

Art: A Blissful Marriage

Display Unites Calder and the Guggenheim

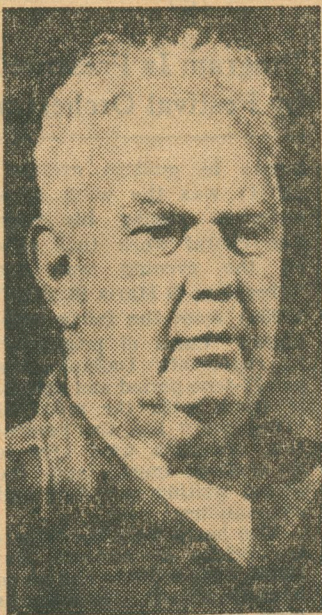
By JOHN CANADAY

LOVERS are always mooning about the miracle that brought them together, and third parties, from now on, are likely to feel the same way about the Guggenheim Museum and Alexander Calder. They were made for each other, and their perfect union in a state of bliss opens for public inspection today.

The Guggenheim has never looked so good. Calder, who looks as good as ever, has never been so well displayed. His gigantic white mobile suspended within the museum's vast central space can be seen from below, from the sides and even from above. His 22-foot high black stabile centered under it is something to stroll around in, an environmental sculpture that should make recent experimenters in this medium wonder why they ever bothered to try.

And while the space under the dome is perfect for Calder's biggest works, the niches along the ramps are ideally scaled to accommodate his most intimate ones. Everything has worked out perfectly, although the installation involved engineering problems as well as the usual harassment of coping with the building's outrageous slants, angles and warpings. The greatest tribute to Thomas Messer, the museum's director (who tied the marriage knot), is that the solutions are so successful that the difficulties seem to have vanished rather than to have been overcome.

With its walls painted white the museum sparkles with the



The New York Times

Alexander Calder

reds, blacks, yellows and blues of the Calders that stand, hang and float about you. It is a shame that Frank Lloyd Wright can't see his building now. If he really designed it as a place to see art, he would be vindicated for the first time since the Guggenheim opened five years ago. Or if, as seems more probable, he designed it as an architectural monument with the power to defeat any effort to give proper play to the object displayed in it, he would be chastened—with the compensation that he could not but be delighted.

Everyone should be delighted. The one regretful response, general at the private opening yesterday, is that the show can't remain as a permanent installation. The perfect marriage is scheduled to break up on Jan. 10.