



Unstable Motives

Propaganda, Politics, and the Late Work of Alexander Calder

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Terra Essay Prize

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Alexander Calder, *Bayonets Menacing a Flower*, 1945. Painted sheet metal and wire, 45 x 51 x 18½ in. Mildred Lane Kemper Art Museum, Washington University in St. Louis, University Purchase, McMillan Fund © 2012 Calder Foundation, New York/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

When Marcel Duchamp suggested to Alexander Calder the name “mobiles” for his suspended sculptures, Calder was apparently pleased with its dual meaning—referring, in French, to both motion and motive. The suitability of Duchamp’s reference to motion is clear, but how, exactly, would one take stock of the motives of Calder’s sculpture? By conventional accounts, they would be largely restricted to the aesthetics of his art—color and shape, tension and balance, or, perhaps, the playful atmosphere they conjure. “His mobiles signify nothing, refer to nothing other than themselves,” mused Jean-Paul Sartre in 1964, a remark approvingly quoted in most Calder monographs, as if to excuse the frequent limitation of their focus to matters of formal invention and artistic chronology.¹

Even in the context of such approaches, however, it is difficult to see how one could consider Calder’s *Bayonets Menacing a Flower* (frontispiece)—to pick only an obvious, though not isolated, example—apart from its historical moment. With its proliferation of flimsy weapons, its ridiculous dangling ciphers for militaristic machismo slung low between its legs, and the hopelessly vulnerable petals about to be deflowered, this work shows Calder’s capacity for mordant critique. The bombastically black-and-white symbolism

of this work is saved from cliché by its sincerity, like Munro Leaf’s children’s book *Ferdinand the Bull*, or in later and strikingly similar terms, the image of Vietnam protesters inserting flowers into the rifles of National Guardsmen. This is not the work of an artist blind to the political utility of his art. As the United States settled into the conflicts and contradictions of the Cold War, and Calder into producing the celebrated mobiles and stabiles of his late career, the acerbic wartime satire of *Bayonets Menacing a Flower* usefully suggests the sorts of meanings of which his work has subsequently been too often emptied.

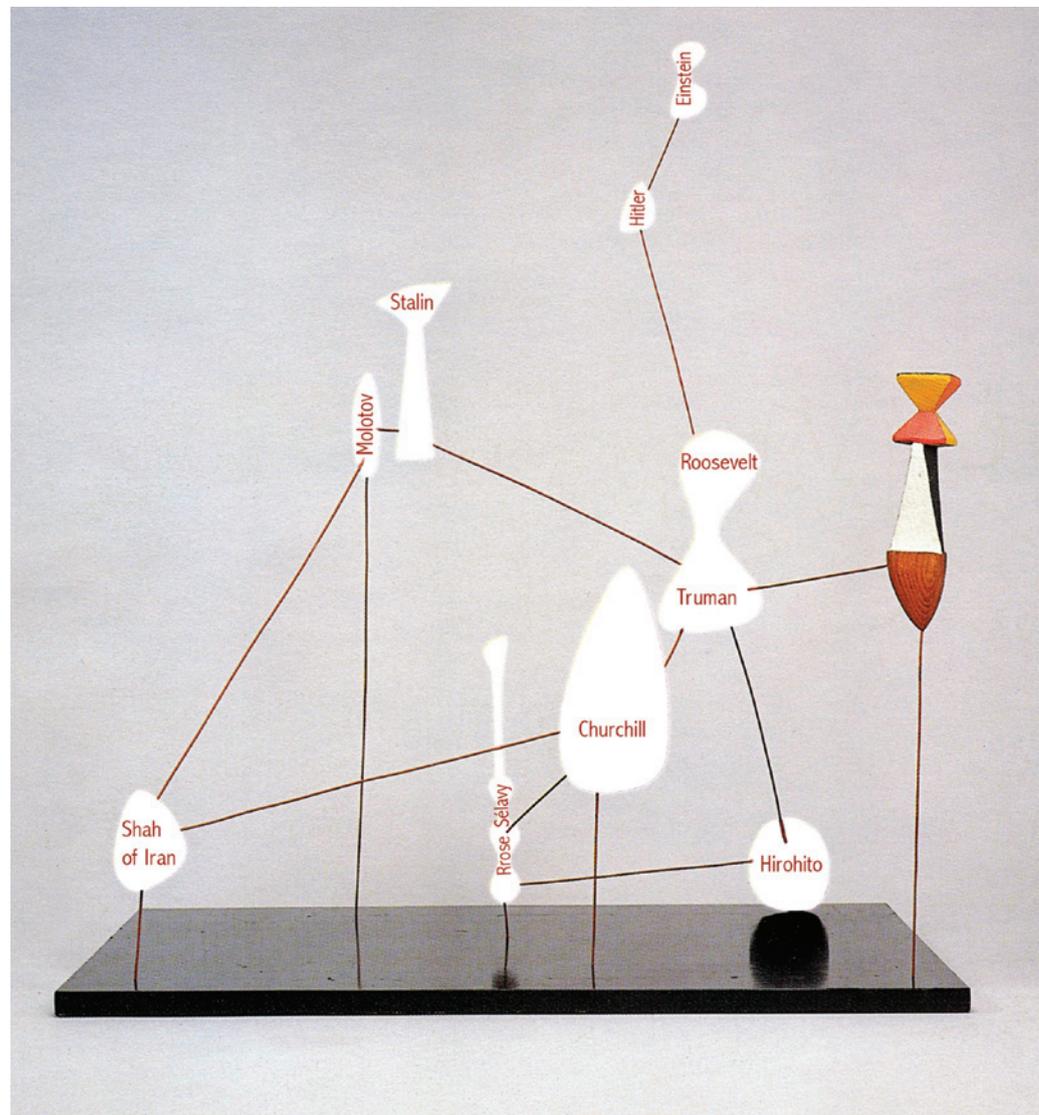
This is not to claim that the contexts of Calder’s art have been ignored. His relation to surrealism and members of the interwar Parisian avant-garde with whom he flirted, for instance, has now been well recovered. Other scholars have examined his relation to mass culture through his interest in toys and the circus, or with science and technology as prefigured in his early training as an engineer. But the focus on his early work has been at the expense of the virtuosic high modernism of his most famous sculptures, which have attracted much less scholarly analysis—as though their commercial success is, frankly, a bit embarrassing.² The imbalance has been compounded by

a more general neglect of the history of postwar art, in which Calder is routinely absent, despite (or perhaps because of) his sustained popularity with museums and their publics. Unlike Henry Moore, whose critical reputation has been resuscitated via a rich revisionist and sometimes theoretical scholarship over the last decade,³ Calder's assigned position in postwar American art history fails to recognize, much less account for, his singularly prominent standing in period visual culture.

Focusing on the output of his later career from the 1950s onward, this article offers new directions for understanding the art of Alexander Calder in relation

to the contexts in which it was seen and the uses to which it was put. Calder's popularity in corporate foyers, jet age airports, and redeveloped urban plazas produced a constellation of meanings that were firmly ideological, but the focus here is limited to the most explicitly politicized contexts of his art. With the now extensive scholarship on the Cold War functions of abstract expressionist painting as a base, Calder's art as it was used in the exhibitions of the "cultural cold war" can be recontextualized by examining the contradictory expressions of political allegiance and dissent that characterized the artist's late-career public reputation.⁴ The

1 Alessandro Balteo Yazbeck in collaboration with Media Farzin, *Didactic Panel and Model of Alexander Calder's Vertical Constellation with Bomb, 1943* (detail of C-Print), 2007–9. From the series *Cultural Diplomacy: An Art We Neglect*. Installation: C-Print, plastic model on pedestal, narrative wall label, and vinyl lettering, configuration variable. Photo courtesy of Henrique Faría Fine Art, New York, and the artists



result is a position for Calder's art that is as politically unstable as postwar America itself, vacillating between propaganda and dissent and demonstrating the potential for abstraction to serve the most apparently opposed political motives.

Statues of Liberty

I want to make things that are fun to look at and have no propaganda value whatsoever.

—Alexander Calder⁵

In 2009 an exhibition by the Venezuelan-born artist Alessandro Balteo Yazbeck in collaboration with Media Farzin drew striking connections between Cold War politics and the work of Alexander Calder.⁶ The exhibition presented a fabricated history that speculated on the political use of Calder's art in Latin America, juxtaposing extensive factual evidence with appropriated Calder sculptures. One didactic label connected Nelson Rockefeller's role as Coordinator for Inter-American Affairs and his responsibilities for "the cultural and propaganda side of wartime diplomacy" with his funding of the Hotel Avila in Caracas, completed in 1942. The wall text described how the Harrison and Abramovitz–designed building, which contained a Calder mobile at its heart, "projected the image of open democracy . . . that literally jeered at totalitarianism." Another work linked Calder's 1953 ceiling for Caracas's university auditorium with the major Cold War summit that took place there two years later.⁷

The simulated Calder sculptures included in the exhibition made further connections between his work and the visualization of American power in Latin America. One of Calder's derricklike towers from the 1950s was suggestively—if tenuously—linked to the oil interests of American corporations in Venezuela, including those associated with the

Rockefellers. Perhaps the most striking works in the exhibition were also the most seemingly absurd: two reconfigurations of Calder's *Vertical Constellation with Bomb* (1943). The first was a sculptural simulation, altering the original by drawing attention to its eponymous weapon amid otherwise white-coated forms made from carbon fiber, Plexiglas, and thermoplastic instead of Calder's more homespun materials of wire and wood. The second was a didactic panel that extended the militaristic content by annotating the components of Calder's atomic form by turning it into a complex political diagram (fig. 1). Not only does Yazbeck's isolation of the bomb imply the military significance of Calder's subject matter, but the relations between the likes of Albert Einstein, Adolf Hitler, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Josef Stalin, Winston Churchill, Vyacheslav Mikhailovich Molotov, and others reimagine Calder's wired-together sculptural cells as a kind of network of power. The associations might be unintelligible—the inclusion of Marcel Duchamp's *Rose Sélavy* among its protagonists certainly fits the diagram's irrational history—but the recognition that Calder's forms might suit the dynamics of propaganda and politics is significant.

An examination of the inclusion of Calder's art in the international fairs and festivals of the postwar period confirms its use as a tool of American cultural diplomacy. While considerable attention has now been given to the connections between art and the Cold War, Yazbeck and Farzin's artistic take on the subject stands alone in specifying that Calder occupied an equivalent position.⁸ Limiting discussion of the cultural cold war to abstract expressionist painting has already prompted others to remark that it is necessary to "broaden the terms of the debate" to encompass the diverse art forms implicated in such efforts.⁹ Sculpture has, in one unavoidably politicized context, been drawn into dialogue with this scholarship, via the

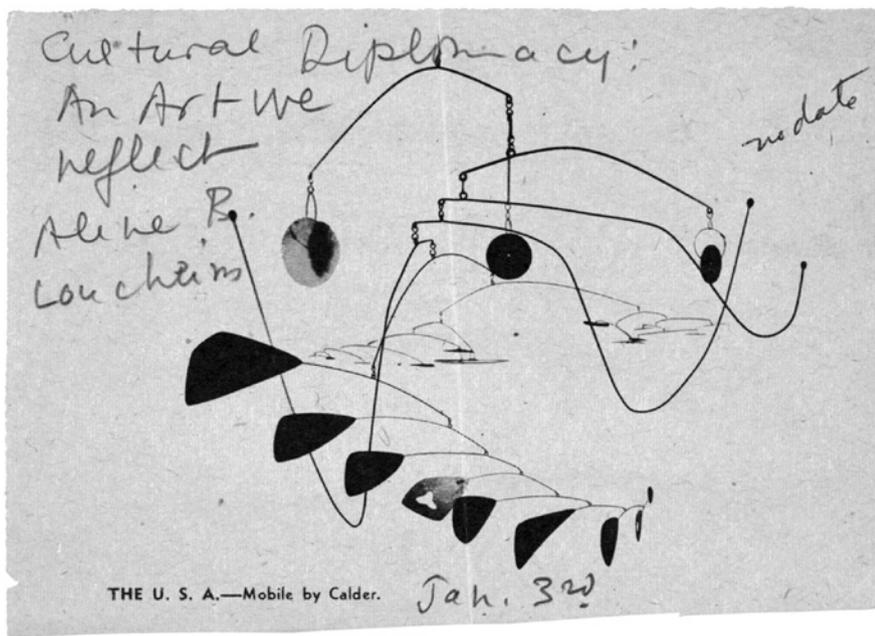


2 Installation view of *U.S. Representation, Il Bienal do Museu de Arte Moderna*, São Paulo, Brazil, 1953; organized by the International Program of the Museum of Modern Art, New York. International Council/International Exhibition Program Records, Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York. Art by Calder © 2012 Calder Foundation, New York/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York. Photo © Museum of Modern Art, New York/Licensed by SCALA/Art Resource, New York

Unknown Political Prisoner Competition (1953). For this occasion, organized by the Institute of Contemporary Arts in London, Calder's proposed monument was no less overtly ideological than the event itself: a violently angular composition of metal forms pierced by an airborne spear, certainly evidence of the "legible and direct" symbolism that one commentator at the time thought was evident in even the most abstract entries.¹⁰ Calder's language may be cooler than the welded techno-skeletons of Reg Butler, who won the competition, or even the serrated carcasses of Theodore Roszak, but still, work such as this makes it difficult to accept Marla Prather's claim that Calder's

art was "impervious to the traumas of the Cold War."¹¹

Yazbeck's exhibition was called *Cultural Diplomacy: An Art We Neglect*, a title borrowed from an article Aline Louchheim wrote for the *New York Times* in 1954. Louchheim had argued that the U.S. government's failure to sponsor an official presence at the second International Biennial Exhibition of Modern Art (1953) in São Paulo, where countries from across the political spectrum sought "prizes as proof of their country's glory," was interpreted by the representatives of other participating countries as a sign of America's "woeful indifference to culture." Not that



- 3 Alexander Calder, *Triple Gong*, 1951. Press clipping from Aline B. Louchheim, "Cultural Diplomacy: An Art We Neglect," *New York Times*, January 3, 1954, SM36. Alexander Calder Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. Art © 2012 Calder Foundation, New York/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

Louchheim thought America's participation, organized instead by the Museum of Modern Art in New York (MoMA), was unsuccessful. Securing the "most prominent" position in the pavilion, the center of America's contribution was a retrospective of forty-five works by Calder in a dedicated "room of honor" (fig. 2), a privilege shared only by Pablo Picasso.¹² If the role of art in defining American identity lacked state sanction, the illustration of Calder's work in Louchheim's article suggested that someone understood its nationalistic potential. The illustration from Louchheim's piece, with the title of the article jotted on it, is among the papers that Calder donated to the Archives of American Art in 1963 (fig. 3). Captioned as "The U.S.A.," Calder's high-spirited *Triple Gong* indeed read as a kind of national allegory. As with almost all major international exhibitions of American art in the early 1950s, Calder's showing at São Paulo was managed by MoMA's International Program and funded by a Rockefeller Brothers grant.¹³ Building on the museum's established touring program, the International Program exhibitions were, as MoMA

boasted in a 1956 press release, "seen in 21 countries in Latin America, Europe and Asia . . . as far north as beyond the Arctic Circle in Norway and south as far as São Paulo . . . , eastward to India and Japan, and westward to most of the European countries this side of the Iron Curtain."¹⁴ The struggle against communism loomed large for the initiative, and while the degree of state support for such projects has been the subject of debate, there can be little doubt that the international presentation of American art was a manifestation of soft power—in Europe, an artistic flourish to the postwar reconstruction of the Marshall Plan. As Serge Guilbaut has described, MoMA was not only "striving to arbitrate modernist taste on a global level," but modern art itself was conceived as "an antidote to the communist virus."¹⁵ International touring exhibitions of modern American art thus laid claim to American cultural maturity, countering the allegations of artistic philistinism and spiritual alienation; they used the individualism of artistic expression to demonstrate American freedom.

Although such surveys were deliberately diverse in their display of American art, Calder's was rarely excluded. The American pavilion at the 1952 Venice Biennale presented a retrospective of Calder's work, winning him that year's prize for sculpture. Calder was included in the exhibition *Twelve Modern American Painters and Sculptors* (1953), opened at the Palais de Tokyo in Paris by the United States ambassador C. Douglas Dillon. The exhibition subsequently toured to Zurich, Düsseldorf, Stockholm, Helsinki, and Oslo. With the support of the United States Information Agency (established by President Dwight D. Eisenhower in 1953), MoMA later mounted *Cinquante ans d'art aux États-Unis* (1955) at the same Paris venue—and again Calder's work was prominently displayed and well received. Retitled *Modern Art in the United States*, this exhibition then traveled to Zurich, Barcelona, Frankfurt, The Hague, Vienna,

- 4 Installation view of *Modern Art in the United States: A Selection from the Collections of the Museum of Modern Art*, Tate Gallery, London, 1956; organized by the International Program of the Museum of Modern Art, New York. International Council/International Exhibition Program Records, Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York. Art by Calder ©2012 Calder Foundation, New York/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York. Photo, Alfred Carlebach ©Museum of Modern Art, New York/Licensed by SCALA/Art Resource, New York



and London (fig. 4). In 1956 the exhibition appeared in Belgrade, Yugoslavia (fig. 5), with the support of the U.S. Embassy there—the first exhibition of modern American art in a communist country. In West Germany alone, where cultural diplomacy was seen as especially crucial in containing the Soviet Union and cementing American influence, there were over a dozen exhibitions of Calder's work during the 1950s. Thirty miles from East Germany, in Kassel, the *Documenta I* (1955) and *Documenta II* (1959) exhibitions both featured Calder's work.¹⁶

On the other side of the Berlin Wall, the *United States National Exhibition* in Moscow (1959) included two works by Calder—an honor accorded to none of the abstract expressionist painters. Invited to Moscow for the occasion by the Soviet Society for Cultural Relations, MoMA's Alfred Barr presented a lecture on American art to Soviet artists, culminating with the screening of films showing Jackson Pollock and Calder at work. Barr's choice of these two artists was surely

well considered. He could hardly have selected two other artists who, respectively, better demonstrated the “non-conformity and love of freedom” that he thought distinguished modern American art from the stilted realism favored by totalitarian regimes.¹⁷

For the American pavilion at the Brussels World's Fair in 1958, Calder was commissioned to create two works: a large rotating sculpture as the centerpiece of the fountain in the forecourt and a mobile for the foyer of the 360-degree “Circarama” theater that showed Walt Disney's *America the Beautiful*. Two more Calder works were included in the *50 ans d'art moderne* exhibition at the Belgian Pavilion.¹⁸ Robert Haddow has claimed that the “confident formalism” of American art at Brussels was “not supposed to make earth-shattering claims for American art but merely to contribute to the over-all atmosphere of insouciance and innovative modernism.” As another historian has described, American fair propaganda “showcased the eclectic material democracy of the here and



5 Installation view of *Modern Art in the United States: A Selection from the Collections of the Museum of Modern Art*, Kalemegdan Pavilion, Belgrade, Yugoslavia, 1956; organized by the International Program of the Museum of Modern Art, New York. International Council/International Exhibition Program Records, Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York. Art by Calder ©2012 Calder Foundation, New York/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York. Photo © Museum of Modern Art, New York/Licensed by SCALA/Art Resource, New York

now” such that “liberty was shown not as some abstract right but as exposure to the concrete freedom of making choices by selecting among a myriad of spectacles and artefacts.”¹⁹

“What emerges,” *Life* magazine described in its ambivalent report of the Brussels fair, “is a slightly blurred image . . . hedonistic, eclectic, trivial in spots, cheerful and fundamentally humane.”²⁰ Calder’s resonance with such imagery is evident in many accounts of his work. Frank Seiberling’s 1959 response to a Calder mobile, for instance, could be easily substituted for the values ascribed to the Brussels fair: “The character of these shapes and their arrangement suggest to me a free, affirmative spirit, orderly and also fun-loving, adaptable yet independent, not complex yet subtle.” When René d’Harnoncourt, the director of MoMA and a member of the advisory panel for the Brussels exhibition, had claimed that modern art was the “foremost symbol” of American democracy because of its “infinite variety and ceaseless exploration,” it is not difficult to see how liberty and freedom were usefully materialized in the

unconstrained animation of the mobile.²¹ Calder’s prominence in exhibitions of modern art during the Cold War was more than simply the reflection of his success. Lacking the wild violence and anxiety of abstract expressionism, Calder’s kinetic sculptures served as ciphers for the dizzying freedom on which postwar America’s self-image so depended.

Formally, Calder mobiles functioned as the high-art complement to another American fair staple, the ball-and-stick visualizations of chemical and atomic sciences that promised endless molecular miracles for everyday life. Like automated appliances (such as those that provided the backdrop for the famous 1959 “Kitchen Debate” between Vice President Richard Nixon and Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev at the Moscow Exhibition), Calder’s “invention” served as another kind of manifestation of “Yankee ingenuity”—like generalized Rube Goldberg machines—and provided the cultural correlate of high-tech novelties promised by American abundance. It is a point cogently suggested by Clement Greenberg in “The European View of American Art,” his typically supercilious response to the favorable reviews that Calder had received at the Venice Biennale. Calder, he wrote, “provides the kind of modern art one is prepared for. There is novelty—even if it is only mechanical—and an abstractness that seems racy and chic. This is modern the way it looked when it was modern.”²² Just as Sigfried Giedion, in his book *Mechanization Takes Command* (1948), celebrated the mobile for its elevation of the aesthetics of invention, Calder’s art in the exhibitions of the Cold War was held up as an embodiment of American technical superiority.²³

Calder’s position as the favored sculptor of the state was also made clear by the presence of his works in America’s international offices. His *Hextopus* (fig. 6) was installed in the courtyard of the United States Information Service’s Amerika Haus in Frankfurt—one of

the largest buildings of a \$120-million Department of State program designed to project a “distinguishable American flavor” through diplomatic architecture in locations threatened by the proximity of communism.²⁴ Designed by Skidmore, Owings & Merrill and completed in 1952, this sparkling international-style statement of newness featured Calder’s spiky space-age parabolas at its center, visible through the building’s glass facades that literalized the transparency of American democracy. Calder designed what he described as a “starry web” (fig. 7) for architect Josep Lluís Sert’s U.S. Embassy building that opened in Baghdad. This idiosyncratic wall-mounted piece, featuring fifty metal stars against a ground of blue-glazed

tiles, framed the Great Seal of the United States. A catalogue of the predominantly abstract artworks on display at the U.S. Embassy in Moscow in the late sixties lists work by Calder. Reporting on the Art in Embassies program in the mid-1960s, a cooperative venture between MoMA and the Department of State, the *New York Times* mentioned Calder among those artists involved in the task of “strengthening our cultural image” abroad.²⁵

That Calder’s art served as a sign for American freedom might seem, in these highly ideological contexts and with the evidence thus far presented, like a foregone conclusion, but it is only part of the picture. The image of Calder as one of America’s premier artist-diplomats that

- 6 Alexander Calder, *Hextopus*, 1955. 100 3/8 x 131 7/8 x 98 3/8 in. U.S. Consulate (formerly Amerika Haus), Frankfurt ©2012 Calder Foundation, New York/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York





7 Alexander Calder, *Untitled*, 1957, in Josep Lluís Sert's U.S. Embassy, Baghdad. Art by Calder © 2012 Calder Foundation, New York/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York. Photo, Louis Reens/Francis Loeb Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts

these examples suggest is complicated by the ideological meanings that his art came to acquire in domestic politics. As David Craven has argued, it is easy to exaggerate the propagandist uses of postwar abstraction, eliding the “insurrectionary” ideological position of artists in McCarthyist America and the allegations of dissent they experienced. The politicization of Calder’s art must take into account the fact that he was among those artists whose activities were monitored by government agencies. In 1951 concerns about Calder’s political sympathies were raised in the United States Congress, in one of the several attacks on abstract artists leveled by Representatives Fred Busbey

and George Dondero. The cause for their complaints was eighty-four prints from MoMA’s collection that were on display at the U.S. Embassy in Paris. Busbey alleged that the exhibition was “communistic” and complained that such abstract art was designed to convey a “mood of revolution.” Calder was the most eminent of the eight artists in the exhibition named in Congress as having files documenting their communist links, obtained by the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC).²⁶

However spurious the connection (the Congressional Record lists Calder’s 1944 “sponsorship” of a U.S.-Soviet relations dinner at New York’s Russian Institute as evidence of his sympathies), merely being named was not to be taken lightly. Other so-called evidence for Calder’s Soviet affiliations would not have been difficult to unearth. For instance, in 1943 Calder had donated *The Black Flower* to the Museum of Western Art in Moscow.²⁷ “The accusation of communism,” wrote Calder’s friend Ben Shahn in 1953, “is the most powerful scourge that has fallen into the hands of reaction since heresy ceased to be a public crime.”²⁸ In the case of Paul Strand, who in 1950 fled to Italy to escape the stigma of HUAC allegations, “to be a Left-aligned artist, not to mention an intellectual and an internationalist, was more than enough to draw unwelcome attention in a McCarthyite political culture.”²⁹

Along with other cultural figures seeking to clarify their loyalties, Calder was listed in 1951 as a “committee member” of the newly formed American Committee for Cultural Freedom, the U.S. affiliate of the anti-communist Congress for Cultural Freedom that was covertly funded by the CIA.³⁰ Calder was the only American-born artist included among the canonical European modernists in the 1952 *XXth Century Masterpieces* exhibition that the congress presented in London and Paris to “demonstrate with what vitality art has flourished in a free world.”³¹ Nonetheless, to be named as

a communist sympathizer was to find oneself in a perilous situation. Michael Gibson is alone in linking this context and Calder's 1953 move to France, even if he dismisses the idea: "Calder does not seem to have said anything that would suggest a connection between his move and the rise of McCarthyism in the United States," he writes.³² Gibson is, no doubt, correct about Calder's silence; to admit such a reason for the move would have been tantamount to an admission of guilt. In the postwar decades, both Calder's art and life were unmistakably tangled in Cold War politics and its

contradictory articulations in the domestic and international spheres. In the 1960s and 1970s, however, Calder's increasingly public politics would seek to combat such vulnerabilities.

An Artist at the Barricades

I don't have much patriotism. . . . There's nothing to be patriotic about. Trying to get your country to do what you think is right, that's what I would consider patriotism.

—Alexander Calder³³



8 Alexander Calder with *Mercury Fountain* (1937) in the Spanish Pavilion at the Paris World's Fair, 1937 ©2012 Calder Foundation, New York/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York. Photo, Hugo Paul Herdeg/Calder Foundation, New York / Art Resource, New York

“Calder is an exemplary citizen,” wrote the critic John Russell in 1976, “who turns up on the right side of barricades whenever those barricades need to be erected.”³⁴ From protest posters and badges to political advertisements, Calder’s involvement in a variety of activist causes in the 1960s and 1970s was a significant strand of his public reputation that has been subsequently neglected. But the official uses of his art in the service of the state continued, too, and, in a number of instances, the conflict that resulted from Calder’s opposition to government policy and the display of his art as an expression of freedom underscores the contradictory ideological positions of his practice.

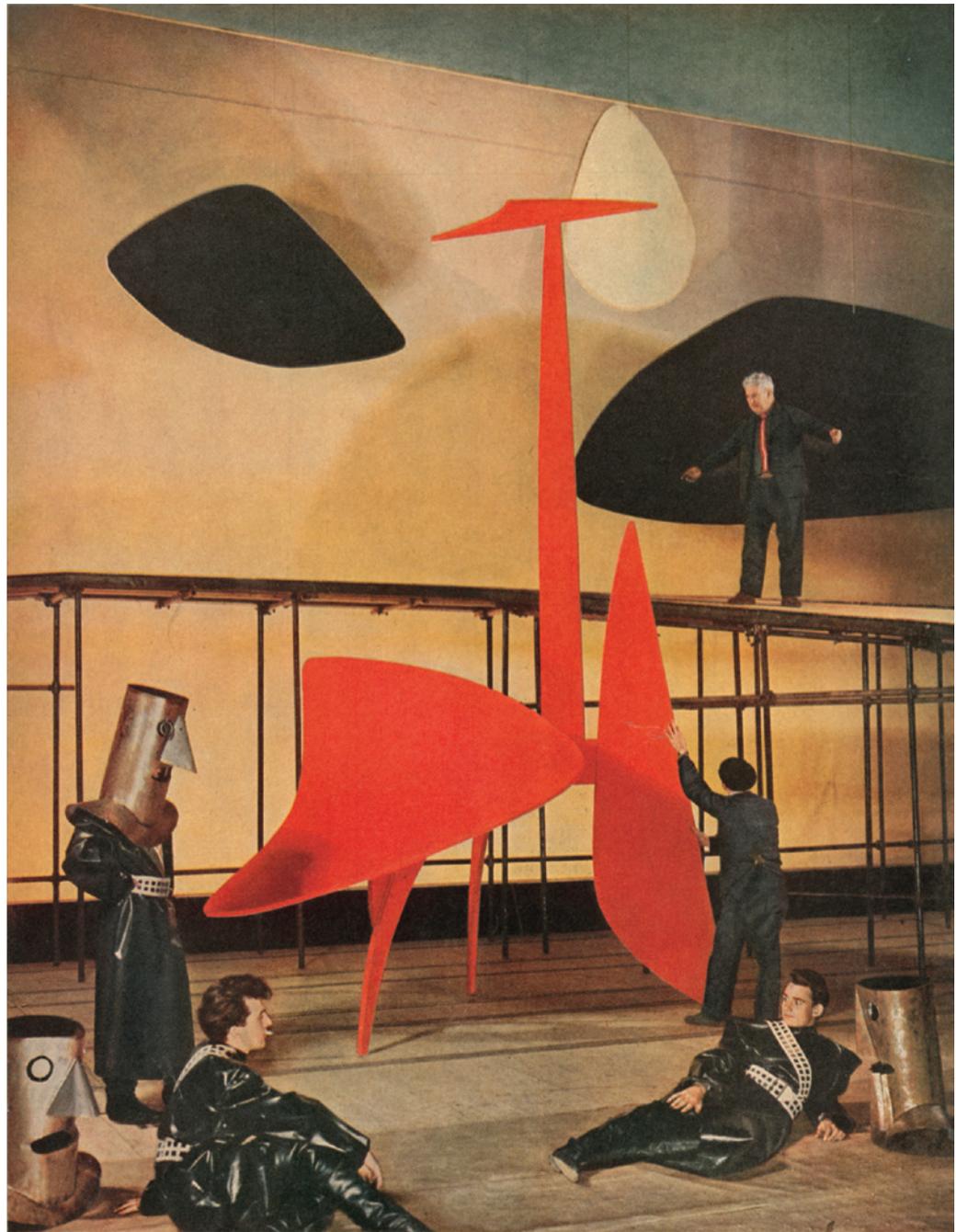
Calder’s willingness to use his art for explicitly political ends is prefigured in some of his earlier works. No less a charged painting than Picasso’s *Guernica* (1937) was the backdrop for Calder’s *Mercury Fountain* (1937), which Sert placed at the heart of his pavilion for that year’s *Exposition internationale des arts et techniques dans la vie moderne* in Paris (fig. 8).³⁵ The twisting metal work flowed, not with water, but with mercury—the valuable product of the Almadén mines whose workers fought General Francisco Franco’s troops in the Spanish Civil War. Calder’s public opposition to war was equally articulated in his support of the Call for an American Artists Congress in 1936, of which he was one of 380 signatories. “What can artists do to oppose the high-pressure drive towards war?” the group asked. “Because we know that our work as free artists is indissolubly linked with continuing peace and the dominance in American life of democratic principles.”³⁶

In the postwar period, Calder’s largely overlooked stage design for Henri Pichette’s play *Nucléa* (1952; fig. 9) is a further example of the political application of his sculpture. Amid the play’s “synthesis of shrieks, violent verbal images, and deafening stereophonic noise,” Calder’s abstract scenery suited the unnaturalistic antiwar

piece, with its worker-heroes struggling for love in a postapocalyptic “festival of blood.” Against Pichette’s stock poetic universe of suns and moons, birds and bees, Calder’s forms make concrete the metaphors of the play, from the astral bodies of star-crossed lovers to the suspended doom of nuclear nightmare. “To dramatize [the] theme of atomic warfare,” in the words of one account of the staging, Calder’s “mobiles were hung like portentous clouds above towering stables, which symbolize war machines.”³⁷ But the politics of the work were not simply pacifist: between the comrades and class conflict that dominate the play’s narrative and the radical left clique that ran the Théâtre National Populaire, Calder’s sets were indeed serving revolutionary ends. Thus, while his mobiles were performing their role of U.S. cultural diplomat at the 1952 Venice Biennale, *Nucléa* posited a less optimistic view of international relations: “the powder of war,” one soldier proclaims in the play, “speaks the purest language of diplomacy.”³⁸

From the late 1950s onward, Calder’s opposition to the dynamics of the Cold War conflict became increasingly public and vociferous. In October 1958 Calder’s name appears among those signing an advertisement in the *New York Times* headlined “America Needs a New Foreign Policy.” The statement condemned Cold War politics as a failure, undermining “the world’s belief in the United States” and increasing the “peril of annihilation.” “Whether we like it or not, more than one third of the earth’s population is governed by communist regimes,” it read, making it “imperative that all the world be opened up, and that travel, trade and cultural exchange be encouraged among all peoples.”³⁹ In the early 1960s Calder also publicly aligned himself with a number of causes supporting free artistic expression. With the credibility of HUAC waning and Calder himself having been subjected to its scrutiny, he was listed as one of the sponsors of a 1961 rally calling for its abolition.⁴⁰ In 1962 Calder and Shahn

- 9 Alexander Calder, stage design for *Nucléa*, 1952 ©2012 Calder Foundation, New York/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York. Reproduced from Dorothy Seiberling, "Calder: His Gyrating 'Mobile' Art Wins International Fame and Prizes," *Life*, August 25, 1952, 86



organized a fund-raising exhibition for the imprisoned Mexican artist David Siqueiros, the muralist and active Communist Party member jailed in 1960 for his antigovernment revolutionary provocations.⁴¹

In this period, Calder began to use his prints as a means of supporting a variety of international refugee aid organizations. He contributed a serigraph to the

portfolio of prints compiled by Varian Fry to raise funds for the International Rescue Committee.⁴² Calder's involvement with Spanish Refugee Aid best captures the extent of such fund-raising activities and the significant impact they could produce. Although his support for the group began in the 1950s, in 1965 he started to provide a steady supply of

lithographs that the charity could sell to raise money for its activities. By 1969 the organization listed Calder as one of its major sponsors.⁴³ Calder eventually donated to Spanish Refugee Aid a total of 2,705 lithographs. Selling for between sixty and eight hundred dollars each, they raised more than half a million dollars.⁴⁴

But it was the Vietnam War that provoked Calder's most strident political statements. In November 1965 Calder was one of fifty-eight sponsors of an advertisement calling for a March on Washington against the Vietnam War. A few months later, he and his wife, Louisa, placed their own antiwar advertisement—a full page in the *New York Times* titled “A New Year, Hope for New World.” Centered on one of the swirl motifs Calder was then using in his gouaches, like a vortex

into the alternative reality they hoped for, it called for “an end to hypocrisy, self-interest, expediency, distortion and fear, wherever they exist. With great respect for those who rightly question brutality, and speak out strongly for a more civilized world. Our only hope is in thoughtful Men—Reason is not treason.” With his wife, Calder issued this statement in his capacity as the chairman of Artists for SANE (National Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy), one of several professional committees within the well-known antinuclear and peace lobby group. In Europe, Calder put his name to the affiliated Paris American Committee to Stop the Vietnam War and was listed in media reports as one of its founding members.⁴⁵

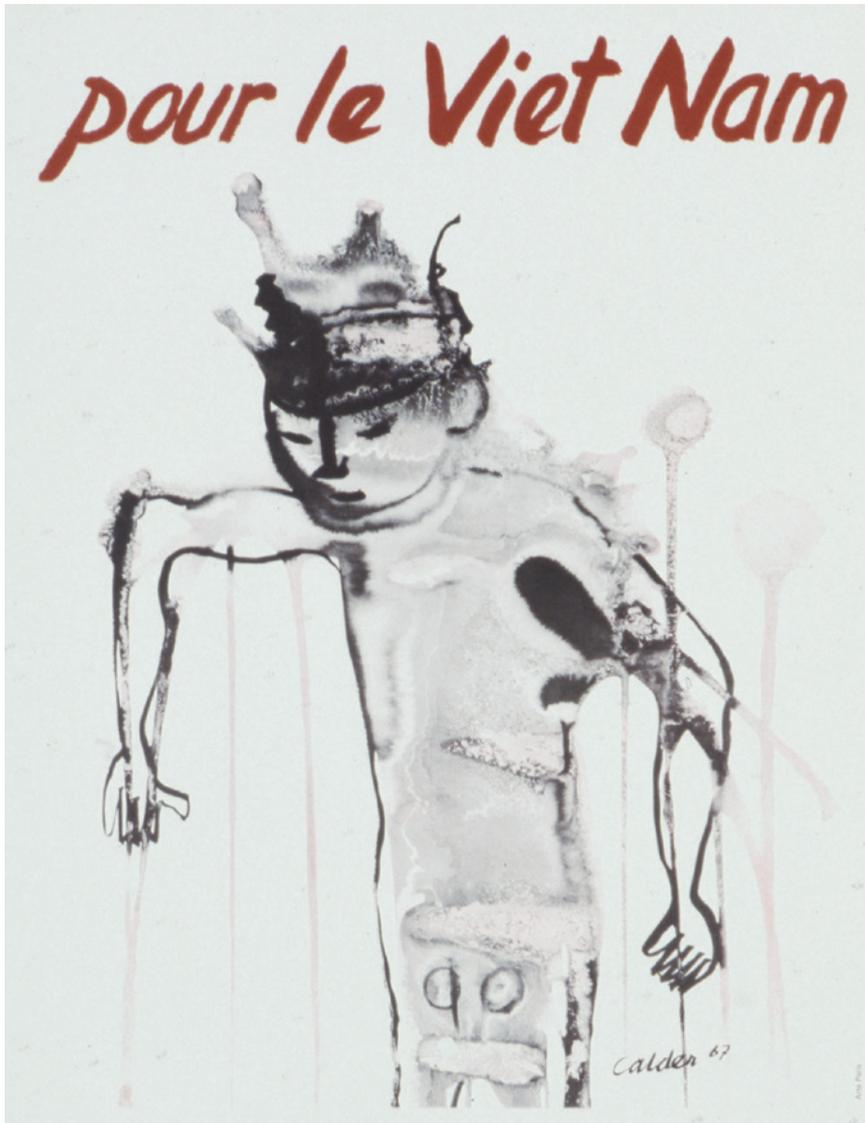
As his monumental stables began to stride across America's city streets, so too did Calder. He attended two Marches on Washington for Peace in Vietnam, organized by SANE, in November 1965 and May 1966. In June 1966 Calder's name again appeared among the academics,

artists, and professionals who signed an anti-Vietnam War petition that spanned several pages of the *New York Times*.⁴⁶ He was photographed at the Spring Mobilization against the War in New York in April 1967 and attended the March on the Pentagon in Washington in October 1967.⁴⁷ In August 1967 Calder was among the most famous signatories of “A Call to Resist Illegitimate Authority,” a widely distributed petition whose antidraft position caused the federal government to prosecute its authors for criminal conspiracy.⁴⁸ His small badge (fig. 10) for the major Moratorium to End the War in Vietnam March in 1969 used his characteristic red-and-black palette and prominently included his signature—deploying his artistic trademarks in aid of the peace effort.

Calder's opposition to the war was, of course, not unusual among artists and intellectuals in 1960s America, but the extent of his activities has been downplayed, resulting in interpretations of his art as disconnected from the social conflicts of the period. Though the colorful palette and floating abstract motifs of Calder's work for left-wing social justice causes might have suited the aesthetics of sixties counterculture, it is important to locate Calder's stance in the contested terrain of the protest movement. As a “peace liberal,” Calder was, to borrow David Levy's characterization of the SANE milieu, at the “respectable and decorous” end of the protest movement. “Middle-class, middle-aged, and middle-of-the-road,” the kinds of protest activities Calder participated in were, as another has put it, marked by a “general atmosphere of dignity and restraint.” Such a moderate presence was politically strategic: the participation of elders in the peace cause helped clarify that it was not merely a “student organization,” as indeed one correspondent to the *New York Times* used Calder's involvement to substantiate.⁴⁹ Calder's production of such work as the protest button and



10 Alexander Calder, protest button for New Mobilization Committee, 1969. 1 3/4 in. diameter. Collection of the author ©2012 Calder Foundation, New York/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York



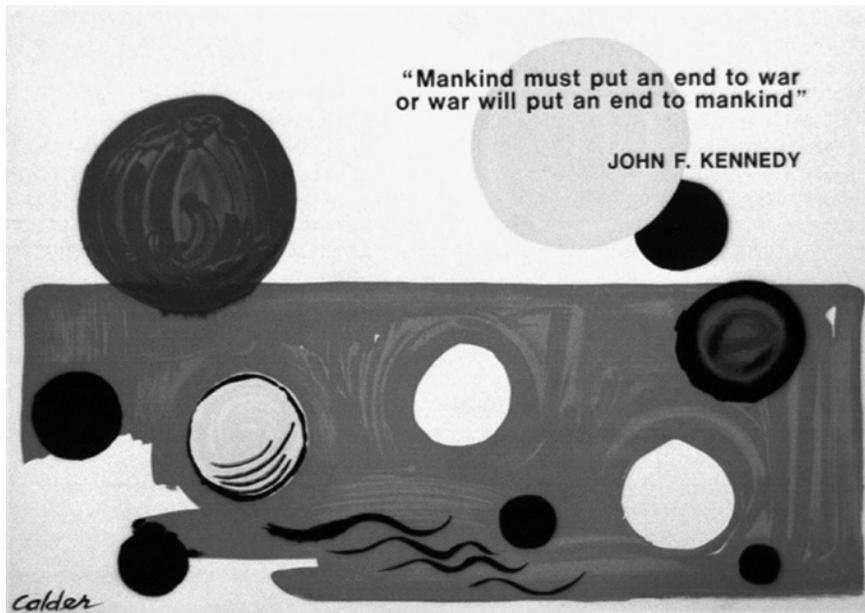
11 Alexander Calder, *Pour le Viet Nam*, 1967. Offset lithograph, 29 ½ x 17 ½ in. ©2012 Calder Foundation, New York/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York. Photo, Calder Foundation, New York/Art Resource, New York

illustrated advertisements was designed to lend these causes the imprimatur of one of America's most famous artists: established, without being stuffily establishment; modern, without risk of alienating more moderate constituents.

Just as the more militant activism of the New Left, such as the Students for a Democratic Society, tended to dominate media coverage of the protest movement, so too has art history tended to focus on the more confrontational tactics of groups such as the Art Worker's Coalition and the Artists' Protest Committee.⁵⁰ Not that Calder

was wholly isolated from counterculture quarters. He was, for instance, a judge for the No More War poster competition that launched Ralph Ginzburg's controversial and caustically antiestablishment *Avant Garde* magazine.⁵¹ Nor did Calder limit his visual response to the war to the otherworldly escape that his abstractions could offer. His 1967 antiwar image *Pour le Viet Nam* (fig. 11) shows a tragic figure rendered in an uncharacteristically expressive wash, its inky drips and blemishes suggesting horrific wounds or burns. It is a potent image, prefiguring the graphic violence of later 1960s photojournalism and operating far from the aesthetic ambiguity of his abstract prints that could, and were, just as easily used for social justice fund-raising as for corporate identity programs.

That, at the same time as all this, Calder was equally happy to lend his voice to the campaigns for Democratic candidates demonstrates his political pragmatism. Posters such as those for Abraham Ribicoff's reelection campaign as senator for Connecticut in 1968 were calculated to be more than merely decorative. Asking for another design from Calder in 1974, Ribicoff's brief was for a poster that would be "a strong, simple graphic statement that reflects boldness and vigor—freshness but with dependability and a sense of direction in troubled times." No doubt hoping to capitalize on the name he shared with America's most famously honest politician, he requested that "the 'Abe' should come through clearly at a glance."⁵² Calder also supported George McGovern's 1972 presidential race. For the 1972 Art for McGovern fund-raiser, Calder produced two new lithographs designed around the candidate's name. He also donated a mobile to the exhibition, priced at twenty-four thousand dollars, which seems to have been among the most expensive works sold in aid of the McGovern campaign.⁵³ Calder also supported the negative campaigning against McGovern's opponent, sponsoring



12 Alexander Calder, *Mankind Must Put an End to War or War Will Put an End to Mankind*, 1975. 18½ x 25 ⅝ in. Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. © 2012 Calder Foundation, New York/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

an advertisement condemning Nixon's conduct in Vietnam that was placed by the National Committee of Impeachment in the *New York Times*.⁵⁴ For Calder, party politics were no less viable an ideological platform than his protest activities—a continuity that is nicely figured in his later use of John F. Kennedy's statement, "Mankind must put an end to war or war will put an end to mankind" in a 1975 poster for SANE (fig. 12).

In at least two cases, Calder's sculptures were titled in a way that drew them into the arsenal of his more ephemeral statements. In 1966 Calder changed the name of *Object in Five Planes* (1965) to *Peace* and donated the full-size stabile to the American delegation to the United Nations, to be displayed at its New York headquarters.⁵⁵ A similar example concerns the stabile installed on the University of California's Berkeley campus in 1969, although Calder's involvement in the change of title is less clear. A note in fine print in the dedication pamphlet attempted to clear up any ambiguity around the name of the work, suggesting that it had been a point of contention: "During its construction . . . *Hawk* went under the name of *Boeing*, a nickname

given to it by the workers. However, since it was conceived as one of a series, and followed *Falcon*, it is officially called *Hawk*."⁵⁶ One wonders if, in the heart of a university campus whose student protests against the Vietnam War had been spurred three years earlier by the presence of military recruiters, the professed misnaming of iron blades after a major supplier of military aircraft was a reference that could not be tolerated for Calder's aggressively taut form. But since those on either side of the Vietnam debate were named doves and hawks, the title was bound to have problematic resonances. When the sculpture was moved to the new Berkeley Art Museum the following year (fig. 13), the predatory suggestions of the work's title were modified for its third incarnation—the suitably paradoxical *The Hawk for Peace*.

Other public incidents in Calder's late career point to conflicts between Calder's politics and the use of his art as a symbol of state power. In 1965 President Johnson's cultural adviser suggested the staging of a one-time White House Arts Festival to show support for the arts. The event was patently political in its motives, designed to recapture the high-profile artistic support that had been enjoyed by Kennedy, the first president to invite cultural leaders (including Calder) to his inauguration.⁵⁷ Instead, the very public withdrawal of the poet Robert Lowell on grounds of his opposition to Vietnam and the printing of his letter refusing the invitation on the front page of the *New York Times* turned the event into an embarrassing media-relations debacle. "Every serious artist knows that he cannot enjoy public celebration without making subtle public commitments," wrote Lowell. "At this anguished, delicate and perhaps determining moment, I feel I am serving you and our country best by not taking part." Among the artists who followed Lowell's suit by refusing the invitation to participate in the festival was Calder.⁵⁸



13 Alexander Calder, *The Hawk for Peace*, 1968. Painted steel, 156 x 132½ x 276 in. Berkeley Art Museum, University of California, Gift of Alexander Calder in Memory of Kenneth Aurand Hayes ©2012 Calder Foundation, New York/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York. Photo, Colin McRae, ca. 1974

However, the White House still managed to undermine Calder's protest. Widely reproduced in newspapers across the country the day before the event, the heroic image chosen to promote the festival showed a ballerina executing a *grand jeté* over Calder's *Whale II* (1937/1964), which had been lent by MoMA. Distributed by Associated Press's wirephoto service, the photograph powerfully visualized an uncontested celebration of elite arts on the steps of the White House—and Calder's sculpture was at its very center. Lowell might have feared that his presence would represent a “subtle

commitment,” but not even this cooperation was required for Calder's art to be called into duty. The event's organizer jubilantly reported that *Whale II* had been sited by J. Carter Brown, director of the National Gallery of Art, such that the works by “Calder and . . . [David] Smith saluted each other.”⁵⁹

The day of the event was no less politicized. John Hersey insisted on reading from his novel *Hiroshima*, and Dwight Macdonald and Thomas Hess harassed attendees to sign an antiwar petition. With everyone talking about “the Lowell problem,” Phyllis McGinley read a new



14 Senator J. William Fulbright and President Lyndon B. Johnson examine Calder's *Whale II* at the White House Festival of the Arts, 1965. Art © 2012 Calder Foundation, New York/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York. Photo, Yoichi Okamoto/Lyndon B. Johnson Library, Austin, Texas

verse telling the audience to “praise poets, even when they’re troublesome.” This was hardly the uplifting apolitical respite that the president sought. He skipped the first eight hours of the event, appearing only briefly to deliver a terse address, leaving the First Lady to manage the maelstrom. But ever attuned to the importance of

media coverage, Johnson, as the event’s organizer later described,

found a reason to call to his office Senator Fulbright, the Rhodes Scholar and Vietnam War critic who was rapidly becoming a hero to “these people.” After the conference the President took the senator for a walk around the White House ground and had a photograph made with the two of them studying Calder’s Whale [II]. The expression on Lyndon Johnson’s face was somewhat enigmatic. But, anyhow, there it was, the picture in all the afternoon papers, LBJ and the Rhodes Scholar Vietnam critic taking an interest in culture together.⁶⁰

Bolstering the image of “Johnsonian consensus” that had become so precarious, the photograph (fig. 14) positioned Calder’s sculpture as the contemplative locus for bipartisan unity.

That Calder and his work were subject to competing and conflicting political positions was nowhere more powerfully demonstrated than by his nomination for the Medal of Freedom by President Gerald Ford. Calder declined, responding to Ford in October 1976:

I was pleased to receive your invitation last week, but felt I could not accept in a case where my acceptance would imply my accord with the harsh treatment meted out to conscientious objectors and deserters. As from the start I was against the war and now am working with “amnesty” I didn’t feel I could come to Washington. When there will be more justice for these men I will feel differinglly [sic].⁶¹

Compounding the explicitly political stance of Calder’s refusal was his acceptance of the French Legion of Honor two years before, an award that had been reported on by the American press.⁶² Ford’s very public support for Calder’s monumental stabile in Grand Rapids, Michigan, the president’s hometown, must also have made the

rebuke sting, failing to repay the generous support that Calder had enjoyed from the government in his late career. *White Cascade* (1975) had just been installed at the Federal Reserve Bank in Philadelphia, and two major new Calder commissions were planned for public buildings in Washington, D.C.—*Untitled* for the National Gallery of Art, and *Mountains and Clouds* for the Hart Senate Building. A few weeks after sending his refusal to Ford, and with the two latter projects incomplete, Calder died on November 11, 1976.

On New Year's Day 1977, Ford announced to the press the longest list of Presidential Medal of Freedom winners since the award had been introduced by President Kennedy in 1963. The twenty-one Americans whom he intended to honor included Nelson Rockefeller, Lady Bird Johnson, and the late Alexander Calder. Little over a week later, the ceremony was held at the White House. Ignoring Calder's refusal to accept the award, Ford awarded Calder the medal anyway. The official citation for his Presidential Medal of Freedom praised the artist in terms that softly implicated his work in American patriotism, praising him for contributing "spirit and vitality to his country" and claiming that "[t]he face of America is richer and more beautiful for the many examples of his imagination which cover it." One cannot help but sense a sly justification for Ford's exploitation of Calder's name when he described Calder's sculpture as "a truly public art," as though the very publicness of his art validated the nation's claim on its politics.⁶³

The *Washington Post* revealed that Louisa Calder's absence from the ceremony represented a "boycott" of the award. "My husband felt and the family feels very strongly about freedom. In our telegram to President Ford we said that freedom should be for everyone," she told the newspaper.⁶⁴ Most newspapers toed the White House line, reporting that

the three missing awardees were simply "unable to attend" and would receive their medals later. The position has been reasserted by the award's official historian, who wrote in 1996 that Calder's award was "delivered at a later date," as though its willing receipt was no less mandatory than the draft itself.⁶⁵ To the very end, the politicization of Calder's art—as a symbol of patriotic freedom and a monument to state power—remained in tension with the dissent that represented its antithesis.

In the Balance

In 1968 Calder's work was included in MoMA's important exhibition *The Machine as Seen at the End of the Mechanical Age*. "This exhibition," wrote the curator, "is dedicated to the mechanical machine, the great creator and destroyer, at a difficult moment in its life."⁶⁶ Its tale of the rise and fall of machine-age utopianism culminated with Jean Tinguely's *Homage to New York* (1960), the kinetic sculpture that had famously performed its shambolic self-destruction in MoMA's courtyard a decade earlier. If Tinguely's sculpture owed some of its form to Calder's prototypes, it hardly shared the modernist optimism of Calder's machines for perpetual motion.

Yet there were intriguing signs that Calder's ebullient abstractions were being drawn into a more problematic position. Calder's *A Universe* (1934) was also included in the exhibition—and almost as if inspired by the collapse of the Tinguely, gave its own performance of failure. As one newspaper reported:

Last week as the lunarnauts sailed home, Alexander Calder's A Universe, 1934 went bust. It was just an accident. The motorized mobile in New York City's Museum of Modern Art had slipped a string. One of the satellites which wound its curving way thru

*an airy, wiry armillary wouldn't move. The museum staff, alert as always, had turned off the switch and placed two ordinary looking cards guaranteed to produce a teleologic shiver: "Do Not Touch," "Out of Order."*⁶⁷

The work was illustrated, and the caption brought home the cosmic disorder symbolized by the accident: "The universe was out of order at the Museum of Modern Art." Unlike the predetermined failure of Tinguely's work, exhibited only via its documentation, the unexpected and very public malfunction of Calder's sculpture could hardly have been more fitting. This mechanical failure served as an accidental epigraph for the exhibition itself.

At the end of the machine age, Calder's claim to produce a powerfully national sculpture was increasingly insecure. Just as the airplane had come to be as powerful a sign for war and destruction as it was for peace, and the skyscraper as much a symbol for alienation as civic aspiration, by the late sixties, Calder's optimistic modernism looked distinctly tarnished—as though the welded seams and haphazard braces in his stables might begin to split from the manifold ideological pressures brought to bear on them. By the time Calder's *Bent Propeller* (1970)—commissioned for New York's most audacious renewal project, the World Trade Center—was crushed on September 11, 2001, the unfortunate prescience of its title made it difficult to see the work's fate as disconnected from America's diminished claims to global hegemony.

The sense that the confident abstraction and formal balance of Calder's sculpture might be compensating for contrary social realities was, however, not a new theme. Writing in 1955, one critic predicted that "Alexander Calder will laugh, one imagines, even in interstellar space. His mobiles and stables bring the refreshing touch of humor to a tensed world."⁶⁸ Albert Elsen's opening remarks for the catalogue of a Calder retrospective in 1974 followed a similar line:

*Life is pleasure or pain, sanity or insanity, peace or turbulence. Our existence teeters between winning and losing balance. We struggle to accommodate unexpected events, to temper security with risk or the reverse. When did we last read a newspaper that did not warn of imperilled relationships of ecology, monetary and stock markets, missile systems and branches of government? Détente and the Gallup Poll are synonymous with shifting power confrontations. . . . The artist who can realize the vision of a harmonious existence has our attention.*⁶⁹

Elsen may have considered the balance of Calder's sculpture an antidote for unstable times, but his inability to see Calder's sculpture outside the contradictions and conflicts of their social context is telling, for it was precisely "shifting power confrontations" that underpinned many of the public uses of Calder sculpture.⁷⁰ Even aside from the explicitly ideological stance taken by specific Calder works, his art was inevitably understood via the media representations of his sociopolitical position, a space in which resistance could coexist with the various endorsements constructed by his patrons. At once a symbol of freedom and patriotism and a contradictory expression of dissent and protest, Calder's late work was indeed characterized by unstable motives.

As abstract design became an increasingly familiar mode of communication in twentieth-century visual culture, the entanglement of an art of apparently purely formal elements—shape, color, and movement—in the business of politics importantly demonstrates the powerfully propagandist role that had emerged for abstraction under industrialized capitalism. Preeminently suited to the demands of communicative flexibility, Calder's art slipped as smoothly into the role of propagandist as it did into that of activist. If totalitarian regimes embraced realist art for its ability to support the social order of the state didactically—as in Clement Greenberg's famous account,

whereby avant-garde art is “too difficult to inject effective propaganda into”⁷¹—Calder provides a crucial complication at the opposite aesthetic extreme, where the apparent symbolic emptiness of abstraction made it not simply vulnerable to being co-opted but able to be used simultaneously by the most diametrically opposed politics.

In an interview in 1973, Calder seemed certain that art should not attempt to represent the very tragedies that he sought to prevent through his advocacy for peace and freedom: “I do not think . . . that an artist can represent, in sculpture, tragedies such as Pearl Harbor, the atomic bomb or war in general.”⁷² Here, his concerns about the unrepresentability of atrocity echo those of many others—from Dwight Macdonald’s criticism of the “moral deficiency” of the naturalism of John Hersey’s *Hiroshima* to, most notoriously,

Theodor Adorno’s claim that to write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric. But abstraction far from guaranteed the apolitical art that Calder, and many of his subsequent interpreters, may have preferred. Calder might rarely have depicted the conflicts of his time, but far from being disengaged from such events, his art was inextricably linked to the negotiation of power in mid- to late twentieth-century America. As Serge Guilbaut has memorably termed the paradox in relation to abstract expressionism, “an art whose stubborn will to remain apolitical became, for that very reason, a powerful instrument of propaganda . . . for art to be politicized it had to be apolitical.”⁷³ Serving contradictory ends in the struggles of Vietnam and the Cold War, the uses to which Calder’s art were put became more entangled in the ideological terrain of postwar America than he might have liked to imagine.

Notes

1 Jean-Paul Sartre, *Essays in Aesthetics*, trans. Wade Baskin (London: Peter Owen, 1964), 90. Calder scholarship is dominated by essays commissioned for museum exhibition catalogues. While not properly formalist, their reverent tone has often excluded more critical perspectives. Jed Perl, the art critic of the *New Republic* and author of a planned biography of Calder, exemplifies such hagiographic tendencies. See, for instance, Perl, “Calder’s Imagination,” in A. S. C. Rower, *Calder: Sculptor of Air* (Milan: Motta, 2009). A corresponding anti-intellectual current is typified by Lynne Warren’s recent claim that “One needn’t read the Kabbalah, plumb artist statements or manifestos, have read philosophy, delve into the psycho-sexual depths of an artist’s autobiography, or be conversant with the socio-political context of the artwork to appreciate a Calder.” Warren, “Alexander Calder and Contemporary Art,” in *Alexander Calder and Contemporary Art: Form,*

Balance, Joy, ed. Warren (New York: Thames and Hudson, 2010), 21.

2 One of the few dedicated surveys of Calder’s late work is Joan Marter, “Alexander Calder’s Stabiles: Monumental Public Sculpture in America,” *American Art Journal* 11, no. 3 (July 1979): 75–85. The now voluminous and rich scholarship on Calder’s early career includes *Alexander Calder: The Paris Years* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 2008); Mark Rosenthal, *The Surreal Calder* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 2005); Susan Davidson, *Yves Tanguy and Alexander Calder: Between Surrealism and Abstraction* (New York: L&M Arts, 2010); and Elizabeth Hutton Turner and Oliver Wick, *Calder/Miró* (London: Philip Wilson Publishers in collaboration with the Phillips Collection and Fondation Beyeler, 2004). Other more specifically sociohistorical accounts of Calder’s early career in America include Joan Marter, “The Engineer behind Alexander Calder’s Art,” *Mechanical*

Engineering, December 1998, 52–57; and L. Joy Sperleng, “The Popular Sources of Calder’s Circus,” *Journal of American Culture* 17, no. 4 (2004): 1–14.

3 See the essays collected in Jane Beckett and Fiona Russell, eds., *Henry Moore: Critical Essays* (Aldershot, U.K.: Ashgate, 2003); and Anne Middleton Wagner, *Mother Stone: The Vitality of Modern British Sculpture* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 2005).

4 The phrase “cultural cold war” comes from Frances Stonor Saunders, *The Cultural Cold War: The CIA and the World of Arts and Letters* (New York: New Press, 2000). Useful surveys of Cold War scholarship on American painting include Francis Frascina, “Looking Forward, Looking Back: 1985–1999,” in *Pollock and After: The Critical Debate*, ed. Frascina, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2000), 1–25; and Ellen G. Landau, “Abstract Expressionism: Changing

- Methodologies for Interpreting Meaning,” in *Reading Abstract Expressionism: Context and Critique*, ed. Landau (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 2005), 1–121.
- 5 Quoted in Selden Rodman, *Conversations with Artists* (New York: Capricorn Books, 1961), 140.
 - 6 *Cultural Diplomacy: An Art We Neglect* was first seen at Christopher Grimes Gallery, Los Angeles, May 23–July 3, 2009. The exhibition was shown again at Henrique Faria Fine Art, New York, October 14–November 13, 2010. The recent touring exhibition *Alexander Calder and Contemporary Art*, which pairs contemporary practice with Calder originals, excludes Yazbeck’s work. The catalogue claims Yazbeck’s art merely “refers to Calder . . . in the archetypal postmodern way.” Warren, “Alexander Calder and Contemporary Art,” 25.
 - 7 Calder’s position in the propagandist program of this complex is well captured in Monica Boulton, “The Politics of Abstraction: The Tenth Inter-American Conference Caracas, Venezuela, 1954,” *Latin Americanist* 52, no. 1 (2008): 85.
 - 8 In the essays collected in Frascina’s *Pollock and After*, for instance, Calder is mentioned only in Michael Kimmelman’s 1994 counterrevisionist essay commissioned by MoMA in response to the allegations of earlier scholarship. See Kimmelman, “Revisiting the Revisionists: The Modern, Its Critics, and the Cold War,” in *Pollock and After: The Critical Debate*, 294–306, esp. 297–99.
 - 9 Gay McDonald, “Selling the American Dream: MoMA, Industrial Design and Post-War France,” *Journal of Design History* 17, no. 4 (2004): 409. The complaint is not new: the “marginalized” position of sculpture in this scholarship was also alleged in Joan Marter, “Postwar Sculpture Re/Viewed,” *Art Journal* 53, no. 4 (1994): 20.
 - 10 Aline B. Louchheim, “11 Sculptors Will Represent U.S. at International Contest in London,” *New York Times*, January 28, 1953, 29.
 - 11 Marla Prather, “1953–1976,” in Prather, A. S. C. Rower, and Pierre Arnould, *Alexander Calder, 1898–1976* (Washington, D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 1998), 279.
 - 12 Aline B. Louchheim, “Cultural Diplomacy: An Art We Neglect,” *New York Times*, January 3, 1954, SM36; Aline B. Louchheim, “Modern Art Fete Excites São Paulo: Calder Shares Honors with Picasso,” *New York Times*, December 1, 1953, J2.
 - 13 Nelson A. Rockefeller was both MoMA’s president and the treasurer of the Rockefeller Brothers Fund. See Helen M. Franc, “The Early Years of the International Program and Council,” in *The Museum of Modern Art at Mid-Century: At Home and Abroad*, ed. John Elderfield (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1994), 109–49.
 - 14 Press Office, “Report on Activities of Museum of Modern Art’s International Exhibition Program,” Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1956.
 - 15 Serge Guilbaut, “Ménage à trois: Paris, New York, São Paulo, and the Love of Modern Art,” in *Internationalizing the History of American Art*, ed. Barbara Groseclose and Jochen Wierich (University Park: Pennsylvania State Univ. Press, 2009), 160, 165. The disputed degree of “collusion” between MoMA and the United States Information Agency is described in Nancy Jachec, “Abstract Expressionism and the International Council,” in *The Philosophy and Politics of Abstract Expressionism, 1940–1960* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2000), 157–209.
 - 16 “Art of U.S. Is Shown at Museum in Paris,” *New York Times*, April 25, 1953, 13. *Modern Art in the United States: A Selection from the Collections of the Museum of Modern Art, New York* (London: Tate Gallery, 1956). Franc, “The Early Years of the International Program and Council,” 126–28. *Documenta* (Munich: Prestel-Verlag, 1955) lists five Calder works, whereas *Documenta II—Skulptur* (Cologne: Verlag M. DuMont Schauberg, 1959) lists four.
 - 17 “Moscow to See Modern U.S. Art,” *New York Times*, May 31, 1959, 60. “U.S. Abstract Art Arouses Russians,” *New York Times*, June 11, 1959, 3. Alfred H. Barr, “Is Modern Art Communistic?” *New York Times Magazine*, December 14, 1952, 22.
 - 18 Exposition Universelle et Internationale de Bruxelles, *50 ans d’art moderne* (Brussels: Éditions de la Connaissance, 1958) lists two Calder works.
 - 19 Robert H. Haddow, *Pavilions of Plenty: Exhibiting American Culture Abroad in the 1950s* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1997), 89. Victoria de Grazia, *Irresistible Empire: America’s Advance through Twentieth-Century Europe* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 2007), 353.
 - 20 “Our Image at Brussels,” *Life*, July 14, 1958, 44.
 - 21 Frank Seiberling, *Looking into Art* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1959), 202. René d’Harnoncourt, “Challenge and Promise: Modern Art and Modern Society,” *Magazine of Art* 41, no. 7 (1948): 252.
 - 22 Clement Greenberg, “The European View of American Art,” in *The Collected Essays and Criticism*, vol. 3, *Affirmations and Refusals, 1950–1956*, ed. John O’Brian (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1995), 61.
 - 23 Sigfried Giedion, *Mechanization Takes Command: A Contribution to Anonymous History* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1948), 476–77.
 - 24 Quoted in Jane Loeffler, “The Architecture of Diplomacy: Heyday of the United States Embassy-Building Program, 1954–1960,” *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 49, no. 3 (1990): 251.
 - 25 Josep Lluís Sert, “Drawings, Plans and Project-Related Material: United States Embassy—Baghdad,” Josep Lluís Sert Collection, Frances Loeb Library, Harvard Design School, Folder B019b. On Sert’s building, see Samuel Isenstadt, “‘Faith in a Better Future’: Josep Lluís Sert’s American Embassy in Baghdad,” *Journal of Architectural Education* 50, no. 3 (1997): 172–88. Donna M. Binkiewicz, *Federalizing the Muse: United States Arts Policy and the National Endowment for the Arts, 1965–1980* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 2004), 157–58. Grace Glueck, “Home-Grown Art Blooms in U.S. Missions,” *New York Times*, July 6, 1965, 1.
 - 26 David Craven, *Abstract Expressionism as Cultural Critique: Dissent during*

- the McCarthy Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1999), 10. Some of Calder's files, obtained via Freedom of Information requests by a *New York Times* journalist, are outlined in Herbert Mitgang, *Dangerous Dossiers: Exposing the Secret War against America's Greatest Authors* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1989), 208–12. "Information from the Files of the Committee on Un-American Activities, United States House of Representatives," Cong. Rec. H3521 (April 4, 1952). The other artists from the exhibition listed as having files were Antonio Frasconi, Milton Goldstein, Robert Gwathmey, Leona Pierce, William Rose, Alfred Russell, and Louis Schanker.
- 27 Alexander Calder, *Alexander Calder: An Autobiography with Pictures* (London: Allen Lane, 1967), 185.
- 28 Ben Shahn, "The Artist and the Politicians," *Art News* 52, no. 5 (1953): 35. Congress accused Shahn of having communist sympathies, and he lost commercial illustration work as a result. Calder was also friends with the black-listed actor Burgess Meredith, who narrated the film *Works of Calder* and for whom Calder designed sets for a 1950 musical.
- 29 Fraser MacDonald, "Paul Strand and the Atlanticist Cold War," *History of Photography* 28, no. 4 (2004): 362.
- 30 Calder is listed among the "American Committee" in the group's advertisement "We Put Freedom First," *New York Times*, April 1, 1951, 169. Others listed include Clement Greenberg and Robert Motherwell.
- 31 *XXth Century Masterpieces* (London: Congress for Cultural Freedom with the Arts Council, 1952), 4.
- 32 Michael Gibson, *Calder* (London: Art Data, 1988), 74.
- 33 Quoted in *ibid.*, 93.
- 34 John Russell, "Calder's Universe Enlivens Ark," *New York Times*, October 14, 1976, 43.
- 35 Calder, *Calder: An Autobiography with Pictures*, 158.
- 36 For a detailed account of the project, see Phyllis Tuchman, "Alexander Calder's Almadén Mercury Fountain," *Marsyas* 16 (1972–73): 97–106. Tuchman criticizes inaccuracies in another account, which makes an exception of its politics by claiming that "Although Calder has little interest in politics or world affairs, he did on one occasion, in the interest of art, pose as a Spanish Loyalist." Geoffrey Hellman, "Everything Is Mobile," *New Yorker*, October 4, 1941, 29. For the quote, see Matthew Baigell and Julia Williams, eds., *Artists against War and Fascism: Papers of the First American Artists Congress* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers Univ. Press, 1986), 34. Calder has been characterized as a "liberal" among the leftist majority of the congress, which was later used by HUAC as evidence of artists' communist sympathies. See Andrew Hemingway, *Artists on the Left: American Artists and the Communist Movement, 1926–1956* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 2002), 123.
- 37 Jacques Guicharnaud, *Modern French Theatre: From Giraudoux to Genet* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1967), 177. Dorothy Seiberling, "Calder: His Gyrating 'Mobile' Art Wins International Fame and Prizes," *Lifé*, August 25, 1952, 86.
- 38 Henri Pichette, *Nucléa* (Paris: Théâtre National Populaire, 1952), 38: "la poudre de guerre parle le plus pur langage de la diplomatie."
- 39 Advertisement, "America Needs a New Foreign Policy," *New York Times*, October 16, 1958, 40.
- 40 Mitgang, *Dangerous Dossiers*, 211.
- 41 Leonard Folgarait, *So Far from Heaven: David Alfaro Siqueiros' The March of Humanity and Mexican Revolutionary Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1987), 19, 39–44.
- 42 Sheila Isenberg, *A Hero of Our Own: The Story of Varian Fry* (New York: Random House, 2005), 326.
- 43 Advertisement, "An Appeal to American Jews from Pablo Casals," *Commentary* 48, no. 6 (1969): 22.
- 44 Nancy Macdonald, *Homage to the Spanish Exiles: Voices from the Spanish Civil War* (New York: Insight Books, 1987), 146–48.
- 45 Advertisement, "A New Year, Hope for New World," *New York Times*, January 2, 1966, 137. "Branch of SANE Formed in Paris," *Herald-Tribune*, June 25, 1966, 19.
- 46 Advertisement, "On Vietnam," *New York Times*, June 5, 1966, 208.
- 47 Jean Lipman, *Calder's Universe* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1977), 337. The photograph of Calder protesting is available at <http://www.gettyimages.com/detail/95576582/Premium-Archive>.
- 48 Other signatories included Allen Ginsberg, Dwight Macdonald, Benjamin Spock, Noam Chomsky, and Herbert Marcuse. See Michael Foley, *Confronting the War Machine: Draft Resistance during the Vietnam War* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 2003), 95.
- 49 "Respectable and decorous": David Levy, *The Debate over Vietnam* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1995), 135. "Middle-class . . . and dignity and restraint": Milton Katz, "Peace Liberals and Vietnam: SANE and the Politics of 'Responsible' Protest," *Peace and Change* 9, nos. 2–3 (1983): 21, 24. Mitchell Goodman, "The Line of Most Resistance," *New York Times*, March 31, 1968, SM138.
- 50 Such radical practices are well documented in Francis Frascina, *Art, Politics and Dissent: Aspects of the Art Left in Sixties America* (Manchester: Manchester Univ. Press, 1999); and Julia Bryan-Wilson, *Art Workers: Radical Practice in the Vietnam War Era* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 2009).
- 51 Calder's judging of the No More War poster competition was advertised on the rear cover of *Avant Garde*, January 1968.
- 52 Quoted in Eric M. Zafran, *Calder in Connecticut* (New York: Rizzoli International Publications in association with Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, 2000), 153.
- 53 Both lithographs were illustrated in William Wilson, "A Graphic Gallery of Political Palettes," *Los Angeles Times*, October 26, 1972, C1. Jean Kennedy, the wife of Ted Kennedy, was photographed looking at one of the posters in the *Washington Post*. See Sally Quinn, "The Scene: This, That and the Other Thing Night for McGovern,"

- Washington Post*, September 22, 1972, 1. The price of Calder's mobile is listed in Paul Richard, "The Sale: Flashy List of Backers," *Washington Post*, September 22, 1972, 1. Diana Loercher, "'Apolitical' Artists Give for McGovern," *Christian Science Monitor*, September 25, 1972, 6, notes that "the most expensive work sold as of this writing rang up \$24,000." The total profit of the sale was "nearly \$100,000."
- 54 See George Gent, "Presidential Campaign Stirs the Arts Communities," *New York Times*, September 26, 1972, 42. National Committee for Impeachment, advertisement, "A Resolution to Impeach Richard M. Nixon as President of the United States," *New York Times*, May 31, 1972, 23.
- 55 This is despite Calder's insistence on the insignificance of his titles. See, for instance, Gibson, *Calder*, 12. "U.S. Mission to U.N. Gets Calder Gift," *New York Times*, February 8, 1966, 34. See also A. S. C. Rower, "Plaques d'immatriculation," in *Alexander Calder, 1898–1976* (Paris: Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, 1996), 38.
- 56 Herschel B. Chipp, "Dedication," in [*Dedication of the Hawk*] (Berkeley: Univ. of California, 1970), unpaginated. I am grateful for the assistance of Steven Smith in locating this source.
- 57 "Kennedys Invite Leaders in Arts," *New York Times*, January 15, 1961, 32.
- 58 The White House Arts Festival affair is described in David A. Smith, *Money for Art: The Tangled Web of Art and Politics in American Democracy* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2008), 74–75; and Gary O. Larson, *The Reluctant Patron: The United States Government and the Arts, 1943–1965* (Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 1983), 208–13. Quoted in Richard F. Shepard, "Robert Lowell Rebuffs Johnson as Protest over Foreign Policy," *New York Times*, June 3, 1965, 2. According to Dwight Macdonald, Calder's refusal was "because of our present foreign policy." Macdonald, "A Day at the White House," *New York Review of Books*, July 15, 1965, 11.
- 59 For an example of the use of the image, see "White House Arts Festival on Today; Some Won't Attend," *Chicago Tribune*, June 14, 1965, 3. Eric F. Goldman, "The White House and the Intellectuals," *Harper's Magazine*, January 1969, 43.
- 60 Goldman, "The White House and the Intellectuals," 44.
- 61 "Letter from Alexander Calder to Gerald Ford." Calder Foundation, <http://calder.org/chronology/period/1953-1976/230>. Calder contributed a lithograph for Amnesty International's portfolio for the Year of Prisoners of Conscience (1977).
- 62 Albin Krebs, "Notes on People," *New York Times*, February 6, 1974, 43.
- 63 Bruce Wetterau, *The Presidential Medal of Freedom: Winners and Their Achievements* (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly, 1996), 225.
- 64 Quoted in Jacqueline Trescott, "The Medal of Freedom Awards," *Washington Post*, January 11, 1977, B1.
- 65 Wetterau, *The Presidential Medal of Freedom*, 226.
- 66 Pontus Hulten, *The Machine as Seen at the End of the Mechanical Age* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1968), 6.
- 67 Thomas Willis, "Playful Terrors of Our Time," *Chicago Tribune*, January 5, 1969, F2.
- 68 William Sener Rusk, "New Ways of Seeing," *College Art Journal* 15, no. 1 (1955): 44.
- 69 Albert Elsen, *Alexander Calder: A Retrospective Exhibition* (Chicago: Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, 1974), unpaginated.
- 70 Such meanings remain contested. Quoting Lisa Ann Favero's opinion that Yazbeck's *UNstabile Mobile* (2007) embodied the "heightened instability" of the Iraq war (Favero, *Sculpture* 26, no. 8 [October 2007]: 75), Warren (*Alexander Calder and Contemporary Art*, 27n16) responded that "the writer perhaps never has the opportunity to observe that Calder mobiles, while undoubtedly kinetic, are hardly unstable."
- 71 Clement Greenberg, "Avant Garde and Kitsch," in *The Collected Essays and Criticism*, vol. 2, *Perceptions and Judgements, 1939–1944*, ed. John O'Brian (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1986), 20.
- 72 Quoted in Maurice Bruzeau, *Calder* (New York: Harry Abrams, 1979), 49.
- 73 Serge Guilbaut, "The New Adventures of the Avant-Garde in America: Greenberg, Pollock, or from Trotskyism to the New Liberalism of the 'Vital Center,'" *October* 15 (Winter 1980): 75.