
Alexander Calder: !Mira qué artista!

Report by: Lise Jones

Encouraging children to have an interest in culture can be a tough challenge, and trawling around endless galleries can have an adverse effect on their appreciation of art. This appealing and entertaining book serves a dual function, providing comprehensive information on American artist Alexander Calder, as well as serving as a stimulus to young artists. There is a biography of Calder, together with beautifully presented examples of his work, and a wealth of ideas and materials designed to encourage the creative process, all in an easily accessible form.

Alexander Calder is most famous as the inventor of the hanging 'mobile' sculpture, and he also created incredible vast metal 'stabiles', created a miniature circus, made toys, sculpted in wire, designed jewellery, and decorated planes and cars. His work is typified by the use of vivid colours and has a naive, childlike and playful quality about it, which is pleasingly reflected in this book.

The design and layout of the book immediately appeals to the senses, providing a visual and tactile feast. The lighthearted way in which the works are presented is true to Calder's ethos. To demonstrate Calder's stabiles, a red sculpture strides across two pages, inviting the reader to turn the book around and view it from all angles. Another page opens to reveal the Cirque Calder, complete with flagpoles and tightrope, and miniature press out cardboard performers to animate the circus are included in the back of the book, along with 'found objects' to use in sculptures. There is even a metal chain to encourage budding artists to experiment and produce their own profile sculptures.

A great introduction to modern art, the book works on different levels to appeal to children of various ages, making this a volume that readers will want to keep and revisit for future reference. The informative text puts Calder's work into historical context, stimulating questions about other artists and movements. The interactive elements of the book are beautifully realised, encouraging participation and experimentation. The scope of Calder's art ranges from the miniature to the monumental, and the materials he used are often humble and every day, opening up a world of possibility for the young artist. Calder's humorous and joyful attitude are captured and reflected admirably in the design and text of this book, and its irresistible playfulness and tactile qualities will bring out the child in anyone.

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