

# Finding aid for the Phillip T. Catalano Calder project Collection 221

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Grand Rapids Public Library, Grand Rapids History and Special Collections  
Department

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Grand Rapids, Michigan 49503

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## Summary Information

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<b>Repository:</b>	Grand Rapids Public Library, Grand Rapids History and Special Collections Department
<b>Creator:</b>	Catalano, Phillip T.
<b>Title:</b>	Phillip T. Catalano Calder project
<b>ID:</b>	Collection 221
<b>Date [inclusive]:</b>	1968-1984
<b>Physical Description:</b>	0.21 Linear Feet One box
<b>Language of the Material:</b>	English
<b>Abstract:</b>	Phillip T. Catalano was chairman of a committee of the Grand Rapids Transportation Club that oversaw shipping Alexander Calder's sculpture, La Grande Vitesse. This collection provides information on the process of moving the crates to Grand Rapids from the delivery point at the Detroit Harbor. The crates were shipped from Biemont Foundry in Tours, France via Antwerp on the Dutch ship, the Bonita. Phillip Catalano worked with other members of the Grand Rapids Transportation Club to achieve the safe delivery of the sculpture pieces in May 1969. The business firms of various club members contributed both personnel and equipment to the project. The collection includes papers, news clippings and images of the sculpture under construction.

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## Biographical / Historical

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By February 1968, Phillip T. Catalano, Manager for Traffic & Distribution at Steelcase, Inc. of Grand Rapids, had assumed the position as Chairman of a committee within the Grand Rapids Transportation Club, to study moving "La Grande Vitesse" to Grand Rapids. This included exploration of transportation options and costs for moving the 42 tons of Alexander Calder's unconstructed sculpture from the specific port of entry.

A press release of March 12, 1969 announced that Catalano would chair a subsequent committee to handle the actual transport, supported by a host of services donated by Club members. On May 6, 1969, the steel arrived at the Detroit Harbor. Five firms with members in the Grand Rapids Transportation Club provided five large tractor-trailer combination vehicles and crew, plus support staff. Special permits were required to transport the oversized load over Michigan highways, from the Harbor to the Vanderberg

Center in downtown Grand Rapids, where it was to be erected. A speech, which Catalano gave to the Transportation Club in the fall of 1969, chronicles his adventures in this capacity. His document "Notes on Calder Sculpture Project, Apr. 29, 1969," also provides names and details of the intense delivery time period between May 1-6, 1969. After delivery the sculpture was constructed at the Vanderberg Plaza by Haven-Busch Company, iron workers.

Little is currently known about Mr. Catalano, outside of the context of this project. A 1984 letter in these files shows Catalano still in his position at Steelcase at that time. A business card in these files names Catalano as Executive Director for Marketing & Sales for Southern Furniture Transport, Inc., Orlando, Florida giving a Grand Rapids phone number. An article, added to this collection, from the Grand Rapids Press Flair section documents Catalano's efforts to save the USS Des Moines, the vessel upon which he served during World War II.

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## Scope and Contents

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This collection focuses on aspects of the Vandenberg Center Sculpture Project connected with the movement of the crated steel pieces of Alexander Calder's La Grande Vitesse sculpture to Grand Rapids, Michigan. In addition, some information on the subsequent installation and dedication of the sculpture is included.

Additional information on the project is located in the Nancy Mulnix Collection #001, and in a number of other sources throughout the Archives, the Local History collections and the general library collections.

Calder's La Grande Vitesse was an important national project, as it was the first public sculpture federally funded via the National Endowment for the Arts "Art in Public Places" program. Calder is considered one of the best American sculptors of the 20th century.

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## Administrative Information

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### Publication Statement

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111 Library Street NE  
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49503  
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URL: <http://www.grpl.org>

## Immediate Source of Acquisition

Phillip T. Catalano, accession number 1994.026

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## Related Materials

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### Related Materials

Coll. 001, Nancy Mulnix Collection Coll. 125, Box 958 Robinson Studio Collection. New City/County Administration Building Complex Construction. Vandenberg Center, 1967-1968 Coll. 224, GRPL Art & Graphics Collection. Alexander Calder related work. Coll. 254, GR Building Collection. Vandenberg Center and specific buildings.

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## Controlled Access Headings

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- Grande Vitesse -- Calder, Alexander, 1898-1976
- Grand Rapids (Mich.) -- History
- Catalano, Phillip T.
- Calder, Alexander, 1898-1976
- Grand Rapids Transportation Club

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## Collection Inventory

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### Biographical material.

Title/Description	Instances
"Heavy Metal". Grand Rapids Press. Flair. Sept. 11, 2001	Box 1

Folder 1

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)**Series I. Calder Project Documents.****Scope and Contents**

Includes original and photocopied documents, such as pink forms from the Detroit Harbor documenting damage to some of the shipping crates during the unloading.

**Correspondence.**

Title/Description	Instances
From Keeler to Wege. RE: Shipment of Art. Memo. Nov. 7, 1968. To Miner Keeler from Peter Wege; Letter. Nov. 4, 1968. Keeler Brass letterhead. List. "Description of the Shipping Cases of the Calder for Grand Rapids"	Box 1 Folder 2
Mar. 4, 1969 Memo. TO: Members of Mayor's Committee, Vandenberg Center Sculpture Project. FROM: Peter Wege Nancy Mulnix. Has annotations by Catalano for contacts at various firms for assistance: Bob Fahrner, Gordon Buter, Bob Stouten, Bill Hooker, James Scripps	Box 1 Folder 2
March 12, 1969. Press Release. Announcing the formation of the special committee within the Grand Rapids Transportation Club to move the Calder.	Box 1 Folder 2
Mar. 17, 1969 Letter. TO: Phil Catalano FROM: M.S. Keeler II RE: Confirming sailing of Dutch ship "The Bonita" set for March 26 from Antwerp.	Box 1 Folder 2
March 18, 1969. TO: Calder Sculpture Transportation Committee. FROM: Catalano RE: March 13, 1969 GR Press article, and information on the shipment.	Box 1 Folder 2
Mar. 28, 1969. Letter. TO: Catalano FROM Gordon H. Buter, on ATL, Associated Truck Lines, Inc. letterhead. Recommends 5 trucks to carry the width of the load.	Box 1 Folder 2
Thank you letter from Nancy to Phil [RE May 6, 1969]	Box 1 Folder 3
May 29, 1969. Card from Peter Wege calling a June meeting.	Box 1 Folder 2
June 12, 1969. Thank you letter. TO: Robert H. Fahrner. FROM: Catalano. Attachment: List of Committee Members Truck Drivers	Box 1 Folder 2
June 9 June 10, 1969 Memos. RE Transportation needs for the Dedication. June 9, 1969. Stan Soltys; June 10, 1969. Bill Miller	Box 1

	Folder 4
Passenger Assignments for Motorcade from Kent County Airport to Vandenberg Center	Box 1 Folder 4
May 3, 1984. TO: Peter Wege From: Catalano. RE: Information on the earlier project	Box 1 Folder 5
Notes on Calder Sculpture Project / Phil Catalano April 29, 1969 to May 6, 1969. (8 sheets, stapled)	Box 1 Folder 6
Detroit Harbor Terminal, Inc. Bonita sheets (3) May 6, 1969. Three "Consignee's Copy" Pink sheets describing the damage to some of the cases containing the Calder art. 2 sheets of scratch paper with notes.	Box 1 Folder 7
The Calder – Art or Junk! Given before the GR Transportation Club, Fall 1969	Box 1 Folder 8
Grand Rapids Transportation Club, Feb. 1968 Flyer. RE: Guest Speaker Buck Matthews. Verso: "President's Message" ... Frank Hild. The fourth paragraph on this side talks about Phil Catalano as Chairman of the study committee to move 35 tons of art.	Box 1 Folder 8
Business cards (2): Southern Furniture Transport, Inc. Phillip T. Catalano, Executive Director; C.S. Sieswerda, Representing Import Export Service Co.	Box 1 Folder 9

## Miscellaneous Documents

Title/Description	Instances
"La Grande Vitesse" A Special Commemorative Edition of Lithographs by Alexander Calder / Margaret Crawford, Co-Chairman, GVSH Friends of the Arts ... n.d. Given by Calder to build an endowment for the fine arts college at GVSU. 75 hand signed 425 signed items	Box 1 Folder 10
"La Grande Vitesse" / by Alexander Calder. Program. June 14, 1969.	Box 1 Folder 10

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## Series II. Clippings

### Scope and Contents

Includes newspaper clippings about the transport, the project, and the dedication, primarily from the Grand Rapids Press, but also from other local or regional newspapers.

Also includes images of the Calder sculpture clipped from other sources, many unidentified.

<b>Title/Description</b>	<b>Instances</b>
Chicago Tribune, June 15, 1969. "42 Tons of Art for Grand Rapids" / Thomas Willis	Box 1 Folder 12
Detroit Free Press. "42-Ton Art controversy dedicated in Grand Rapids" [Damaged]	Box 1 Folder 13

## Graphic Clippings

<b>Title/Description</b>	<b>Instances</b>
Cover. Greater Grand Rapids Chamber of Commerce News. June 1969.	Box 1 Folder 11
Cover. Greenlight. North American Van Lines. Oct.-Nov. 1969.	Box 1 Folder 11
"The Story behind the Stabile" Source unknown.	Box 1 Folder 11
Big and Bright Red. pg. 4 Source Unknown	Box 1 Folder 11
Calder Stabile on way to Grand Rapids. Grand Rapids Magazine, n.d.	Box 1 Folder 11
"The hand of the Master" Mies van der Rohe. Fortune, Apr. 1969, pg. 93. RE International style buildings.	Box 1 Folder 11
The Calder Stabile / by Ellen Williams [poem] Photocopy. Source unknown.	Box 1 Folder 11

## GR Press Clippings

<b>Title/Description</b>	<b>Instances</b>
April 3, 1969. "Sculpture Help Sought as Shipping Cost Soars / Maury De Jonge	Box 1 Folder 15
May 6, 1969. "Calder Work in Crates Here"	Box 1 Folder 15
March 13, 1969. "Tons of Jigsaw Puzzle; sculpture due in pieces"	Box 1 Folder 15
Grand Rapids Press. Wonderland, West Michigan Magazine, Apr. 20, 1969. "Grand Rapids gets a masterwork" The strong-	Box 1 Folder 14



handed loner who made 'La Grande Vitesse' / by Bernice  
Mancewicz

## GR Press, June 15, 1969. Dedication Coverage

Title/Description	Instances
"City and Kent officially get Calder's Work"	Box 1
	Folder 15
"Louisa Calder wants a sane nuclear policy"	Box 1
	Folder 15
"Nancy Mulnix guide fore behind stabile"	Box 1
	Folder 15
"La Grande Vitesse dedication is occasion for celebration"	Box 1
	Folder 15
"It was Sandy Calder's Kind of Crowd"	Box 1
	Folder 15
"Calder Gamely Greet Guests, Finally Tires"	Box 1
	Folder 15
Jigsaw Puzzle by the Ton; sculpture coming in pieces."	Box 1
	Folder 15

## Source Unknown

Title/Description	Instances
"Calder Art Unveiling is June 14"	Box 1
	Folder 15
"Calder Work En Route Here"	Box 1
	Folder 15

## "Interpreter" Newspaper Clippings

Title/Description	Instances
Apr. 9, 1969. Why was Calder Sculpture a secret in first place?	Box 1
	Folder 16
Calder sketch spurs controversy, Apr. 9, 1969.	Box 1
	Folder 16

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## Series III. Photographs Slides

### Scope and Contents

Includes a set of eleven black & white photographs from Advertising Photographer William Andrews, who documented construction of La Grande Vitesse, for the project. The Slides are currently unprocessed; see the Archivist.

### **Black white 8x10 by William Andrews, Advertising Photography (11). Received in envelop from Aves Advertising, Inc.**

Title/Description	Instances
1. View from roof of new Kent County Building, NE toward Immanuel Lutheran Church. La Grande Vitesse in construction on the plaza, with a large crane lifting pieces. A corner of the new City Building is seen left. "A-10"	Box 1 Folder 17
2. View NE to Lookout Hill, the Expressway, and Michigan Ave. La Grande Vitesse in construction in Vandenberg Center plaza. A large crane at right lifts pieces from the plaza into place on the sculpture. "A-12"	Box 1 Folder 17
3. View to the NE. An early image in the construction of La Grande Vitesse on Vandenberg Plaza. This image shows the footings, and one piece lying near the footings. Other pieces are scattered on the plaza. A large crane stands ready to lift the pieces. Immanuel Lutheran Church and Lookout Hill are seen in the background, upper left. "B-6"	Box 1 Folder 17
4. View to the NW of La Grande Vitesse in construction. The new City Building is seen behind the sculpture. A crane, not seen, holds a piece of the sculpture in the air. "C-12"	Box 1 Folder 17
5. La Grande Vitesse, in construction in Vandenberg Plaza, is seen behind the large crates in the foreground. A piece is being lifted by a large crane. A member of the construction crew sits atop the large crates. The new City Building is behind the sculpture in the background. "E-3"	Box 1 Folder 17
6. La Grande Vitesse" appears now constructed in Vandenberg Plaza, perhaps with scaffolding ready for the painters. "G-2"	Box 1 Folder 17
7. Peter Wege, left, Co-Chair of the Vandenberg Center Sculpture Project Committee and Grand Rapids Mayor Christian Sonneveldt, point out the address on a piece of one of 10 large crates which transported "La Grande Vitesse" to the U.S. The crate is address to..."Christian H. Sonneveldt". "G-7"	Box 1 Folder 17
8. View North on Ottawa Avenue, across the street from Vandenberg Center plaza. A large crane in the street is ready to lift pieces of the steel sculpture. The Grand Rapids Press Building is seen in the background in Michigan Ave. "H-2".	Box 1 Folder 17
9. View West across Ottawa Street to Vandenberg Center plaza, where three construction crew members are working with a	Box 1

large crane, to lift pieces of the Calder steel. La Grande Vitesse is seen behind the crates, and the new International style City Building stands behind the sculpture. "H-5"	Folder 17
10. View of a detail of "La Grande Vitesse" in construction, with two crew men working a piece into place. The cable from the crane is still in place. The piece of white building seen behind the sculpture at the bottom of the image is the new Union Bank Building, across Ottawa Street from Vandenberg Center. "I-7"	Box 1 Folder 17
11. View to the south, of La Grande Vitesse" in construction. The Old City Hall is seen center left. Two crewmen work on the first piece of the sculpture. Onlookers are seen along the fence in the background. "J-16"	Box 1 Folder 17
Slides for the same images above remain in the unprocessed collections at this time.	

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