ALMINE RECH

Gwen O'Neil
A Glimmer in the Shade

Jan 17 — Mar 1, 2025 | New York

Almine Rech New York, Tribeca is pleased to announce *A Glimmer in the Shade*, Gwen O'Neil's second solo exhibition with the gallery, on view from January 17 to March 1, 2025.

Surrounded by grandeur, it is no wonder that Gwen O'Neil draws inspiration from her environment. She is transfixed by the phenomena and sensations of the natural world. Through her mesmerizing use of color and instantly recognizable motion, atmospheric conditions dance across the canvas. Her pointillistic technique alludes to nature's simultaneity and happenstance, while harkening back to the masters Seurat and Signac.

Premised on perception, her work explores the interplay of color and its relationship with both the viewer and the surroundings. In line with Michel-Eugène Chevreul's *De la loi du contraste simultané des couleurs* (1839), O'Neil's work posits that colors can shift—becoming more vibrant—depending on neighboring hues. When complementary colors of equal value and saturation meet, luminosity results.

While the natural world remains a constant muse, O'Neil has shifted her palette toward darker, moodier realms. Deeply captivated by nature, she is nonetheless attuned to its haunting truths. The glorious choreography of starlings across the skies, while breathtaking, is an invasive force. The Santa Ana winds that temporarily clear the air also dangerously stoke wildfires. And the ravishing sunrises and sunsets are, in truth, a toxic gift bestowed by pollution. O'Neil challenges us to confront these contradictions, urging the protection of nature before we render our planet uninhabitable.

Her process has evolved in this new series. Inspired by Helen Frankenthaler, O'Neil now stains her works, a departure from her earlier use of raw canvas. "The ground is no longer the same; I have to rediscover color all over again." Copious sketches are projected directly onto the canvas as she lets the interplay of color guide her hand. Working intuitively with saturation and hue on this new foundation, the spontaneity evokes a veracity only found in nature.

Engaging with the flux of the cosmos, O'Neil's dynamic images are akin to mindscapes or dreamscapes. She deconstructs the inextinguishable energy of matter into its base form—constituent dot-particles and waves. Her work is part science, part poetry—offering, amidst the gathering darkness, "a glimmer of light."

Gwen O'Neil (b. 1992) is based in Los Angeles. Born in Manhattan and raised on Long Island, she graduated from the Savannah College of Art and Design in 2015.

— Lilly Wei, New York-based art critic, writer, independent curator, and journalist.