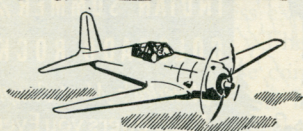
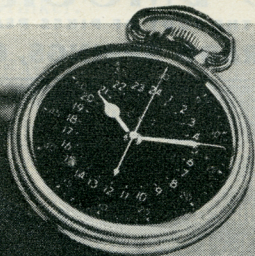


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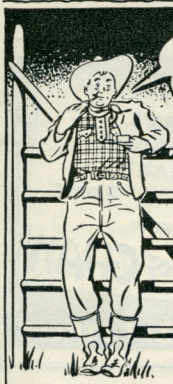


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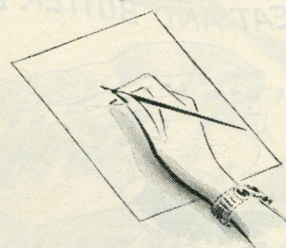
Alexander Calder and  
Some Others



THE Museum of Modern Art is a large and gorgeous institution, but I've sometimes thought that the artist who is offered a one-man show there might well think twice before accepting. Maybe it's the air of portentousness that surrounds those big retrospectives they hand a man there, maybe it's simply that few artists have the scope and vitality to support such large-scale presentation. In any case, I can think of at least three men who received such showings in recent years and came out of them with their reputations seriously disabled. I must confess, too, that I had my misgivings that something of the sort might happen when I learned that the Museum was planning a retrospective for Alexander Calder.

Calder, as you undoubtedly know, is the inventor and so far practically the sole practitioner of the artistic mode known as "mobile sculpture," and he has two faults which I feared might make his show either monotonous or unwieldy, or both. He's a little bit lazy creatively, so once he has found a pattern or a movement that appeals to him he is likely to repeat it, and he seems to be lacking in self-criticism, with the result that at times one finds him venturing, apparently blindly, into fields of expression that offer small outlet for his peculiar genius. He is also, however, one of the few truly fanciful artists around today, with a purity and clean grace about his invention that are hard to find equalled elsewhere, and I'm glad to report that in this case my fears were groundless. Beautifully arranged by James Johnson Sweeney and Herbert Matter, the show is from first to last a brilliant success.

The faults I have mentioned appear in it, as they should of course in any well-rounded study of the man. A large part of the charm of Calder's mobiles derives from the very waywardness of their movements, swaying or revolving as the wind or your hand's touch sets them in motion, and he was certainly completely up a blind alley when, some ten years ago, he began tinkering with sculptures whose movements were mechanically and hence rigidly controlled;



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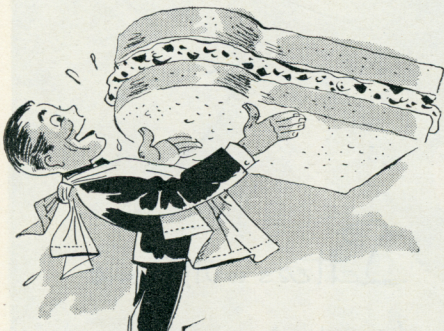
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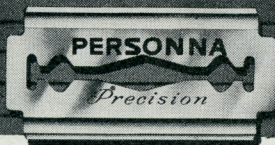
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perhaps too much space in the show is given to productions of this period. There are times too, as in the mobile called "Tines," when the use of incongruous objects in the construction, chunks of broken bottle, bits of pitchfork tines, and so on, reduces his playfulness pretty close to the level of horseplay.

These are minor objections, though, in the face of the sweep and brilliance of the exhibition as a whole. Calder's mobiles are hard to describe, being made up as much of air and of motion as of anything else, and I won't try to do much itemizing of individual pieces, though there are two or three—"Hour Glass," and "Little Leaves" with its scud of small, fluttering surfaces, and the infinitely delicate "Black Dots"—that I'd like just to mention as being particularly worth searching out. What one mainly sees, though, is movement, not of one piece but of many, and as it is the beauty and mystery of pure movement that give the show its interest, so it is the variety and ingenuity that the artist has displayed in developing that beauty which gives him his stature as an artist. Calder's art never seeks to define, but rather to delimit; it's all outline instead of substance, periphery rather than content. If one takes him on these terms, as the show so handsomely does, it must be seen that his stature is considerable.

**A**T the Buchholz there is a triangular affair, involving sculptures by Doris Caesar, paintings by Kurt Roesch, and pen drawings by Ben-Zion. Of the work, I liked the Ben-Zion drawings best, or perhaps it is more accurate to say that I found them most stimulating. Doris Caesar's sculpture is always solid, well balanced, and thoughtful, but it somehow lacks crispness and authority, while the Roesch oils, sensitively handled as they are (see "Head of Sorrow" and the fluent "New England Church"), are perhaps a trifle too noncommittal in their mingling of various modern French influences, such as



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