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## NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART'S CALDER MOBILE UNDERGOES CONSERVATION TREATMENT



Alexander Calder's giant mobile has gracefully presided over the atrium of the East Building since it was installed on November 18, 1977.

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Washington, DC -- The 76-foot-long mobile designed by Alexander Calder for the central court of the East Building of the National Gallery of Art has been removed from public view for the second time since its installation in 1977. National Gallery staff and engineers, including artist-engineer Paul Matisse (the grandson of Henri Matisse) disassembled the sculpture on April 19 in order to clean the multicolored parts and to repair the worn metal surfaces. The Gallery plans to reinstall it by the end of 2005. The unofficial icon of the East Building, Calder's mobile consists of thirteen panels and twelve arms, weighs 920 pounds, and is constructed of aluminum honeycomb and aluminum and steel bars.

Calder (1898-1976) created his first motorized abstract sculptures or "mobiles" in the

early 1930s. Using an ingenious system of weights and counterbalances, he eventually designed constructions that moved freely when suspended, powered only by slight air currents. The work he created for the East Building, *Untitled*(1976), is a prime example of this kind of construction.

In 1972, when the East Building of the National Gallery was under construction, the artist was asked to create a large mobile that would complement the monumental atrium of the building. Originally planned in steel, the sculpture was too heavy when enlarged to function as the artist intended. Paul Matisse transformed the design into an aluminum construction that retained the look and dynamism of the steel construction with a more employable weight. The sculpture was installed on November 18, 1977, one year after Calder died; it was his last major work of art.

In 1988, the mobile was removed from exhibition for conservation treatment for the first time. Since its refurbishment more than 25 years ago, the wearing of the metal parts has slowly impeded its free rotation. When it returns to its prominent perch in the East Building atrium, it will move about and look once again as Calder had envisioned it.

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## General Information

The National Gallery of Art and its Sculpture Garden are at all times free to the public. They are located on the National Mall between 3rd and 9th Streets along Constitution Avenue NW and are open Monday through Saturday from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and Sunday from 11:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. The Gallery is closed on December 25 and January 1. With the exception of the atrium and library, the galleries in the East Building will be closing gradually beginning in July 2013 and will remain closed for approximately three years for Master Facilities Plan and renovations. For specific updates on gallery closings, visit [www.nga.gov/renovation](http://www.nga.gov/renovation) (<http://www.nga.gov/renovation>) .

For information call (202) 737-4215 or the Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD) at (202) 842-6176, or visit the Gallery's website at [www.nga.gov](http://www.nga.gov). Follow the Gallery on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/NationalGalleryofArt](http://www.facebook.com/NationalGalleryofArt) and on Twitter at [twitter.com/ngadc](http://twitter.com/ngadc).

Visitors will be asked to present all carried items for inspection upon entering. Checkrooms are free of charge and located at each entrance. Luggage and other oversized bags must be presented at the 4th Street entrances to the East or West Building to permit x-ray screening and must be deposited in the checkrooms at those entrances. For the safety of visitors and the works of art, nothing may be carried into the Gallery on a visitor's back. Any bag or other items that cannot be carried reasonably and safely in some other manner must be left in the checkrooms. Items larger than 17 by 26 inches cannot be accepted by the Gallery or its checkrooms.

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