

## Third Grade Alexander Calder Circus LESSON PLAN CONTINUED

Teacher: Katy Lehman

Unit Title: The Circus

Lesson Title: Alexander Calder Continued

Grade Level: Third Grade

Number of Students: 25 Students

### BIG IDEA

Combining Real and Fantasy

Performance Art

Art in Motion-Movement

Using Found Objects and Loose Parts to create 3D Sculptures

Famous Artist Inspiration

### ART / ARTIST(S) OF RELEVANCE

This class we will focus on the artist Alexander Calder. Calder was a multifaceted artist who was most known for his sculptures. He could transform wire into any type of human, animal, or object. He would also incorporate found objects like cans, corks, leather, and wood scraps into his sculptures. Calder became fascinated with the circus; he would draw scenes from the Ringling Brothers and Barnum and Bailey circus. He also started to create sculptures of animals, performers, and objects found at the circus. He called all of these sculptures the Calder Circus, a complex body of performance art. He eventually made more than 50 figures out of found materials. And Calder himself was the ringleader, interpreting all of the characters in live performances. Famous artists in Paris, such as Miro, Man Ray, Cocteau, and Mondrian, would come to watch and listen to his shows.





## **PREREQUISITES**

Students will have made a circus drawing and a circus poster.

Students will have an idea of the different types of animals and performers that are seen in the circus.

Students have learned about Alexander Calder and The Calder Circus.

Students have created circus characters and objects using found objects, pipe cleaners, and wire.

## **SAFETY HAZARDS**

Students will be working with wire and various types of wire cutters. They will need to use these materials safely and responsibly. The teacher will give an explicit explanation for how to properly use these materials and tools. Students will be observed and monitored by the teacher and will be asked to stop using a specific tool if it is apparent that they are not using it responsibly.

## **INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS**

This lesson connects to history, reading, and language arts. Over the past several lessons, students have read books about the circus and formed a language around different elements of the circus. By this lesson they have an extensive knowledge of the performers, animals, and events that happen at the circus. New to this lesson, students will read two books about Alexander Calder a famous sculptor and creator of the Calder Circus. They will learn the history of Calder, his Circus, and his sculptures.

## **LESSON OVERVIEW**

This lesson is a continuation of the Alexander Calder inspired lesson where students transformed their 2D drawings and poster paintings into 3D sculptures. Students used found objects, wire, and pipe cleaner to create circus objects and characters like acrobats, ringmasters, fire breathers, lions, giant bunnies, rings of fire, and more. For this lesson students will watch a *historic, old time* video of Alexander Calder transforming his 3D circus sculptures into a Circus Performance. Students will use this as inspiration to work in a 4-person group to create a larger 3D circus sculpture that acts as the venue, a new scene of animals or characters, a vehicle, or a stunt object. Students can use their sculptures from the previous class period to combine them together with one another or they can make something completely new together. Before students start to design and craft their larger circus sculptures they will be informed that towards the later half of the class period, they will have to put on their own Falk Circus performance. They will have to work together in their group to decide what they will say about their circus, what they have their animals and performers do during the performance, and the details about the performers, like their names, their lines, their actions, and their role in the circus performance. Each student in the group has to have a speaking line in the performance. This information will facilitate new and unique ideas for creating a larger circus sculpture. Students will have the same materials that they worked with last week, in addition to new materials that the teacher will introduce and demonstrate during the teacher introduction. This lesson allows students to expand on their 3D circus sculptures, work in collaboration with their classmates to make something new, and experience planning and presenting performance art.

## **LEARNER OBJECTIVES**

Students will find inspiration from books and famous artists.  
Students will use loose parts and found objects with art materials to create 3D sculptures.  
Students will learn skills and what tools to use to create wire sculptures.  
Students will transform their drawings and paintings from previous lessons into 3D sculptures.  
Students will work in collaboration with their peers to create 3D objects and characters to design a large-scale artwork together.  
Students will transform their circus characters and objects into performance art.

## **NATIONAL ART STANDARDS**

VA:Cr1.2.2a. Make art or design with various materials and tools to explore personal interests, questions, and curiosity.

## **PENNSYLVANIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION STANDARDS**

Standard - 9.1.V.1.E1. Use imagination and creativity to express self through visual arts.

Standard - AL.2.1.B1. Complete multi-step tasks with independence.

Standard - AL.3.2.A1. Use and connect materials/strategies in uncommon ways to create something new or to solve problems.

### **MATERIALS NEEDED FOR LESSON**

- 1. Wire cutters**
- 2. Wire tools**
- 3. Wire (thick and thin)**
- 4. Beads**
- 5. Corks**
- 6. Feathers**
- 7. String**
- 8. Pipe Cleaners**
- 9. Other loose parts and found objects**
- 10. Large round flat corks**

### **TEACHER ACTIONS / EXPECTED LEARNER ACTIONS**

<b>Teacher Actions</b>	<b>Expected Learner Actions</b>
5 minutes: Teacher will welcome students into the classroom and have them go to their theatre style seats.  Teacher will ask students to explain what they have created in the previous class.	5 minutes: Students engage in conversation in theatre style seats.
15 minutes: Teacher shows videos of Alexander Calder performing his Calder Circus. Teacher facilitates conversation about transforming art into performance. The teacher explains how students will work in groups of 4 at their tables to create a Falk Circus. The teacher explains how students will use their sculptures from the previous class to add more detail onto them, combine their figures to make a circus performance, or make something completely new and larger together.	15 minutes: Students attentively watch video, listen to the instructions, and ask questions about uncertainties.

5 minutes: Teacher demonstrates again how to sculpt the wire and how to combine sculptures with one another to make something new and larger.	5 minutes: Students watch the teacher give demo.
20 minutes: Teacher will instruct students to go back to their art making seats to use the materials to create their sculptures. Teacher will let the students know who their group members are. Teacher will provide assistance and ideas to any student who needs.	20 minutes: Work time.
25 minutes: Teacher tells children it is time to clean up so that they can present their Circus Performances. They go outside to the balcony and sit in a large circle. Each group of 4 performs in the middle of the circle.	25 minutes: Students clean up and present their Circus Performances outside on the balcony. They sit in a large circle and each group performs in the middle of the circle.
5 minutes: Clean up anything else and having closing conversation.	5 minutes: Clean up anything else and have closing conversation.

## ENDING THE LESSON

**Closure of Lesson** To end the lesson, the groups will present their Circus Performances. They will be able to watch and listen to what one another created and how they choose to make their characters act. They will also have closing conversation about their creations, their process, and their experience making 3D sculptures from found objects with others in collaboration that ends with a performance.

## REFERENCES TO MATERIALS CONSULTED

Alexander Calder by Patricia Geis

Sandy's Circus by Tanya Lee Stone and illustrations by Boris Kulikov

Calder's Circus <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t6jwnu8Izy0>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GS2q-8dFyiw>

Alexander Calder Performing Sculpture Tate Modern London <https://vimeo.com/146488825>

Alexander Calder and Fischli Weiss at Foundation Beyeler <https://vimeo.com/168523146>

## **THE CLASSROOM AS A THIRD TEACHER**

The classroom will be set up with three large tables. At the front of the room will be teacher examples, books, and materials. Students will begin in theatre style seats to engage in conversation, listen to introduction, watch videos, and watch demonstrations. Students will move to their art-making seats at the three tables and can bring materials from the front of the room to work on. There will be teacher examples, books, and animal figures for students to reference around the room for inspiration for their sculptures. For the performance acts students will move to the balcony outside and sit in a circle in the open outdoor space while each group performs in the middle.

## **ASSESSMENT**

Students will be assessed on their eagerness and creativity when creating their 3D circus sculptures. They will be assessed on the diversity of materials that they used and how they shape the materials into new and imagined circus characters or objects. Students will be assessed on their ability to work in collaboration with their classmates. The students will be assessed on how they choose to work together, whether that is making something totally new together or combining their previous circus creations together. They will be assessed on the dialogue and performance that they present with their 3D sculptures. Each student in the group will have to contribute to the performance in a verbal and physical way.