

# ALMINE RECH

## whitewall

By earl Fontaine  
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Photograph Courtesy Almine Rech

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To “double down” is to strengthen your efforts at a potentially risky moment, and I think it’s very fitting in our current political climate and where I’m at in my career.

**WW:** The show is based on your childhood memories of the gambling that went on in your neighborhood, but also creates a parallel narrative on the career of an artist. How did you first make this connection?

**MJ:** As an artist, there’s something particularly exciting about opening an exhibition in your hometown. I grew up in Brooklyn, and for me, it was a very different place than it is now—in the post-gentrification era. This led me to dig and conjure up memories of what it was like before and try to convey this feeling.

There was a stronger sense of community and togetherness. Gambling came up because it’s such a prevalent activity in black and latino communities around NYC—from the young guys outside playing cee-lo, to the older people playing lottery and illegal numbers. People turn into adults and the impulse of play never leaves.

I feel like that’s a lot like an artist. Our inner child wants to play and create and take risks in return for a greater gain.

**WW:** The exhibition features new paintings and includes a site-specific installation. What can you tell us about that aspect of the show?

**MJ:** With this exhibition, I’m allowing more media to permeate the work. One room is covered with a wallpaper. It’s an appropriation of a daily numerology publication called BIG RED that is sold in inner city bodegas around NYC. It’s based on past lottery and horse race results, and people use them to pick lottery numbers, and for illegal gambling.

They are, for me, a ready-made—the graphic composition of the sheets and the humorous quotes that are printed on them. The wallpaper changes the gallery context into something that’s linked to marginalized areas in NYC, like an old-school numbers hole.