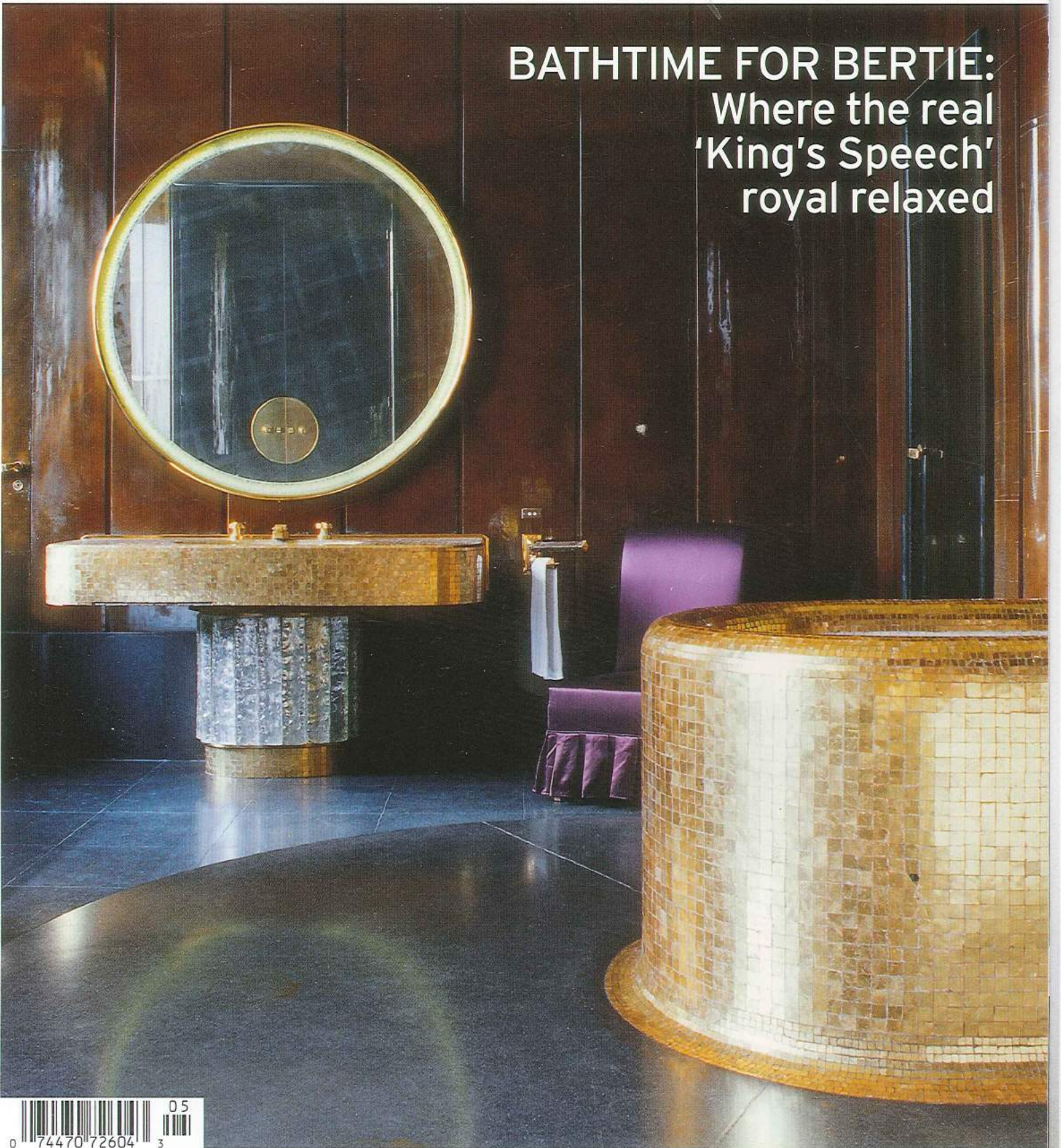


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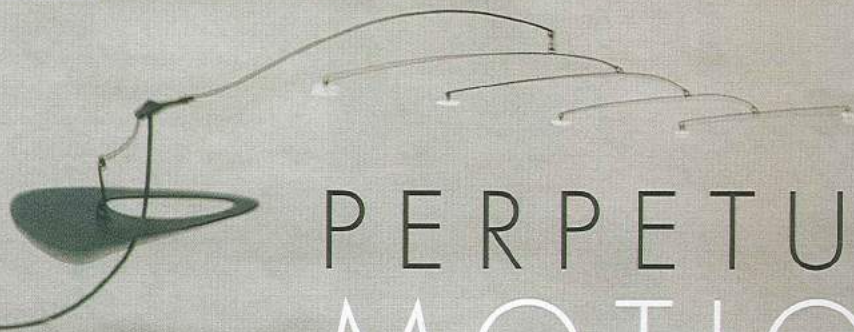
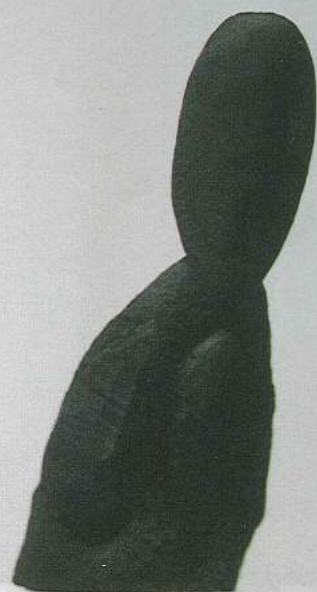


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Works by Calder's friends and contemporaries are featured throughout the Calder Foundation's galleries in New York. On the wall is Fernand Léger's *The Scaffolding* (1919). All the other artworks are by Calder (clockwise from foreground): *Little Parasite* (1947), *Black Mobile with Hole* (1954), *Devil Fish* (1937), *Myrtle Burl* (1941), and *Untitled* (c1933), which is carved out of a single large piece of ebony



PERPETUAL MOTION

After a nomadic childhood and restless youth, Alexander Calder found a spiritual home among the avant-garde artists of Paris. Constantly on the move, he created a huge body of work – including his celebrated kinetic sculptures – that spans nearly seven decades of the 20th century. These days, it's the turn of the art itself to travel, first passing through New York's Calder Foundation, where it is catalogued, studied and then lent to exhibitions round the world, as Kevin Guyer reports. Photography: Maria Robledo



IN A NONDESCRIBT corner of New York's Chelsea neighbourhood, far from the art-gallery district, tucked away on the top floor of one of those big, muscular, turn-of-the-20th-century buildings that remind us that New York was once a thriving manufacturing centre, is a hidden treasure. A 1,000sqm minimalist loft space, flooded with natural light, it is dedicated to the work of one of the 20th century's most important and innovative artists, Alexander 'Sandy' Calder.

'Forget everything you thought you knew about my grandfather's work,' says Alexander 'Sandy' Rower, the chairman and president of the Calder Foundation, who set up the organisation in 1987.

Calder worked in many different media, but he is best known for the brightly coloured perpetual-motion sculptures that Marcel Duchamp called 'mobiles'. They can be found in many Modern-art collections and museums, but there is also a vast body of lesser-known works that have made a significant contribution to the development of 20th-century art.

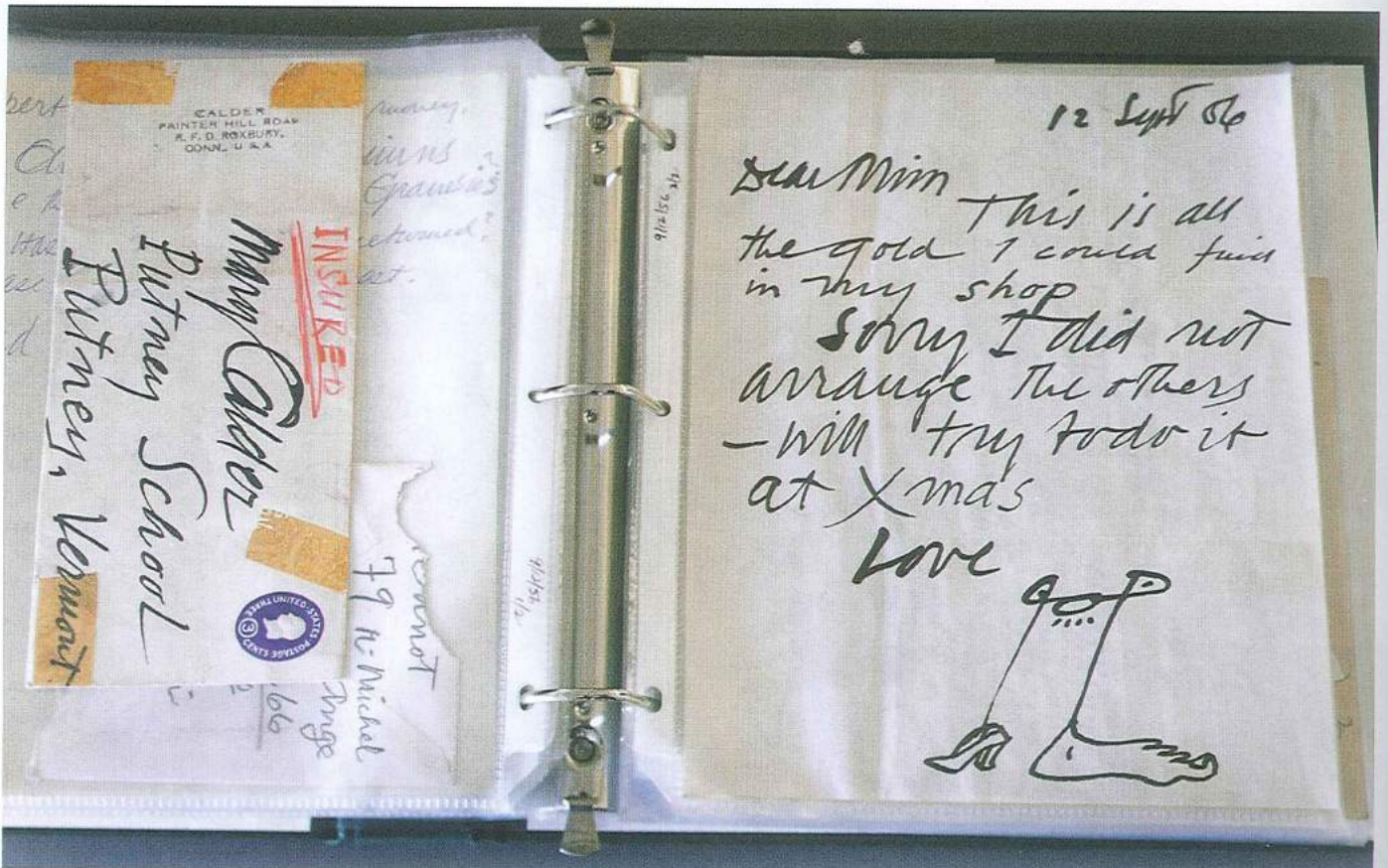
'When I started the foundation,' says Rower, 'I was frustrated that there wasn't a lot of scholarship going on around my grandfather's work. His intellect was being minimised; people were only focusing on Calder and animals, Calder and colour, Calder and motion – all the basic, most obvious Calder themes.' So the foundation collaborates on exhibitions and helps plan them. Its other main objectives are the cataloguing of thousands of the artist's works, which span nearly seven decades; archiving his letters and documents; and facilitating the scholarly study of his legacy. The foundation houses thousands of pieces of work but owns very few of them; most belong to collectors and institutions that lend them to Rower so they can be studied or lent to exhibitions.

Calder was born in 1898 in Lawnton, Pennsylvania, to a family of artists. His Scottish immigrant grandfather, Alexander Milne Calder, and his father, Alexander Stirling Calder, were both successful sculptors. Working in the Beaux Arts tradition, they created monumental sculptural works to adorn many of Philadelphia's municipal buildings. His mother, Nanette Lederer Calder, was a professional portrait painter. Because of his father's many public art commissions, the family was constantly moving round the United States. It was a nomadic existence – perpetual motion of a different sort.

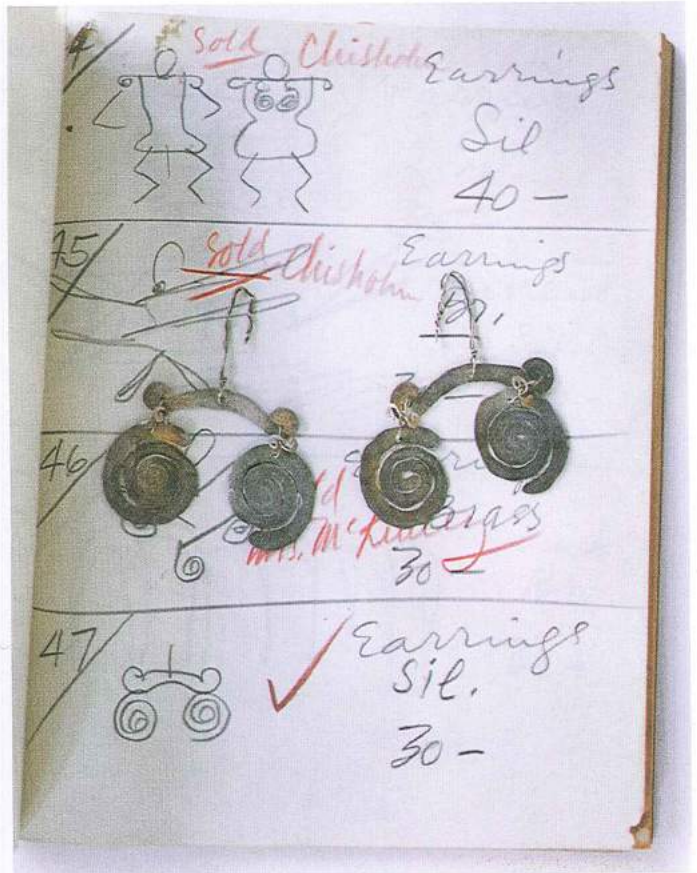
In her moving memoir, *Three Alexander Calder's*, the artist's older sister, Margaret 'Peggy' Hayes, wrote about their temporary homes: 'Our parents bought only what was necessary, improvising the rest.' Perhaps this spirit of invention had a lifelong influence on the young artist; he would make Christmas gifts for his parents of small, playful sculptures, often with moving parts.

After high school, he attended the Stevens Institute of Technology in New Jersey. On graduation in 1919, he spent a few years travelling round the USA, working at various odd jobs, including engineering and crewing on a steamship. In 1923, he was living with his sister in rural Washington state, working as a timekeeper at a logging camp. 'Sandy was still not satisfied that he had found his life's work,' Peggy remembers. 'Mother came to visit, bringing paints he had requested; then

Top: a c1924 chair by Marcel Breuer joins Calder's works, which include the free-standing sculpture *Big Bird* (left) from 1937. Above: in the foreground hangs Calder's mobile *Cône d'Ebène* (1933). On the wall is Joan Miró's *Femmes et Oiseau dans la Nuit* (1947). Opposite: the silhouettes of sculptures in the central gallery – illuminated by skylights rediscovered during the refit – look like drawings in space. The painting, *Untitled* (1933), is also by Miró



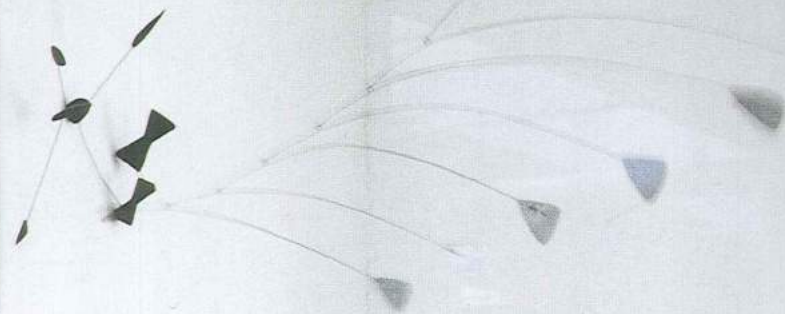
Top left: Calder's jewellery designs often included Celtic and Bronze Age spiral motifs – this brass necklace dates from 1938. Top right: Calder Foundation chairman Sandy Rower's office. On the George Nakashima table is a standing mobile by Calder from 1947. Directly behind is a kinetic wire piece entitled *Goldfish Bowl*, from 1929 – Calder made it as a Christmas present for his mother. Above: an illustrated letter and its envelope from Calder to his daughter Mary

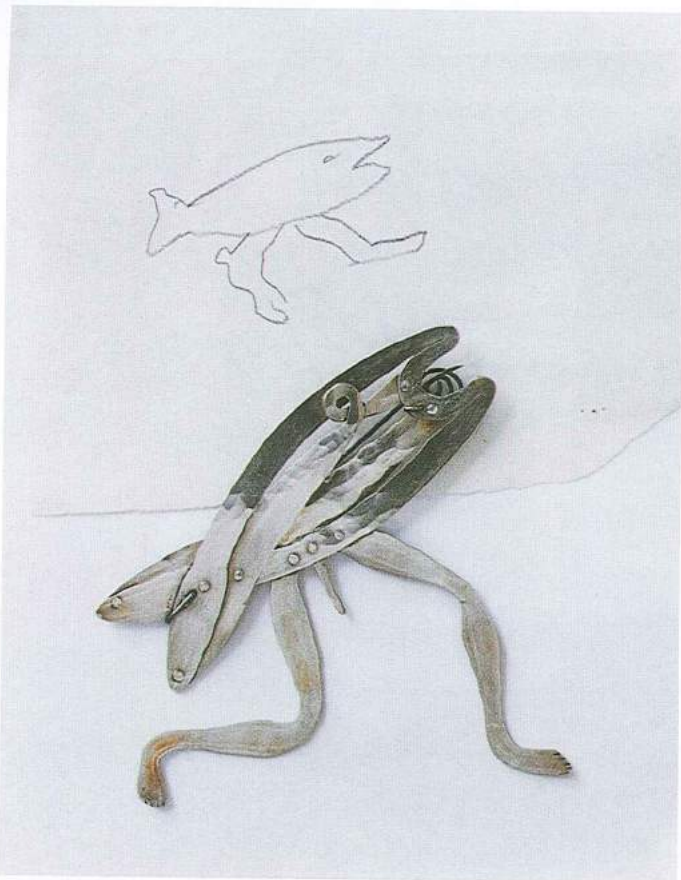
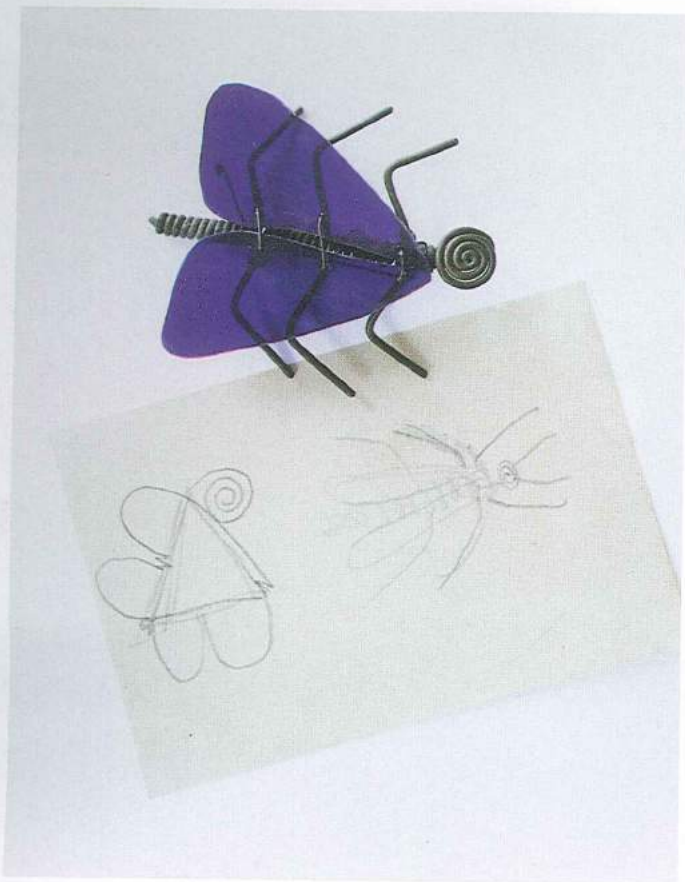


Top left: in the 185sq m archive area, Calder's *La Touraine* (1965), hangs above a Jean Nouvel 'Less' table and Eames Aluminum Group 'Management' chairs. Top right: earrings made by Calder in 1940 lie on a page from the artist's own inventory. Above left: Calder created jewellery for friends, family and for sale to the general public. On the left is a necklace from 1945 entitled *Caged Crochery*. Above right: material from the foundation's extensive archives



Above: in the conference room, Calder's *La Danseuse* stands next to accompanying drawings made in 1944. An untitled mobile from 1941 hangs overhead. Opposite: on the conference-room wall is Fernand Léger's *Nature Morte (Le Coquillage)*, 1927. The table is from the Saarinen 'Tulip' series – mid-20th-century classics act as a bridge between Calder's time and the present and were chosen because Calder 'knew so many designers', explains Sandy Rower





one day when they were sketching together, he blurted out: "The truth is, Mother, I want to paint."

Soon after this, Calder moved to New York and enrolled in the legendary Art Students League. This was followed in 1926 by a move to Paris, where he created one of his most beloved works, the *Cirque Calder*. He also began a series of revolutionary wire portrait-sculptures, which replaced mass with void; he used wire to 'draw' in mid-air, celebrating the personalities of the day, including Josephine Baker, Jimmy Durante and Kiki de Montparnasse. Calder also became friends with artists of the French avant-garde – Marcel Duchamp, Joan Miró, Jean Arp, Fernand Léger and Piet Mondrian – and it was at this time that he married Louisa James, a grandniece of Henry James.

Alexander and Louisa spent much of their lives between Paris, New York and Roxbury, Connecticut, where in 1933 they bought an old farmhouse – its icehouse was converted into a studio. They had two daughters, Sandra and Mary, the latter being Sandy Rower's mother. 'The studio is still full of Calder's materials and tools and looks exactly as it did the day he died,' says Rower. The family still use the compound as a residence, but Sandy hints that it might one day be opened to the public.

There is currently no public access to the foundation's New York offices either – though conversion of the building's penthouse, due for completion this summer, will add exhibition space and arts-programming facilities. Having started life in an office in Tribeca, the foundation only moved into its current premises after a stint in Woodstock, New York. Rower found the Chelsea loft property, then met architect Francis d'Haene, founder of New York's D'Apostrophe design firm. 'He had designed some great gallery spaces and knew how to work on a budget,' says Rower, 'so I decided to work with him.'

The office area runs along one wall of the loft space, so that there would be 'open storage for works of art, which we could constantly change over; pieces for the staff to enjoy and live with, but also examine and study. We always have works in the gallery space here that are about to go to an exhibition.'

D'Haene planned glass walls to enclose Rower's office and the conference room but the foundation director felt that this was a step too far towards corporate slickness. Instead, Rower had the idea of installing window panes – what he calls an 'honest reference' both to the history of the building and to the sash windows of the artist's Roxbury studio.

The organisation's work has resulted in an increasing number of exhibitions that explore previously neglected aspects of Calder's oeuvre. One of the foundation's first major publications, a lavish catalogue to accompany the 2009 *Calder Jewelry* retrospective, has become something of a collector's item. Besides the exhibitions and the historical research, Rower and his team are compiling a *catalogue raisonné* – a comprehensive list of more than 22,000 of the artist's works – and are looking into publishing this information online. It has also created the Calder Prize, which is awarded biannually to a living artist. Calder's intellect is being minimised no longer ■

For further information on the Calder Foundation, ring 001 212 334 2424, or visit calder.org. To contact D'Apostrophe, ring 001 212 965 1077, or visit dapostrophe.com

Top: a Plexiglas and brass-wire brooch that Calder created using scraps from a sculpture made for the 1939 World's Fair. Above: the fish is a recurring motif in Calder's work. Here, an anthropomorphic male fish has been fashioned into a silver brooch (1940). Opposite: desks designed by architect Francis d'Haene line the foundation's south wall. Overhead hangs Calder's *Roxbury Fish*, one of a series of hanging fish sculptures he made in the mid-1940s

