ALMINE RECH

Calder and Picasso

Oct 28 — Dec 17, 2016 | New York, Upper East Side

Almine Rech Gallery is delighted to announce *Calder and Picasso*, the inaugural exhibition at its new gallery in New York City, opening on October 27, 2016. Curated by the artists' esteemed grandsons, Alexander S. C. Rower and Bernard Ruiz-Picasso, this exceptional and intimate exhibition will be the first to explore the creative dialogue between these two modern masters. The exhibition will bring together more than fifty works created between 1912 and 1967, highlighting the shared formal, social and political concerns that informed their varied and seminal creative outputs. All of the works on view, including paintings, sculpture and works on paper, have been drawn from the respective private family collections, many of which have rarely or never before been exhibited in public.

Calder and Picasso is the culmination of more than two years of conversation and collaboration, during which Rower and Ruiz-Picasso explored the myriad preoccupations and practices of their grandfathers, finding dialogues in their work both formally and philosophically. What started as a simple exchange of observations and imagery developed into an important and deeply personal journey of discovery and rediscovery, as the numerous aspects connecting these iconic artists became more distinct. Coming out of Rower and Ruiz-Picasso's parallel perspectives and unrivalled knowledge of their grandfathers' *œuvres*, the exhibition does not aim to be exhaustive, but instead a unique insight into two of the most important artistic figures of the 20th century.

Bernard Ruiz-Picasso said, "It has a been a pleasure and a privilege to work with Alexander Rower over the last two years to curate this uniquely personal exhibition. Our ongoing dialogue has been an extraordinary process, through which we have discovered a tremendous amount about the similarities that exist between Calder and Picasso's work, both thematically and historically. I am also delighted to be able to share these important works from the family collection with the public, in some cases for the first time."

Alexander S. C. Rower said, "For over fifty years now, both Bernard and I have been living with the works of our grandfathers. This type of intimacy with an artist's work is a tremendous privilege. And over the past two years, while working on this project, we have developed a much deeper understanding about the resonance between them—even the vital connections, such as addressing the void, or the attempt to delineate nonexistence. Our exhibition is a call and response that reflects our personal expressions as grandsons with our own things. Yet it is also about the public getting to see works that are rarely exhibited, which has its own reward."

Each born in the 19th century to classically trained artist fathers, Calder and Picasso's formative artistic years were marked by political upheaval in Europe. Such correlation between the artists' backgrounds is striking, despite their seventeen-year age difference. 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 causes. The pair's most remarkable encounter took place at the charged Spanish Republican Pavilion at the Paris *Exposition Internationale* in 1937, which aimed to raise both awareness and funds for the Republic's cause in the brutal Spanish Civil War. For the Pavilion, Picasso famously painted his monumental *Guernica*, depicting the Nazi blanket bombing of the Basque town of Guernica, and Calder contributed his *Mercury Fountain*, a beautiful yet toxic allusion to the threat to Almaden, the Republic's most important mercury mine—both overtly strong statements attesting to their ideological support for the Republic. Sharing strong anti-Fascist sentiments, Calder and Picasso were united in their belief that artists had a key role to play during times of war and that new art could be staged as a political and social force.

The thoughtfully curated selection of works presented in *Calder and Picasso* will include an important self-portrait by Picasso from 1964, which was kept by Picasso until his death in 1973, and a Calder standing mobile from around 1942. This pairing represents the beginning of the dialogue that led to the exhibition and exemplifies the resonance between the two artists. Works on display will also bring to light the artists' common formal interests in modes of representation and the void, or nonexistence as tangible matter. Simultaneously embracing the principals of abstraction and representation, certain similar dynamic qualities emerge between Calder's energetically charged wire sculptures and Picasso's immediate and spontaneous line drawings, both of which evoke a fluid, living mode of linear representation that seems at once two and three dimensional, inviting the viewer to fabricate his or her own complete illusionistic image. In the exhibition, works such as Picasso's drawing *Arlequin* (1918) and Calder's wire sculpture *Acrobat* (1929) will be situated in conversation with each other, highlighting a formal andsymbolic exploration of line and negative space as well as tracing a trajectory between drawing and sculpture. Calder's treatment of transparency and space, though often assumed to be influenced by Cubism, was in fact an investigation he came to entirely separately, as was his groundbreaking introduction of actual motion into his works, thereby working around the implied depiction of motion that was a preoccupation of Cubism and Futurism. Calder and Picasso, as is often the case, were two disparate artists of a shared era who were drawn to the same questions in their practice, each producing his own fascinatingly unique solutions.

The exhibition will be accompanied by a catalogue featuring a moderated interview with Rower and Ruiz-Picasso by writer and curator Phong Bui, new essays by Susan Braeuer Dam, Director of Research and Publications at the Calder Foundation; Jordana Mendelson, Associate Professor of Spanish and Portuguese Languages and Literature at New York University; and Robert Slifkin, Associate Professor of Fine Arts at New York University, as well as archival materials and historical photographs.

Alexander Calder / Constellation with Diabolo. 1943. Wood, wire, and paint. 24 1/4" x 18 1/4" x 16".
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Pablo Picasso / Femme dans un fauteuil. June 8, 1946. Oil on plywood. 51 1/8" x 38 1/8". Zervos XIV-175 © 2016 Succession Picasso / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.