

ALEXANDER
CALDER



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ALEXANDER CALDER (1898-1976)

The Cross

1948

Signed lower right, "Calder"

oil on canvas

28 3/4 x 36 1/4 in. (73 x 92 cm)



WATCH VIDEO

PROVENANCE

Perls Gallery, New York

Private Collection, acquired from the above

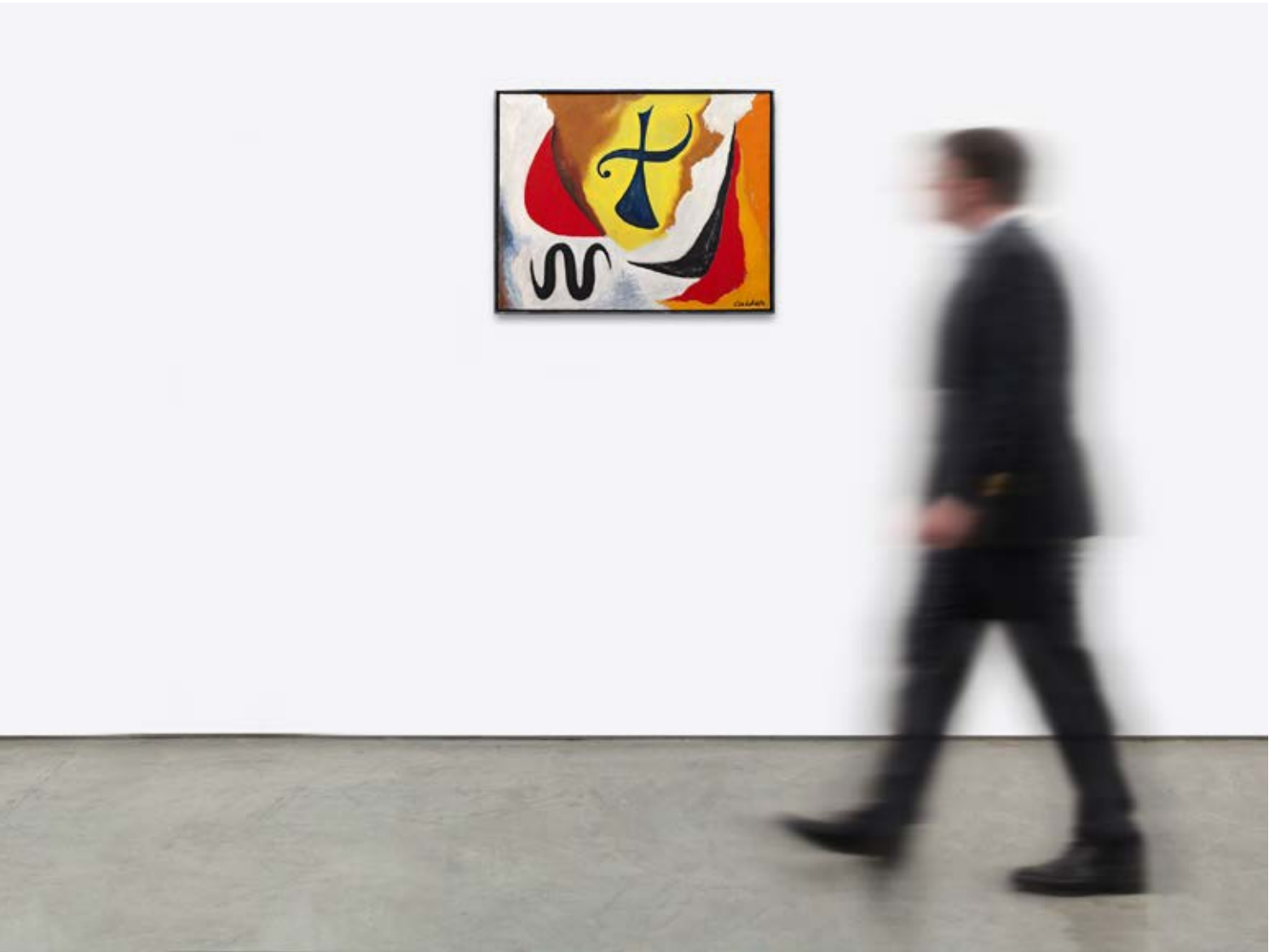
EXHIBITION

Crane Gallery, London, *Calder: Oils, Gouaches, Mobiles and Tapestries*, 5 March–1 May 1992

— IMPORTANT FACTS

- Alexander Calder executed a surprising number of oil paintings during the second half of the 1940s and early 1950s.
- As Calder was painting *The Cross* in 1948, he was already on the cusp of international recognition and on his way to win the XX VI Venice Biennale's grand prize for sculpture in 1952.
- Taking this interest from sculpture to canvas, we see that Calder built a sense of torque within *The Cross* by shifting its planes and balance. Using these elements, he created implied motion suggesting that the figure is pressing forward, or even descending from the skies above.

DETAIL IMAGES





An abstract background featuring a bright red section in the upper left corner and a yellow section in the upper right corner, separated by a jagged, torn-edge line.

Calden



MARKET ANALYSIS

Alexander CALDER	
Statistical Analysis	
Number of lots	3085
Change from 1/1976 - 3/2024	+3474.3%
Compound Annual Growth Rate	7.6
Revaluation	
Input value	0 USD
Revalue date	01/1976
Revaluation	0 USD

100% (median)-USD (Nominal terms)

AMR Art Market Research



The graph by Art Market Research shows that since January 1976, the value of artworks by Calder has increased by 3474.3%, with a compound annual growth rate of 7.6%.

While Calder was a prolific artist, oil on canvas paintings like *The Cross* are among the rarest examples of the artist's work.

COMPARABLE PAINTINGS SOLD AT AUCTION



Seven Black, Red and Blue

1947

oil on canvas

48 1/8 x 60 1/4 in. (122.2 x 153 cm)

Sold at Christie's New York:

November 2017 for \$3,372,500

Painted only one year before *The Cross*

Similar colors and abstraction in space, multicolor background fully realized

This painting is somewhat larger than *The Cross*

Personnage
1946
oil on canvas
48 x 45 in. (121.9 x 114.3 cm)

**Sold at Sotheby's New York:
November 2014 for \$1,865,000**

Painted two years before *The Cross*

Similar colors, but the abstraction in *The Cross* is more relatable

Sold at auction in 2014, this painting would be worth well over \$3m today



COMPARABLE PAINTINGS SOLD AT AUCTION



Fond rouge

1949

oil on canvas

48 x 60 in. (121.9 x 152.4 cm)

**Sold at Sotheby's New York:
November 2018 for \$1,815,000**

Painted just one year after *The Cross*

A nice abstraction, but not as exciting
compositionally as *The Cross*

The background here is only one color, while *The Cross*
balances multiple hues in its background

CALDER PAINTINGS IN MUSEUM COLLECTIONS



**Musée National de la
coopération franco-américaine,
Blérancourt, France**

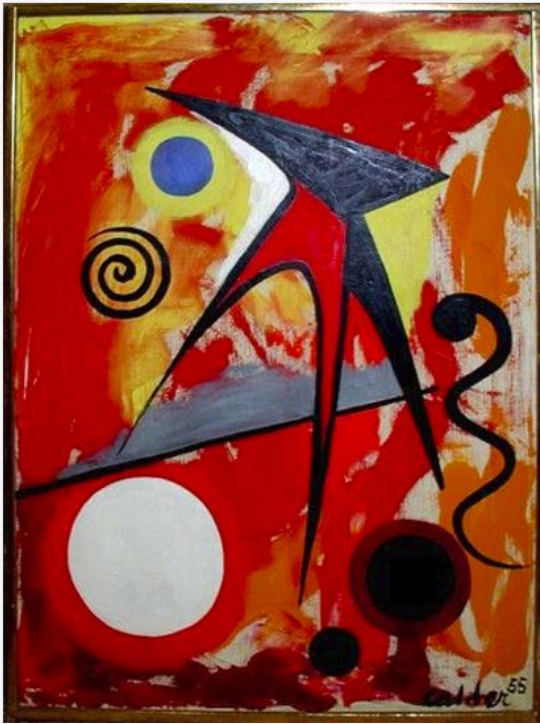
Untitled
1930
oil on canvas
32 x 26 in. (81.2 x 66 cm)

**San Francisco Museum of
Modern Art**

Spiral and Propeller
1956
oil on canvas
17 7/8 x 26 1/8 in. (45.4 x 66.3 cm)



CALDER PAINTINGS IN MUSEUM COLLECTIONS



Yale University Art Gallery

Surveyor's Instruments

1955

oil on canvas

24 x 18 in. (60.9 x 45.7 cm)

“Above all, art should be fun.”

Alexander Calder

— HISTORY



Alexander Calder in studio, 1947

Alexander Calder executed a surprising number of oil paintings during the second half of the 1940s and early 1950s. By this time, the shock and inspiration of his 1930 visit to Mondrian's studio had developed into an artistic language of Calder's own. So, as Calder was painting *The Cross* in 1948, he was already on the cusp of international recognition and on his way to winning the XX VI Venice Biennale's grand prize for sculpture in 1952. Working on his paintings in concert with his sculptural practice, Calder approached both mediums with the same formal language and mastery of shape and color.

As an inveterate student of mechanical engineering, Calder was deeply intrigued by the unseen forces that keep objects in motion. Taking this interest from sculpture to canvas, we see that Calder built a sense of torque within *The Cross* by shifting its planes and balance. Using these elements, he created implied motion suggesting that the figure is pressing forward or even descending from the skies above. *The Cross's* determined momentum is further amplified by details such as the subject's emphatically outstretched arms, the fist-like curlicue vector on the left, and the silhouetted serpentine figure.

Calder also adopts a strong thread of poetic abandon throughout *The Cross's* surface. It hints of his good friend Miró's hieratic and distinctly personal visual language, but it is all Calder in the effective animation of this painting's various elements. No artist has



Calder studio 1948

Calder design for the cover of *Derriere Le Miroir*, July, 1950



earned more poetic license than Calder, and throughout his career, the artist remained convivially flexible in his understanding of form and composition. He even welcomed the myriad interpretations of others and would have been pleased to hear that this so-called “Cross” might be perceived as the abstract outlines and features of a face hovering upon a dynamic solar radiance, set within an ovoid-shaped feature suggesting a godhead.

Either way, it is important to remember that *The Cross* was painted shortly after the upheaval of the Second World War. The painting is not so much a reflection of the artist’s “damn-it-all gaiety,” which is readily found in Calder’s gouache works, and more so a sobering account of the time. Most of all, *The Cross* proves that Alexander Calder loaded his brush first to work out ideas about form, structure, relationships in space, and most importantly, movement.

