

PRESS RELEASE

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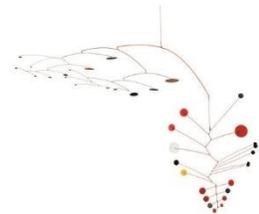
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SEATTLE ART MUSEUM LAUNCHES MULTI-YEAR INITIATIVE OF EXHIBITIONS AND OUTREACH PROGRAMS CENTERED AROUND ALEXANDER CALDER'S GROUNDBREAKING CREATIVITY

Calder: In Motion, The Shirley Family Collection,

Celebrates Major Gift of More Than 45 Seminal Works from Every Decade of the Artist's Career from the Collection of Jon and Kim Shirley



SEATTLE - The Seattle Art Museum (SAM) launched today its multi-year initiative of exhibition and outreach programs celebrating the life, legacy, and work of American artist Alexander Calder (1898-1976). Made possible by a transformative gift from the museum's longtime supporters Jon and Kim Shirley, the initiative debuts with the exhibition *Calder: In Motion, The Shirley Family Collection*. This is the first comprehensive public display of more than 45 seminal works that represent every decade of Calder's career, including iconic mobiles, stabiles, standing mobiles, wire sculptures, a constellation, works on paper, and a significant oil painting, as well as lithographs and related ephemera.

The exhibition offers an extensive look into the prolific output of Calder and is accompanied by robust programming made possible by the Shirleys' gift, including school visits and family programs serving Seattle's diverse public and driven by partnerships with community organizations. The programs kick off on Friday, November 10 with a free lecture by Dr. Elizabeth Hutton Turner, Professor of Art at University of Virginia and a renowned Calder scholar.

"It is incredibly meaningful to see this initiative, undertaken in partnership with Jon and Kim Shirley, come to fruition," said Kimerly Rorschach, Interim Illsley Ball Nordstrom Director and CEO of SAM. "Through their generous donation of works and financial support, we are able to create important scholarly exhibitions and robust public programs that reach so many of our audiences, making this innovative American artist's work accessible and relevant to all. We look forward to demonstrating the breadth of creativity in one artist's career,

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underscoring the vital importance of Calder to the field of modern art that continues through to artists of today.”

“Alexander Calder’s art is inspirational and approachable, and we are thrilled these iconic works will be available to the widest possible range of audiences to share and experience his transformational art,” said Jon and Kim Shirley, long-time trustees and philanthropic supporters. “*Calder: In Motion* is the realization of a lifetime’s passionate collecting and a heartfelt desire to share these magnificent works with the public in perpetuity. We look forward to sharing Calder’s work and genius with our fellow Seattleites and contributing to the vibrant cultural life of our city for many years to come.”

Exhibition Details

Calder: In Motion thematically highlights pieces from the 1920s to the 1970s, including superlative examples of his famous mobiles and stabiles. The show also includes examples of Calder’s works on paper and an oil painting, among other media, representing the expansiveness of his oeuvre. The exhibition explores Calder’s artistic experimentation, his engagement with unseen forces and dynamics, and his lasting contribution to modern art.

“The Shirley Family Gift provides SAM a unique opportunity to curate a concentrated view and in-depth study of one artist’s work,” said José Carlos Diaz, Susan Brotman Deputy Director for Art and exhibition curator. “The inaugural exhibition highlights the dynamic and ever-changing qualities of Calder’s art. He was a pioneer of wire sculpture, the creator of the mobile, and a true creative genius, gracefully employing industrial materials to redefine the notion of sculpture. We hope visitors will walk away with a greater appreciation for the artist and his work.”

To accentuate the artist’s exploration of height, scale, and movement, the exhibition is installed in the museum’s double-height galleries—a unique space for large-scale works, with several overlooks from the floor above. The exhibition design captures a sense of movement, with an S-shaped, curved wall that wraps around the 22-foot-tall sculpture *Red Curly Tail* (1970) and divides the galleries into a series of vignettes illuminating the exhibition’s themes and highlighting the elegance and lyricism of Calder’s work.

Visitors are welcomed into the exhibition by a pairing of the early wooden sculpture *Femme assise* (1929) with *Mountains* (1:5 intermediate maquette, 1976), a model for one of Calder’s final commissions before his death in 1976. This pairs one of his earliest works in the exhibition with one of his latest.

The second gallery includes several works that may surprise visitors familiar with the artist. These works include the oil painting *The Yellow Disc* (1958), a medium that Calder engaged throughout his career but isn’t nearly as well-known as his sculpture; *Untitled (Métaboles)*, 1969, a mobile that the artist created as part of a stage set for a ballet; and *Fish* (1942). The latter, a significant work from a rare series of mobiles created during and after World War II when metal was scarce, is made of wire framing and found materials, including porcelain fragments and bits of colored glass.

The central gallery traces Calder’s career, highlighting his achievement through works that range from the miniature to the monumental. The expansive *Toile d’araignée* (1965), an airy, monochromatic mobile, hovers over several works below, including the masterful standing mobile *Bougainvillier* (1947) and the large-scale *Red Curly Tail* (1970). Also on view is the hanging mobile *Gamma*

(1947), eleven miniature standing mobiles, and a limited edition of the book *Fables of Aesop: According to Sir Roger L'Estrange* (1931), for which Calder created original illustrations.

The final gallery considers the artist's legacy, with works that demonstrate Calder's accomplishments throughout his most productive decades and the impact his work has had on the development of modern art. This gallery will include *Untitled* (1936), *Little Yellow Panel* (ca. 1936), *Jonah and the Whale* (ca. 1940), *Untitled* (ca. 1942), *Constellation with Red Knife* (1943), *Yellow Stalk with Stone* (1953), *Untitled* (maquette, ca. 1960), and *Squarish* (1970). This gallery also serves as a bridge into the museum's modern and contemporary galleries, which feature permanent collection works by contemporaries of Calder and others influenced by his practice.

Visitors to the exhibition are also encouraged to visit SAM's Olympic Sculpture Park, where Calder's *The Eagle* (1971) is installed and complemented by the striking background of Elliott Bay. The six-ton, 38-foot-tall sculpture was donated to SAM on the occasion of the museum's 75th anniversary by Jon and his late wife Mary Shirley. An important example of Calder's monumental stabiles, *The Eagle* has become an emblem of the downtown Seattle waterfront and the ongoing revitalization of the city's vibrant downtown and waterfront.

Public Programs

Public programs and events that explore Calder's artistic practice are planned for both the Seattle Art Museum and the Olympic Sculpture Park throughout the run of the exhibition. These include talks, tours, performances, art-making workshops, and a family-friendly festival, in addition to numerous curator tours that are included with museum admission. Tours will be led by José Carlos Diaz; Catharina Manchanda, Jon and Mary Shirley Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art; and Carrie Dedon, Associate Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art. Lectures by Calder scholars and local artists will also be presented on various themes of the exhibition.

"The Shirleys' generous gift allows SAM to live its values of truly inclusive access," said Jason Porter, Kayla Skinner Deputy Director of Education and Public Engagement. "We are thrilled that their gift earmarked for public programs allows us to create multifaceted programming and to undertake important outreach to the city's students and surrounding communities. These exciting programs will serve a range of visitors, from our youngest learners to our long-standing patrons, and will allow everyone to appreciate the enduring impact of Calder's legacy."

SAM will devote many of its beloved Family Fun Workshops between December 2023 and May 2024 to exploring the creativity that animated Calder's artistic practice and inviting visitors to bend artistic rules as Calder did. Each workshop will begin by exploring a specific work by the artist. With the guidance of a teaching artist and plenty of art-making materials provided, children will create a masterpiece inspired by their time in the Seattle Art Museum galleries or at the Olympic Sculpture Park. Participants will learn to embrace Calder's use of humble and often "upcycled" materials to bring abstract expressions to life. In addition to the public editions, workshops will also be offered exclusively for the families of the SAM's community partners, including [Old Redmond Schoolhouse](#) and [Refugee Women's Alliance \(ReWA\)](#).

On January 12 and April 19, 2024, the museum will host SAM Open House, a recurring series of free events that invite partners and community members for

an after-hours evening of gallery tours, performances, live music, and drinks and snacks. Each edition responds to the themes of the exhibitions on view.

On April 20, 2024, SAM will host *Balancing Act: A Calder Family Festival*, featuring performances, art making, and in-gallery experiences, including movement and workshops by local dance artists to encourage intuitive appreciation of Calder's works and embrace the physicality of art through the lens of Calderian innovation. This family program will offer an opportunity for dynamic, multigenerational learning.

Pre K-12 Student Engagement and Inclusive Access

A core component of the Shirleys' programming support focuses on K-12 students and provides free admission and full or partial bus reimbursement for all qualifying Seattle Public Schools. Beginning on November 8, all guided school tours will visit *Calder: In Motion*. K-2 students will explore sculptural concepts such as space, form, movement, and balance. Students in grades 3-12 will broadly examine how art connects with mood and emotions, in alignment with the focus on social-emotional learning of Seattle Public Schools and other area school districts.

All students will have the opportunity to participate in an art-making workshop led by a professional teaching artist, creating their own sculptures inspired by the exhibition. Free in-person and virtual educator workshops will help support teachers explore Calder's work in their classrooms. SAM will also send teaching artists into preschools serving underserved youth, including refugee and immigrant children. Traveling to the Refugee Women's Alliance (ReWA) Early Learning Centers in South Seattle and Lake City, as well as Old Redmond Schoolhouse Early Learning Center, artists will help children foster connections through art making.

Interpretative Materials

Calder: In Motion introduces numerous perspectives within the galleries. An audio guide features Jon Shirley's reflections on his 35-year journey of collecting Calder's works as well as object spotlights by José Carlos Diaz; Alexander S. C. Rower, president of the Calder Foundation and grandson of the artist; and Kennedy Yanko, a painter-sculptor based in Bushwick, Brooklyn, who works in paint skin and metal to explore the limits of material gesture. A SAM Soundtracks playlist, available via three music platforms, features tracks from Calder's own collection of jazz, world, and avant-garde music. The exhibition is accompanied by a fully illustrated color catalogue, also titled *Calder: In Motion, The Shirley Family Collection*. It features contributions by José Carlos Diaz, Jon Shirley, Alexander S. C. Rower, and Elizabeth Hutton Turner.

The [exhibition microsite](#) is the online home for Calder at SAM and offers a robust portal for exploration. The site details the story of the collection's formation, includes information on each collection object, features a "surprise me" button that randomly selects an object to explore, and highlights the life and career of the artist. The microsite also shares all the ways to experience *Calder: In Motion*, with a spotlight on events and information about the exhibition catalogue, the smartphone audio guide, a playlist inspired by Calder's record collection, and long-form content about Calder on SAM Blog.

Looking Forward

Following *Calder: In Motion*, which runs through August 4, 2024, the second exhibition in the multi-year series will feature internationally renowned

contemporary artists who have been profoundly influenced by Calder. Later exhibitions will undertake in-depth reexaminations of specific historical periods in the artist's career.

Image credits: *Moons and Waves*, 1963, Alexander Calder, 1898-1976, gouache and ink on paper, 29 1/2 x 41 in., Promised gift of Jon and Mary Shirley, © 2023 Calder Foundation, New York / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York, photo: Nicholas Shirley. *Red Curly Tail*, 1970, Alexander Calder, 1898-1976, sheet metal, rod, bolts, and paint, 192 x 275 x 144 in., Promised gift of Jon and Mary Shirley, © 2023 Calder Foundation, New York / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York, photo: Nicholas Shirley. *Gamma*, 1947, Alexander Calder, 1898-1976, sheet metal, wire, and paint, 58 x 84 x 36 in., Promised gift of Jon and Mary Shirley, Photo courtesy of Calder Foundation, New York / Art Resource, New York, © 2023 Calder Foundation, New York / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

About Seattle Art Museum

As the leading visual art institution in the Pacific Northwest, SAM draws on its global collections, powerful exhibitions, and dynamic programs to provide unique educational resources benefiting the Seattle region, the Pacific Northwest, and beyond. SAM was founded in 1933 with a focus on Asian art. By the late 1980s the museum had outgrown its original home, and in 1991 a new 155,000-square-foot downtown building, designed by Venturi, Scott Brown & Associates, opened to the public. The 1933 building was renovated and rededicated as the Asian Art Museum in 1994, and it reopened on February 8, 2020, following an extensive renovation and expansion. SAM's desire to further serve its community was realized in 2007 with the opening of two stunning new facilities: the nine-acre Olympic Sculpture Park (designed by Weiss/Manfredi Architects)—a “museum without walls,” free and open to all—and the Allied Works Architecture designed 118,000-square-foot expansion of its main, downtown location, including 232,000 square feet of additional space built for future expansion. The Olympic Sculpture Park and SAM's downtown expansion celebrated their tenth anniversary in 2017.

From a strong foundation of Asian art to noteworthy collections of African and Oceanic art, Northwest Coast Native American art, European and American art, and modern and contemporary art, the strength of SAM's collection of approximately 25,000 objects lies in its diversity of media, cultures, and time period.