ALMINE RECH

Calder
Unfolding

Oct 13 — Nov 12, 2022 | Paris, Matignon

Almine Rech is delighted to present Calder Unfolding, a survey of work by Alexander Calder, from October 13 – November 12, 2022. Known internationally as a titan of twentieth-century art, Calder (1898–1976) deftly worked across a range of media throughout his career. Highlighting examples of gouache, jewelry, and sculpture, the exhibition offers a rare opportunity to behold a broad scope of the artist's work.

Unique among his contemporaries, Calder devised a number of new mediums during his lifetime, none more famous than the mobile. Giving form to something as ephemeral as currents of air, he astonished the world with his creation of kinetic sculpture in 1931. As philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre once wrote of his work, "A passing glance is not enough; you must live with it, be bewitched by it [...] The movements of Calder's mobiles have a life of their own." Featured in the Rech presentation is an untitled hanging mobile from 1963 composed of delicate sheet metal elements affixed to cascading wire tendrils. Made at the height of Calder's career, the mobile's expansive scope of movement ensures that its audience will never experience it the same way twice.

Also included is *Puntos Blancos* (1955), a standing mobile where the moving elements sit atop a graceful wire base. In 1955, Calder paid an extended visit to Venezuela, where he had been commissioned to create an acoustic ceiling for the auditorium at the Universidad Central de Venezuela in Caracas, designed by his friend, the architect Carlos Raúl Villanueva. The exquisite curvature of the filament base hearkens back to Calder's wire sculptures made in the 1920s and early 1930s, the nascent years of his career. The discs balancing upon it bob with the musicality of a *corps de ballet*, recalling the euphonic project that brought Calder to South America.

In addition to sculpture, a number of pieces of jewelry will be on view. Calder made jewelry throughout his life, beginning in his childhood years when he first crafted ornaments for his sister's dolls from found bits of wire. In this spirit of generosity, his works of jewelry were frequently gifts that he made for his wife, daughters, and numerous friends. A striking, early pair of nickel-plated earrings (c. 1930) show his facility with even the smallest pieces of wire, while a bold brooch (c. 1938) illuminates "jewels" of colored glass against a toothed, brass wire backing.

Similarly of note is a figa hair comb. The *figa*, a clenched fist with the thumb tucked into the forefingers, is a potent symbol of fertility in Brazil. This comb from around 1948 was likely made during the first of Calder's several, extended pilgrimages to the country, when his work was the subject of solo exhibitions in both São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro. The ancient spiral, another important symbol in Calder's iconography, appears frequently in his jewelry, and can be seen in a number of the brooches, bracelet, and earrings on view.

A collection of Calder's gouache works round out the exhibition. As masterful working in two dimensions as he was in three, the artist had a penchant for muscular color and strong forms. Many of them underscore Calder's commitment to abstraction, such as Untitled (1963), a painting bisected by glorious swaths of citrine- and tomato-hued pigment, and overlaid by washy, black orbs that seem to float in space much as the elements of a mobile do. Once again, the spiral figures prominently, this time in a gouache dating from 1970. It takes the shape of a snake coiling in upon itself, an illusionistic image that also conjures a spinning ratchet wheel the longer one's eye lingers upon it.

— Jessica Holmes, writer and critic