

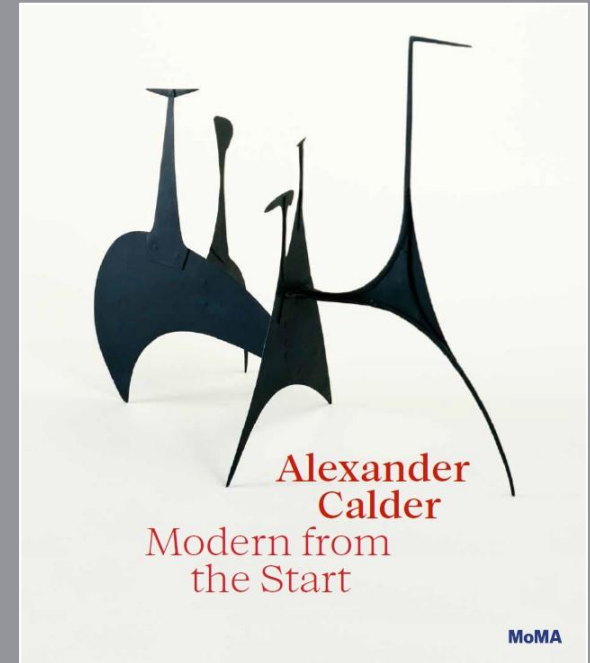
Alexander Calder

Modern from the Start

Cara Manes; with reprinted texts by Alexander Calder

Alexander Calder: Modern from the Start is a focused look at one of the most well-known and beloved artists of the 20th century through the lens of his relationship with MoMA

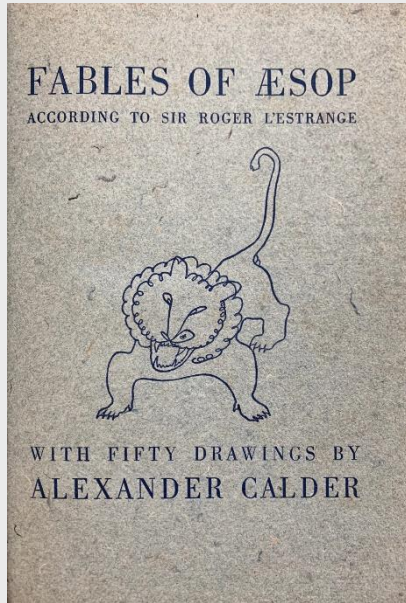
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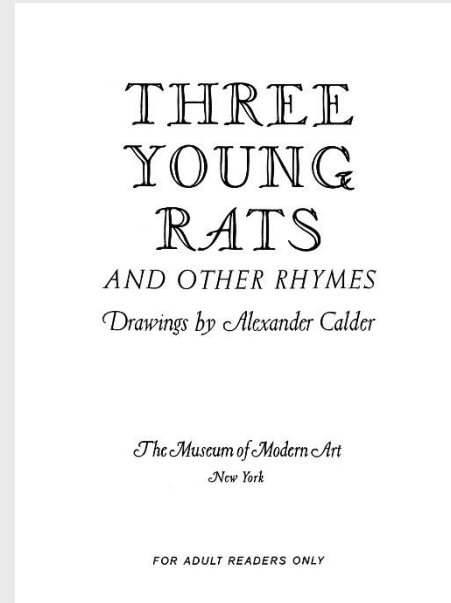
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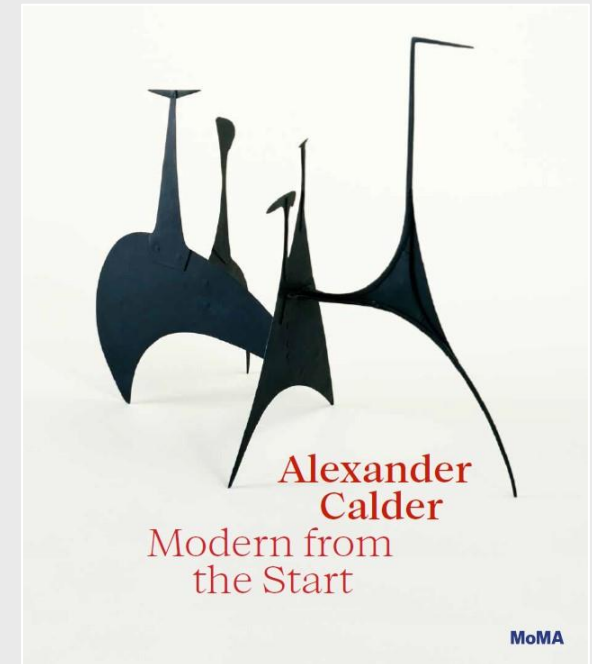
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Key Sales Points

- This is the first in-depth exploration of the relationship between Alexander Calder and The Museum of Modern Art
- Extensive research into the archives at MoMA and the Calder Foundation sheds new light on the subject
- Accompanies the exhibition at The Museum of Modern Art, New York from 7th March 2021 to 8th August 2021



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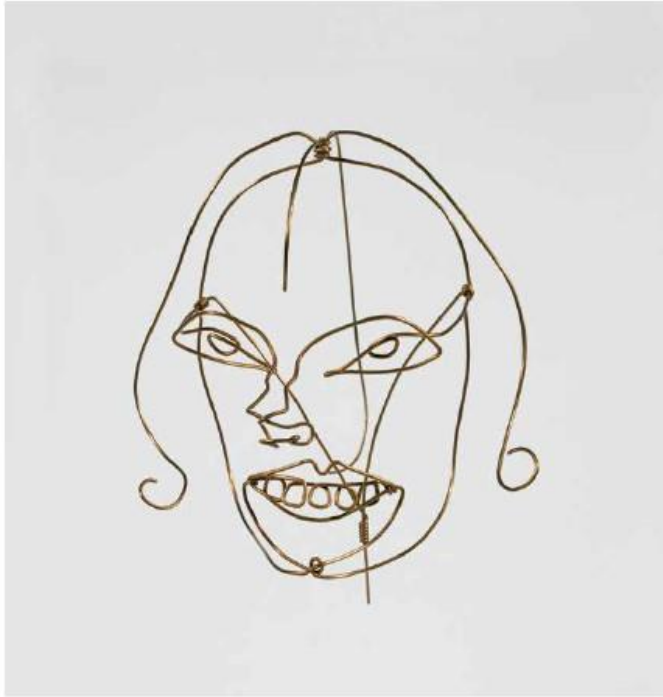


Caption here with a date. Caption here.

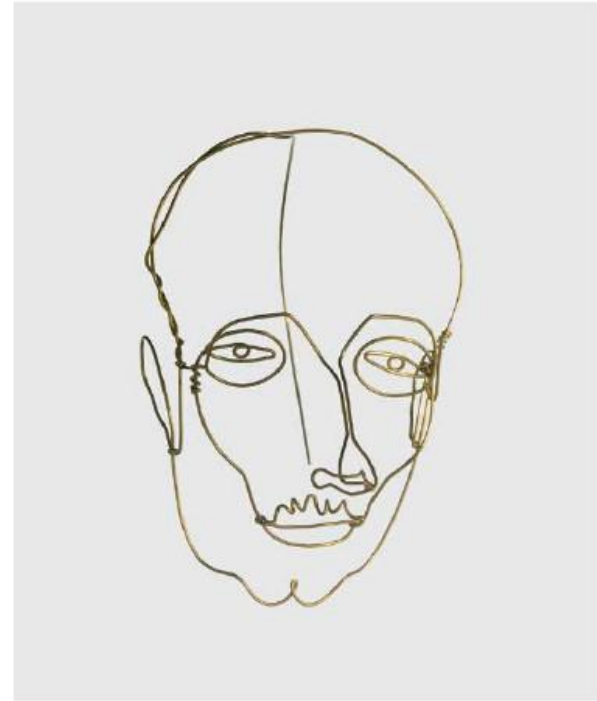
On December 2, 1930, The Museum of Modern Art, just over a year old, opened its ninth exhibition, *Painting and Sculpture by Living Americans*. Organized by MoMA's founding director, Alfred H. Barr Jr., the exhibition debuted the work of thirty painters and seven sculptors, several of whom had "hitherto been practically unrecognized in New York." Selected by Barr; Irene Abbott, the Museum's associate director; and a jury of four Museum trustees, the works in the show ranged stylistically from Ashcan realism to European-inflected modernism, but they were all largely figurative—painted landscapes, figures, and still lifes, and sculptures carved in wood or cast in bronze.¹ Although by this point Alexander Calder was well known for figurative bent-wire portraits, Barr chose to represent his recent work with four wood sculptures of animals and people, all made after 1928: *Man*, *Acrobats*, *Stooping Girl*, and *Cow* (fig. 1); the latter work, he later reported in a letter to the artist, was "one of the most popular pieces in the exhibition."² Carved from a single piece of wood, the cow's sweet, docile face is obviously naturalistic, but its body is less so, intertwined as it is with its source material so as to appear not to have fully emerged from it. Barr had seen Calder's figurative wood and wire works at New York's Weyhe Gallery the previous winter, where critics had deemed them "amusing" and full of

"pathos," among other favorable—if somewhat trite—characterizations.³ Writing to *Cow*'s owner to secure it for loan, Barr urged, "I feel that Calder has been underestimated and frequently dismissed as merely clever. I think such works as the 'Cow' if seriously exhibited would do much to revise popular opinion of his work which has, I think, considerable quality."⁴

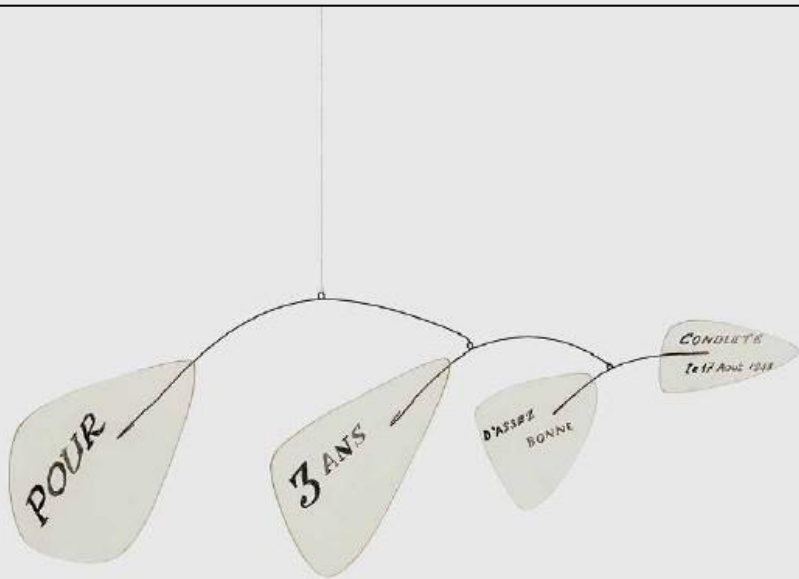
At the time of the show's opening, Calder, at thirty-two years old, was one of the youngest "Living Americans" included, but his life and work experience ran deep and wide. He had grown up in various cities throughout the United States with his parents, both artists, who often relocated the family in order to take various public commissions. He had studied engineering and, following the advice of a schoolmate, planned to become an executive; worked a number of jobs; taken courses at the Art Students League, in New York; and, after a stint as an illustrator for the *National Police Gazette*, taken off for Paris. By the time of the MoMA show, in late 1930, Calder had been living and working in France for the better part of four years.⁵ He had become a part of the city's cultural avant-garde, befriending artists, periodically exhibiting his sculptures on both sides of the Atlantic, and performing his *Cirque Calder*, a complex multiact artwork in which he manipulated dozens of handmade sculptures of the actors and architecture of a miniature circus. The



Marion Greenwood, 1928
Brass wire, 12 3/4 • 11 3/4 • 11 3/4 in. (31.9 • 28.1 • 28.8 cm)
The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Gift of the artist



Portrait of a Man, c. 1928
Brass wire, 12 3/4 • 8 3/4 • 13 1/2 in. (32.5 • 22.2 • 34.2 cm)
The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Gift of the artist



For 5 Years of Fairly Good Behavior (*Pour 5 ans d'assez bonne conduite*), 1941-43
 Flexiglas, wire, and paint, 10 1/4 in. (25.7 cm) high • 29 in. (73.5 cm) diam.
 The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Kay Sage Tanguy Bequest



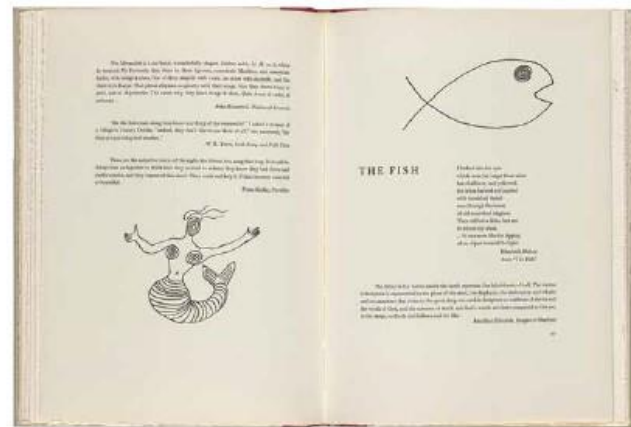
Untitled, 1939
 Sheet aluminum, steel wire, and paint,
 14 1/8 • 9 • 10 3/4 in. (37.1 • 22.8 • 27.5 cm)
 The Museum of Modern Art, New York.
 Kay Sage Tanguy Bequest



Untitled, 1946
 Lithograph, comp.: 14 7/8 x 11 3/4 in. (37.6 x 28.6 cm);
 sheet: 19 3/4 x 15 3/4 in. (49 x 39.9 cm)
 Publisher: Buchholz Gallery, New York
 Printer: Mourlot, Paris. Edition: 25
 The Museum of Modern Art, New York.
 Gift of the artist



Untitled, 1941
 Gouache and ink on paper, 22 1/2 x 30 3/4 in. (56.3 x 78.2 cm)
 The Museum of Modern Art, New York.
 James Thrall Soby Bequest



A *Bestiary*, compiled by Richard Wilbur, 1955
 illustrated book with fifty-six letterpress plates,
 page (each): 12 1/4 × 9 1/4 in. (31.8 × 23.5 cm);
 overall (closed): 12 1/4 × 9 1/4 × 1/4 in. (32.6 × 23.8 × 1.7 cm)

Publisher: Pantheon Books, New York. Printer:
 The Spiral Press, New York. Edition: 825
 The Museum of Modern Art, New York.
 The Louis K. Stern Collection



Sandy's Butterfly. 1964
Steel, sheet steel, iron rods, and paint,
12 ft. 8 in. × 9 ft. 2 in. × 8 ft. 7 in. (386 × 279 × 261 cm)
The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Gift of the artist