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Contact:

Sandra Farish Sloan, 415.357.4174, ssloan@sfmoma.org
Libby Garrison, 415.357.4177, lgarrison@sfmoma.org
Robyn Wise, 415.357.4172, rwise@sfmoma.org

SFMOMA PRESENTS THE SURREAL CALDER

From March 3 through May 21, 2006, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA) will present the exhibition *The Surreal Calder*. Organized by Mark Rosenthal, adjunct curator of twentieth-century art at The Menil Collection in Houston, Texas, the exhibition reinserts the work of Alexander Calder (1898–1976) into the context of Surrealism. The San Francisco presentation is organized by SFMOMA Curator of Painting and Sculpture Janet Bishop.

Calder's sculptures have become widely recognized as masterpieces of twentieth-century Modernism. His innovative approach to three-dimensional art resulted in the proliferation of several new sculptural forms, including wire sculpture, mobiles and stabiles. Calder is a ubiquitous presence in the story of modern art, yet he is rarely seen or remembered in the context from which he initially emerged as an artist.

The exhibition presents more than forty works by Calder, including his first mechanized sculpture, *Goldfish Bowl* (1929) and *Tightrope* (1936), a large sculpture that recalls his ongoing fascination with the circus. The exhibition also includes a selection of ten works by Calder's surrealist peers, including Max Ernst, René Magritte, Joan Miró, and Yves Tanguy. Calder's parentage includes Marcel Duchamp, who helped conceive the mobile; Piet Mondrian, who introduced pure abstraction; and Miró, who communicated the central ideas of Surrealism. Calder went on to play a major role in Surrealism during its formative years, participating in the defining 1936 *Exposition surréaliste d'objets* in Paris.

The Surreal Calder showcases the strong surrealist vein in the artist's combinations of found materials; renowned works such as *Gibraltar* (1936) and *Wooden Bottle with Hairs* (1943) reveal his affinity with the sculpture of Miró and Jean Arp. In the spirit of the surrealist quest for new forms, Calder concentrated on recreating cosmic elements in his sculptures, specifically depictions of celestial space and constellations, a theme with seemingly endless variations in his work.



Alexander Calder, *Un effet du japonais*, 1941; Courtesy Calder Foundation, New York; © 2005 Estate of Alexander Calder/ADAGP, Paris/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

“Surrealist practice liberated him,” writes Mark Rosenthal in the exhibition catalogue. “Calder was drawn to the fantastic, as were the Surrealists...His interests converged with surrealist themes of wit, exotic creatures, and extravagant displays of nature.”

Calder was born July 22, 1898, near Philadelphia, into a family of artists. His father and grandfather were noted sculptors and his mother had been a painter. Calder earned a mechanical engineering degree at Stevens Institute of Technology in New Jersey, where one of the subjects he studied was applied kinetics, dealing with the effects of force on free-moving bodies. He attended the Art Students League in New York before moving to Paris in 1926, where he studied at the Académie de la Grande Chaumière. Thereafter, Calder divided his time between France and the U.S. He died in New York on November 11, 1976.

The exhibition is accompanied by a fully illustrated, 156-page, hardcover color catalogue, with an essay by Mark Rosenthal, an illustrated chronology by Alexander S. C. Rower, and a suite of rarely published Herbert Matter photographs of the artist and his work.

The Surreal Calder is organized by The Menil Collection, Houston, Texas, and is generously supported in part by The Eleanor and Frank Freed Foundation, Anita and Mike Stude, an anonymous donor in honor of Elsie Cozens, Mary and Roy Cullen, and Mrs. Nancy C. Allen. Additional support is provided by The Cullen Foundation, Faye Sarofim & Co., George and Mary Josephine Hamman Foundation, Houston Endowment Inc., The Wortham Foundation, and the City of Houston. The San Francisco presentation is supported by the Koret Foundation Funds, The Bernard Osher Foundation, the Estate of Ann Hall, and Daniel G. Volkmann Jr.

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Museum hours: Open daily (except Wednesdays): 11 a.m. to 5:45 p.m.; open late Thursdays, until 8:45 p.m. Summer hours (Memorial Day to Labor Day): Open at 10 a.m. Closed Wednesdays and the following public holidays: New Year’s Day, Fourth of July, Thanksgiving, Christmas.

Koret Visitor Education Center: Open daily (except Wednesdays): 11 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.; open late Thursdays, until 8:30 p.m. Summer hours: Open at 10 a.m.

Admission prices: Adults \$12.50; seniors \$8; students \$7. SFMOMA members and children 12 and under are admitted free. Thursday evenings after 6 p.m. admission is half-price. The first Tuesday of each month admission is free.

SFMOMA is easily accessible by Muni, BART, Golden Gate Transit, SamTrans, and Caltrain. Hourly, daily, and monthly parking is available at the SFMOMA Garage at 147 Minna Street. For parking information, call 415.348.0971.

Visit our Web site at www.sfmoma.org or call 415.357.4000 for more information.

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