

Calder Re~Wired Teacher's Guide

Synopsis of Program

Novel costuming and seamless choreography, enlivened by compelling musical selections translate the energy behind some of Calder's most famous works. Paintings, sculptures, stabiles and mobiles are brought to life using mime, mask, puppetry, narration and music. The influences of Calder's work are explored in a light hearted array of clever stories and vignettes based loosely on his true life experiences.

Goals

- To introduce students to the life and times of a 20th Century American artist; Alexander Calder.
- To illustrate how an actor becomes many different characters through the use of mask, movement and live theater.
- To show one interpretation of how an artist may be inspired through out a life time; and how those life experiences translate into an expression of one's own thoughts and views by way of the individual talents we each posses.
- To introduce basic art themed vocabulary associated with Calder's work.

Calder Re~Wired meets the following learning standards for the arts: New York State Art Curriculum Standards #1, #3 and #4 National Art Curriculum Standards #4, #5, and #6.

National Standard 5: Reflecting upon and assessing the characteristics and merits of the art work. The students will respond critically to a variety of artworks by Sandy Calder. Calder's life experiences are detailed in terms school children can plainly understand and the connections are made clear in the presentation of such works. They will be able to connect the development of Calder's individual artworks with his life experiences through discussions and further reading and activities suggested below.

National Standard 4: Understanding the visual arts in relation to history and cultures. The students will develop an understanding of the personal and cultural forces that shaped Calder's artistic communication through his artworks. The art works of Calder were born out of a number of the influences of his family. His father, mother and grandfather were all artists in their own right. Additionally, his training in mechanical engineering and his travels to other parts of the world would introduce him to foreign cultures. In 1930 he went to Paris and was influenced by the art of Mondrian and Miró. In 1932 he exhibited his first brightly colored constellations, called mobiles, consisting of painted cut-out shapes connected by wires and set in motion by wind currents. In turn, his art shaped the world's view of art and culture; of past and present societies, with his inventions of new artistic styles; namely mobile, or "kinetic" art.

National Standard 6: (residencies) Making connections between visual arts and other disciplines. Calder Re~Wired makes use of the visual art of a great modern artist, but also shares through dance, puppetry, mime and music. Post performance workshops include mime and mask techniques, character development, and performance. Students will have the opportunity to participate in some performance aspects of this presentation through the residence program. Additionally, cross curriculum activities included below help meet this standard.

How To Prepare for the Program

A FEW WEEKS PRIOR TO THE PERFORMANCE:

1. Have students read up on the life and work of Sandy Calder and come up with one or two facts about his life. See suggested reading references. What was he famous for inventing?
2. Introduce vocabulary words as listed below.
3. Ask students to think of ways in which an artists might get ideas for what to paint or sculpt. **This is the focus of our performance.
4. Familiarize students with copies of the art works we have provided in the following pages of this guide.

ON THE DAY OF THE PERFORMANCE:

1. Students will view posters of Calder's works during the show. They will be displayed in order of the performance, from left to right. Students may relate the posters to the performance and to Calder's narration.

Vocabulary List. (Review before program)

Sculpture- A Three Dimensional work of art.

Kinetic- Having the energy of movement

Stabile- Giant 3-D steel sculptures that did not move.
Mobile- A system of balanced objects which hang from a central point

Reading Suggestions

Excellent [Stone, Tanya Lee, *Sandy's Circus*. Viking Press, Penguin Group, 2008.](#)
[The Life and Work of Alexander Calder](#). Series book, available at [UnitedNow.com](#)
Balliett, Blue, [The Calder Game](#). Scholastic Press, 2008.

Mini Bio

Alexander Calder was born in Philadelphia (United States) in 1898. He followed studies in mechanical engineering, before a teaching at the Art Students League of New York (1923-1925). He stayed in Paris (1926-1927) and went to the Academy de la Grande Chaumière. In 1926, he made small animals and other articulated characters in wire and he animated them by staging miniatures in a circus spectacle ("The circus of Calder"). His first personal exhibition was organized in 1928 (New York). In 1931, "Sandy" Calder exhibited with the group Abstraction-Creation. The artist created abstract objects moved by the air or by engines which make them turn endlessly, sticking on frail stalks many black or colored metal sheets which move "poetically". Marcel Duchamp baptized them "mobiles". Calder invented steel sculptures anchored on the ground, usually black and red sculptures to which Jean Arp gave the name of "stables". These abstract forms evoked an animal and plant kingdom. With time going on, "mobiles" and "stables" took more impressive dimensions. Calder used primary colors and is useful of engineering techniques for their realization. Alexander Calder died in New York in 1976.

Cross Curricular Activities

Math: Make mobiles using wire hangers, string, clothespins, washers, nuts, paper clips, straws, index cards. Discuss the concept of equal balance and free motion in a mobile. For higher grades, have students draw diagrams first and write equations for a perfectly balanced mobile. Then construct the mobile from their diagram and equations. Explore concepts of balance, counter-balance and stability. Experiment by adding and subtracting objects. Title the mobile and hang from the ceiling.

Art: Wire Sculptures. Get more ideas from [Twisteez.com](#). Discussion points: Analyze works by answering questions like, "What does this remind you of?" "How does it compare to _____?" "How does it make you feel?" "What do you think it represents?" "How do you think your impression would change if it were a different color?"

Writing: (Elementary) Make an anagram poem, or a picture book based on the show. (Middle) Write a biography of Calder and/or a critique of the program. (Middle) Create a biographical pamphlet on Calder. Include the following elements: When/Where was he born? What was he most famous for? What style of art did he invent? What is the most interesting thing about him? Where can someone go to find out more about Calder? Include pictures and samples of installations that may be in a nearby city or museum.

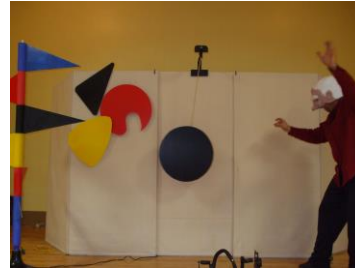
Reading: Research and answer biographical questions from the suggested books or from internet research.

Social Studies: Research the era in which Calder grew up. He was born in 1898. Complete one of the three activities: 1. List five methods of communication used today. Tell how many of those existed 100 years ago. 2. Interview a family member who was living in the 1930-1940's. Tell what life was like then. School, games, work. Include pictures if possible. 3. Draw an illustration of what the U.S. flag looked like in 1898. Explain what changes have been made to the flag since then, and why.

Science: Explore concepts of balance, counter-balance and stability. Many of Calder's sculptures were inspired by the night sky. Choose a constellation and create a mobile model of it.

Music: Excerpts from the following musical selections ~ Beethoven's 9th Symphony, 2nd Movement Molto Vivace; Stravinsky Suite #2 1921; Missorsky Pictures at an Exhibition, March; Puffin Billy (Cpt. Kangaroo); Blow Ye Winds by N.E. Music Collection; Beethoven Moonlight Sonata; Baroque & Blue, Rampal; Slippery Hank by Paragon Orchestra; Charles Ives March II; Invictus by Karl King; LeRoy Anderson, Penny Whistle; and too many more to list!

Universe



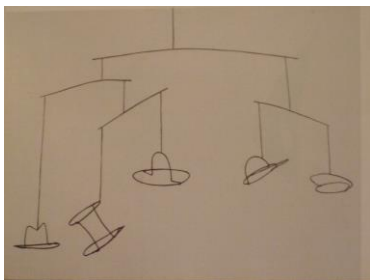
Sword Swallower



Man On Stilts



Mobile With Hats, 1951



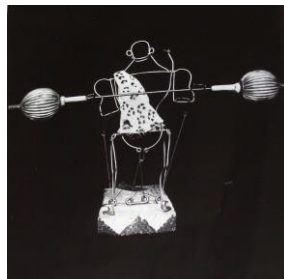
Lion Tamer with Lion, Circus



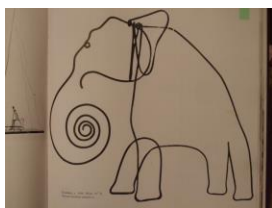
Black Sun White Moon, 1968



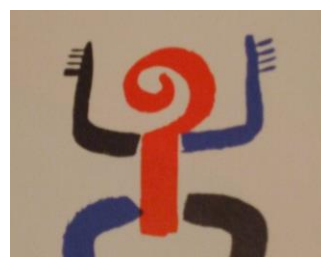
Weightlifter (wire circus)



Elephant c 1928



Book Cover 1963



Self Portrait 1925

