this viewpoint it is a genial development of certain aspects of the dada movement.

The apparent spontaneity of Calder’s work is no accident. It is rather what John Dewey describes as “complete absorption in subject matter that is fresh, the freshness of which holds and sustains emotion . . . Staleness of matter and obtrusion of calculation are the two enemies of spontaneity of expression. Reflection, even long and arduous reflection, may have been concerned in the generation of the material. But an expression will nevertheless manifest spontaneity if that matter has been vitally taken up into a present experience.”



*Untitled, 1938*  
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# Alexander Calder Interview

## Katharine Kuh

Alexander Calder and Katharine Kuh, "Alexander Calder," *The Artist's Voice: Talks with Seventeen Artists* (New York and Evanston, Illinois: Harper & Row, 1962).



George Hoyningen-Huene  
*Calder with Cirque Calder, 1926-1931, Paris, 1930*  
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### **Question: Does your work satirize the modern machine?**

Calder: No, it doesn't. That's funny, because I once intended making a bird that would open its beak, spread its wings and squeak if you turned a crank, but I didn't because I was slow on the uptake and I found that Klee had done it earlier with his Twittering Machine and probably better than I could. In about 1929, I did make two or three fish bowls with fish that swam when you turned a crank. And then, of course, you know about the Circus. I've just made a film of it in France with Carlos Vilardebo.

### **Question: Which has influenced you more, nature or modern machinery?**

Calder: Nature. I haven't really touched machinery except for a few elementary mechanisms like levers and balances. You see nature and then you try to emulate it. But, of course, when I met Mondrian I went home and tried to paint. The basis of everything for me is the universe. The simplest forms in the universe are the sphere and the circle. I represent them by disks and then I vary them. My whole theory about art is the disparity that exists between form, masses and movement. Even my triangles are spheres, but they are spheres of a different shape.

### **Question: How do you get that subtle balance in your work?**

Calder: You put a disk here and then you put another disk that is a triangle at the other end and then you balance them on your finger and keep on adding. I don't use rectangles—they stop. You can use them; I have at times but only when I want to block, to constipate movement.

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**Question: Is it true that Marcel Duchamp invented the name “mobile” for your work?**

Calder: Yes, Duchamp named the mobiles and Arp the stabiles. Arp said, “What did you call those things you exhibited last year? Stabiles?”

**Question: Were the mobiles influenced by your Circus?**

Calder: I don’t think the Circus was really important in the making of the mobiles. In 1926 I met a Yugoslav in Paris and he said that if I could make mechanical toys I could make a living, so I went home and thought about it awhile and made some toys, but by the time I got them finished my Yugoslav had disappeared. I always loved the circus—I used to go in New York when I worked on the Police Gazette. I got a pass and went every day for two weeks, so I decided to make a circus just for the fun of it.

**Question: How did the mobiles start?**

Calder: The mobiles started when I went to see Mondrian. I was impressed by several colored rectangles he had on the wall. Shortly after that I made some mobiles; Mondrian claimed his paintings were faster than my mobiles.

**Question: What role does color play in your sculpture?**

Calder: Well, it’s really secondary. I want things to be differentiated. Black and white are first—then red is next—and then I get sort of vague. It’s really just for differentiation, but I love red so much that I almost want to paint everything red. I often wish that I’d been a fauve in 1905.

**Question: Do you think that your early training as an engineer has affected your work?**

Calder: It’s made things simple for me that seem to confound other people, like the mechanics of the mobiles. I know this, because I’ve had contact with one or two engineers who understood my methods. I don’t think the engineering really has much to do with my

work; it’s merely the means of attaining an aesthetic end.

**Question: How do you feel about your imitators?**

Calder: They nauseate me.

**Question: Do you make preliminary sketches?**

Calder: I’ve made so many mobiles that I pretty well know what I want to do, at least where the smaller ones are concerned, but when I’m seeking a new form, then I draw and make little models out of sheet metal. Actually the one at Idlewild (in the International Arrival Building) is forty-five feet long and was made from a model only seventeen inches long. For the very big ones I don’t have machinery large enough, so I go to a shop and become the workman’s helper.

**Question: How do you feel about commissions?**

Calder: They give me a chance to undertake something of considerable size. I don’t mind planning a work for a given place. I find that everything I do, if it is made for a particular spot, is more successful. A little thing, like this one on the table, is made for a spot on a table.

**Question: Do you prefer making the large ones?**

Calder: Yes—it’s more exhilarating—and then one can think he’s a big shot.

**Question: How do your mobiles differ from your stabiles in intention?**

Calder: Well, the mobile has actual movement in itself, while the stabile is back at the old painting idea of implied movement. You have to walk around a stabile or through it—a mobile dances in front of you. You can walk through my stabile in the Basel museum. It’s a bunch of triangles leaning against each other with several large arches flying from the mass of triangles.

**Question: Why walk through it?**

Calder: Just for fun. I’d like people to climb over it but it isn’t big enough. I’ve never been to the Statue of Liberty but I understand it’s quite wonderful to go into it, to walk through.

**Question: Léger once called you a realist. How do you feel about this?**

Calder: Yes, I think I am a realist.

**Question: Why?**

Calder: Because I make what I see. It's only the problem of seeing it. If you can imagine a thing, conjure it up in space—then you can make it, and tout de suite you're a realist. The universe is real but you can't see it. You have to imagine it. Once you imagine it, you can be realistic about reproducing it.

**Question: So it's not the obvious mechanized modern world you're concerned with?**

Calder: Oh, you mean cellophane and all that crap.

**Question: How did you begin to use sound in your work?**

Calder: It was accidental at first. Then I made a sculpture called Dogwood with three heavy plates that gave off quite a clangor. Here was just another variation. You see, you have weight, form, size, color, motion and then you have noise.

**Question: How do you feel about your motorized mobiles?**

Calder: The motorized ones are too painful—too many mechanical bugaboos. Even the best are apt to be mechanically repetitious. There's one thirty feet high in front of Stockholm's modern museum made after a model of mine. It has four elements, each operating on a separate motor.

**Question: How did you happen to make collapsible mobiles?**

Calder: When I had the show in Paris during 1946 at Louis Carré's gallery, the plans called for small sculptures that could be sent by mail. The size limit for things sent that way was 18 x 10 x 2 inches, so I made mobiles that would fold up. Rods, plates, everything

was made in two or three pieces and could be taken apart and folded in a little package. I sent drawings along showing how to reassemble the pieces.

**Question: You don't use much glass any more, do you?**

Calder: I haven't used it much lately. A few years ago I took all sorts of colored glass I'd collected and smashed it against the stone wall of the barn. There's still a mass of glass buried there. In my early mobiles I often used it.

**Question: Are there any specific works that you prefer and would like to have reproduced?**

Calder: What I like best is the acoustic ceiling in Caracas in the auditorium of the university. It's made from great panels of plywood—some thirty feet long—more or less horizontal and tilted to reflect sound. I also like the work I did for UNESCO in Paris and the mobile called Little Blue under Red that belongs to the Fogg. That one develops hypocycloidal and epicycloidal curves. The main problem there was to keep all the parts light enough to work.

**Question: Do you consider your work particularly American?**

Calder: I got the first impulse for doing things my way in Paris, so I really can't say.

**Question: Have American cities influenced you?**

Calder: I like Chicago on the Michigan Avenue Bridge on a cold wintry night. There used to be no color but the traffic lights, occasional red lights among the white lights. I don't think that looking at American cities has really affected me. We went to India and I made some mobiles there; they look just like the others.

**Question: What's happened to that large sculpture, The City?**

Calder: The City was purchased by the Museo de Bellas Artes in Caracas through the kind offices of my good friend, the architect Carlos Raul Villanueva.

**Question: I found it great.  
What do you think of it?**

Calder: I'm slowly becoming convinced. I made the model for it out of scraps that were left over from a big mobile. I just happened to have these bits, so I stood them up and tried them here and there and then made a strap to hook them together—a little like objets trouvés. ["Found objects" usually refers to articles in nature and daily life, like shells, stones, leaves, torn paper, etc., which the artist recognizes and

accepts as art. Ed.] I decided on the final size by considering the dimensions of the room in the Perls Galleries where the work was to be shown.

**Question: What artists do you most admire?**

Calder: Goya, Miró, Matisse, Bosch and Klee.



André Kertész  
*Calder with Eucalyptus, 1940, 1940*  
[Artwork © 2018 Calder Foundation, New York / Artists Rights Society \(ARS\), New York / SAVA Buenos Aires;](#)  
[Photo © André Kertész - RMN.](#)

## Calder's Mobiles Jean-Paul Sartre

Jean-Paul Sartre, "Calder's Mobiles," Alexander Calder: Mobiles, Stables, Constellations, exhibition catalogue (Paris: Galerie Louis Carré, 1946). Translation by Chris Turner, *The Aftermath of War: Jean-Paul Sartre* (Calcutta: Seagull, 2008).

If it is true that the sculptor is supposed to infuse static matter with movement, then it would be a mistake to associate Calder's art with the sculptor's. Calder does not suggest movement, he captures it. It is not his aim to entomb it forever in bronze or gold, those glorious, stupid materials doomed by their nature to immobility. With cheap, flimsy substances, with little bones or tin or zinc, he makes strange arrangements of stalks and palm leaves, of discs, feathers and petals. They are resonators, traps; they dangle on the end of a string like a spider at the end of its thread, or are piled on a base, lifeless and self-contained in their false sleep. Some errant tremor passes and, caught in their toils, breathes life into them. They channel it and give it fleeting form—a Mobile is born.

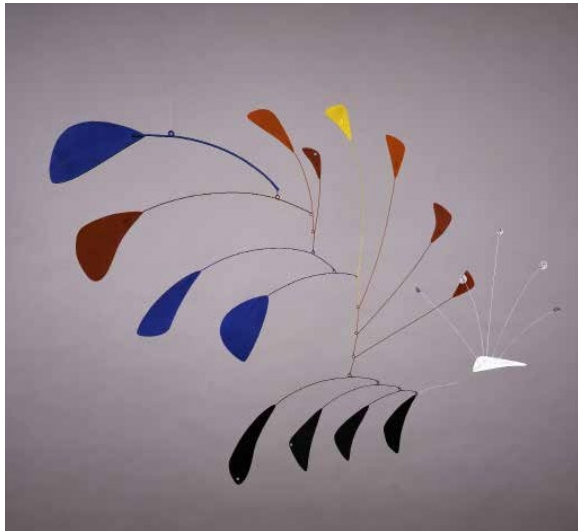
A Mobile: a little local fiesta; an object defined by its movement and non-existent without it; a flower that withers as soon as it comes to a standstill; a pure stream of movement in the same way as there are pure streams of light. Sometimes Calder amuses himself by imitating a new form. He once gave me an iron-winged bird of paradise. It takes only a little warm air to brush against it as it escapes from the window and, with a little click, the bird smooths its feathers, rises up, spreads its tail, nods its

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crested head, rolls and pitches and then, as if responding to an unseen signal, slowly turns right around, its wings outspread. But most of the time he imitates nothing, and I know no art less untruthful than his.

Sculpture suggests movement, painting suggests depth or light. Calder suggests nothing. He captures true, living movements and crafts them into something. His mobiles signify nothing, refer to nothing other than themselves. They simply are: they are absolutes.



*Peacock*, 1941  
© 2018 Calder Foundation,  
New York / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / SAVA  
Buenos Aires.

In his mobiles, the 'devil's share'<sup>1</sup> is probably greater than in any other human creation. The forces at work are too numerous and complicated for any human mind, even that of their creator, to be able to foresee all their combinations. For each of them Calder establishes a general fated course of movement, then abandons them to it: time, sun, heat and wind will determine each particular dance. Thus the object is always midway between the servility of the statue and the independence of natural events. Each of its twists and turns is an inspiration of the moment. In it you can discern the theme composed by its maker, but the mobile weaves a thousand variations on it. It is a little hot-jazz tune, unique and ephemeral, like the sky, like the morning. If you missed it, it is lost forever.

Valéry said the sea is always beginning over again. One of Calder's objects is like the sea and equally spellbinding: always beginning over again, always new. A passing glance is not enough; you must live with it, be bewitched by it. Then the imagination revels in these pure, interchanging forms, at once free and rule-governed.

These movements that intend only to please, to enchant our eyes, have nonetheless a profound and, as it were, metaphysical meaning. This is because the mobiles have to have some source of mobility. In the past, Calder drove them with an electric motor. Now he abandons them in the wild: in a garden, by an open window he lets them vibrate in the wind like Aeolian harps. They feed on the air, breathe it and take their life from the indistinct life of the atmosphere. Their mobility is, then, of a very particular kind. Though they are human creations, they never have the precision and efficiency of de Vaucanson's automata. But the charm of the automaton lies in the fact that it handles a fan or a guitar like a human being, yet its hand movements have the blind, implacable rigour of purely mechanical translations. By contrast, Calder's mobiles waver and hesitate. It is as though they make an error, then correct it.

I once saw a beater and gong hanging very high up in his studio. At the slightest draught of air, the beater went after the rotating gong. It would draw back to strike, lash out at the gong and then,

like a clumsy hand, miss. And just when you were least expecting it, it would come straight at it and strike it in the middle with a terrible noise. These movements are too artistically contrived to be compared to those, say, of a marble rolling on a rough plane, whose course depends solely on the uneven terrain: the movements of Calder's mobiles have a life of their own.

One day, when I was talking with Calder in his studio, a mobile, which had until then been still, became violently agitated right beside me. I stepped back and thought I had got out of its reach. But suddenly, when the agitation had left it and it seemed lifeless again, its long, majestic tail, which until then had not moved, came to life indolently and almost regretfully, spun in the air and swept past my nose.

These hesitations and resummptions, gropings and fumbings, sudden decisions and, most especially, marvellous swan-like nobility make Calder's mobiles strange creatures, mid-way between matter and life. At times their movements seem to have a purpose and at times they seem to have lost their train of thought along the way and lapsed into a silly swaying. My bird flies, floats, swims like a swan, like a frigate. It is one, one single bird. And then, suddenly, it breaks apart and all that remain are rods of metal traversed by futile little tremors.

These mobiles, which are neither entirely alive nor wholly mechanical, constantly disconcerting but always returning to their original position, are like aquatic plants swaying in a stream; they are like the petals of the *Mimosa pudica*, the legs of a decerebrate frog or gossamer threads caught in an updraft.

In short, although Calder has not sought to imitate anything—there is no will here, except the will to create scales and harmonies of unknown movements—his mobiles are at once lyrical inventions, technical, almost mathematical combinations and the tangible symbol of Nature, of that great, vague Nature that squanders pollen and suddenly causes a thousand butterflies to take wing, that Nature of which we shall never know whether it is the blind sequence of causes and effects or the timid, endlessly deferred, rumpled and ruffled unfolding of an Idea.

<sup>1</sup> *La part du diable* may be said to be everything that eludes understanding. It is the title of a 1942 work by Denis de Rougemont. [Trans.]



*Edgar Varèse, c.  
1930  
© 2018 Calder  
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York / Artists  
Rights Society  
(ARS), New York  
/ SAVA Buenos  
Aires.*

## Varèse on Calder: Excerpt from a Fictional Interview (fragment)

Alexander S. C. Rower

Being a grandson of Alexander Calder and having known some of his illustrious friends (among them, Marcel Duchamp, Joan Miró, James Johnson Sweeney, and Edgard Varèse), I come across occasions in my study of my grandfather's life and works where I'd like to have details of circumstance clarified. This fictional interview is an attempt to mollify that desire. It is an amalgam of my personal and professional experience, put into a different kind of framework.



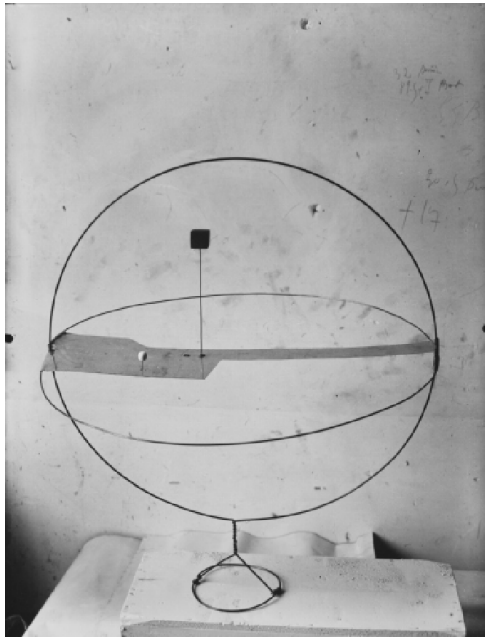
**Alexander S. C. Rower: When did you first meet Calder?**

**Edgard Varèse:** Frederick Kiesler introduced us in the fall of 1930. I visited Calder's studio, which, at that time, was on the rue de la Colonie, in the treizième arrondissement. Eventually, he made a fantastic wire portrait of me. As it has had numerous interventions and mishandlings over the years, it now looks more like me as an old man instead of representing my vigorous youth . . . a bit like Dorian Gray! [Laughs.] So, from then on, I became a frequent visitor, especially around the time he prepared for his show at Galerie Percier in 1930–31. I liked to watch him work, as his abstract compositions resonated with some of my own, such as *Intégrales* [1924–25] or *Ionisation* [1929–31].

**ASCR: Your wire portrait, now at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, was not the only "portrait" Calder made of you. He also made *Musique de Varèse* [ca.1931], an abstract stabile that premiered at Percier. It comprises an implied sphere of two wire circles that intersect at right angles, with a piece of shiny, tin plated sheet metal at its center that engages a radiating plane. Two small objects, a white wooden sphere and an ebony cube, project from wires that rise from the light-reflecting sheet metal. Was this one of the compositions that resonated with your music?**

**EV:** Yes, it has something of a contrapuntal disparity, much like the organization of my own elements. As I have said before, we actually have three dimensions in music: horizontal, vertical, and dynamic swelling or decreasing. And I added a fourth, sound projection—that feeling that sound leaves us with no hope of being reflected back, a feeling akin to that aroused by beams of light sent forth by a searchlight—for the ear as for the eye, that sense of projection, of a journey into space. Your grandfather understood this. He under-

stood that noise was another whole dimension, and he even said that about his own works.



Marc Vaux  
*Musique de Varèse*, 1931  
Artwork © 2018 Calder Foundation, New York / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / SAVA Buenos Aires; Photo © Bibliothèque Kandinsky, Centre Pompidou, fonds Marc Vaux.

**ASCR True, true. My grandfather also indicated on more than one occasion that the most important thing in a composition was disparity. And he, too, worked in the fourth dimension, realized in sculpture as present-time, active experience. Even before the mobile, his wire sculptures incorporated actual movement. His use of wire brings me to my next question. Would you liken your use of innovative, often pedestrian materials to Calder's own?**

**EV:** When I first met Calder, my credo was "New Ears for New Music and New Music for New Ears." Everyone was perplexed—not only by my materials but also by the timbre, density, rhythm, texture, approach, and so forth. Pierre Boulez said that the first time he heard *Ionisation*—featuring thirteen percussionists playing forty instruments, such as anvils, a cowbell, triangles,

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bongos, a güiro, even a lion's roar (by way of a *cuí-ca!*)—it was like an object coming from Mars. In this sense, my vocabulary was much like Calder's. He reimagined sculpture with wire, sheet metal, broken bits of glass, gongs, tin cans, and *objets trouvés*, many of which instigated rather shocking sonorous effects. My music called for new ears, yet Calder's sculpture called for new eyes and ears. [Laughs.] Even [the journal] *Transition* missed the mark when, in 1936, it assigned Calder's work to "The Eye" and mine to "The Ear." The boundaries are rarely so starkly defined. On another level, one could examine how the namesake of my composition—"ionisation," this breaking away of electrons from atoms—relates to the "atmospheric conditions"—deployed nuclei, atoms, voids—that Calder spoke about in his sculpture.

**ASCR: Around 1955, Calder wrote about a "ballet object" he had made in Paris more than twenty years earlier. He called it *A Merry Can Ballet* [c. 1932–33]. In his manuscript, he made a drawing of a stick with tin cans hanging from strings, and he wrote, "This was the 'music'—Varèse liked ballet (but not 'music')." What did he mean by that?**

**EV:** It is often said that *A Merry Can Ballet*—the phonetic equivalent of "American ballet," said with a French accent—referenced my composition of the previous decade, *Amériques* [1918–21, revised 1927]. Both Calder and I enjoyed puns, as did our friend Duchamp. As far back as the Twenties, I decided to call my music "organized sound" and to call myself, not a musician, but "a worker in rhythms, frequencies, and intensities." Yet the music of Calder's ballet—this collection of tin cans, this notion of chance—was quite challenging for me to accept. His sculptures, especially *Small Sphere* and *Heavy Sphere* [1932 / 33], really sent the whole of the Parisian avant-garde into a conceptual conundrum (cat.p.156). But his sound experiments in structured chance were prophetic. In

hindsight, it is clear that Calder's various compositional exercises had a great impact on the young crowd—John Cage, Earle Brown, and the like.

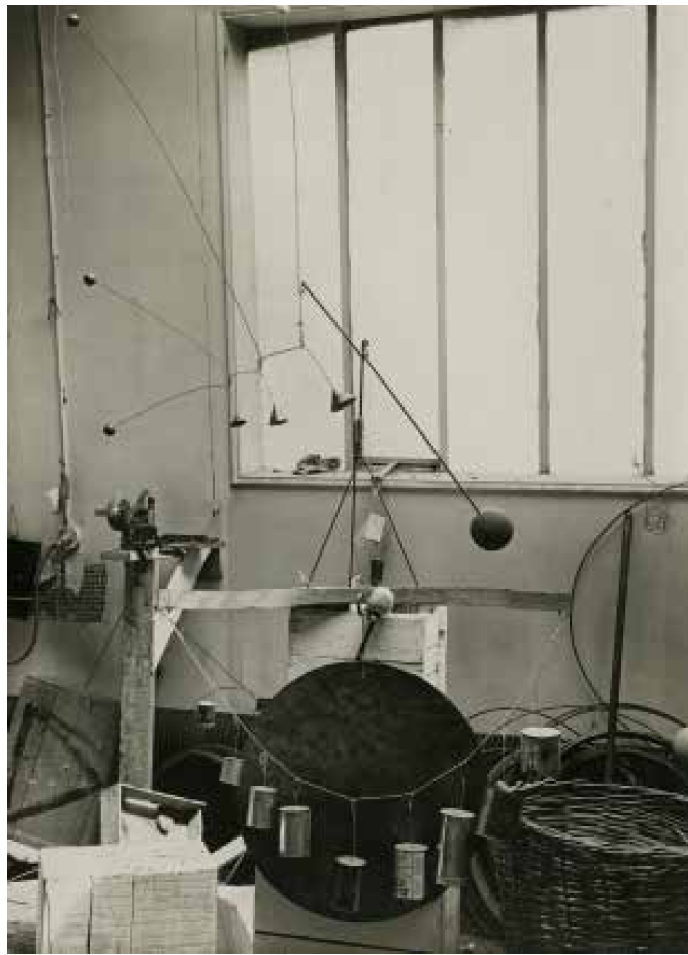
**ASCR: Calder used sound as an aesthetic medium as early as 1932, beginning with *Small Sphere* and *Heavy Sphere*. Do you suppose you inspired him?**

**EV:** I remember Calder saying that the sirens in *Ionisation* were the best notes in my music, although he did not make any such direct references in his compositions. My piece was a percussive ensemble, and, in many ways, so was *Small Sphere* and *Heavy Sphere*, with its disconcerting crashes, thuds, and so forth—all part of a real-time orchestration. Even more, it was an open composition, meaning that circumstances awaken the form of gesture. Looking back, I can see that this, too, is the actuality of the art in the "mobiles," veritable tools to present or perform the necessary non-sequence of surprise and happenstance—the build and release of anticipation, as in the circus or good choreography. And yet the defining actions in his special space-time end up with our perceiving something greater than ourselves . . . something universal.

**ASCR: In *Small Sphere* and *Heavy Sphere*, displacing the large "heavy sphere," which is made of cast iron, sets the small wooden ball in motion around a seemingly random collection of repurposed objects situated on the floor, which have been organized by the viewer. Clearly, this work was a forerunner not only of chance composition but also of avant-garde music in a broader sense. For one, Calder was asking the viewer to step into the roles of composer and conductor, of a sort. How does this compare to—or serve as a departure from—your experiments around that time?**

**EV:** I was never interested in the concept of "intervention"—I was seeking technological means to infalli-

bly deliver the sounds I had in mind. I was confronted with tremendous resistance from the musical academic world, which prevented access to greater electronic tools for research and experimentation. I attempted to found a scientific laboratory in order to solve certain musical problems—for example, the impossibility of infinitely sustaining a pitch. This was in the pre-electronic age, of course. I employed the means I had at hand, somewhat akin to Calder's use of everyday materials and his exploitation of their limits. A bit later in my life, Earle Brown brought together a group of jazz musicians whom I directed with graphic notation in a semi-improvisatory fashion, but this was a dalliance. Charlie Parker sought me out as a composition teacher, but he died just days before our planned first lesson.



Marc Vaux  
*El taller de Calder en 14 rue de la Colonie, París 1933.*  
Desde arriba Untitled, 1932 (sin  
título), A Merry Can Ballet, 1933, y un gong  
[Artwork © 2018 Calder](#)  
[Foundation, New York / Artists](#)  
[Rights Society \(ARS\), New York /](#)  
[SAVA Buenos Aires; Photo ©](#)  
Bibliothèque Kandinsky Centre Pompidou,  
fonds Marc Vaux.

# List of Artworks

Untitled (Trapeze Rigging), 1925  
Lápiz sobre papel  
27,8 x 21,1 cm  
Calder Foundation, New York

Untitled (Rigging), 1925  
Lápiz sobre papel  
27,8 x 21,1 cm  
Calder Foundation, New York

Untitled (Figures on Trapeze), 1925  
Lápiz sobre papel  
27,8 x 21,3 cm  
Calder Foundation, New York

Untitled (Rooster), 1925  
Tinta sobre papel  
10,5 x 5,4 cm  
Calder Foundation, New York; Legado de /  
Bequest of Mary Calder Rower, 2011

Untitled (Rooster), 1925  
Tinta sobre papel  
8,3 x 7 cm  
Calder Foundation, New York; Legado de /  
Bequest of Mary Calder Rower, 2011

Untitled (Rooster), 1925  
Tinta sobre papel  
9,8 x 7 cm  
Calder Foundation, New York; Legado de /  
Bequest of Mary Calder Rower, 2011

Untitled (Rooster), 1925  
Tinta sobre papel  
7,6 x 5 cm  
Calder Foundation, New York; Legado de /  
Bequest of Mary Calder Rower, 2011

Untitled (Rooster), 1925  
Tinta sobre papel  
6,35 x 6,35 cm  
Calder Foundation, New York; Legado de /  
Bequest of Mary Calder Rower, 2011

Untitled (Rooster), 1925  
Tinta sobre papel  
10,8 x 10,8 cm  
Calder Foundation, New York; Legado de /  
Bequest of Mary Calder Rower, 2011

Untitled (Cat), 1925  
Tinta sobre papel  
14,2 x 7,9 cm  
Calder Foundation, New York; Legado de /  
Bequest of Mary Calder Rower, 2011

Untitled (Cat), 1925  
Tinta sobre papel  
15,2 x 8,9 cm  
Calder Foundation, New York; Legado de /  
Bequest of Mary Calder Rower, 2011

Untitled (Cat), 1925  
Tinta sobre papel  
7,3 x 13,9 cm  
Calder Foundation, New York; Legado de /  
Bequest of Mary Calder Rower, 2011

Untitled (Cat), 1925  
Tinta sobre papel  
8,6 x 12,06 cm  
Calder Foundation, New York; Legado de /  
Bequest of Mary Calder Rower, 2011

Untitled (Cat), 1925  
Tinta sobre papel  
8,9 x 4,7 cm  
Calder Foundation, New York; Legado de /  
Bequest of Mary Calder Rower, 2011

Untitled (Cat), 1925  
Tinta sobre papel  
12,3 x 6,9 cm  
Calder Foundation, New York; Legado de /  
Bequest of Mary Calder Rower, 2011

Untitled (Cat), 1925  
Tinta sobre papel  
14,2 x 16,5 cm  
Calder Foundation, New York; Legado de /  
Bequest of Mary Calder Rower, 2011

Untitled (Monkey), 1925  
Tinta sobrepapel  
9,8 x 9,2 cm  
Calder Foundation, New York; Legado de /  
Bequest of Mary Calder Rower, 2011

Untitled (Monkey), 1925  
Tinta sobrepapel  
7,3 x 8,8 cm  
Calder Foundation, New York; Legado de /  
Bequest of Mary Calder Rower, 2011

Untitled (Monkey), 1925  
Tinta sobrepapel  
13 x 7,6 cm  
Calder Foundation, New York; Legado de /  
Bequest of Mary Calder Rower, 2011

Untitled (Monkey), 1925  
Tinta sobrepapel  
8,2 x 6,3 cm  
Calder Foundation, New York; Legado de /  
Bequest of Mary Calder Rower, 2011

Untitled (Monkey), 1925  
Tinta sobrepapel  
11,11 x 9,02 cm  
Calder Foundation, New York; Legado de /  
Bequest of Mary Calder Rower, 2011

Untitled (Monkey), 1925  
Tinta sobrepapel  
9,5 x 20,9 cm  
Calder Foundation, New York; Legado de /  
Bequest of Mary Calder Rower, 2011

Animal Sketching, 1926  
Publicación  
20 x 15 cm  
Calder Foundation, New York

Elephant, c. 1927  
Alambre y madera  
29,2 x 14,6 x 29,2 cm  
Calder Foundation, New York

Hercules and Lion, 1928  
Alambre  
152 x 122 x 61 cm  
Calder Foundation, New York; Donación  
prometida de / Promised Gift of Alexander  
S. C. Rower

Singe, c. 1928  
Alambre y madera  
43 x 20,3 x 20,3 cm  
Calder Foundation, New York; Donación de  
/ Gift of Sandra Calder Davidson, 2010

Hellen Wills II, 1928  
Alambre y madera  
52,7 x 73,7 x 21,6 cm  
Calder Foundation, New York  
Jimmy Durante, c.1928  
Alambre  
30,4 x 30,4 x 23,8 cm  
Calder Foundation, New York; Donación de  
/ Gift of The Lipman Family Foundation, en  
memoria de Jean y Howard Lipman, 2016

Goldfish Bowl, 1929  
Alambre  
40,6 x 38,1 x 15,2 cm  
Calder Foundation, New York; Donación  
prometida / Promised Gift of Alexander S.  
C. Rower

Acrobats, 1929  
Alambre  
78 x 88 x 2 cm  
Calder Foundation, New York; Donación  
Shawn Davidson, 2014

Untitled, 1930  
Óleo sobretela  
41,2 x 27,3 cm  
Calder Foundation, New York; Legado de /  
Bequest of Mary Calder Rower, 2011

Untitled, 1930  
Óleo sobretela  
46 x 37,7 cm  
Calder Foundation, New York

Untitled, 1930  
Óleo sobretela  
61 x 38 cm  
Calder Foundation, New York

In Perspective, 1931  
Tinta sobre papel  
48,2 x 62,8 cm  
Calder Foundation, New York; Donación de  
/ Gift of Sandra Calder Davidson, 2010

Setting Sun, 1931  
Tinta sobre papel  
78 x 57,7 cm  
Calder Foundation, New York; Adquisición,  
2016

Two Spheres Within a Sphere, 1931  
Madera, alambre, pintura  
80 x 43,2 x 43,2 cm  
Calder Foundation, New York; Legado de /  
Bequest of Mary Calder Rower, 2011

Rod and Punky, 1932  
Tinta sobre papel  
55,9 x 80,6 cm  
Calder Foundation, New York

Small Sphere and Heavy Sphere,  
1932/33  
Hierro, madera, vidrio, chapa, hilo, varilla,  
pintura  
Altura 317,5 cm, instalación dimensiones  
variables  
Calder Foundation, New York; Legado de /  
Bequest of Mary Calder Rower, 2011

Untitled, 1932  
Tinta sobre papel  
57 x 78,1 cm  
Calder Foundation, New York

Untitled, c. 1932  
Madera, alambre, pintura  
147,3 x 370 x 15,2 cm  
Calder Foundation, New York; Donación de  
/ Gift of Alexander S. C. Rower, en memoria  
de Howard Rower, 2009

Machine motoriséé, 1933  
Madera, alambre, pintura, motor  
95,3 x 50,2 x 48,9 cm  
Calder Foundation, New York

Untitled, c. 1934  
Tubo, varilla, madera, hilo de alambre,  
cuerda  
114,5 x 94 cm  
Calder Foundation, New York

Snake and the Cross, 1936  
Lámina de metal, madera, varilla, hilo de  
alambre, pintura  
205,7 x 129,5 x 111,8 cm  
Calder Foundation, New York

Untitled, 1936  
Lámina de acero, pintura  
28,3 x 27,9 x 22,9 cm  
Colección particular  
Harps and Heart, c. 1937  
[Arpas y corazón]  
Cable delatón  
101 cm de diámetro, medidas variables  
Calder Foundation, New York

Untitled, 1938  
Alambre, madera, acero, cuerda, varilla,  
motor  
220 x 114 x 99 cm  
Calder Foundation, New York; Donación  
prometida de / Promised Gift of Alexander  
S. C. Rower

Crossed Boomerang, c. 1940  
Plata martillada  
12,1 x 10,5 cm  
Colección particular

Untitled, c. 1940  
Lámina de metal, cuero, varilla y tela  
147,3 x 124,5 cm  
Calder Foundation, New York

Tiara, c. 1940  
Alambre de latón y acero  
50 cm de diámetro, 17 x 17 x 10 cm  
Calder Foundation, New York

Untitled, c. 1940  
Lámina de metal, alambre, pintura  
114 x 48 x 68 cm  
Calder Foundation, New York

Untitled, 1941  
[Sin título]  
Lámina de metal, alambre, pintura  
30,48 x 101 x 55,2 cm  
Calder Foundation, New York; Legado de /  
Bequest of Mary Calder Rower, 2011

S and Star, 1941  
Madera contrachapada, cable de velocímetro, chapa, alambre, pintura, motor  
122 x 61 x 38 cm  
Calder Foundation, New York

Untitled, c. 1941  
Lámina de metal, alambre  
127 x 76,2 x 40,6 cm  
Calder Foundation, New York

Clangors, 1942  
Lámina de metal, varilla, cuerda, pintura  
67,3 x 129 cm  
Calder Foundation, New York

Red Sticks, c. 1943  
Madera, alambre, cuerda, pintura  
120 x 157 cm  
Calder Foundation, New York

Black Constellation, 1943  
Madera de ébano, alambre  
43 x 105,5 x 20,3 cm  
Calder Foundation, New York; Donación de / Gift of Sandra Calder Davidson, en memoria de Jean Davidson, 2014

Brooch, c. 1945  
Plata, alambre de acero  
12,4 x 11,4 x 2,9 cm  
Colección particular

Tentacles, 1947  
Lámina de metal, alambre  
56,5 x 92,5 x 97,6 cm  
Calder Foundation, New York

Black Widow, 1948  
Lámina de metal, alambre, pintura  
352,2 x 250,4 x 0,7 cm  
Colección Instituto de Arquitectos do Brasil, São Paulo (IABsp)

Triple Gong, c. 1948  
Chapa de latón, alambre, pintura  
99,1 x 190,5 x 7 cm  
Calder Foundation, New York; Donación prometida de / Promised Gift of Holton Rower

Necklace for Nucléa, 1952  
Cable de plata  
54,6 x 45,7 cm  
Calder Foundation, New York

Brass on Piano Legs, 1955  
Hoja móvil de metal, alambre de latón  
33 x 45,7 x 16,5 cm  
Colección particular

Crag, 1974  
Lámina de metal, alambre, pintura  
381 x 243,8 x 96,5 cm  
Calder Foundation, New York; Donación de / Gift of Margaret S. Bilotti, 2015

Critter without Arms, 1974  
Lámina de metal, pintura  
190,5 x 76,2 x 71,1 cm  
Calder Foundation, New York

Critter inimmable, 1974  
Lámina de metal, pintura  
195 x 97 x 72 cm  
Calder Foundation, New York