

FUNDACIÓN JUMEX ARTE CONTEMPORÁNEO

MUSEO JUMEX

CALDER: DISCIPLINE OF THE DANCE

GALERÍA 3

22.MAR.15—28.JUN.15

From 21 March–27 June 2015, Museo Jumex will present *Calder: Discipline of the Dance*, a major survey of works by Alexander Calder (1898–1976), the American artist who redefined the history of art through his use of unconventional materials and his unprecedented transformations of space. Curated by Alexander S. C. Rower, president of the Calder Foundation, New York, and grandson of the artist, the exhibition presents nearly eighty works from the 1920s through the 1970s that lend insight into Calder’s intellectual intuitions and unequalled perceptual innovations. Despite his connections to Latin America and his larger-than-life legacy among artists of subsequent generations, *Calder: Discipline of the Dance* marks the artist’s first retrospective in Mexico in over twenty-five years.

“It is an immense thrill to collaborate with the Jumex Foundation on this important project,” Rower states. “The exhibition couldn’t have come at a better time, giving Mexican audiences the chance to experience my grandfather’s sculpture in an entirely new way in this recently opened 21st century jewel-box museum. It’s a show for Mexico, but one that will contribute to our understanding of Calder on an international level.”

The exhibition takes as its point of departure Calder’s inspiration and experience in Latin America. “[Calder] is a perpetuator of unexpected forms of balance through which sculpture has mastered the discipline of the dance,” wrote renowned critic Juan García Ponce in 1968. Difficult to define yet unmistakably present, the naturalistic energy inherent in Calder’s sculpture was immediately recognized and celebrated by his Latin American friends during his lifetime. A mutual attraction lured Calder to Mexico, Venezuela, and Brazil on many occasions, beginning in 1948 and continuing throughout the rest of his life.

In 1933, Calder wrote, “Just as one can compose colors, or forms, so one can compose motions.” His compositions of motions needed no explanation in Mexico, where intellectual circles heralded him as the modern master most closely sympathetic to regional politics and culture. On the occasion of the 1968 Olympics Games, and through the dedication of his close friend the architect Mathias Goeritz, Calder was commissioned to realize the monumental sculpture *El Sol Rojo* (1968) for the entrance of Mexico City’s Aztec Stadium, where it still stands today.

The works on view largely originate from the Calder Foundation’s preeminent collection and include the artist’s signature wire sculpture, mobiles, and stabiles, as well as paintings and jewelry. The exhibition begins with a presentation of wire sculpture, objects of a novel aesthetic that constitute Calder’s first recognized invention in Paris. Soon after arriving there in 1926, Calder was immediately welcomed into the close-knit circle of avant-garde artists, composers, architects, and thinkers of Montparnasse, all of whom celebrated his ingenious wire objects and his complex *Cirque Calder* (1926–31). Calder’s breathtaking and nearly life-size portrait *Aztec Josephine Baker* (1930), an articulated depiction of the Parisian cabaret sensation, constitutes the centerpiece of this group.

Entering the main space, visitors will be confronted with a progression of sculptures installed chronologically but also conceptually in a groundbreaking layout designed by architect Tatiana Bilbao, who took inspiration from Goeritz. The plan seeks to tap into the architect’s concept of “emotional architecture,” or the design of space in a way that responds to human feelings, a consummation of art with architecture.

Calder too sought to redefine space through his work. By making his sculptures kinetic, he achieved in them a semblance of vitality or human sentience. One of the best examples is *Scarlet Digitalis* (1945), exhibited shortly after its execution, and then kept in Calder’s home, far from the public eye, until recently. With its multiple distinct motions and finger-like “digits,” the work is at once utterly abstract and intuitively human. Another key mobile is *53 Black Dots* (1953), named for the year in which it was created and conceived as a larger version of *Black Dots* from 1941. Exemplifying Calder’s ability to re-imagine space with honest materials, this mobile has twelve elements of variegated shapes and sizes, three of which are perforated, revealing the artist’s engagement with contemporaneous notions of presence and absence on multiple levels.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Alexander Calder (1898–1976), whose illustrious career spanned much of the twentieth century, is the most acclaimed and influential sculptor of our time. 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: he delineated mass by suggesting its volume in a few lines of wire. Following a visit in October of 1930 to Mondrian’s studio, where he was impressed by the environment and actuation of space, Calder made his first wholly abstract compositions and invented the kinetic sculpture now known as the mobile. Coined for these works by Marcel Duchamp in 1931, the word mobile refers to both “motion” and “motive” in French. The earliest mobiles moved by a system of cranks and motors, although these mechanics were virtually abandoned as Calder developed mobiles that responded to air currents, light, humidity, and human interaction. He also created stationary abstract works that Jean Arp dubbed stabiles.

In 1948, Calder made the first of three extended trips to Brazil—passing through Mexico City for the first time—where he held highly successful exhibitions in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo. In 1952, he accepted the commission for *Acoustic Ceiling* (1954) for the Aula Magna auditorium at Universidad Central de Venezuela. That same year, Calder represented the United States at the Venice Biennale, winning the grand prize for sculpture. Toward the end of the 1950s, he devoted himself to making outdoor sculpture on a monumental scale from bolted steel plate. These stately titans, among them *El Sol Rojo* (1968), continue to grace public plazas in cities throughout the world. Major retrospectives of Calder’s work during his lifetime were held at the Guggenheim Museum, New York (1964); 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 the age of seventy-eight.

ABOUT THE CURATOR

Alexander S. C. Rower is president of the Calder Foundation and Alexander Calder’s grandson. The Calder Foundation, a nonprofit organization founded in 1987 by Rower, is dedicated to collecting, exhibiting, preserving, and interpreting the art and archives of Calder. The Foundation has documented more than 22,000 works by the artist and has established an extensive archive dedicated to all aspects of Calder’s career. Rower has curated numerous exhibitions worldwide, including projects at Leeum, Samsung Museum of Art, Seoul; Centre Pompidou, Paris; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; The Menil Collection, Houston; Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid; Guggenheim Museum, Bilbao; and the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. He has published many texts on Calder’s life and work, and he frequently lectures on the subject.

FUNDACION JUMEX ARTE CONTEMPORÁNEO

FUNDACIÓN JUMEX ARTE CONTEMPORÁNEO was created to promote the production, reflection and knowledge of contemporary art, and to generate innovative ways to foster art and culture. This is done through Colección Jumex, the Foundation’s art collection; Museo Jumex, a new venue for the exhibition and activation of contemporary art; Galería Jumex Ecatepec, an experimental exhibition space; and Editorial Jumex, a platform for the publication and dissemination of contemporary art discourse. Additionally, Fundación Jumex promotes its mission through three complimentary areas: Fomento, a program dedicated to support the production of contemporary art and independent projects, education and research; Investigación, a department dedicated to the research and analysis of contemporary culture; and Educación, an area committed to enhancing the visitor’s ability to understand and appreciate contemporary art.

MUSEO JUMEX HOURS & ADMISSION

Entrance: \$30 nationals; \$50 foreigners; 50% discount for students and teachers (with a valid ID); Free for children under 15 and people over 60 years of age (with a valid ID); Free every Friday.

Hours of operation: Tuesday through Sunday, 11 am to 8 pm.

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