

ArtNews : 'Almine Rech Discusses Expansion of Her Gallery Empire, as Upper East Side Space Opens', by Nate Freeman, October 26, 2016.

ALMINE RECH DISCUSSES EXPANSION OF HER GALLERY EMPIRE, AS UPPER EAST SIDE SPACE OPENS

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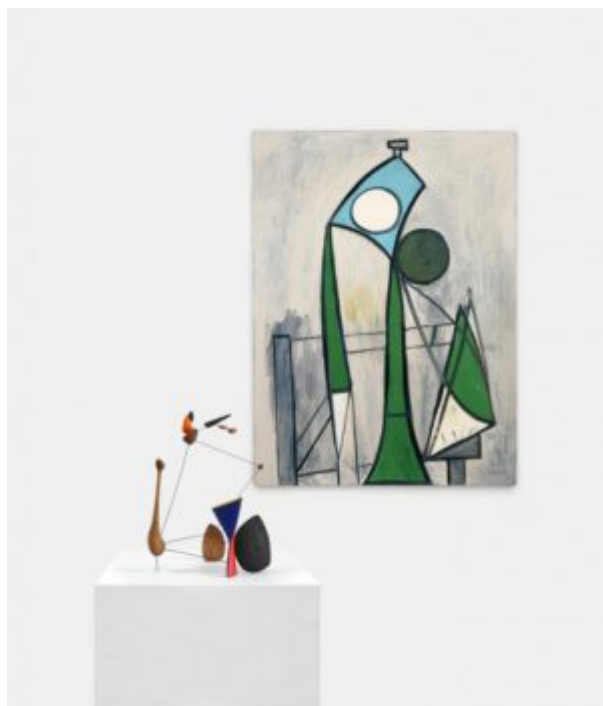
It seems like we were just doing this, pre-viewing a new orb in French dealer Almine Rech's constellation of galleries. Ah, right, that's because we were! Earlier this month, we were watching Jeff Koons take over Rech's new space in London, next to Gagosian Gallery's Grosvenor Hill spot in Mayfair. And, then this morning in Manhattan, she was opening the doors to her new Upper East Side digs, on the second floor of 39 East 78th Street.

"You know, that is a bit of a coincidence!" Rech said to me, standing in a partition that splits the space in two, near the front desk. "Like, the London gallery was supposed to open earlier, and it was delayed and delayed, and then it happened the same month, at like two weeks difference. That's how things are, but that was not the plan."

Rech's newest gallery puts her right in the middle of a still-growing Upper East Side scene, in which her immediate neighbors include Gagosian (again), with Half Gallery and Mnuchin Gallery next door. The one-two punch of Rech opening both a second outpost in London and her first stateside gallery in New York punctuates the quiet construction of a mini-empire: Rech now has five galleries, in Paris, Brussels, London, and New York. She now has more flags planted in various capitals of culture than, say, Marian Goodman (New York, Paris, London) or Blum & Poe (Los Angeles, Tokyo, New York).

Rech told me that she locked down the space about a year ago, which led to word leaking out around the time of Art Basel Miami Beach 2015. It's modestly sized at 3,000 square feet (Rech's space in Brussels is housed in a gigantic former truck garage) and was designed by David Becovy. In its former life it was a modest gym called Fitness Consultants, and the transformation required a massive building out of the space.

"From the moment when I signed, it took a year," she said. "It was in such a bad shape, you cannot imagine."



Alexander Calder, *Constellation with Diabolo*, 1943, wood, wire, and paint, 24 1/4 x 18 1/4 x 16 in. and Pablo Picasso, *Woman, June 8, 1946*, oil on plywood, 51 1/8 x 38 1/8 in. Zervos XIV-175 (Figure)

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Rech knew that when she would finally open a gallery here in New York, it would be on the Upper East Side, and didn't bother looking in other neighborhoods.

"We are a gallery which has a trans-period program—it can be completely contemporary, it can be completely emerging, or modern, or a combination of both," she said.

Indeed, the shows Almine Rech Gallery has up at its various outposts include Tom Weselmann in Paris, Taryn Simon in Brussels, and Erik Lindman in London.

"So it makes more sense to be uptown in the historical area," she added.



The outside of the new second-floor space.

COURTESY GOOGLE MAPS

(It's also nice that she has a residence with her husband, Bernard Ruiz-Picasso, at The Carlyle, which is immediately next door. They also have a Peter Marino-designed apartment downtown, as well as homes in Paris, Brussels, and the French countryside. They get around in a private jet, as mentioned in a profile of Alex Israel in *W*, which saw him hitching a ride with Rech and her husband as they went from the Museo Picasso in Málaga, Spain, to the opening of the Garage Museum in Moscow.)

Rech's first show at the gallery, which opens to the public Thursday evening, is "Calder and Picasso," put together by her husband, who is Picasso's grandson, and Sandy Rower, Calder's grandson and the founder of the Calder Foundation. The pairing came about when Rech pushed the two grandsons together two years ago, though it's not clear what relationship their grandfathers had during their lifetime.

"As key figures in the Parisian avant-garde, the two artists first met in 1931 but subsequently came into direct contact only a handful of times, though each followed the other's work with keen interest and shared numerous friends and political cause," reads a press release for the show. Regardless, the two bodies of work complement each other in various ways, with the sculptural grooves flowing well from the mobiles to paintings, with echoes of color and form throughout the show. One striking example: Calder's sculpture *Constellation with Diabolo* (1943) mimics the half ovals and bending stems of Picasso's painting *Femme dans un fauteuil* (1946), which is installed on the wall directly behind it.

Managing partner Paul de Froment (who is Rech's son from her previous marriage to French businessman Xavier de Froment, making this all very much a family affair up on 78th Street) led me around this morning, and pointed out that many of the pieces had been installed chronologically, with works made the same year next to each other. Familiar themes abound: Calder made some cool wire roosters, while Picasso liked to paint birds, etc.

(Calder's oeuvre, it seems, has proven to be an amendable counterpoint to a wide variety of artists, whether his contemporary and not; Hauser & Wirth staged "Transparence: Calder / Picabia" at its gallery in Zurich in 2015, and this summer, the Foundation Beyeler had up an intriguing show pairing Calder with works by the mischievous Swiss duo Fischili/Weiss.)

On Wednesday morning, both Rower and Ruiz-Picasso were on hand to show a few people around the show, which culls most of its work from their private collections. Picasso's progeny was buttoned up in a suit and tie; Rower, in burnt orange Vans, had on a tweed jacket with his shirt unbuttoned to mid-sternum.

"We have an intimate relationship with the works here," Rower said. "We've lived with them."

At one point, a woman on the tour asked, apropos of nothing, if the art gene was passed to the grandkids, compelling them to make art of their own.

"Yes, the art of loading trunks!" said Ruiz-Picasso, referring to the grueling install of the show, creating an unlikely mental image.

"He looks great on a ladder, hammering away," said Rower. "You should have seen this guy."