

Alexander Calder (American, 1898-1976) – Artist Resources

[The Calder Foundation: biography, artwork, exhibitions, essays](#)

[Profile of Calder's 1943 retrospective at MoMA, which Calder credited as a catalyst for his success](#)

[Calder at work in his studio, an essay in photographs from the Tate museum](#)

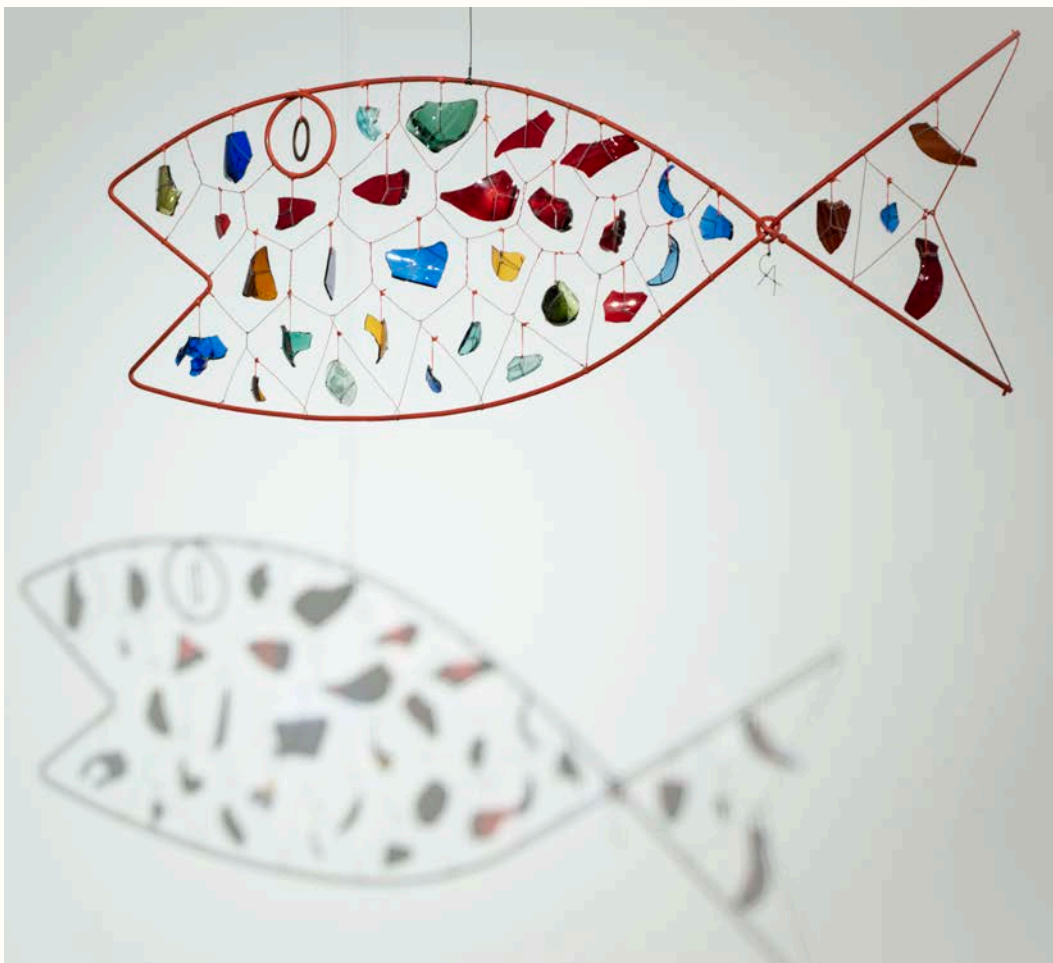
New scholarship:

[Calder: The Conquest of Space: The Later Years: 1940–1976](#), Jed Perl (Penguin Random House, 2020), a follow up to Perl's 2017 [Calder: The Conquest of Time: The Early Years: 1898-1940](#).



Calder, 1957.

Photograph: Walter Sanders, Time Life Pictures/Getty Image



Alexander Calder (American, 1898-1976)

Fish, ca. 1952

Hanging mobile - painted steel rod, wire, string, colored glass, and metal objects

Private Collection; L2019:91.1

Alexander Calder was born into a family of artists – his mother was a painter and his father and grandfather were sculptors – but initially resisted a career in the arts. Instead he pursued a degree in mechanical engineering. After enrolling at the Art Students League in New York in 1923, this background provided the foundations for the signature mobiles that would become the core of his prolific oeuvre. These delicately balanced constructions are hinged together with metal wire and weighted by biomorphic shapes that appear to move on their own, swayed by the slightest breath of air. In each sculpture, the poetic possibilities of motion are an essential element. **Fish** recalls a subject explored in some of the Calder's earliest mobiles and is one of just twelve mature sculptures with this formal composition. Encased by a metal frame and held taught by wire and string, the suspended pieces of colored glass become glittering scales that cast ever-changing compositions of shadows as ambient air currents animate the mobile in unexpected ways.

On view January 15 – April 19, 2020