



Smithsonian  
*Archives of American Art*

A Finding Aid to the Alexander Calder Papers,  
1926-1967, in the Archives of American Art

Erin Corley

Funding for the processing and digitization of this collection  
was provided by the Terra Foundation for American Art.

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Archives of American Art  
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<https://www.aaa.si.edu/services/questions>  
<https://www.aaa.si.edu/>

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## Collection Overview

<b>Repository:</b>	Archives of American Art
<b>Title:</b>	Alexander Calder papers
<b>Identifier:</b>	AAA.caldalex
<b>Date:</b>	1926-1967
<b>Extent:</b>	2.5 linear feet
<b>Creator:</b>	Calder, Alexander, 1898-1976
<b>Language:</b>	English
<b>Summary:</b>	The papers of abstract kinetic artist and sculptor Alexander Calder measure 2.5 linear feet and date from 1926 to 1967. Found within the papers are scattered biographical materials, correspondence, printed materials, photographs, scattered prints and sketches by Calder, and a scrapbook. Of particular interest are the numerous photographs of Calder, including many of Calder at work in his studios, with his family at their home in Touraine, France, exhibitions, and artwork. Among the photographs are several taken by photographer and artist Herbert Matter and a photograph of Pierre Matisse at Calder's home.

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## Administrative Information

### Provenance

The collection was donated in 1963 by Alexander Calder and was microfilmed shortly after receipt.

### Related Material

The Archives also has a transcribed interview of Alexander Calder, conducted October 26, 1971 by Paul Cummings for the Archives of American Art.

### Alternative Forms Available

The papers of **Alexander Calder** were digitized in 2005 by the Archives of American Art, and total 1,086 images.

### Processing Information

The collection received preliminary processing at some point after donation and the collection was microfilmed on reel D305. It was fully processed, arranged and described by Erin Corley and scanned in 2005, with funding provided by the Terra Foundation for American Art.

### Preferred Citation

Alexander Calder papers, 1926-1967. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

## Restrictions on Access

The collection has been digitized and is available online via AAA's website.

## Ownership and Literary Rights

The Alexander Calder papers are owned by the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. Literary rights as possessed by the donor have been dedicated to public use for research, study, and scholarship. The collection is subject to all copyright laws.

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## Biographical Note

Sculptor and kinetic artist Alexander Calder was born in Lawnton, Pennsylvania. As the son of two artists, he was encouraged to sculpt and construct things in his own workshop at an early age. In 1919 he graduated from Stevens Institute of Technology with a degree in mechanical engineering, and after holding several jobs, he decided to take classes at the Art Students League in New York City. He began exhibiting his paintings, but also focused on drawing, illustration, and wood and wire sculpture. In 1926 Calder moved to Paris and began making toys for his performance piece, "Cirque Calder." He married Louisa James in 1931 and exhibited his mobiles for the first time the same year. He continued to spend his time between New York and Paris, and he and Louisa also bought a farm in Roxbury, Connecticut. They had two children, Sandra and Mary. Calder befriended many influential artists, including Joan Mirò, Fernand Léger, Marcel Duchamp, and Yves Tanguy, and joined the Abstraction-Création group in 1931. He exhibited and worked on commissions extensively throughout his career. As a very prolific artist, he had alliances with several galleries, including the Pierre Matisse Gallery in New York. Later in his career, Calder began focusing on large-scale outdoor sculptures. He died in 1976 at the age of 78.

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## Scope and Content Note

The papers of abstract kinetic artist and sculptor Alexander Calder measure 2.5 linear feet and date from 1926 to 1967. Found within the papers are scattered biographical materials, correspondence, printed materials, photographs, scattered prints and sketches by Calder, and a scrapbook. Of particular interest are the numerous photographs of Calder, including many of Calder at work in his studios, with his family at their home in Touraine, France, exhibitions, and artwork. Among the photographs are several taken by photographer and artist Herbert Matter and a photograph of Pierre Matisse at Calder's home.

Biographical material contains a few of Calder's personal documents, including a passport and address lists, as well as writings. Correspondence is scattered and of a general nature, including letters about exhibitions and artwork, and postcards from friends, some of which are illustrated. The printed material contains exhibition invitations and catalogs, news clippings, and magazines, primarily about Calder's career. Also found is scattered artwork by Calder and others, and a scrapbook of news clippings dating from 1926-1932.

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## Arrangement

The Alexander Calder papers are arranged into six series, according to type of material. The contents of each folder have been arranged chronologically.

- Series 1: Biographical Material, 1928-1954, undated(Box 1; 8 folders)

- Series 2: Correspondence, 1928-1962, undated (Box 1; 3 folders)
- Series 3: Printed Material, 1927-1967, undated (Box 1-3; 1 linear foot)
- Series 4: Photographs, 1927-1962, undated (Box 3-6; 0.6 linear feet)
- Series 5: Artwork, 1930-1947, undated (Box 5-6; 1 folder)
- Series 6: Scrapbook, 1926-1932 (Box 7; 1 item)

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## Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:

Subjects:

Sculptors  
Sculpture, American  
Sculpture, Modern -- 20th century

Types of Materials:

Photographs  
Scrapbooks  
Sketches

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## Container Listing

### Series 1: Biographical Material, 1928-1954, undated

*(Box 1; 8 folders)*

Biographical Material includes various address lists and business cards kept by Calder, his passport, notes, a catalog with handwritten prices, and other writings. Also found are a French tax document and other ephemera.

Box 1, Folder 1	Address Lists, undated <a href="#">Image(s)</a>
Box 1, Folder 2	Annotated Catalog with Prices, 1929 <a href="#">Image(s)</a>
Box 1, Folder 3	Business Cards, undated <a href="#">Image(s)</a>
Box 1, Folder 4	Ephemera, 1929-1943, undated <a href="#">Image(s)</a> (Partially scanned)
Box 1, Folder 5	Notes, undated <a href="#">Image(s)</a>
Box 1, Folder 6	Tax Document, 1931 <a href="#">Image(s)</a>
Box 1, Folder 7	U.S. Passport, 1928 <a href="#">Image(s)</a>
Box 1, Folder 8	Writings by Calder and Others, 1954, undated <a href="#">Image(s)</a>

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## Series 2: Correspondence, 1928-1962, undated

*(Box 1; 3 folders)*

This series includes correspondence to and from Calder. Much of the material is about exhibitions and works of art; also found are several postcards from friends. The series contains illustrated envelopes from Calder's son-in-law, Jean Davidson. Some items are in French.

Box 1, Folder 9-10      Correspondence, 1928-1962, undated  
*(2 folders)*

[Image\(s\)](#)

[Image\(s\)](#)

Box 1, Folder 11      Illustrated Envelopes from Jean Davidson, undated

[Image\(s\)](#)

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## Series 3: Printed Material, 1927-1967, undated

*(Box 1-3; 1 linear foot)*

Included in this series are invitations and catalogs for Calder exhibitions, including some international and rare items, news clippings about Calder, the bulk of which span from 1953 to 1955, and other miscellaneous news clippings compiled by Calder. Also found are various magazines and a publication on graphic arts.

- |                     |  |
|---------------------|--|
| Box 1, Folder 12-16 | Exhibition Invitations and Catalogs, 1929-1967, undated<br><i>(5 folders)</i><br><a href="#">Image(s)</a><br><a href="#">Image(s)</a><br><a href="#">Image(s)</a><br><a href="#">Image(s)</a><br><a href="#">Image(s)</a>  |
| Box 1, Folder 17    | News Clippings, Calder, undated<br><a href="#">Image(s)</a>  |
| Box 2, Folder 1-12  | News Clippings, Calder, 1927-1955<br><i>(12 folders)</i><br><a href="#">Image(s)</a><br><a href="#">Image(s)</a><br><a href="#">Image(s)</a><br><a href="#">Image(s)</a><br><a href="#">Image(s)</a><br><a href="#">Image(s)</a><br><a href="#">Image(s)</a><br><a href="#">Image(s)</a><br><a href="#">Image(s)</a><br><a href="#">Image(s)</a><br><a href="#">Image(s)</a><br><a href="#">Image(s)</a><br><a href="#">Image(s)</a> |
| Box 3, Folder 1-3   | News Clippings, Calder, 1955-1960<br><i>(3 folders)</i><br><a href="#">Image(s)</a><br><a href="#">Image(s)</a><br><a href="#">Image(s)</a>  |
| Box 3, Folder 4-5   | News Clippings, Miscellaneous, 1929-1954, undated<br><i>(2 folders; not scanned)</i>   |
| Box 3, Folder 6-8   | Magazines, Miscellaneous, 1953-1956, undated<br><i>(3 folders; not scanned)</i>  |
| Box 3, Folder 9     | <i>Portfolio: The Annual of Graphic Arts, , 1951</i>   |



*(Not scanned)*

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## Series 4: Photographs, 1927-1962, undated

*(Box 3-6; 0.6 linear feet)*

This series contains photographs of Calder, including formal portraits, Calder working in his studio, and spending time with his family. Among the photographs are several taken by photographer and artist Herbert Matter. Also found are numerous photographs of Calder at work on an unidentified mobile sculpture from 1954. This series also includes photographs of Calder's Home in Touraine, France, his studio, exhibitions, and his artwork.

Box 3, Folder 10	Portraits of Calder, circa 1927- circa 1960, undated <i>(See Also Box 6)</i> <a href="#">Image(s)</a>
Box 4, Folder 1-2	Calder at Work, 1927-1956, undated <i>(2 folders; see also Box 6)</i> <a href="#">Image(s)</a> <a href="#">Image(s)</a>
Box 4, Folder 3-4	Calder at Work on Mobile, 1954 <i>(2 folders)</i> <a href="#">Image(s)</a>
Box 4, Folder 5	Calder's Home at Touraine, France, circa 1953 <a href="#">Image(s)</a>
Box 4, Folder 6-8	Calder with Family and Friends, 1932-1962, undated <i>(3 folders; see also Box 6)</i> <a href="#">Image(s)</a> <a href="#">Image(s)</a> <a href="#">Image(s)</a>
Box 4, Folder 9	Calder's Studio, 1939-1946, undated <i>(See Also Box 6)</i> <a href="#">Image(s)</a>
Box 5, Folder 1	Pierre Matisse at Calder's Home in France, undated <a href="#">Image(s)</a>
Box 5, Folder 2	Exhibitions, 1953-1959, undated <a href="#">Image(s)</a>
Box 5, Folder 3-4	Photographs of Artwork, 1929-1958, undated <i>(2 folders; not scanned; see also Box 6)</i>
Box 6 (sol)	Oversize Photographs, Portraits of Calder <i>(See Box 3, F10)</i>
Box 6 (sol)	Oversize Photographs, Calder at Work <i>(See Box 4, F2)</i>
Box 6 (sol)	Oversize Photographs, Calder with Family and Friends

*(See Box 4, F8)*

Box 6 (sol)      Oversize Photographs, Calder's Studio  
*(See Box 4, F9)*

Box 6 (sol)      Oversize Photographs, Artwork  
*(See Box 5, F4)*

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## Series 5: Artwork, 1930-1947, undated

*(Box 5-6; 1 folder)*

Artwork includes lino cut prints sent to Calder from his nephew, Kenneth Hayes, as well as prints and sketches by Calder. Also found are three Japanese prints by an unidentified artist.

Box 5, Folder 5            Artwork, 1930-1947, undated  
                                  (See Also Box 6)  
                                  [Image\(s\)](#)

Box 6 (sol)                Oversize Artwork, 1930-1947, undated  
                                  (See Box 5, F5)

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## Series 6: Scrapbook, 1926-1932

*(Box 7; 1 item)*

This series includes one scrapbook, originally a Chinese ledger notebook, containing newspaper clippings about Calder dating from 1926-1932, although it is marked "1929".

Box 7 (sol), Folder 1      Scrapbook, 1926-1932  
[Image\(s\)](#)

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