

Alexander Calder (1898 - 1976)

3 Yellow and Spiral on Red and Black

Signed with artist's monogram *'CA'* on the base

Standing Mobile - painted sheet metal, wire and brass rod

12¼ x 12¼ x 10 in

31.1 x 31.1 x 25.4 cm

Executed in 1960

Artist description:

Alexander Calder was born into an artistic family; both his father and grandfather (of the same name) were successful sculptors. His father had created many public sculptures, most of which were in Philadelphia. His grandfather, a Scottish immigrant who came to Philadelphia in 1868 is best known for his monumental statue of William Penn (1644-1718), (founder of the province of Pennsylvania) on top of the Philadelphia town hall tower. Calder's mother, Nanette, was a professional portrait painter who had studied at the Académie Julian in Paris, (1888-1893). Nanette met Alexander at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts whilst she was studying there.

Calder was educated at Croton-on-Hudson High School in New York State after which he

attended Yonkers High. His father was appointed acting chief of the Department of Sculpture at the Panama Pacific International Exposition in San Francisco. Calder moved to San Francisco where he completed his studies and graduated from Lowell High School in 1915. Following training at Plattsburg Civilian Military Training Camp he joined the naval section of the Student's Army Training Corps. Calder went on to study mechanical engineering at Stevens Institute of Technology in Hoboken, New Jersey, where he also excelled in mathematics. He completed his degree at Stevens in 1919 and for the next few years worked in several engineering jobs; a hydraulics engineer and draughtsman for the New York Edison Company, followed by work as a mechanic for the H. F. Alexander passenger ship. Upon completion of the ship, Calder took employment as a timekeeper in a logging camp, where the surrounding mountainous landscape inspired him to make some paintings. Thereafter, he set upon his artistic career and moved back to New York.

Calder enrolled with the Art Students League in New York whilst working part time for the National Police Gazette. It was during an assignment for the Gazette in which Calder was asked to make sketches of the Ringling Brothers and Barnum and Bailey Circus that the artist's fascination with the Circus began, a subject that he would come back to periodically throughout his career.

In 1926 Calder moved to Paris and established a studio there. He befriended many of the artistic elite, including Jean Arp (1886-1966), Joan Miró (1893-1983) and Marcel Duchamp (1887-1968). He held his first solo show of wire sculpture in Paris at Galerie Billiet in 1929. It was not long before he started to develop his kinetic sculptures, or 'mobiles', which first appeared circa 1932. Not only did he start to create sculptures that took their motion from natural air currents, but also made the first hanging sculptures with movable elements. Many of these early works were reminiscent of natural forms such as leaves, fish and birds.

Calder returned to the US in 1933, where he set up a home in Connecticut with his wife Louisa, whom he had first met on a boat to Paris. Here they raised their two children Sandra and Mary. In 1962 Calder settled into a new workshop in Indre-et-Loire, France. He made many mobiles and gouache paintings, some of which he gifted to his friends and neighbours. He even donated a large sculpture to the town, which since 1974 has been situated in front of the church there. In 1966 his Autobiography with Pictures was published. He died on 11th November 1976, following the opening of a major retrospective at the Whitney Museum in New York.

His work can be found in prestigious private and public collections throughout the World including: Madrid, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía; Paris, Centre Georges Pompidou; New York, The Whitney Museum of American Art, Museum of Modern Art and Washington DC, National Gallery of Art.