



# FREDERIK MEIJER Gardens & Sculpture Park

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### **Meijer Gardens Exhibits Alexander Calder's Prolific Work from 1969**

*Alexander Calder: 1969 – The Fortieth Anniversary of La Grande Vitesse  
June 5 – September 7, 2009*

### **ADDITIONAL QUOTES**

"1969 represents a turning point in public art, as it was the first time the National Endowment for the Arts provided funding for the creation of a public sculpture. Though controversial in its time, La Grande Vitesse has become a source of pride for Grand Rapids' citizens, and is emblematic of the transformative power of Calder's art. Focusing on one year of Calder's life achievement is a compelling vision for an exhibition, and showing a group of the Artist's works from the same moment as La Grande Vitesse will offer audiences a richer experience of his art as a whole."

**Alexander S.C. Rower, Director  
Calder Foundation, New York  
5 February 2009**

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"In 1967, Grand Rapids became the first city in the nation to receive a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts in order to commission a work of monumental sculpture for our city. In June, 1969, we dedicated the magnificent stabile, La Grande Vitesse, created for us by the great American artist, Alexander Calder.

"Today "The Calder" is emblazoned everywhere: as the city's logo, on every city street sign, on every city vehicle, on the city's flag and letterhead. It is the gathering place for causes, for protests, for celebrations. We measure distance from the Calder; we start and finish at the Calder; it is never alone, and it is never defaced - no graffiti.

"In 1969 Grand Rapids had lost its identity as the "Furniture City" and was struggling to deliver urban renewal. We didn't quite know who we were or where we were going. Then the Calder came and a phenomenon began. We found the courage and the energy to begin a renaissance that continues to this day. Because of the Calder, we can never say "never" again. Today our central city has a new skyline. Tall office buildings and apartments stretch skyward, and beautifully restored historic homes and shops line the streets. The river, so long abused, shimmers with salmon and invites walkers to its grassy edges.

REWORDED: "During this time, Grand Rapids had lost its identity as the "Furniture City" and was struggling to deliver urban renewal," said Nancy Mulnix, co-chair of the committee responsible for commissioning the work. "When the Calder came, the city found the courage and energy to begin a renaissance that continues to this day."

"Did the Calder invigorate the arts in Grand Rapids? Absolutely! For the arts agencies, the Calder was a dream come true. From it they took heart and energy and determination, and they made their dreams of

new facilities and bigger audiences come true. A shining example of that is the Fredrick Meijer Gardens and Sculpture Park, the most important destination in this community since the Calder.

"We must thank the Meijer Gardens for honoring the fortieth anniversary of the Grand Rapids Calder with an exhibition of Alexander Calder's art. This exhibition carries us back to the beginning and allows us to grasp how far forward we have come. If Sandy Calder were here today, he would be delighted to learn that his "object" has become the icon of such a dynamic community.

"Sandy Calder was a man of keen, quiet intelligence and warm wit. He cherished the gentle and friendly qualities in life. He valued himself but not so that it showed. His love for everybody else - phonies excluded - was felt in his handshakes, his hugs, his generosity, and his steadfast loyalty. Calder's word was his bond. He was a man who valued peace not war, love not hate. He was committed to his wife, Louisa, his daughters, his grandchildren, his friends and his work. Alexander Calder was a genuinely good man. He created one of his finest sculptures for this city, and he came back twice to visit it and his Grand Rapids friends. Grand Rapids will be honored forever by his amazing gift to us."

***Nancy Mulnix***

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"This exhibition is a profound moment for Frederik Meijer Gardens & Sculpture Park, Grand Rapids, and, in truth, the nation. It is impossible to imagine 20<sup>th</sup> century art without Alexander Calder. *La Grande Vitesse* and 1969 are critical to his imaginative and influential repertoire.

"The exhibition at Meijer Gardens is founded on the good will and vision of many people beginning with Calder Foundation and The City of Grand Rapids. Audiences of every age and experience will enjoy and gain from this important endeavor."

***Dr. Joseph Antenucci Becherer***  
***Director of Exhibitions and Curator of Sculpture***  
***Frederik Meijer Gardens & Sculpture Park***

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