

PHILADELPHIA STYLE

people to be eager and begging to show here, not turning down the city because it's not important enough."

If anyone can make this happen, it's the indefatigable Mayer. An avid art lover with a myopic sense of purpose, she spent her mid-twenties working her way through the ranks of the global art world. She landed at the esteemed David Beitzel Gallery in New York, where she handled high-net-worth clients, then moved on to the Taiwan Fine Art Museum, and, finally, San Francisco. But at just 27, this Jersey girl was feeling restless and wanted to come home.

After settling in Philadelphia, she opened Bridgette Mayer Gallery in the spring of 2001. Weathering those post-9/11 years with nothing more than determination and a fierce love for what she does ("I only sold one \$400 print in the month of September, and I remember thinking, Oh, no"), Mayer filled her jewel box of a gallery with up-and-coming artists. "I really believed in the type of art I was showing and the types of shows I was putting together. I thought, At some

point, someone's going to appreciate this," she recalls.

Ten hard-working years later, the acknowledgment is overwhelming. Her corporate and residential client list tops 300, with many of the city's societal and professional elite depending on her expert eye. And she now has pieces like a \$5 million Jackson Pollock while still showcasing \$3,000 works by up-and-coming artists.

To truly curate the type of art she loves, however, she needed a gallery to match. So in 2007, she bought the rest of the 200-year-old building that housed her gallery, eventually took a year to renovate, and reopened this past fall as a 3,000-square-foot enclave befitting the works that hang on its stark-white walls. Her exhibitions are now garnering worldwide attention. In January she hosted the highly esteemed and coveted Costa Rican artist Federico Herrero, a Venice Biennale Golden Lion Award winner, for his first show in the US. And Spanish artist Germán Gómez (whose work is collected by the King of Spain) is

coming to the Walnut Street gallery for an exhibition that opens in April.

Despite these successes, Mayer never loses sight of what inspired her to open her gallery a decade ago. "I want to enrich people's lives with art. It has made a huge impact on my life, and I hope to make that impact with people by helping them understand it, live with it, and let it bring beauty to their life." 709 Walnut St., 215-413-8893; bridgettemayergallery.com **PS**

INSIGHT

Dream acquisition: A painting by Basquiat

In the gallery window: "You'll always find my Cockapoo, Luca."

You would be surprised to know: "I grew up on a farm. Farming wasn't my dad's job—it was his hobby."

Bridgette Mayer, brightening up the Philadelphia art scene

mayer's masterstroke

BRINGING THE WORLD'S BEST CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS TO PHILADELPHIA IS ALL IN A DAY'S WORK FOR BRIDGETTE MAYER. BY MARNI PRICHARD MANKO

Despite claiming ownership to some of the art world's most esteemed institutions and luminaries, Philadelphia has always been saddled with a second-tier status among artists and influencers. If gallery owner Bridgette Mayer has anything to do with it, those days will soon be over.

"I'm striving to put Philadelphia on the art map," says the 38-year-old owner of the Washington Square gallery that bears her name. "I want