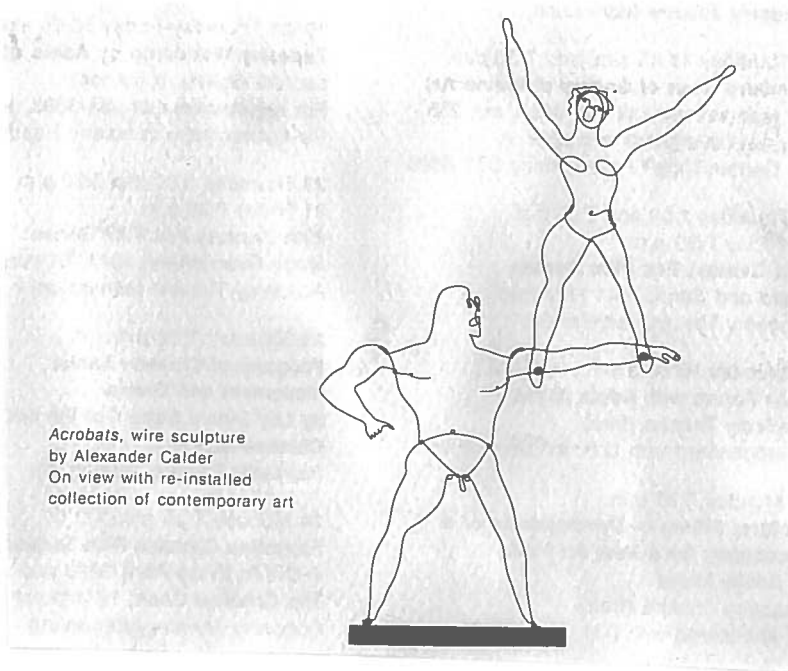


ALEXANDER CALDER



Acrobats, wire sculpture
by Alexander Calder
On view with re-installed
collection of contemporary art

Calder

ALEXANDER CALDER
United States, 1898–1976



Two Acrobats, ca. 1928
Brass wire, painted wood base

Gift of Mrs. Theodore A. Cooke, Mrs. P. E. Spalding, and Mrs. Walter F. Dillingham,
1937 (4595)

Object with Yellow Background, 1936
Painted wood, metal, string (partially reconstructed)

Gift of Mrs. Theodore A. Cooke, 1962
(3014.1)

Untitled, 1967
Gouache on paper

Gift of Mr. Edgardo Acosta, 1971

White and Red Boomerang, 1971

Painted metal, wire

Bequest of Mrs. Edward C. Sterling, 2007

Focus on Alexander Calder

In 1937, the Honolulu Academy of Arts hosted an exhibition titled *Fantastic Art* featuring the work of Catalan artist Joan Miro and American engineer-cum-sculptor Alexander Calder (1898-1976). Calder was profoundly influenced by Miro's invention of an abstract universe populated by organic forms and the sense of movement he conferred upon them. It was through his friendship with Miro and the broader circle of European avant-garde artists that Calder conceived of a truly kinetic form that he called the mobile – a term suggested to him by the French artist Marcel Duchamp who was also interested in actual or implied kineticism in art.

Calder studied engineering at Stevens Institute of Technology in the 1910s, and later applied these interests to an ambitious installation called *The Circus* which he traveled throughout Europe where he met some of the most influential artists of the 20th-century. Of these, the Dutch painter Piet Mondrian provided a point of departure. Calder envisioned Mondrian's paintings as rectangles oscillating in space and so set out to create paintings that move. These early works launched a career that spanned most of the 20th-century, introduced kineticism into the American vernacular, and anticipated the kinetic sculpture movement of the 1950s-60s.

Alexander Calder (American, 1898–1976)

Hi! [Two Acrobats], c. 1928

Brass wire and wood

Gift of Mrs. Theodore A. Cooke, Mrs. P. E. Spalding,
and Mrs. Walter F. Dillingham, 1937 (4595)

Alexander Calder revolutionized sculpture in the 20th century with the introduction of the mobile, a term coined by his friend Marcel Duchamp, but kinetic sculpture was only one of his achievements. Calder's early work with wire demonstrated the aesthetic potential of untraditional media and challenged traditional conventions of sculpture by introducing open space and transparency into three-dimensional form.

Calder studied engineering at Stevens Institute of Technology in the 1910s, before enrolling in the Art Students League in New York in 1923 to study painting. In 1926, he moved to Paris and, drawing from his engineering background, developed a miniature circus made up of performers articulated in wire and found objects. Beginning in 1927, he presented *Circus* in Paris, New York, and elsewhere, holding elaborate performances and mimicking actual circus acts; in the process he met some of the most influential artists of the 20th century. Although Calder's work would become more abstract in later years, *Circus*, with its emphasis on the movement of form and line in space, is an important part of the evolution of his work—demonstrating a dedication to kinetics as art from the outset of his career.