

CENTRO BOTÍN CENTRE

EXHIBITION MENU
Children and families

CALDER

29 JUNE - 3 NOVEMBER 2019

STORIES

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



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Hello, welcome to this exhibition, which is actually a story composed of many other stories. Do you want to know who the main character is? Let's see if you can guess. Looking at the room from the hall, who do you think made all these works? Was it a child or an adult? Was it a man or a woman? Where did he or she live? I'm sure you've come up with an idea, but do you want to know the real story? Well, here we go!

The person who made all of these works of art is Alexander Calder, who was born 121 years ago in Pennsylvania, in the United States. His parents and grandparents were also artists, so he grew up surrounded by paintings and sculptures, and he made his own sculptures out of brass sheet when he was just eleven years old. But when it came time for him to study, he followed a friend's idea and went to engineering school.

Calder started working as an engineer, but he soon became bored in this field and returned to his childhood passion for art. From then on, Calder was fulfilled, and he created many sculptures all over the world. But he also imagined and invented other works of art that were never made. Do you want to know more about them?

Hans Ulrich Obrist, the curator of this this exhibition said:

"To know their dreams, is to know the person."

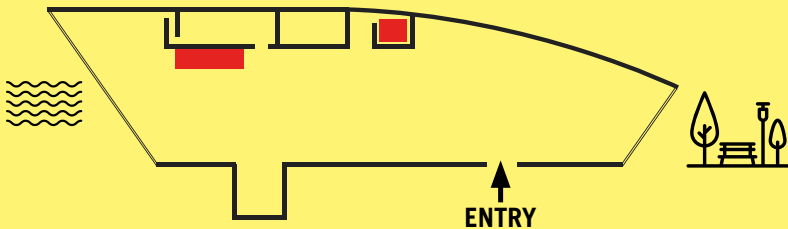
Let's find out what Calder was dreaming about. Will you join us?

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He imagined that the rectangles were moving



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Calder had many friends who were artists and some of them have participated in this exhibition. He wrote them letters, and he visited them whenever he could, as on the day when he went to Paris to see his friend Piet Mondrian.

Mondrian painted vertical and horizontal lines, and he filled the remaining rectangles inside with colors. You may have seen some of his works in books. If his name doesn't ring a bell, you can search on the Internet, and you will quickly recognize his art.

When Calder arrived at Mondrian's studio, he was astonished by the environment. One wall was covered by cardboard rectangles in various colors, and the light that entered through the window illuminated them. Calder imagined that the rectangles were moving, and he thought he should make the shapes move for real. Mondrian didn't find the idea interesting, but Calder was fascinated by it. From then on, all his works would have movement.

A year later, Calder began to develop three- and four-dimensional objects that move, such as the works that you see here. If you look *Square* from the side, you can see the mechanism he created. Are you able to figure out how the pieces would move?

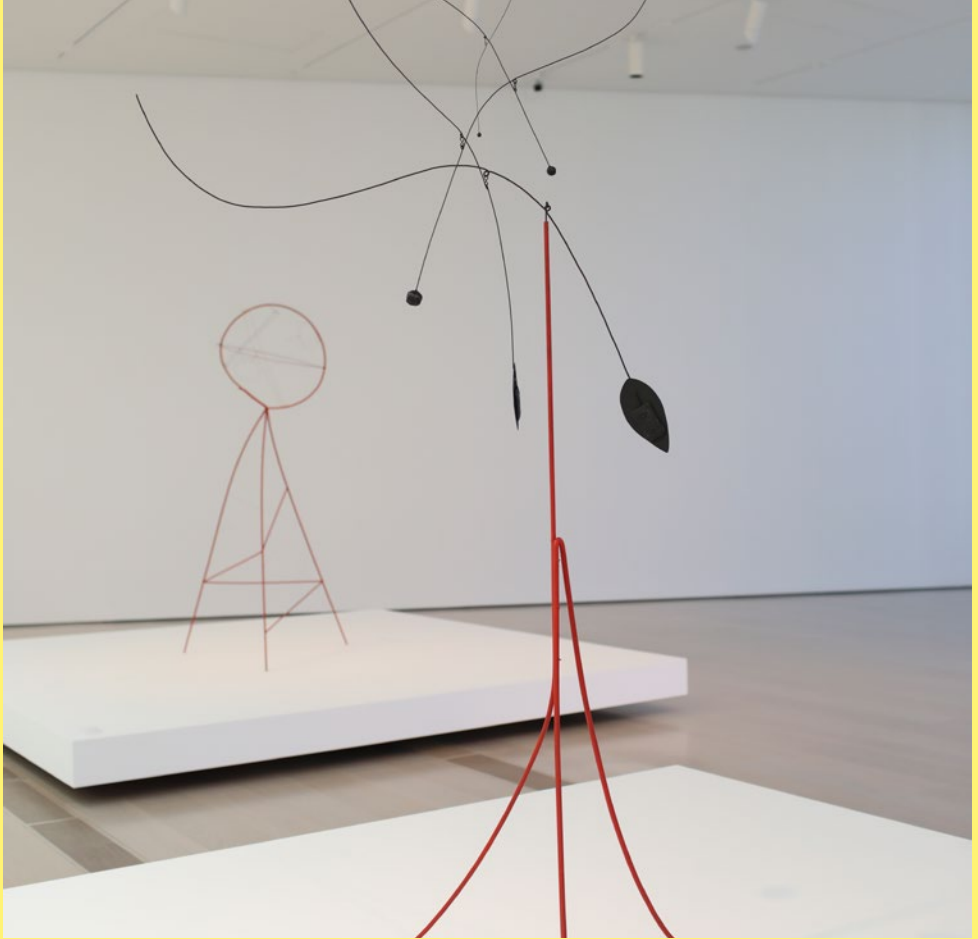
Now we can't move them because we could damage the art work, but we can use our imagination.

We also have a room in this exhibition where you can see short animations of Calder's designs moving. Let's see if you like them!

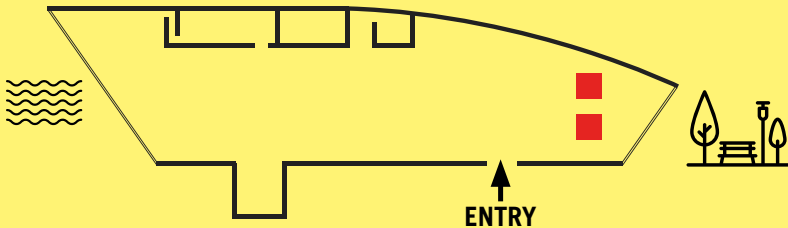
Shall we go on? Go to the window that overlooks the Jardines de Pereda.

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Project for the Bronx Zoo



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These two works are models, which in full-scale would have been much bigger and heavier. What do they remind you of? What do they look like?

And where would Calder have wanted to put these sculptures? Since the project was very unique it's hard to guess: it was for a zoo in New York City.

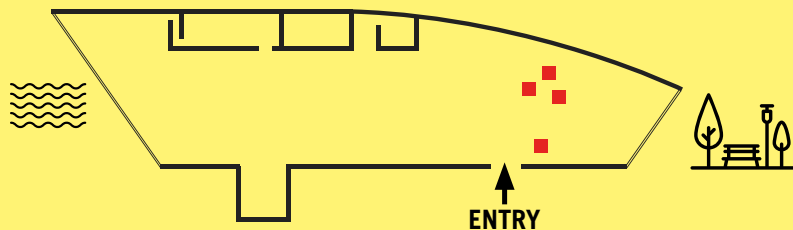
An architect was designing part of the zoo and asked Calder for help. They imagined the animals surrounded by works of art and an armored tunnel so that people could enter the zoo and interact with animals without being in danger. Do you like that idea? Do you think animals like art? How could we find out? Unfortunately, the project was never realized, so these sculptures were never made in full-scale, as Calder intended.

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Models for Percival Goodman and the New York World's Fair



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The same year that Calder designed the models for the zoo, he designed many other innovative works of art because, even at the age of 41, his curious and creative spirit never disappeared.

He created, for example, the models that you see in these four showcases. All of them for public installation, to welcome people at the entrance of large and important buildings or other sites. These works are models, but can you imagine them taller than the ceiling of this room? They all moved. The black ones by the wind, and the ones with color with mechanisms that he created.

Six of the models were presented along with Percival Goodman's architectural design as part of a submission for a competition. Unfortunately, Goodman's proposal was not chosen, and Calder's sculptures were never made in full-scale, so we can only imagine them.

Can you imagine a sculpture as big as this at the entrance of your house, your school, the hospital? Surely, getting to the buildings would be more fun and walking down the street as well.

Shall we go on?

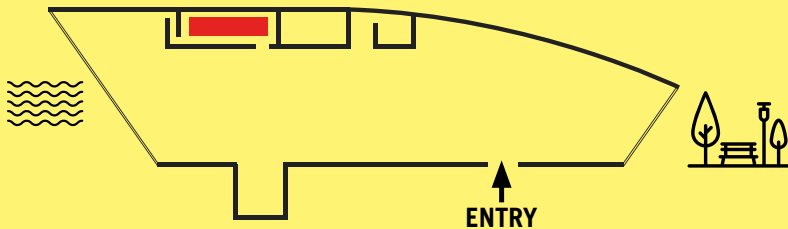
Now, we will enter through the door near the first works that we saw.

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Inside Calder's head



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We're going to "go inside" Calder's head. How? By exploring what Calder wanted to create and by seeing interpretations of his ideas come to life on these screens.

In the 1930s, Calder began to compose what he called ballet-objects. He designed the movements of the pieces and their times and recorded them in drawings.

He never realized any of these specific ballets, but today, thanks to computers and Calder's notations, we have been able to interpret his ideas.

- Look at the drawings on the wall. Everything is thought out and recorded on paper.
- Look at the screens for a while without putting on your headphones.
- Think about what music you would put with the animations.
- Now put on your headphones. Do you like it?

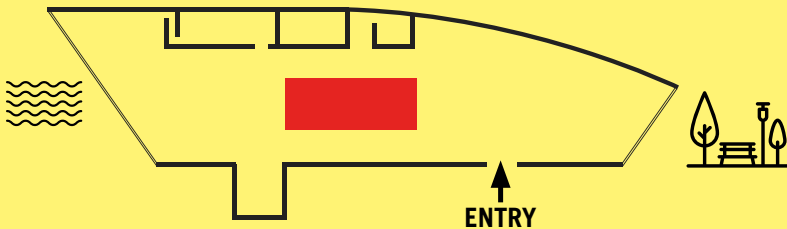
We don't know what music Calder would have used for this project, but his great-grandson tried to figure it out and has chosen the music you hear.

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From small to big



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When Calder was asked to create a work, he often started in the same way. First, he made a model, and then, he would enlarge the model to see how the sculpture worked on a larger scale. The bigger the model, the heavier and more difficult it was to move safely. He continued this process until he decided on the design for the final sculpture.

So, in this area, you can see these large models that are actually medium-sized. The real one would be much bigger, taller than this room. It would have been in front of a New York bank. But in the end the idea was rejected, and Calder kept all the models, from the smallest ones to these. Do you see them? Do you see the small ones in the room?

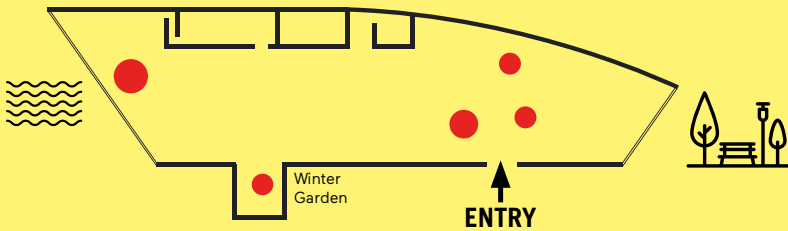
The same thing happened with these works that were cast in bronze from plaster. They can all move. Bend over and take a look at them. Do you see the points where the elements are connected? These models are small, but Calder designed them to be huge. On the screens you can see the movement of each of them. Let's see if you can identify them!

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Mobiles



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Did you notice the sculptures hanging from the ceiling? These are Calder's best-known works, mobiles. Maybe you've seen them before in a book.

Every mobile you see in the room has a different story; Calder created each for a different location around the world. Since Calder intended for the visitor to engage with his works of art, we would like to propose something:

- Choose one mobile.
- Look at it from different points. Lie down on the ground if you want because normally these mobiles are very high, and they can be seen from below.
- Calder wanted an energy exchange between the mobile, the person, and the place. And, we can only feel this energy if we stay for a while, quietly observing.
- Now imagine: where and for whom did Calder create this mobile?

If you are very curious, go to the wall texts with an adult and find out the correct information. But it may not be necessary, intuition is sometimes strong enough.

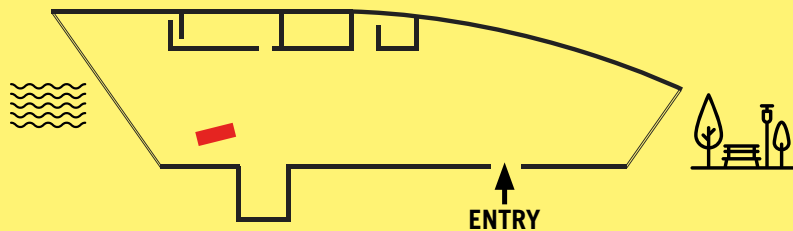
That's how Calder created, letting himself be led by his intuition.

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Art in motion



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A car? What's a car doing in an art exhibition? What do you think? For Calder, this car was a moving canvas. Calder met a racecar driver, Hervé Poulain, who wanted a special car for a special race.

Calder and Poulain became friends, and after several models, Calder painted the final car for his friend. The car company BMW liked the car so much that after this project, BMW continued to make cars with other artists, and today, these Art Cars are in the BMW museum. If you visit their website, you can see Calder and Poulain working on the car and the car in motion.

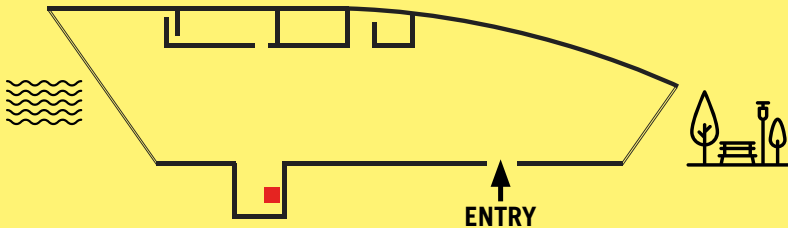
Can you imagine if all cars were painted like this? Do you think cities would look different?

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Last model



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And like all stories, this one also has an end. And the end is this model.

When Calder was 78 years old, a museum in the Netherlands, which had many outdoor sculptures, asked Calder to create a sculpture for them. Calder was very excited about the project, and he and his wife, Louisa, got on a plane and went to the Netherlands.

They visited the museum, and Calder decided on a concept. Then, they returned to their home at Saché, and Calder created the model for the sculpture. Calder died soon after sending the maquette to the museum director, who received the sad news from Calder's wife when he called to tell him that the project had been approved.

This model remains in the museum as a record of one of Calder's last unrealized dreams.

Never stop dreaming, because dreams are where all the stories of our lives are born.

Thank you very much for coming, we hope to see you soon!
