

The Originator of the Art Mobile: Alexander Calder

By: Tammy Duffy: April 19, 2014



Photos by Tammy Duffy

Princeton University began building an art collection decades ago as a manifestation to its commitment to modern art. This came about largely through the John B. Putnam Jr. Memorial Collection. The Putnam Collection was committed to collecting works from the “Modern Masters”. Placing art at the campus is a way of placing art in the way of every day experiences. This is a wonderful way of enhancing the campus experience. There is already one piece in the collection by Calder which gives the University the opportunity to expand on a campus exhibition with these two pieces on loan. Right now in front of the Princeton Art Museum there are two Calder sculptures on display. They are on loan from the Fisher Family Collection. The two pieces are entitled, *Man* (1967) and *Man and the Kite that Never Flew* (1967). The Fisher family collection which was started by Doris and the late Donald Fisher, who co-founded the Gap Inc., have grown their collection to a status of being one of the world’s most important collections of modern and contemporary art. The Fisher’s have been extremely supportive of Princeton University for over four decades.

What is especially fascinating about Calder’s work is that he worked in two idioms. He is one of the most innovative and important inventors of the art mobiles, stabiles and 20th century art. He really took into consideration in his work the use of mass, volume, open space and void. Using this rather scientific approach, this seems ever so appropriate, in the home of Einstein, that this exhibition of these two works should take place. Calder was one of the real innovators of pure abstraction in sculpture. The molded forms of metal you see come from the roots of Calder’s paper cut outs. After the Second World War, when sheet metal became more available, many artists, as well as Calder, used this media for their work. Calder would then hands paint his sculptures. There was minimal cost to Calder in the creation of the pieces.

These are two abstract pieces. Many find abstraction impossible to understand. Take a walk around the pieces, what do *you* see? Abstract art allows one to create your own meaning. Feel how the art reacts to you. Let your mind run, develop a relationship with the artwork. The experiences can and will be accidental.

These two Calder’s are on display outside of the Princeton Art Museum until June 15, 2014.

Princeton University Art Museum Hours

McCormick Hall

Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday, 10:00 am to 5:00 pm

Thursday, 10:00 am to 10:00 pm, and Sunday 1:00 to 5:00 pm

COST: ALWAYS FREE