

# cover

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CARPETS & TEXTILES FOR MODERN INTERIORS

## Rugs vs Street Art

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## EXHIBITION

## Alexander Calder: Tapestries and their Gouaches

Four *tapis* and a hammock designed by Alexander Calder were shown alongside related gouache works at Omer Tiroche Contemporary Art in London this autumn. The Mayfair show coincided with the opening of 'Alexander Calder: Performing Sculpture' – a major retrospective at Tate Modern, focusing on the kinetic works for which the American artist is best known.

Made by Nicaraguan and Guatemalan master weavers in the 1970s, the spontaneous qualities of the paintings have been beautifully translated into woven form, with dynamic dribbles of paint becoming intricate coils of jute. Both types of work possess a sense of potential energy, despite the difference in the speed of production between the two formats.

Calder was inspired to create the *tapis* after he received a typical

Central American hammock as a gift from the Manhattan socialite Kitty Meyer. This was a token of her gratitude following the artist's response to her call for donations of prints or multiples to help fundraise after the devastating 1972 Nicaraguan earthquake. Meyer had a special affinity for the region affected, having fled to Managua as a Polish Jew during the Holocaust. Calder was one of five artists to donate work to the cause, but his support did not end there.

The intricate skill and craftsmanship evident in Meyer's gift prompted him to select fourteen of his favourite gouaches to be turned into designs for hammocks and wall hangings. In 1975, working closely with weavers in Guatemala, the artist personally oversaw the interpretation of his works on paper into braided hangings. Calder had

already had conventional tapestries made at Aubusson in France, but the braiding technique proved to be ideally suited to depicting the undulating lines and patterns of his designs. The weavers were paid four times the going rate, and all proceeds from sales and commissions went towards the earthquake relief efforts. The works were made to order in limited editions of 100 (although it is thought that not all 1400 licensed editions were produced). Calder was so fond of the results that he had several of the pieces displayed on the walls and floors of his own home in France. *RM*

**Alexander Calder: Tapestries and their Gouaches** was at Omer Tiroche Contemporary Art, 21 Conduit Street, London, 12 October–1 December 2015 [www.otca.co.uk](http://www.otca.co.uk)

01 Installation view of Alexander Calder at OTCA left to right: *Untitled (III)*, 1970, gouache on paper; *Hammock*, 1974, hand-woven jute tapestry; *Balloons out of the Blue*, 1969, gouache on paper; *Balloons*, 1974, hand-woven jute tapestry; *Brambled Orbs*, 1974, gouache on paper