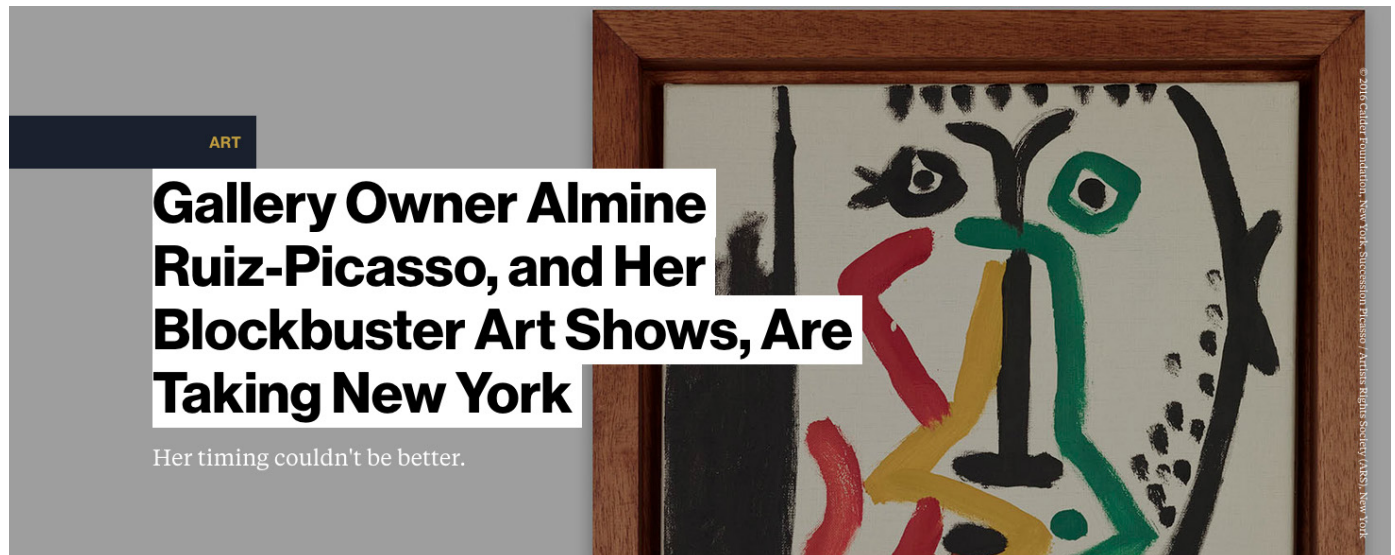


Bloomberg : 'Gallery Owner Almine Ruiz-Picasso, and Her Blockbuster Art Shows, Are Taking New York', by James Tarmy, October 27, 2016.



by  James Tarmy
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October 27, 2016 — 8:00 AM CEST



■ Almine Ruiz-Picasso Photographer: Bec Lorrimer, Courtesy Almine Rech Gallery

Earlier this month in London a crowd of shivering, well-dressed art lovers lined up outside of the Almine Rech Gallery in Mayfair. It was the night before the Frieze Art Fair, and many of the city's galleries had taken advantage of the flood of international art buyers to put on marquee exhibitions. Almine Rech Gallery, which is owned by Almine Ruiz-Picasso (Rech is her maiden name), was introducing a series of new works by Jeff Koons, currently the world's most expensive living artist.

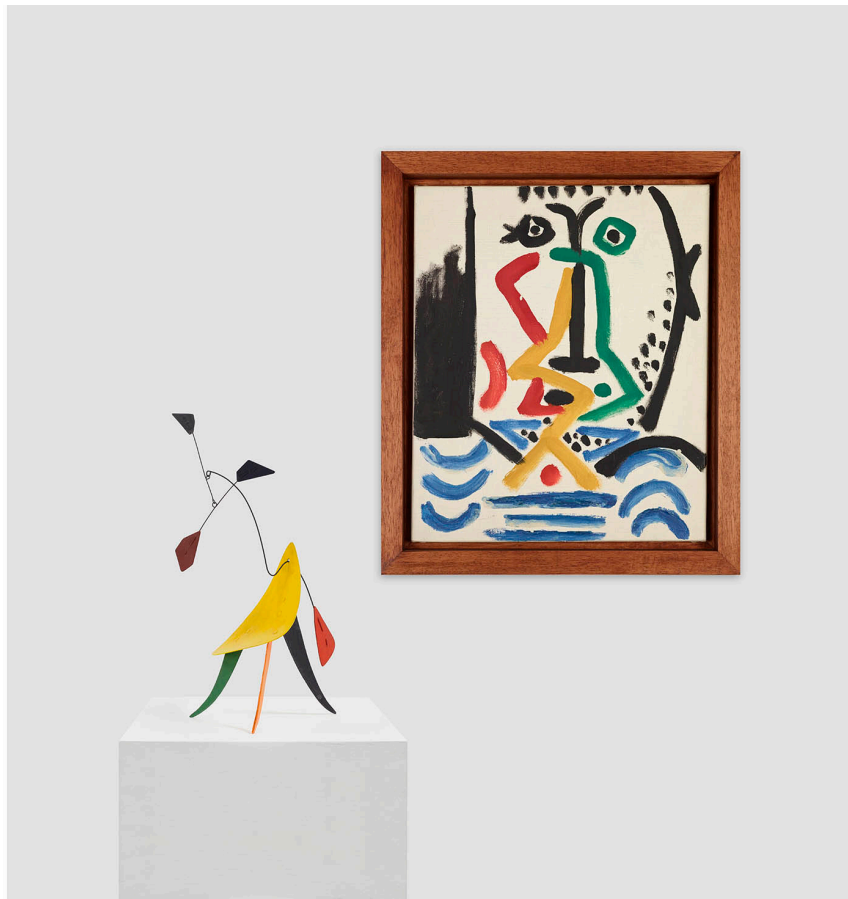
Both Koons and Ruiz-Picasso were at the opening, smiling and taking pictures with the few people lucky enough to get past the team of assistants who barred the door—pleading overcapacity—from the art world hoi polloi hoping to see Koons's \$6 million music-box ballerina statues up close.



■ *Seated Ballerina* by Jeff Koons, 2010-15 Source: Consultatio Real Estate, © Jeff Koons - Courtesy of the Artist and Almine Rech Gallery

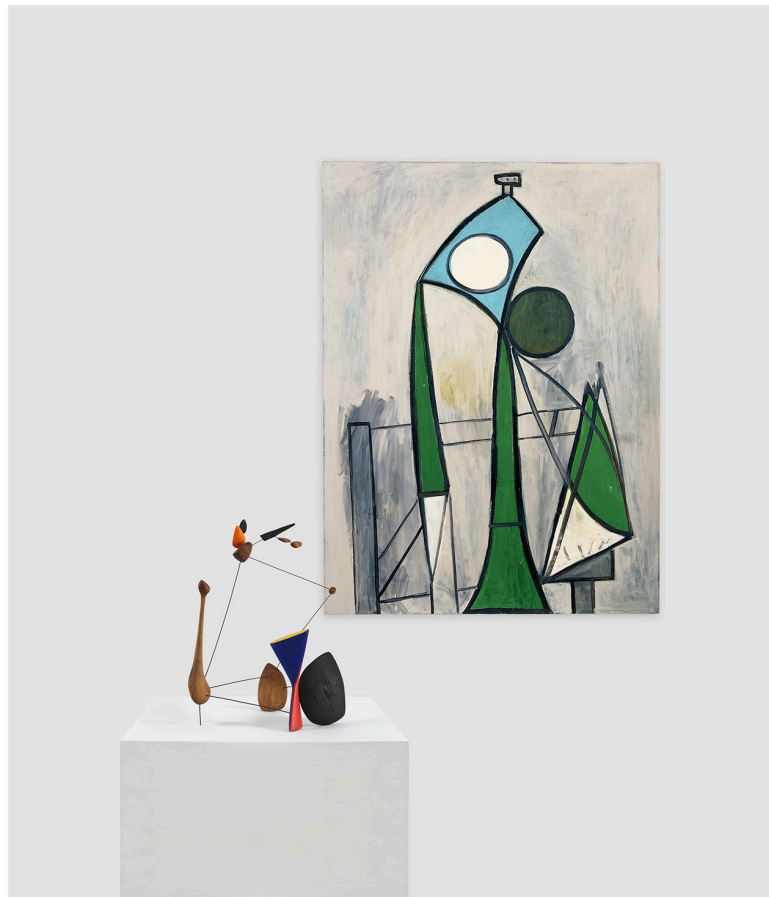
A month later, Ruiz-Picasso, who is in her mid-50s, flew to New York for the inauguration of her first U.S. outpost, where she's hoping to replicate the buzz of her London opening. It's certainly lucky timing: She began to plan the expansion two years ago when the idea of "Brexit" was just a twinkle in Nigel Farage's eye, but now, as the pound sinks and European economies waver, starting a business in the comparatively stable New York market seems like a canny hedge.

Ruiz-Picasso maintains it wasn't purely financial considerations that prompted the move. "Things are not always so rational," she says. "If you have the intuition that you should do something, and you have the opportunity, then you just do it."



■ Alexander Calder *Untitled*, c. 1942. and Picasso's *Portrait d'homme barbu*, 5 Dec. 1964, on view at Almine Rech. © 2016
Calder Foundation, New York, Succession Picasso / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

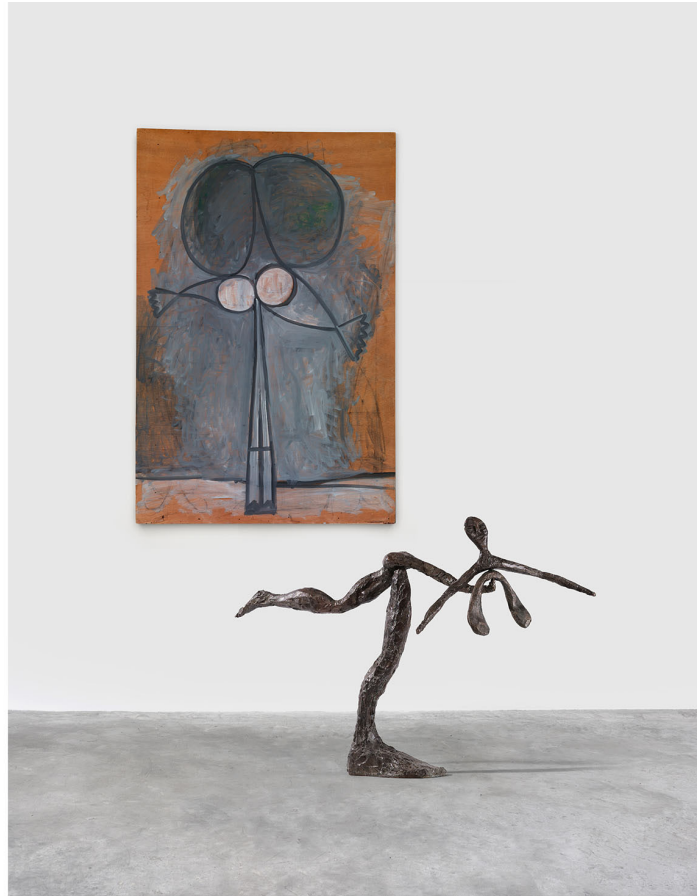
Ruiz-Picasso was born in Paris. Her father, who founded a successful ready-to-wear fashion label, took her to museums, and after flirting with— then rejecting—the idea of being an artist herself (“I knew that to be an artist I would have to give my all, and I wanted to have a life with friends, and I wanted kids, so I knew it wouldn’t work,” she says), Ruiz-Picasso began to do provenance research for Parisian auction houses. By the mid-1980s she was married to her first husband, Xavier de Froment, and had slowly begun to dabble in selling art, helping friends and clients part with modernist artworks from the likes of Pierre Bonnard, Kurt Schwitters, and Félix Vallotton. “At that point, people would buy contemporary art, but they wouldn’t sell it,” she says.



■ Alexander Calder's *Constellation with Diabolo*, 1943, currently on view at the Almine Rech gallery in New York. © 2016 Calder Foundation, New York, Succession Picasso / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

She opened her first gallery in partnership with Cyrille Putnam, the son of the famed interior designer Andrée Putman, in 1989. (The two later married, then divorced.) The gallery lasted for about five years, and in 1997 she opened the Almine Rech gallery in Paris's 13th arrondissement. It was one of the few galleries to show Californian minimalist and conceptual artists in Europe—such artists as James Turrell, Joseph Kosuth, and John McCracken. “They were a bit forgotten in a way,” Ruiz-Picasso says. “Their art cost virtually nothing— even works by Donald Judd were very cheap.” (Judd’s sculptures can now sell for more than \$10 million at auction.)

She married her third husband, Bernard Ruiz-Picasso, in the late 1990s and by 2006 had moved to Brussels and opened a gallery in the same building as her family foundation, the Fundación Almine y Bernard Ruiz-Picasso para el Arte. (Bernard is Pablo Picasso's grandson.) “It was just easier” to also have a gallery in Brussels, she says. “It's very different from London and Paris, in that you can find big spaces in the city center.”



■ Alexander Calder's *Dancer*, 1944, and Pablo Picasso's *Femme debout* from 1946, both on view at the Almine Rech gallery. © 2016 Calder Foundation, New York, Succession Picasso / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

Ruiz-Picasso's gallery represents a mix of living and dead artists. She sells new artworks on what's known as the primary market, which means the art hasn't sold before, and also supports her operations by selling artwork on the secondary market, which comprises artworks that have already changed hands at least once. "Even with secondary market sales, having a primary market gallery costs a lot of money," she says. "I love to show emerging artists. You don't make any money doing it, though."

In fact, Ruiz-Picasso has a history of backing younger artists with mixed results. She's shown such artists as Joe Bradley and Taryn Simon, who have emerged as steady, respected forces in the art world, but she's also been a proponent of artists such as David Ostrowski and Anselm Reyle, whose prices and prestige skyrocketed, then crashed. "Sometimes it doesn't work," she acknowledges. "Sometimes they're only good for a short time, but that's the risk."



■ Almine Ruiz-Picasso and her son, Paul de Froment, who will run her New York gallery. Photographer: Bec Lorrimer, Courtesy Almine Rech Gallery

Now, as Ruiz-Picasso continues to support young artists and to sustain that support through her lucrative secondary-market sales, her New York gallery is taking on a level of import far greater than she'd initially planned. "London is doing OK—it's slowed a little bit," she says. "And the economic and political situation in Europe isn't very good right now, either, so there's a slowdown there, for sure." New York, by contrast, is a place where "there are a lot of collectors, and a lot of museums, and a lot of auctions," she says. "It really is the center." Overall, she says, the art world is deflating. "You used to sell-out your shows in a single day, two weeks before they opened. Is that normal?" she asks rhetorically. "It's certainly not anymore." Ruiz-Picasso says she has lowered expectations for the New York gallery, which will be run by her son, Paul de Froment. "I have a good feeling about it," she says. "But we'll see how the team here will do."

Ruiz-Picasso's inaugural New York show is made up of artworks by Alexander Calder and Pablo Picasso and has been co-curated by her husband and Sandy Rower, Alexander Calder's grandson and the president of the Calder Foundation. "Two years ago Almine said she wanted to open with a Calder/Picasso show," says Rower. "I was like, 'that's serious business.'" The artworks are drawn exclusively from each grandson's family collections—"many of the works are ones Bernard and I literally grew up with in our homes," he says—and, even though (or perhaps because) the works ostensibly aren't for sale, the show represents a massive if not glittering New York debut for the gallery. Rower says it's easy to underestimate Ruiz-Picasso, but that her success speaks for itself. "I think people don't really know who she is when they meet her," he says. "She's so slight, and that little wispy voice, and you're not really sure what's going on, and before you know it, you've bought five things."

Calder/Picasso runs from Oct. 28 to Dec. 17 at the Almine Rech Gallery at 39 East 78th Street in New York.