



Converting an Industrial Monument into a Cultural Landmark:

A Proposal to Locate the Calder Museum Along the Delaware Waterfront



The architect John T. Windrim is renowned for his neo-classical buildings along the Ben Franklin Parkway, but less well-known are the three magnificent power generating stations he designed for the Delaware Riverfront. One of the most majestic is the Delaware Generating Station in the humble, working class neighborhood of Fishtown.



The former power station's huge smoke stacks loom over the adjacent historic Penn Treaty Park. It was here in 1682 that the story of Philadelphia began when William Penn entered into a treaty with the native Lenape Indians. This seven acre greenspace provides the only natural access to the river; however, the park remains disconnected from the surrounding neighborhoods; a glaring inconsistency with Penn's vision for Philadelphia.



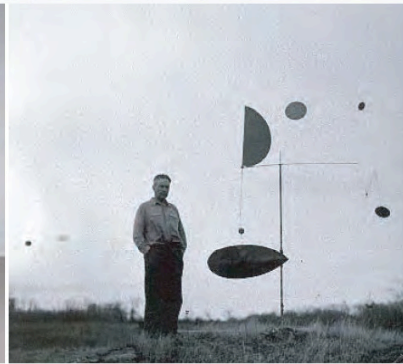
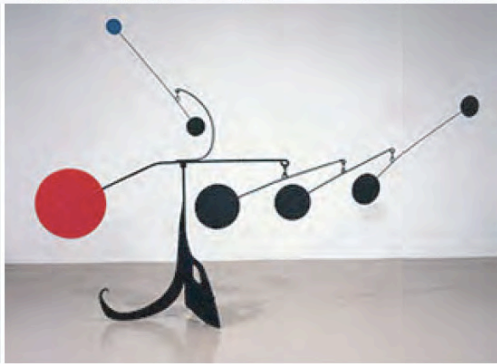
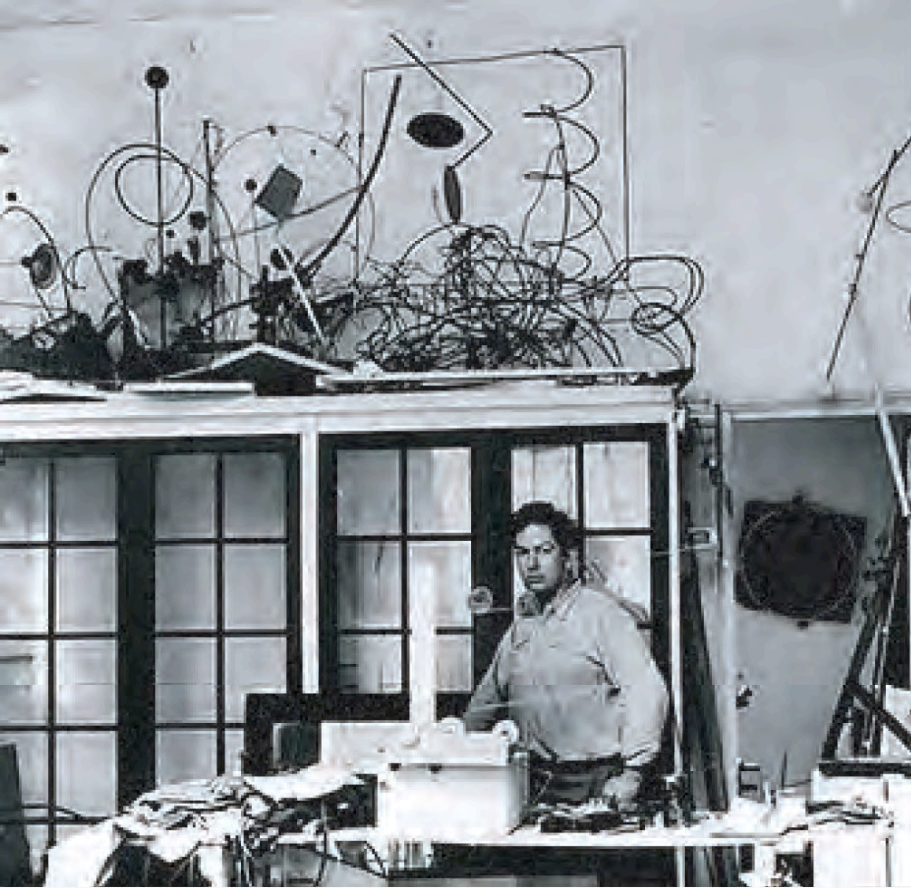
The stunning architecture, unrivaled waterfront views and surrounding greenspace make the Delaware Generating Station an idea location for the Calder Museum. The world famous Tate Modern in London, a former generating station, illustrates the potential for transforming an industrial monument into a cultural landmark.



Peco Energy retired the coal burning Delaware Generating Station in the 80's. Although nearby transformers and a back-up generating station are still operational, the entire property is slated to be decommissioned and sold.



The artistic legacy of the Calder Family begins with the eldest Calder who sculpted the most famous of Philadelphia art icons, William Penn atop City Hall. During the 20 years it took to complete this bronze statute, Calder's son Alexander Milne worked as an apprentice and would later create the poetic Swan Fountain at Logan Circle. It was, however, the third generation sculptor "Sandy" Calder, born in 1898, who solidified this legacy and added another dimension.



Originally trained as a mechanical engineer, Sandy Calder became one of the most important artists of the 20th century with his invention of the mobile, a word coined to describe his often whimsical kinetic sculptures activated by air movements and sometimes engines. He is forever known as the "man who made sculpture move."



Sandy Calder was inspired by machines and his work blurred the line between art and science. In many ways the Delaware Generating Station reflects elements of Calder's character. This site is clearly a good fit for the Calder Museum but there is a much deeper, almost fated, connection. The sculpture of William Penn -- the heart of Philadelphia and the anchor of the Calder legacy -- is positioned to gaze upon the very site described in this proposal.

Until negotiations fell through with the City of Philadelphia, the Calder Foundation had planned to build an \$80 million dollar museum on the Parkway. The Foundation has not found a new site.



The Delaware Generating Station, like its northern sibling, is not historically protected, and in fact, Peco received permission to demolish the Port Richmond Generating Station. However, Peco has not acted on its demolition permit and recently expressed a willingness to discuss the future of both sites. The city should move quickly to historically designate both properties.



The redevelopment of the Delaware Generating into a museum would expedite the remediation of a site that continues to leach dangerous chemicals into a vital waterway and a coveted public space. This museum initiative represents the best hope for cleaning up contamination in a timely, transparent manner.



While the environmental liabilities and remediation are complex, these obstacles are far from insurmountable. In 2002 one of Philadelphia's largest commercial developers, Preferred Real Estate Investments, completed the \$65 million dollar conversion of the Chester generating station by Windrim into award-winning class A office and event space. Although remediation cost approximately \$10 million dollars, PREI acquired the property from PECO for just \$1. The architects who oversaw this incredible conversion, Blackney and Hayes, have been a tremendous resource in the development of this proposal and continue to support this initiative.