

# The Museum of Modern Art

## MoMA ANNOUNCES AN EXHIBITION CHARTING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ALEXANDER CALDER AND THE MUSEUM THROUGH WORKS AND ARCHIVAL MATERIALS IN ITS COLLECTION

**NEW YORK, February 11, 2020 [Updated February 10, 2021]**—The Museum of Modern Art announces *Alexander Calder: Modern from the Start*, a focused look at one of the most wellknown and beloved artists of the 20th century through the lens of his relationship with MoMA. On view from March 14, 2021, through August 7, 2021, *Alexander Calder: Modern from the Start* will include approximately 70 artworks paired with film, historical photographs, and other archival materials drawn from MoMA's collection and augmented by key loans from the Calder Foundation, New York. The exhibition is organized by Cara Manes, Associate Curator, with Zuna Maza and Makayla Bailey, Curatorial Fellows, Department of Painting and Sculpture.

The exhibition will take as a point of departure the idea that Alexander Calder (American, 1898–1976) assumed the unofficial role of the Museum's "house artist" during its formative years. His work was first exhibited at MoMA in 1930, months after the institution opened its doors, and he was among only a handful of artists selected by the Museum's founding director, Alfred H. Barr Jr., for inclusion in his two landmark 1936 exhibitions, *Cubism and Abstract Art* and *Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism*. To inaugurate the then-new Goodwin and Stone Building in 1939, Calder was commissioned to make a hanging mobile for its interior "Bauhaus Staircase"; the resulting *Lobster Trap and Fish Tail* still hangs there today.

Calder also worked closely with curator James Johnson Sweeney, in collaboration with artists Marcel Duchamp and Herbert Matter, on the checklist, catalogue, and installation of his major 1943 midcareer retrospective at MoMA, which introduced the artist, by then already known in Europe, to a broad American audience, through a survey of work made since his foundational years in the late 1920s living and working in Paris, at the heart of the international avantgarde. Throughout the 1940s and 1950s, Calder's sculptures were a mainstay of the Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Sculpture Garden, where they have continued to reappear in the intervening decades. Ten years before his death, in 1966, Calder made an impressive gift of 19 artworks to MoMA in order to round out the institution's holdings.

Aligned with the Museum's commitment to exploring all facets of its collection, *Modern from the Start* will take a deep dive into the work of Calder and provide a timely opportunity to revisit his legacy. Following a loose chronology, the exhibition will present examples from the full scope of Calder's work, from the earliest wire sculptures of the 1920s through the largescale mono- and polychrome stabiles and standing mobiles of his later years. Part of the exhibition will focus on the artist's work up until his midcareer retrospective at MoMA in 1943, including the wire sculpture *Josephine Baker* (III) (c. 1927); *A Universe* (1934), the first work 2 by Calder to enter the Museum's collection; painted sculptural reliefs, works on paper, and rarely seen motorized works, all from the 1930s; a group of

Constellation sculptures from the 1940s; and a selection of jewelry made by Calder for his family and friends.

Drawn from MoMA's archives, photographs and correspondence between the artist and various collaborators, such as Alfred H. Barr Jr. and James Johnson Sweeney, will illuminate Calder's close relationship with the Museum. The other section of the exhibition will trace the development of Calder's practice after his 1943 retrospective at MoMA and will include the hanging mobile *Snow Flurry, I* (1948) from MoMA's collection, along with a digitized film of Calder at work by Swiss artist Herbert Matter from 1950, and a selection of large-scale sculptures. *Modern from the Start* will be a celebration of Calder's work, while also presenting new research and scholarship through the gallery presentation and an accompanying catalogue.

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