

Katherine Harman Harding ©

**Drawing With Wire - three dimensional creations based on Alexander Calder's innovative sculptures. - A two dimensional idea/drawing becomes a three dimensional idea/drawing when the hands use wire to create.**

Beginning with a poem: "Why I Need the Birds," by Lisel Mueller from her book, *Alive Together*.

Alexander Calder is known for taking sculpture off the pedestal. Educated as an engineer, he invented mobiles, sculptures that dangle and move in the air. He also kept a ball of wire and wire cutters in his pockets and when most artists would have been sketching with a pen or pencil, he drew with wire.

Water related examples of Alexander Calder's mobiles include the 1939 "Lobster Trap and Fish Tail." Of this creation he said, "When everything goes right a mobile is a piece of poetry that dances with the joy of life and surprises." In 1956 he displayed "Red Lily Pads" at the Guggenheim Museum, New York and said, "to most people who look at a mobile, it's no more than a series of flat objects that move. To a few, though, it may be poetry." "Yellow Whale" was made in 1958 and of this mobile Calder said, "Disparity in form, color, size, weight, motion, is what makes a composition." (All quotes from the book *Alexander Calder and his Magical Mobiles*, Jean Lipman with Margaret Aspinwall, 1981, The Whitney Museum of Art.)

Calder's wire sculptures are not as well known as his mobiles. They are generally smaller, accessible to the hand and the eye, are free standing or meant to be hung on the wall. They are drawings in wire, of people, animals, fish, circus scenes that move visually – drawings made with the hand in space.

After a poem, we would begin the day with a few quick sketches on paper with pencil – 30 seconds, a minute. These are warm ups.

Then we'd use needle nosed pliers, a wire cutter and pliable wire to form fish, birds, plants, or people, maybe a boat, a rock, a snail – whatever comes to one's imagination - out of the wire. Some will complete this rapidly and I would encourage them to make more sculptures to go with their original idea. Others

will “draw” more slowly and deliberately. It will take them longer to form their straight line metal into a three dimensional drawing.

I would hope to have access to a bulletin board in each to pin the drawings to towards then end of the morning. We will be able to see that the wire drawings cast a shadow on the wall, creating a second and third drawing, depending on how the light crosses it.