

Calder Up Close

I walk up the stairs slowly. Each step is a reminder that my parents have dragged me here unwillingly. This morning when I awoke it felt like any other Sunday. I hauled myself out of bed, unaware of my parents' sneaky plan. I pulled on an oversized sweatshirt and trotted downstairs to find out what delicious scent had been teasing me since I woke up. When I entered the kitchen, I expected the usual: my parents sitting at the island drinking coffee and reading the Sunday paper. Instead I found the unusual. Both my parents were dressed to go out and were abnormally chipper for that early in the morning. I blinked, confused, and was immediately confronted by my mother. It was her brilliant idea that we go to the Seattle Art Museum and see the Alexander Calder exhibit. I automatically responded no. I had too much homework; I hadn't had any down time this week and just needed a day to relax. But apparently my excuses were not good enough. I was hassled, harangued, and bribed with breakfast until I finally conceded.

I somehow managed to get dressed and appeared downstairs thirty minutes later reluctant, but ready to go. While driving into Seattle, we were caught in a deluge that looked like it was right out of a movie. I took this to be a bad omen; why would it be pouring down rain and cold in the middle of May? There was no other explanation—it was clear the powers above did not want us going to this exhibit.

Before I know it, I am standing at the entrance to a startlingly white room. Surrounded by high walls and shadows, I feel eerily at peace. Feelings unexplained, I gaze at the maze of haphazard rooms, some spacious, some tiny, but all filled with the most beautiful colored artwork I have ever seen. When I walk into the first room, I see a small mobile. I edge closer, hesitant and unsure if I want to admit that I like what I see. Finally I stand inches away. The mobile is made up of all sorts of shapes and sizes, weights and colors, yet it hangs perfectly balanced from the ceiling. Mesmerized I gaze on, confused by how something so seemingly eclectic can be so evenly balanced. Standing there on that raining Sunday afternoon I realized that true balance is only

achieved when you take bits and pieces of everything in your life and orchestrate it into a unique mobile of yourself, balancing it all. As I looked at the blue and yellow shapes floating above me, I thought of how I take the pieces of my life that stress me out like standardized testing, fighting with my sisters, and bad hair days and I counterweight that with all of the positives like family dinners, fun school work, and vacation. With a little manipulation and work, my life mobile eventually balances and I am able to approach life with a positive light.

The next room morphs out of the bright gloom at the end of the hallway. Walking down the corridor, my footsteps echo but the feeling of peacefulness still prevails. I step into the next room and am confronted by a plethora of small statues in every color of the rainbow. Playful blues, rusted reds, melancholy greens, and cheerful yellows pop into my vision from all angles. Assaulted by this sudden zing of color, my thoughts are transported; I feel the sting of crisp, fall air, smell the scent of a bonfire, and see my family. It occurs to me that without being able to look forward to bright spots in life like these, our days would be as plain as the white walls of this exhibit.

As I finish up winding through the labyrinth of hallways, I reconnect with my parents and have to admit that I really enjoyed the exhibit. Alexander Calder surprised me by incorporating some of life's most basic ideas into his simple, bold, and colorful artwork. Instead of shying away from the hard aspects of life, he chose to project and focus on the truly meaningful, something I hope to do, too.