

Updated Release: June 7, 2005

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART'S CALDER MOBILE BACK ON VIEW FOLLOWING CONSERVATION TREATMENT



Alexander Calder

Untitled, 1976

aluminum and steel

910.3 x 2315.5 cm (358 1/2 x 912 in.)

National Gallery of Art, Washington, Gift of the Collectors Committee

Photo by Lee Ewing © 2005 National Gallery of Art, Washington

Washington, DC—The 76-foot-long mobile designed by Alexander Calder for the central court of the East Building of the National Gallery of Art is back on view after undergoing conservation treatment. Calder's mobile was reinstalled on June 7 by National Gallery staff and engineers, including artist-engineer Paul Matisse (grandson of Henri Matisse).

Calder (1898-1976) created his first "mobiles" in the early 1930s. Using an ingenious system of weights and counterbalances, he eventually designed constructions that moved freely when suspended, powered only by slight air currents. The work he created for the East Building, *Untitled* (1976), is a prime example of this kind of construction. In 1972, when the East Building of the National Gallery was under construction, the artist was asked to create a large mobile that would complement the monumental atrium of the building.

Originally planned in steel, the sculpture would have been too heavy when enlarged to function as the artist intended. At Calder's request, Paul Matisse transformed the design into an aluminum construction that retained the look and dynamism of the steel construction with a more employable weight. The sculpture was installed on November 18, 1977, one year after Calder died; it was his last major work of art. The monumental mobile is a feat of engineering, being lightweight, extremely strong, and capable of being moved by air currents. Weighing 920 pounds, it consists of thirteen panels and thirteen arms constructed of aluminum honeycomb and aluminum and steel bars.

In 1988, the mobile was removed from exhibition for conservation treatment for the first time. Since that refurbishment more than 15 years ago, the wearing of the mobile's metal parts has slowly impeded its free rotation. The mobile was disassembled on April 19, 2004 in order to repair worn metal surfaces and clean and repaint its multicolored parts. The metal parts have now been repaired by welding and the addition of a hard facing coating of tungsten carbide with cobalt. As an additional preventive measure, steel liners have been fabricated and attached to a few of the contact points that had the most wear. Finally, the entire sculpture was repainted using the original color and paint formulation specified by Paul Matisse and the Calder Foundation. When it returns to its prominent perch in the East Building atrium, it will move and look once again as Calder had envisioned it.

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General Information

The National Gallery of Art and its Sculpture Garden are at all times free to the public. They are located on the National Mall between 3rd and 9th Streets along Constitution Avenue NW and are open Monday through Saturday from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and Sunday from 11:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. The Gallery is closed on December 25 and January 1. With the exception of the atrium and library, the galleries in the East Building will be closing gradually beginning in July 2013 and will remain closed for approximately three years for Master Facilities Plan and renovations. For specific updates on gallery closings, visit www.nga.gov/renovation (<http://www.nga.gov/renovation>) .

For information call (202) 737-4215 or the Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD) at (202) 842-6176, or visit the Gallery's website at www.nga.gov. Follow the Gallery on [Facebook](http://www.facebook.com/NationalGalleryofArt) at www.facebook.com/NationalGalleryofArt and on [Twitter](http://twitter.com/ngadc) at twitter.com/ngadc.

Visitors will be asked to present all carried items for inspection upon entering. Checkrooms are free of charge and located at each entrance. Luggage and other oversized bags must be presented at the 4th Street entrances to the East or West Building to permit x-ray screening and must be deposited in the checkrooms at those entrances. For the safety of visitors and the works of art, nothing may be carried into the Gallery on a visitor's back. Any bag or other items that cannot be carried reasonably and safely in some other manner must be left in the checkrooms. Items larger than 17 by 26 inches cannot be accepted by the Gallery or its checkrooms.

For additional press information please call or send inquiries to:

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