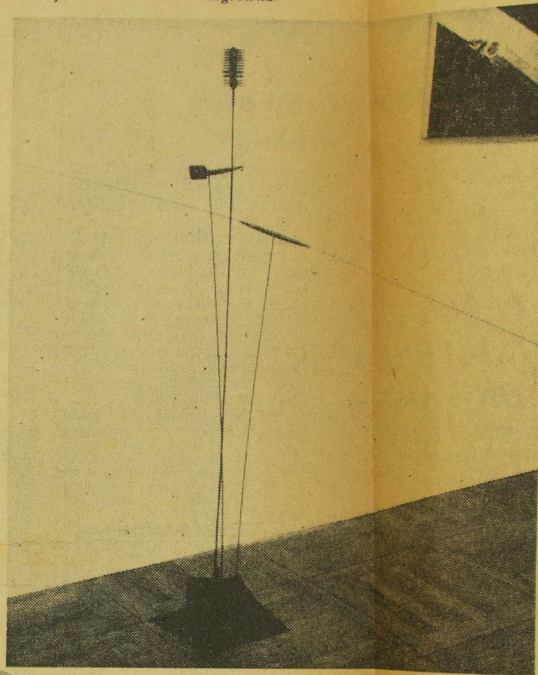


Photographs by George A. Oliver of (left) Alexander Calder's "Le Rouge le noir et le blanc," (below) Takis's "Signals," (bottom left) Harry Kramer's "Aerial Tower," and (bottom) Marta Pan's "Le Teck" with "Equilibre" in the background



Art and movement

BY CORDELIA OLIVER

MOVEMENT as an element in art—the expression, that is, and the illusion of movement—is no new phenomenon. The first is as old as art itself, as old as the prehistoric cave paintings, and the second goes back at least two thousand years. Optical movement, of course, became a nineteenth-century plaything, but the work of art (or in many cases near-art), which itself depends on actual movement, is the discovery of our own century.

Art and Movement, which opened on Saturday at the RSA Galleries in Edinburgh, is the brain-child of William Buchanan, the Arts Council's Scottish Committee's enterprising exhibitions officer. It traces the development

of this side of modern art by means of photographs that range from the fluttering marble draperies of the Victory of Samothrace and fragments of Roman mosaic pavements whose patterns are remarkably three dimensional in effect to Brancusi's "Bird in Space" and a kinetic construction by Marcel Duchamp.

It then goes on to introduce in the round an art form which must be experienced "alive" if it is to give one anything at all. Indeed this whole exhibition, which takes up three galleries at the RSA, is flat and dead-looking until it is lit and set in motion.

Then spotlights throw a ballet of gliding shadows on walls and ceilings while they transfix in the air the clear Christmas colours of the Calder mobiles; Harry Kramer's "Aerial Tower," like some taut and wiry pen drawing by Klee sprung into three dimensions, comes twitteringly to life with intermittent movements of its spidery, interdependent wheels; and Marta Pan's wicked black "Equilibre" octopus (except that its tentacles number four) sinks round silently when touched.

Sometimes the movement is both mechanical and yet infinitely variable, as in Takis's "Ballet Mechanique," which depends on both gravity and magnetism; or, as in his lazily

swaying "Signals," the natural result of the weight and resilience of metals. Salvadori's revolving disc of polaroid screens, by first accepting and then rejecting a beam of light from behind, sets whatever it reflects into a dreamy, floating state, and his panel of iridescent bubbles winks a multiplicity of brilliant specks as one moves to and fro.

All these, and some others like Camargo's deep reliefs, white as snow in sunlight and full of compulsive rhythms, undoubtedly come within the realm of art—being a sort of poetry of moving, or apparently moving, shapes in space. But quite a large part of this exhibition has more in common, really, with that upper floor of the Science Museum where children spend happy Saturday afternoons among the zootropes and phenakistoscopes and all the other Greek-named optical toys of last century. Most of these other pieces are static, but are made to seem to move whenever one passes before them.

David Medalla's "Cloud Canyons," the sculptural equivalent, you might say, of seeing pictures in the fire, is movement, random and changing, but initially controlled by the basic wooden construction from which foaming bubbles emerge—a long way this from the finite perfection of Naum Gabo's marvellous 10-year-old "Linear Construction."

