



PlayArt
March 11, 2015 by Bernard De Koven

I was so struck by the depth and breadth of the [PlayArt](#) site that I had to bookmark it for fear I might get lost in the sheer abundance of images, quotes and essays. It is clearly a resource that we could all be mining for years in our ever-deepening journeys on our playful paths.

PLAYART

"PlayArt," explains the site curator:

“

is a new art form that calls for active participation of the viewer and it offers a range of different types of involvement. Some PlayArtists focus on shapes and structures, others rely on scientific techniques like mechanical principles, physics or digital technology. Whatever the elements, PlayArt aims to get the audience intensely engaged by creating a playful mindset, by enabling playful and creative activities, and by encouraging hands-on experimentation. It is the intention of PlayArtists that their works be touched, manipulated and experienced. Variable or movable sculptures can be rearranged or set into motion. PlayArt captures the viewer's imagination, stimulates curiosity and gives rise to the joy of discovery and play.

”

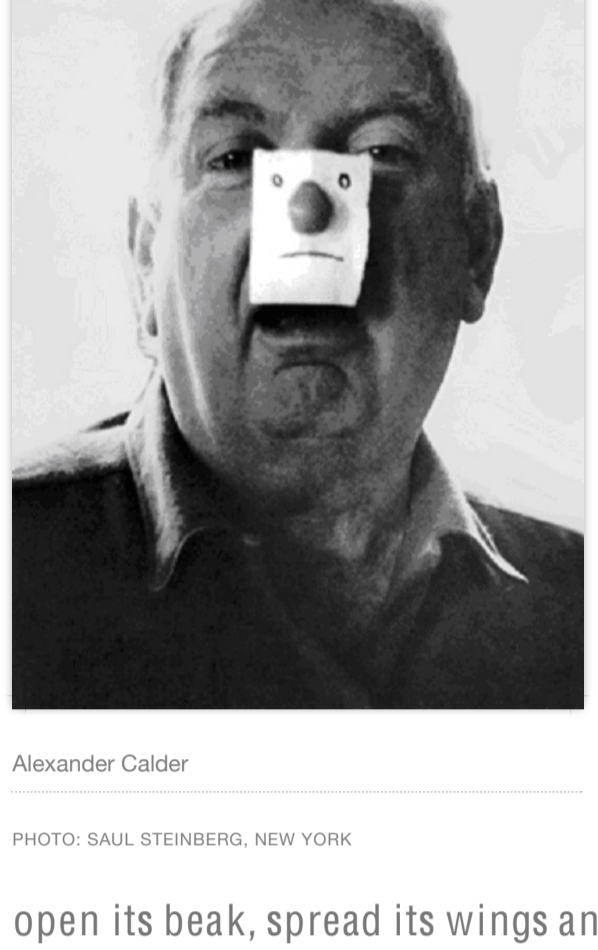


The man behind the collection is a play artist, himself, by the name of [Ernst Lurker](#). Describing one of his exemplary works, [TinkerLinks](#), Lurker demonstrates the depth and intensity of his playful devotion. Following the evolution of his work as he studies and evolves this one particular Object du PlayArt, from a hand puzzle to a public play installation, leads us to the very heart of playful art.



In his essay on [Duchamp and Calder](#), Lurker writes:

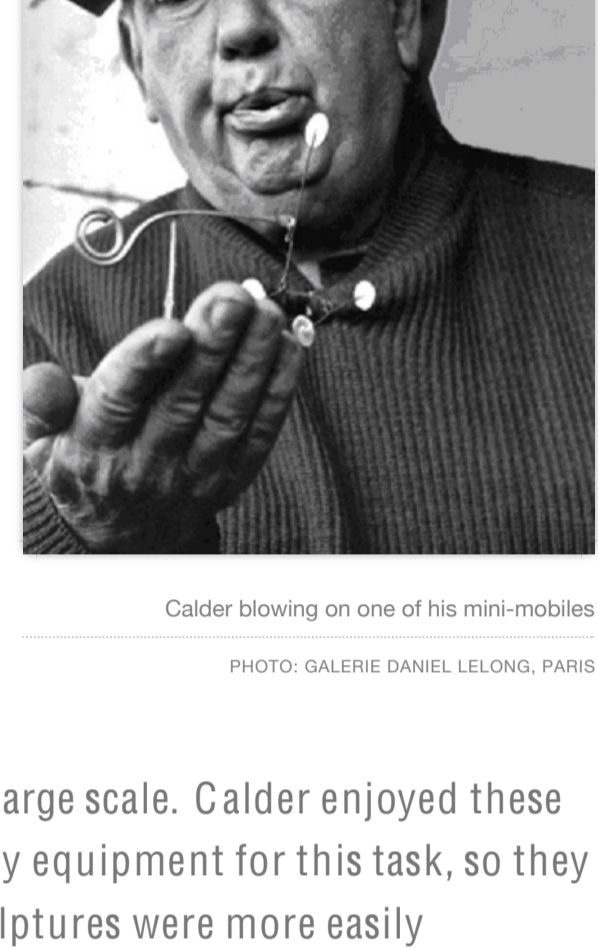
“



Alexander Calder
PHOTO: SAUL STEINBERG, NEW YORK

Calder wearing a nose mask, a perfect illustration of his exuberance and his indomitable, childlike humor. The slightest pretext and any kind of material could set him off to play. What's more, he was an outgoing personality and always looked for ways to spontaneously amuse everybody around him. Two artists Calder most admired were Miró and Klee. Although they generally produced two-dimensional work, which was not interactive, Miró and Klee were possibly the most playful artists in those days. Calder relates: 'I once intended making a bird that would open its beak, I was slow on the uptake and I found that Klee had done it earlier with his Twittering Machine and probably better than I could.'

All of Calder's mobiles, of which he made hundreds, started out as small, handheld play objects that could be set in motion by blowing on them. The photo shows Calder enjoying such a moment. There were many people who did not recognize these whimsical mechanisms as art. (When your reference point is a human statue, what can you expect?) This did not deter him and he said: 'I call them objects, that way no one can come along and say, these aren't sculptures, it washes my hands of having to define them.'



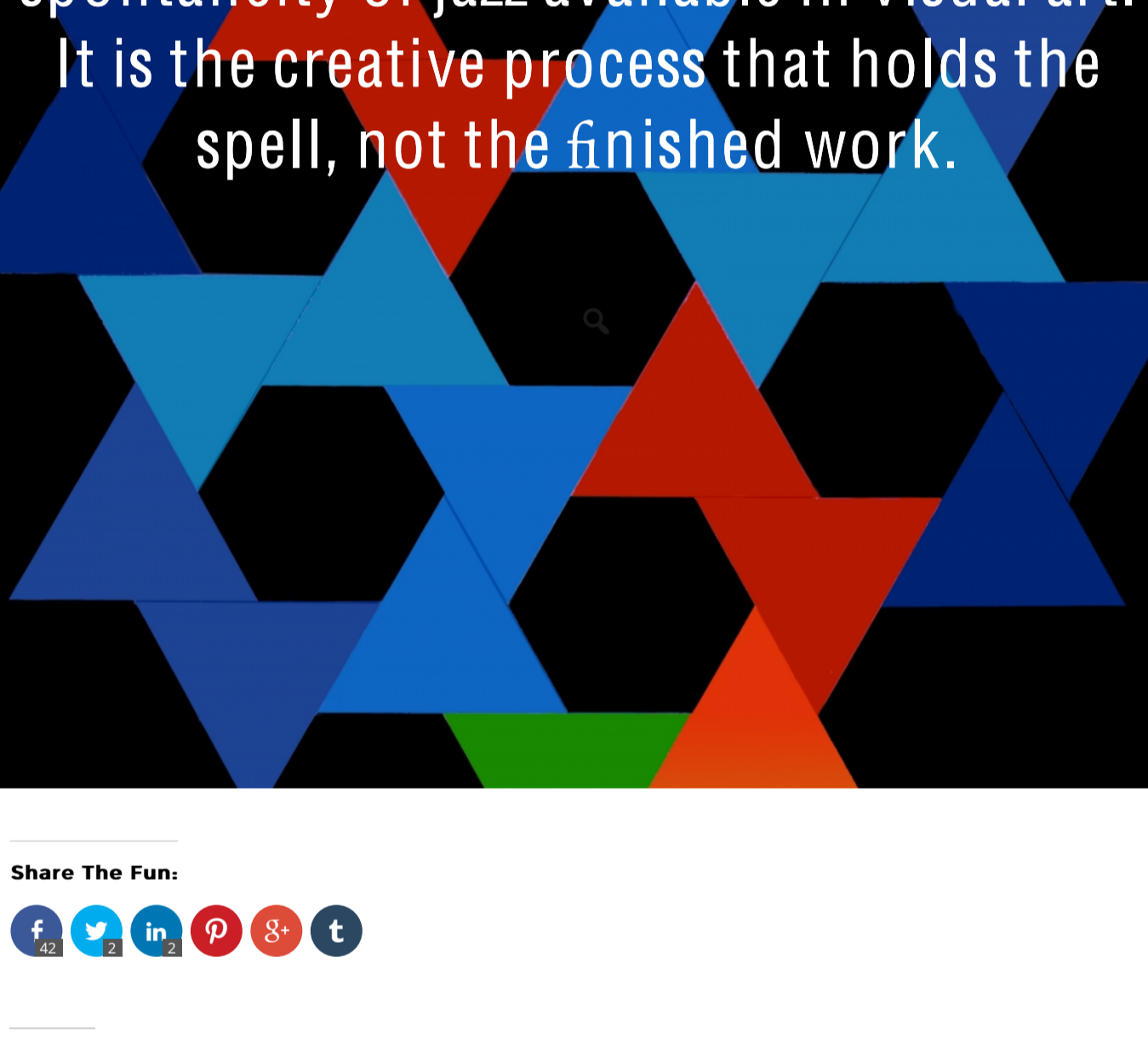
Calder blowing on one of his mini-mobiles
PHOTO: GALERIE DANIEL LELOND, PARIS

Only later did architects and corporations commission these pieces in large scale. Calder enjoyed these commissions but he did not own the heavy equipment for this task, so they were fabricated in factories. The large sculptures were more easily recognized as art (as if size would have anything to do with it). Calder still had not invented a name for these large structures. He could no longer call them objects, so he asked Duchamp for help. This was an historic moment, the two pioneers and giants of the new playful art world met to solve this problem. Duchamp suggested the term "Mobile," and it became the accepted name. It is certainly a clever and pleasing word invention. In fact, the name helped to make Calder's playful creations more "respectable," however, – and this is ironic – it also veiled the main subject of his communication. Even when these sculptures are huge and the spectator can no longer move them – the wind has to take over – they function very much the same way as the [Bicycle Wheel](#). They pull the spectator out of the survival mode and give him a glimpse of the happy world of play. As Calder said: "Above all, I feel art should be happy and not lugubrious."

Ernst Lurker
2009

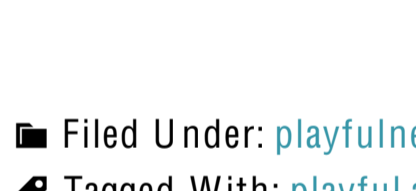
”

For people just embarking on their playful paths, or for those concerned that their playful paths might not be leading them where they most need to be, [PlayArt](#) should prove an ongoing resource for reassurance and inspiration. And, for yet further inspiration, try Lurker's [insightful little essay](#) describing his evolution from being a jazz musician to a PlayArtist, and the evolution of PlayArt itself, in which he writes:



Ernst Lurker

Share The Fun:



Filed Under: [playfulness](#)
Tagged With: [playful arts](#)
A Playful Path: The Book!
Download a Free PDF
Buy the Paperback

« [How To High Jump Playfully](#) [Sushi Chess](#) »

DEEP FUN With Bernard De Koven
Visit [deepFUN.com](#) for more games and deep playfulness.

A Playful Path is supported solely by your generosity.
Donate via PayPal:

Comments

Dana Keller says
March 11, 2015 at 12:40 pm

Awesome site! Thanks so much for sharing.

[Reply](#)

Bernard De Koven says
March 11, 2015 at 1:24 pm

You're so welcome Dana. It was a great find. And my conversations with Ernst since have been very exciting. As have my correspondences with Hanoch Piven. So reassuring to find people like that.

[Reply](#)

Leave A Reply

Your email address will not be published. Required fields are marked *

Name *

Email *

Website

Comment



POST COMMENT

Notify me of follow-up comments by email.

Notify me of new posts by email.

Subscribe Via Email

Enter your email address to subscribe to A Playful Path and receive notifications of new articles by email.

Email Address

SUBSCRIBE

"Playing playfully redefines the game and the consequences. It is transformational. It changes you."

Play Groups



Search this website...