

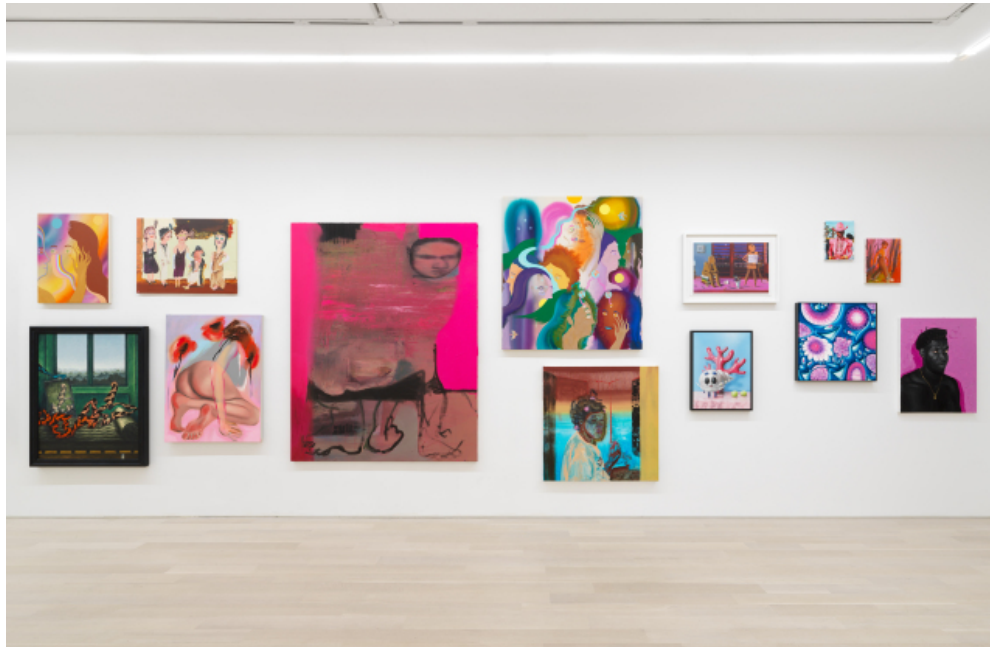
**ALMINE RECH**

**WWD**

## Almine Rech Brings the Salon Approach to New York

The gallery is presenting an uncurated survey of modern painting.

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Kristen Tauer



“Obviously painting is not going to die,” says gallerist Almine Rech Ruiz-Picasso. “It’s really so alive.”

The evidence is on the crowded gallery walls at Almine Rech Gallery at 39 East 78th Street in New York, where Rech has installed a salon-style exhibition, “Salon de Peinture.” Her intention is to bring attention to the history and vitality of painting. The show draws on the tradition of French salon shows beginning in the 17th century. The uncurated shows were designed as a presentation of contemporary art, with work crowded onto exhibition walls. The idea was to present a survey of work without commentary or criteria.

“And then little by little it was taken over by the academics, and it became about trying to rule it and to exclude people,” says Rech. Painters who didn’t make the cut — notably, the avant-garde Impressionist artists like Monet and Renoir — pushed back against the idea of an academic selection committee, resulting in the creation of alternative salon shows.

Rech has long mulled the idea of bringing a salon-style show to New York that pushes back against the idea that painting has gone out of style. “In fact it’s incredible how younger people want to paint,” she says. “I really wanted to show there’s been a huge wave of painting vitality.”

In line with the traditional salon concept, “Salon de Peinture” has no theme and no specific curator. “The theme was the energy of painting and contemporary artists, ones that live now and paint now,” says Rech. Of course, the exhibition isn’t a come-one-come-all exercise; working as a committee, gallery directors included artists they represent and have exhibited in the past, and a few painters who were recommended by those artists. The gallery show includes young but established painters like Sam McKinniss, Chloe Wise, Genieve Figgis and Vaughn Spann alongside emerging artists like Mosie Romney and Otis Kwame Quaicoe and heavy-hitter Kenny Scharf, who’s seen a recent mainstream resurgence.

Although the show doesn't center on a specific subject, many of the works are rooted in portraiture; still lifes and landscapes are also well-represented. "Many artists are really in conversation with what painting was, and some look at the past and reinvent portraiture or landscape, or they look at the history of painting," she says. "I think it's also a kind of reaction to our world, which is very much digital more and more."

Rech has also leaned into the digital art NFT moment, recently partnering with César Piette (included in the salon show) to produce four NFT editions.

"NFT for me is a new technique to do editions, and I think all those new aspects are interesting," says Rech, adding that the gallery received a lot of interest in the project. But despite the recent fervor over digital editions and virtual modes of showcasing art, she also sees an inclination toward live, in-person artwork. "One thing doesn't erase another," she adds.

On view through June 5 in New York.