

**CENTRO  
BOTÍN  
CENTRE**

**EXHIBITION MENU**  
Young and adults

**CALDER**  
29 JUNE - 3 NOVEMBER 2019  
**STORIES**

Curator: **HANS ULRICH OBRIST**  
Exhibition Design: **RENZO PIANO**



# CENTRO BOTÍN CENTRO

## EXHIBITION MENU

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Welcome to *Calder Stories*, an exhibition of never told stories about Alexander Calder's oeuvre. Projects that never came to be but that left wonderful stories behind them.

And why an exhibition on the subject of unrealized works? Because, as Hans Ulrich Obrist—curator of the exhibition—, said:

“Knowing their dreams, is knowing the person.”

At Centro Botín we want you to get to know Calder's work and, through it, to know the person behind the artist. We always want to offer you a new perspective of art and we want it to become part of your world. In order to offer you this new view of Calder, we consulted with the Calder Foundation, led by Calder's grandson, Alexander S. C. Rower.

The first person that Obrist and Rower called upon was Renzo Piano. Piano designed the largest-ever retrospective of the artist in Torino in 1983, so Obrist and Rower asked Renzo Piano to design this exhibition as well. Piano's exhibition design reflects the same concepts he used while designing the Centro Botín.

Platforms levitate, each of them presenting a story. Each story, a village. The movement of people walking amongst the works is as organic as it is in a city or in the Jardines de Pereda. The design does not follow a chronological or geographical order. So, let yourself flow through the space and go wherever you want. As Piano states: “the visitor is 50% of the building,” and in this case, also of the exhibition.

And now, would you like to meet Calder? I'm sure you have something in common with him. We will get started and when we finish you will be able to confirm that.

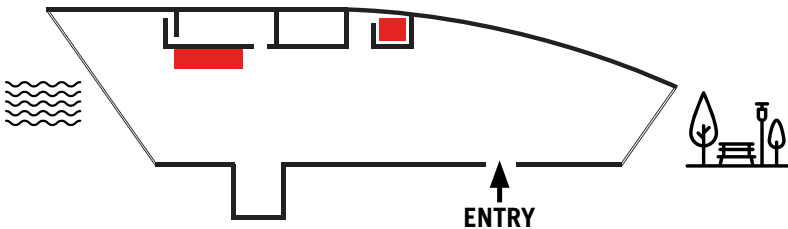
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# CENTRO BOTÍN CENTRE

EXHIBITION MENU  
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Activated Planes



CS01

# CENTRO BOTÍN CENTRO

## EXHIBITION MENU

Young and adults

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All stories have a beginning, and Calder's begins in 1898 in Pennsylvania, in the United States. Calder was born into a family of artists. In the mid-1920s, Calder enrolled in the Art Students League in New York City. After that, in 1926, Calder moved to Paris, where he expanded upon his first great innovation—wire sculpture, a radical new form of massless sculpture in which he “drew” in three-dimensions the portraits of friends, family, and well-known figures of the day. Many of these early sculptures had kinetic elements and some rotated from the ceiling.

In 1930, something happened that changed the course of Calder's work: he visited Piet Mondrian's studio in Paris. Do you know who Mondrian is? I'm sure you do. Search for him on the Internet and you'll soon recognize his work. Mondrian's studio was like an art installation, and on one wall, there were rectangles of colored cardboard for compositional experimentation. An intense light entered through the window. Calder was amazed by the environment, and it seemed to him that the rectangles could move. He pointed this out to Mondrian, who denied the need for such movement, but for Calder it was the beginning of something very interesting.

A year later, Calder began to develop three- and four-dimensional kinetic abstractions, such as the works that you see here. Dubbed “mobiles” by Marcel Duchamp, they are like paintings in motion; in this case, one moves by a motor—which you can see if you look at the work from the side—while the other moves by air currents.

For reasons of conservation, the works cannot move now, but after observing them for a little while, we can see how they would move.

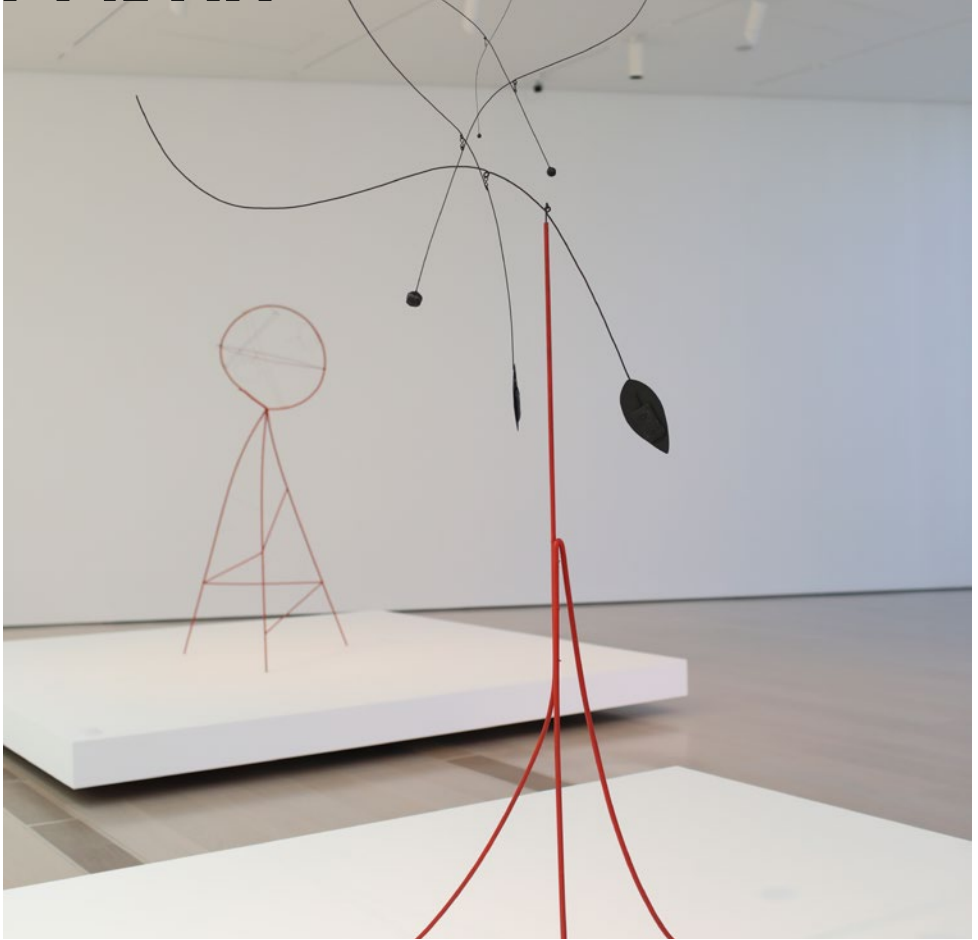
Additionally, at the audiovisual room, there are short videos in which you can enjoy footage of works in motion.

Do you want to know another story about Calder? Go to the window that looks out onto the Jardines de Pereda.

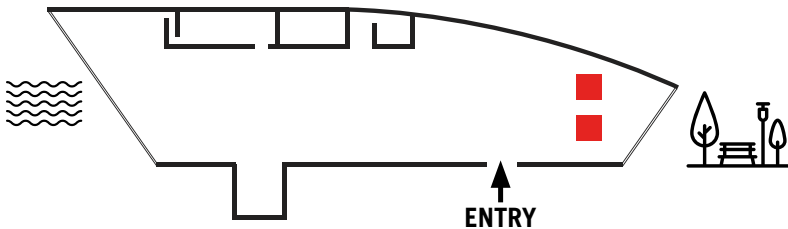
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# CENTRO BOTÍN CENTRE

EXHIBITION MENU  
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Project for the Bronx Zoo



1939 was a busy year for Calder, during which he worked on a variety of projects. You are in front of two of the five models that Calder created at the request of Wallace K. Harrison's architectural firm, which was planning a new African habitat for the Bronx Zoo in New York City. The project was spearheaded by the young architect Oscar Nitzchke, and Calder was asked to create a series of sculptures, a sort of imaginary flora that would become the setting for the actual fauna. According to his worlds:

"We even envisioned having the visitors walking through an armored tube. My objects, I felt, could replace the trees, and -since they would be made of iron- they would be immune to the animals' claws."

The architect's ideas were rejected by the zoo and with them Calder's sculptures, so we will never know what the reaction of the animals would have been. But if the sculptures had been made, can you imagine it? How would the animals have reacted? Do animals have aesthetic sensibility?

While you think, move a little towards the showcases that are on both sides of the room and we will continue with the story.

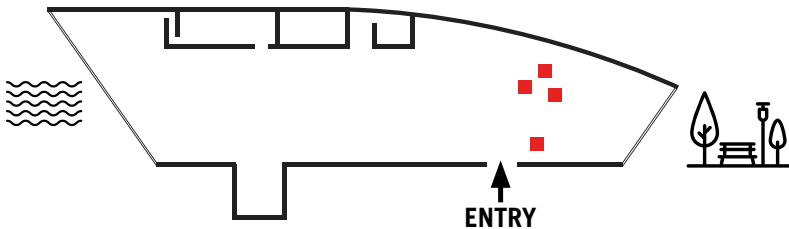
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# CENTRO BOTÍN CENTRE

EXHIBITION MENU  
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The Smithsonian Gallery of Art and the New York "World's fair



CS03

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During that same year, Calder worked with another architect: Percival Goodman. As part of the collaboration, Calder proposed sculptures to be included with Goodman's submission to a competition held to choose a design for the new Smithsonian Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. Goodman did not win the contest, and Calder's works were not made, but neither was the winning project because, soon after, the Second World War broke out, changing the country's priorities.

The models that Calder created for the 1939 New York World's Fair, which are right in front of this showcase, have a similar story: they would never be realized. Calder intended for the finished sculptures to be 15 meters high, adapted into a large-scale sculptural kinetic environment. As you can see, the elements of the sculptures would have moved. Can you imagine being under one of them? Maybe if you bend down to look at them, you will be able to get a sense of what Calder envisioned.

Calder had also received a commission for the 1939 New York World's Fair from Wallace K. Harrison and André Fouilhoux, architects of the Consolidated Edison Pavilion, to produce an extraordinary fountain for the pool in front of their building. Calder's *Water Ballet* consisted of a program lasting five minutes that included a choreography of "jets of water from 14 nozzles...designed to spurt, oscillate or rotate in fixed manners at times as carefully predetermined as the movements of living dancers." Although the jets were installed at the New York World's Fair, the ballet was never executed.

Now go to the audiovisual room behind the wall that supports the first works you have enjoyed; there you will see the drawings for the *Water Ballet* and also have the chance to get into Calder's brain.

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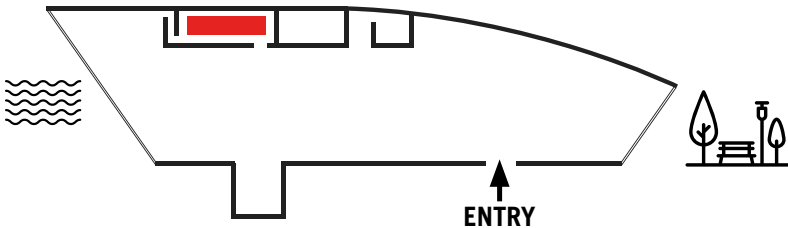


# CENTRO BOTÍN CENTRE

EXHIBITION MENU  
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Audiovisuals



CS04

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## EXHIBITION MENU

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In the 1930s, Calder worked on a number of proposals for kinetic décor. They ranged from relatively small-scale “ballet-objects” to projects that he hoped would be realized within the proscenium arch of the theatrical stage. He began diagramming these ballets in drawings. Although Calder’s concepts for these specific works exhibited at Centro Botín never materialized, we have been able to realize his designs through animations in the exhibition.

“I came up with a graphic method to record the movements of the ballet, marking the trajectories with chalk or pencils of different colors.”

How did we realize Calder’s ideas? Curated interpretations demonstrate Calder’s plans and annotations in an animated form. The result is presented on these screens.

- Observe for a few seconds without putting on the headphones.
- When you have chosen the music, put on the headphones. Does your perception change?

We cannot confirm what music Calder would have used for these works, so the music has been selected by Calder’s great-grandson in keeping with Calder’s designs. What music would you use?

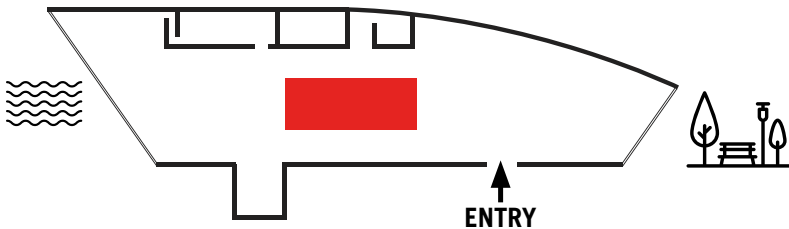
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EXHIBITION MENU  
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Concrete Monuments



CS05

In 1944, Calder received another challenging commission. Architect Wallace K. Harrison suggested that Calder sculpt large outdoor works in concrete for an International Style building. The sculptures would be at the entrance of the building and stand 10-12 meters high. They also had to be made of concrete, a material with which Calder had never worked before.

As Calder recalled in his autobiography:

“Wally Harrison had suggested I make some large outdoor objects which could be done in cement. He apparently forgot about his suggestion immediately, but I did not and I started to work in plaster. I finally made things which were mobile objects and had them cast in bronze acrobats, animals, snakes, dancers, a starfish, and tightrope performers.”

These bronzes are in front of you. If you stop to look at them, you will see how the elements are in balance. The projections of the screens show you the bronzes in motion. Can you imagine all of them moving at the same time? And can you imagine if these sculptures were taller than this room? Shocking, isn't it?

In 1956, Chase Manhattan Bank approached Calder about creating large sculpture for the front of their building. Although Chase Bank did not go forward with Calder's proposal, the models that you see now by the window and that he cast for himself show Calder's working process.

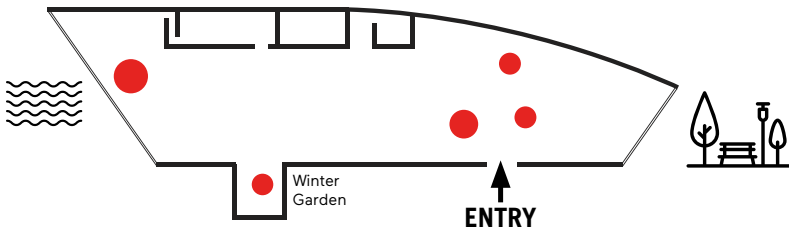
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EXHIBITION MENU  
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Mobiles



And now, we reach the mobiles, the most well-known of Calder's works. Calder was the first artist in the world to provide movement to sculptures in order to sculpt space. Calder wanted to establish a flow of energy between the people who enjoy his works, the works themselves, and the space in which the works were situated. Calder used his intuition and experimented to balance weights and compose the mobiles.

Every mobile in this room has a different story, that is because each of them was created for different people and different locations. That information is in the wall texts but, before you read them, why don't you enjoy the sculptures?

- Lie down on the floor to observe the mobiles from below, almost all of them are viewed from this perspective in the locations where they are usually hung or the sites for which they were created.
- Observe the sculptures, and try to get them to "tell you" something. Perhaps without looking at the wall texts, you can guess where they were made or for what kind of space.

These are full-scale works, not tests or models. Take your time observing them!

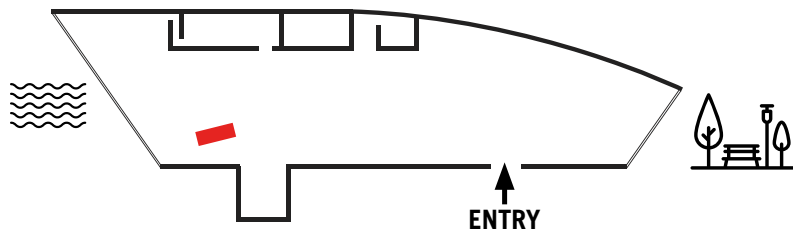
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Art in motion



CS07

# CENTRO BOTÍN CENTRO

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Following Calder's successful project with Braniff International Airways, in which he painted DC-8 jet, racecar driver Hervé Poulain, asked Calder to paint the BMW that Poulain would drive in Le Mans 24-Hours race in 1976. Thanks to that moving canvas, as Calder described the car, his work reached many more people.

Unfortunately, the car did not finish the race due to a mechanical failure, but this project gave rise to the BMW Art Car collection. If you visit their website you can see this car in motion, photos of Calder and Poulain, the previous models, and the other Art Cars that followed.

Can you imagine if these cars were for sale? Our streets would look very different, and who knows, maybe everyone could personalize their own car.

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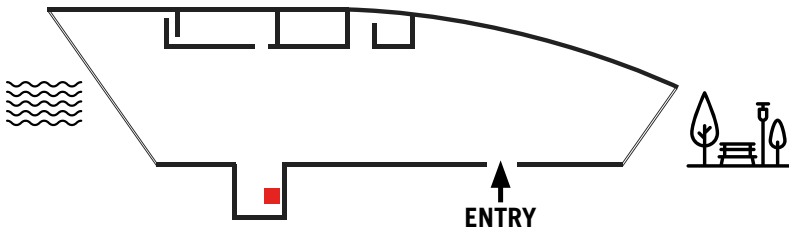


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Last model



CS08

You are in front of the last model made by Calder. This is the story:

In May 1976, the director of the Kröller-Müller Museum in Otterlo asked Calder to create a monumental sculpture for the Museum's garden. Calder and his wife, Louisa, travelled to the Netherlands to see the space where the sculpture would be.

Soon after, Calder began making the maquette. He sent the model and waited for the museum's response. The answer was yes, but when they called Calder's house to tell him with great enthusiasm, it was his wife who answered the phone with the bad news of the artist's death a few days earlier. Can you imagine the director's emotion in that moment?

This model belongs to the Kröller-Müller Museum and the director said:

"I see it every day and dream of things that probably cannot be anymore"

So never stop dreaming. Dreaming we do many more things than in our lifetime, but these dreams are the engines that drive the rest of our actions.

Thank you so much for allowing us to guide you. We hope to see you soon!

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