

company (seventy-nine dancers) with a large repertory (fifty-six ballets) and it has abundant promise. Yef—and no other phrase will do—it lacks style. The dancers have little finesse. Their arms flail out too indistinctly, they miss the sculptural roundness that nearly all Soviet and the best Anglo-American dancers possess, and despite their evident musicality they do not show the sweep and flow of the great. This absence of style undermines their authority as dancers.

The Dutch programme was not particularly well chosen. Balanchine's *Le Palais de Cristal* is one of those transcendental exercises of style few companies can manage. The Dutch ballet fared better in both Herbert Ross's ugly *Caprichos* (a carve-up of Bartók in the name of Goya) and Pearl Lang's interesting but insufficiently communicative modern dance work, *Shirah*. Best of all was Skibine's *Prisoner of the Caucasus*, danced to Khatchaturian's *Gayaneh*, a vigorously unsubtle, yet, on its own terms, entertaining work, full of whirling men and yielding women unpretentiously pretending to suggest Pushkin. Here the Dutch showed a hopeful vitality. National ballets are not built in a day, and the Netherlands company has only a decade or so of experience behind it. Time will sort out a lot of its problems.

The Polish company 'Mazowsze' now at the Albert Hall is probably the most distinguished folk-dance troupe outside Russia. It has all the colour, vivacity and that certain element of toy-town tedium common to the genre. All those pleasant peasants with their songs of village wooing can get flavourlessly monotonous, while I swear that the translations provided in the programme are unconsciously the funniest thing in London, not excluding *Beyond the Fringe*. Yet the 'Mazowsze,' elegant and distinguished, has style to the *n*th degree. Marvellously imaginative costumes, tastefully poised between reality and fancy-dress, and rich choreography danced with an effortless air of rightness, bring an aristocratic, thoroughbred air to the programmes. If dancing had a Debrett, the 'Mazowsze' would make it, the Netherlands National Ballet wouldn't. It's as unfair and simple as that.

## Art

### Alexander Calder

By HUGH GRAHAM



BEFORE Jackson Pollock and the New American Painters, only two Americans enjoyed world-wide recognition as serious creative artists: Frank Lloyd and Alexander Calder. Significantly, both were more interested in space and environment than in the static artefact by which the European artist has traditionally made his name. There should be nothing surprising in this. Until a characteristic American environment evolved, American artists themselves could not confidently create the sort of art which would be appropriate to it.

Both Wright and Calder must be credited with bridging the gap between American living and American seeing. Wright, in spite of his lip-

service to functionalism, was essentially romantic and pictorial in his aims. He gave the American city and landscape, so different in spirit and appearance from the European, forms expressive of themselves. It is some measure of his prophetic gifts that works by artists far younger than himself, such as Rothko, Kline and Pollock, look perfectly in place in houses he designed forty years ago, whereas those of selfconsciously American painters of his own generation, like Grant Wood, look pathetically old-fashioned and provincial. Calder alone, in the years preceding the last war, was creating 'pure' works of art which not only satisfied the most advanced European standards but anticipated the poised, athletic and open-minded achievement of modern American painting. So whatever the final verdict on his sculpture may be, his place in the history of modern art is assured.

It would be wrong to judge him by the Tate Gallery exhibition. His sculptures and mobiles demand space and if possible a constantly changing light. Some of them should stand out of doors, though not in the twilight of an English summer. They are intended to play a part in everyday human activity, not to stand (or hang) reverently dated and docketed in a gallery. For artists of Calder's temperament, the museum is something of a killing-bottle. Also, one could have done with a few casefuls of drawings. Calder is an exquisitely subtle draughtsman, and probably the best illustrator of children's books alive. If his toys are worth displaying, then surely his drawings are too.

All the same, he comes through with flying colours. Few large one-man exhibitions reveal such a consistently elegant turn of mind expressed with such economy and lucidity. Although Calder, the son of a painter and a sculptor, apparently decided as a very young man to turn his back on art, his career appears in retrospect to have been remarkably single-minded. In 1919 at the age of twenty-three he graduated as a mechanical engineer, and only in 1922 did he begin to draw at evening classes in New York. By 1924 he was working as freelance draughtsman, and in 1926 he published a handbook on animal sketching. His youth thus displays a break with the traditional forms of art, rather than with art itself, as well as an innate interest in mechanical and organic movement.

Between 1926 and 1933 he travelled to and fro between America and Europe, supporting himself to begin with by constructing animated toys, and graduating from them, on the encouragement of artists like Miro, Léger and Mondrian, to abstract or near-abstract sculpture. Occasionally he would experiment in solid forms (e.g., *The Horse*, which he carved from walnut in 1928), but usually he worked in tenuous linear material, such as wire, thread and sheet aluminium, which would move either through its own lightness or through the regulation of a small machine. By 1932 he had evolved his own personal art-form, which his friend Marcel Duchamp christened the mobile: delicately adjusted patterns of clean, Miroesque shapes trembling on wire stems and responding to the slightest breath of air like a spray of mimosa or a plume of feathers.

It is on these that his fame rests. That Calder

should become an international figure on the strength of such apparently simple decorative objects many will dispute. Admittedly his mobiles, as Sartre writes, 'suggest nothing. . . . They do not send one back to anything but to themselves: they are, that is all: they are absolutes. . . . For each one of them he establishes a general career of movement and then he abandons it; it is the time of day, the sunshine, the heat, the wind which will determine each individual dance.' But they are nothing like so simple as they seem. Calder's choice of form and pattern is brilliantly subtle and personal, comparable to Matisse's in his late paper cut-outs. But this is not all. Almost all Calder's work embodies or, if you like, etherealises some witty idea or observation. (For example, the stabile called *The Monocle* is really a logical development from the peering early wire figure called *The Hostess*.) He has the same sort of visual wit as Paul Klee, but without the metaphysical complexities. This, with his unerring sense of movement and interval, gives his art a seriousness far beyond the decorative.

## Cinema

### Disasters in the Sun

By ISABEL QUIGLY



**Mr. Hobbs Takes a Vacation.**  
(Carlton.)—**Girl on the Road.**  
(Cameo-Royal.)

HOLIDAY time is upon us, both literally and cinematically, and for the second time in a month we go holidaying with an American family.

Henry Koster's *Mr. Hobbs Takes a Vacation* ('U' certificate) is neater, funnier, much better scripted (by Nunnally Johnson), and less, you might say, wholemeal than Disney's *Bon Voyage*, but the two have enough in common to give us a fair idea of the idealised-typical American family out on a spree, with father kept firmly in his place by a sweet-looking steel-lined wife and a fairly dreadful brood of adolescent kids. In this case, Mr. Hobbs has grandchildren and sons-in-law to cope with as well, two of the adolescents being married and in the process of bringing up even dreadfuller broods; and, in place of Fred MacMurray, we have James Stewart of the gangling gait and dropped half-sentence, and the perfect but absolutely unnoticeable timing, who can say just about everything that ought to be said on the subject by cocking an eye at (say) a recalcitrant boiler, a Finnish cook giving notice, or the third carload of stone-filled suitcases waiting to be carried upstairs.

And because everything is seen through the eyes of mild, middle-aged exasperation, the result, though thoroughly pleasant, is not over-cosy; in fact the endearing frightfulness of families, particularly three generations in a huddle with conflicting methods of child-rearing and absolutely nothing in common but blood-relationship, has seldom come across with such charm, and such an outside sting in its tail. Domestic comedy, sharpened by a lowering sense of domestic disaster (involving not just Finns and boilers, but temperaments, fatherhood, the lot), is rare enough these days for me to cheer,