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CONTACT

Kerri VanderHoff
Grand Rapids Art Museum
616.831.2914
kvanderhoff@artmuseumgr.org

Grand Rapids Art Museum presents *La Grande Vitesse* 1/5th Scale Maquette

Calder Foundation Loan of Large Scale Model Installed in Time for Community Celebrations

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich., May 28, 2010 – The Grand Rapids Art Museum presents the 1/5th scale model, or maquette, of Alexander Calder's *La Grande Vitesse*, the iconic stabile located on Vandenberg Plaza in downtown Grand Rapids. The maquette is installed on the Museum's Level II balcony.

The Calder maquette will be on view for the Art Museum's Founding Day, June 1, and also during the 2010 Festival of the Arts held on June 4, 5 and 6. GRAM offers free admission on Founding Day and during Festival. The historic association with the 1969 installation of the Calder stabile as well as the Festival of the Arts is linked with the Grand Rapids Art Museum. Calder donated his 1967 gouache *Astral Bodies* to be auctioned as part of the capital campaign for *La Grande Vitesse*. Conrad and Molly Bradshaw acquired the work and presented it as a gift to the Art Museum. GRAM trustees Peter Wege led the Calder campaign and Miner S. and Mary Ann Keeler were lead donors. Once installed, the stabile inspired a three-day community celebration to be held annually every year in June. Alexander Calder created the original sun logo – still in use today – as a gift for the event.

The scale model will offer downtown guests the opportunity to learn about the methodical approach used in creating the final 43-foot tall, vibrant red metal sculpture on Ottawa Avenue, two blocks north of the Art Museum. Calder observed a specific four-state protocol in moving from model to finished work of art with commissioned pieces.

Calder's protocol:

1. Preparation of a table-top, unpainted model. This was Calder's initial idea that he called a "sketch in sheet-metal."
2. The table-top model was presented to the committee representing the commission. If accepted, Calder created a 1/10th maquette in unpainted sheet metal that was put in a wind tunnel to check for weaknesses. He resolved any structural problems before moving on to the third stage.
3. Calder then created a 1/5th maquette (which is displayed on GRAM balcony). It too, unpainted, was subject to the forces of the wind tunnel for final checks on weaknesses. If it passed the test, it was then painted and presented to the committee for one last approval. Although a functional piece, Calder considered his 1/5th maquettes to be works of art in their own right.
4. Preparation of the final work of art begins, here *La Grande Vitesse* itself as it stands in downtown Grand Rapids.

Image available upon request.

About the Grand Rapids Art Museum

The Grand Rapids Art Museum (GRAM) celebrates 100 years of art, legacy and vision with its Centennial Year in 2010. The mission of the Grand Rapids Art Museum is to provide a gathering place where people of all ages and backgrounds can enrich their lives through interaction with works of art in a thought-provoking and creative way. Established in the heart of downtown Grand Rapids, the new art museum is internationally known for its distinguished design and LEED Gold certified status. Established in 1910 as the Grand Rapids Art Association, GRAM has grown to include more than 5,000 works of art, including American and European 19th and 20th century painting and sculpture and over 3,000 works on paper. Embracing the city's legacy as a leading center of design and manufacturing, GRAM has a growing collection in the area of design and modern craft.

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