

# ART + DESIGN

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## Teachers Resource Pack Key Stage 2

Blackhorse Workshop Presents Atomic 50:  
Time Travels in Tin created with Abigail Conway

**ATOMIC50**



**WALTHAM FOREST**  
LONDON BOROUGH  
OF CULTURE 2019



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**ARTS COUNCIL  
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# Background

Welcome to this resource pack for teachers that aims to provide activities inspired by the themes behind the unique project: **ATOMIC 50: TIME TRAVELS IN TIN** created for the first ever London Borough of Culture 2019.

There are 4 resources in total: History, Science, **Art & Design** and Literacy, each targeted at children aged 7-11, and linking to Key Stage 2 of the curriculum. These guides are intended for use by teachers with pupils attending the production.

**Atomic 50: Time Travels in Tin** is project that has been developed by performance artist Abigail Conway (<https://www.abigailconway.com>) in collaboration with other artists and makers at Blackhorse Workshop. The activities below show how other artists' work have influenced the set design and visual look and feel of the factory.

## Curriculum Links

- To understand the historical and cultural development of great artists, craft makers and designers, and their art forms;
- To evaluate and analyse creative works using the language of art, craft and design techniques;
- To become proficient in drawing, painting, sculpture and other art, craft and design techniques.

## Mobile Making Activity Inspired by Alexander Calder

*Vocabulary: Mobile, Stabile, Balance, Fulcrum*

### Alexander Calder (1898 – 1976)

Known as a pioneer in the development of kinetic art, Calder created sculptures involving balancing elements, some driven by motors and others propelled by air. His work was either suspended or freestanding, being constructed largely of flat painted metal pieces connected by veins of stems.



For a straightforward introduction to Calder, share this background and images with children:

<https://www.tate.org.uk/kids/explore/who-is/who-alexander-calder>



Links to investigate the life and work of Alexander Calder:

<https://www.guggenheim.org/artwork/artist/alexander-calder>



For extensive images and background:

<http://www.calder.org>

## Introductory Activity: Investigating balancing objects from a suspended ruler

Duration:

Allow one hour

Resources:

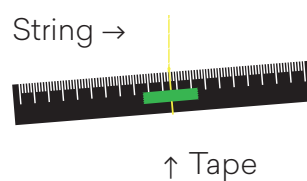
- Ruler (one per pair)
- Fishing wire or other non-stretchy string
- Masking or sticky tape
- Selection of small objects than can be tied to the 'mobile'

**1** Begin the lesson by investigating balancing objects from a suspended ruler.



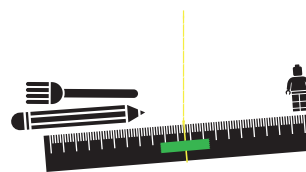
How could you get the objects to balance?

**2** Children to tie a length of fishing wire or string to the centre of their ruler. Use a piece of masking or sticky tape to hold it in place.



What do you notice about where the heavy object needs to be positioned?

**3** They need to then investigate how different objects can be hung using more wire/string at either end of the ruler.



Where should the lighter object go?

**Please note:**

The heavier objects need to go closer to the hanging point, while the lighter objects need to hang further from the hanging point.

Older pupils could investigate suspending one more ruler from the first one and how many objects will need to be suspended from the first to counterbalance the new ruler and objects balancing from this one.

## Main Activity

# Making a Calder Style Mobile

### Duration:

Allow two to three hours

### Resources:

- Coloured card
- Scissors
- Flexible modelling wire (available from TTS School supplies or similar)
- Cutting pliers
- Hole punch
- Fishing wire or non-stretchy string
- Masking, sticky tape, or glue

**1** Children to cut shapes from coloured card or tin foil. Encourage them to make different shapes and sizes, resulting in around 6-8 shapes. Decide beforehand whether you want shapes with a particular theme (geometric, organic, irregular...).

**2** Hand out three lengths of wire to each person, cut to the same length. Bear in mind that the longer the wire, the larger the mobile. Model these stages to the class:

- Bend a small loop at the end of each wire using pliers. The loops should all face the same direction. These loops will be the horizontal hanging arms of their mobiles.
- Using pliers, hold one piece of the wire in the middle. Wrap the wire around the pliers to create a loop set in the centre of the wire. Repeat with the other two pieces of wire. These loops will enable students to connect the mobile pieces.

**3** To create the skeleton of the mobile, place one of the wires on a flat surface (this will be the top tier). Take another wire and attach its centre loop to the right loop of the first wire using fishing wire/string. Take the third wire and attach its centre loop to the right loop of the second wire using fishing wire/string. Tie fishing wire/string to the centre loop on the top tier. This string will allow the mobile to hang.



Once the skeletons of the mobiles are created, children should attach their different hanging shapes to their skeletons with fishing wire/string by using a hole punch, or snip a small cross using scissors, to make holes in the shapes. Attach one shape to each of the empty remaining loops on the wire skeleton.

Encourage pupils to adjust the length of the string between the shapes for variety in their mobiles and to test different shapes and weight combinations on each wire to achieve balance.

When the wires all hang horizontally, when the mobile is held up by the base wire's string, balance has been achieved. Students can even bend the wire to create unique shapes in their mobiles.

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#### Other options...

- For a simpler alternative, you could use wooden sticks in place of wire and link the branches using string.
- Adding designs on the shapes of the mobile can add detail and variety. Children could add pictures or adjectives about themselves to create a work that is representational and personal.
- Creating different specific shapes based on themes can help tailor this lesson to a variety of disciplines.
- Instead of using plain coloured card, try using coloured sheets of transparent plastic for a “sun catcher” appearance.
- Pupils could create two identical shapes for each mobile shape addition, then glue the string between the shapes to attach that section onto the mobile. This would be instead of making holes in the shapes and would look more like Calder's Arc of Petals.
- Use junk items (bottle tops, small tin cans) for mobiles on the theme of recycling. Bear in mind you may need stronger wire, or you could continue the recycling theme by using metal coat hangers.

#### Inspiration and Ideas:



Search ‘Calder mobiles for kids’ on Pinterest for inspiration and ideas. You can find many YouTube videos relating to mobile construction, for example: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uZARheDlf\\_c](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uZARheDlf_c) is clearly explained and modelled.

## Taking it Further:

*Additional artists and projects to investigate*

### Alberto Giacometti (1901 – 1966)

One of the 20th Century's most notable sculptors, Swiss-born Giacometti was influenced by Cubism and Surrealism. His distinctive elongated figures are some of the most recognisable in modern art.

<https://www.guggenheim.org/artwork/artist/alberto-giacometti>

<https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artists/alberto-giacometti-1159>



Why not try out tin foil sculpture?

<http://dolvinartknight.blogspot.com/2014/01/foil-figure-sculpture.html>

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### Cornelia Parker (1956 - present)

British sculptor and installation artist, Parker is well known for her large-scale works. She works in a wide variety of media, often looking at household objects that have been placed in new environments.

<https://www.royalacademy.org.uk/art-artists/name/cornelia-parker-ra>

<https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/parker-cold-dark-matter-an-exploded-view-t06949/story-cold-dark-matter>

#### Projects leading from Cornelia Parker...



Junk sculpture

<https://www.tate.org.uk/kids/make/sculpture/make-junky-funky-sculpture>



Weave a sculpture

<https://www.tate.org.uk/kids/make/sculpture/weave-sculpture>

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# Credits

This resource has been created by Hannah Magee a teacher at The Jenny Hammond Primary School, Leytonstone, London.  
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For further information, visit:

[www.blackhorseworkshop.co.uk](http://www.blackhorseworkshop.co.uk)

[www.blackhorseworkshop.co.uk/atomic-50/](http://www.blackhorseworkshop.co.uk/atomic-50/)