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Clipping from

Sunday Times

London

UNITED KINGDOM

Date

7.8.62

Handwritten:
Houston

THE WORLD OF ART: BY JOHN RUSSELL

Hardware in the Sky

THERE can hardly be, anywhere in the world, an exhibition more purely festive in its effect than the retrospective of works by Alexander Calder which has been arranged for the Arts Council by Mr James Johnson, Sweeney and the artist himself and is now on view at the Tate. First a wondering disbelief and later an even more irrepressible glee may be observed among visitors who come unprimed to these normally august saloons. Pleasure triumphs, all along the line.

And "line" is the word: for Calder began in the late 1920s with a single super-serviceable line of wire that wound, bent, and twisted in and out of space; against all the odds, a figure resulted that was not merely true to the facts of anatomy and character but a touching and exhilarating object in its own right.

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FOR Calder showed from the first his two major assets as an artist: so complete a mastery of stress and strain that we can take it for granted that his delicate and elaborate structures will "work" just as he wants them to; and a wry, offhand, oblique wit, an inherited saltiness of outlook that has kept him transparently American despite long periods of residence in France and the admiring friendship of Arp, Léger, Duchamp, Ernst and many other European artists.

Both the engineering and the wit come out in full strength at the Tate, where Calder for once has the space to envelop the visitor completely in a world of his own making. Once the artificial breezes are in proper order that world will be in perpetual silent stealthy motion, a world of gongs and crescent moons and wraiths of foliage offset on the ground by the arched and pointed shapes, motionless but instinct with energy, of Calder's stables.

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RELAXED and seemingly immaterial, the enormous constructions (one of them is thirty feet across) float on the upper air, dipping and diving, unhurriedly breasting the upward section of their destined flight; and never, never by any chance does any one of the ten or twelve steel sheets lose its harmonious relationship with the others. Balance has its beauties, as we all know; but balance lost and found, risked and recovered a thousand times over, is something that only Calder has perfected; and no amount of engineering expertise can explain away the poetic imperative which results from the flouting of one of our inmost notions: that the sculptor can never quite disguise the inert and necessarily ponderous nature of his medium.

This is a marvellous week for sculpture. It would be

difficult, for instance, to find a better case for modern movement than is put forward at the Hanover where sculptural classics by Arp, Richier, Picasso, César and Giacometti are allied to a fastidious choice of work by newer names: Dodeigne, Ipousteguy and Kalinowski. These are inspired conjunctions, from which the younger artists emerge not at all diminished.

Readers should also note the presence, in the entrance-corridor, of one of the box-objects by Cornell which, though familiar in reproduction, are very rarely seen at first hand in Europe. At the Waddington, finally, there is a good choice of small sculptures by British and French artists.

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IT is difficult, in such a week, for painting to rival the poetic intensity of the best modern sculpture. But at the Leicester there are some beautiful pictures by Aguayo and Castro; at the Beaux Arts Christopher Lane's début deserves to be seen; and the Rowan Gallery at 25a, Lowndes Street has opened with an exceptionally intelligent choice of young English painters.

In today's Colour Section:
Augustus John—the buried
years