ALMINE RECH

Farah Atassi
Metamorphosis

Jun 26 — Jul 31, 2026 | New York

Almine Rech New York is pleased to present 'Metamorphosis,' Farah Atassi's fifth solo exhibition with the gallery, on view from June 26 to July 31, 2026.

"My soul is wrought to sing of forms transformed to bodies new and strange!" The invocation from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* is an apt preface for Farah Atassi's new body of work. Across these eight paintings, transformed forms abound, deconstructed through a liberation of mind and brushstroke.

In *Nocturne*, a curious form, both vegetal and human, stands in an indeterminate space, part interior, part Baconesque cage. We sense that a change is under way, as her constructed surroundings yield to more uncanny elements. Clouds drift through the scene with utter disregard for the walls and the window frame. It is day outside, yet a full moon hangs in the corner. This was the first painting the artist completed in the series, and as it opened up a new world for her, so it does for the viewer.

A narrative begins to emerge: each work represents a dream, distinct, spontaneous visions tied delicately together through shared preoccupations and formal choices. Clouds act as guides, leading the eye from one canvas to the next. In the verdant still life *The Pears and the Clouds*, they take a rest, improbably set on tables like any other sundry item. Atassi is interested in the ambiguous materiality of clouds and their fluctuating nature, as well as compositional hierarchies. Long relegated to the background of paintings, she recast clouds as central characters.

Chimeric figures reoccur throughout the exhibition, half woman, half flower. Daphne– the nymph transformed into a laurel tree to escape the god Apollo– comes to mind. Recounted in the *Metamorphoses* and famously sculpted by Bernini, she is a representation of transformation and transcendence. Atassi's flower women too are organic, yet sculptural. They retain a distinct humanity but have been simplified, symbolized. Across the paintings we witness them up close and from afar, together and alone. Bold shadows anchor their twisting, growing forms; Atassi mused that perhaps they are the most "real" element in these compositions.

In many ways these works interrogate the act of painting– itself a form of metamorphosis. Recent experiments with wet-on-wet technique have brought a renewed attention to materiality and facture to Atassi's process. There are several paintings-within-paintings, like in *The Shadow*, in which a flower woman liberates herself from the canvas, striking out into the rosy dawn.

In *Nocturne 2*, a flower woman stands at a threshold. Beyond the doorway the horizon has disappeared, leaving only a moonlit night sky. Notes of Magritte's uncanny, atmospheric beauty emerge. For Atassi, who was raised in Belgium, the artist is an enduring touchpoint. Describing his *L'empire des lumières* series in 1956, René Magritte wrote: "This evocation of day and night seems to me to have the power to surprise and enchant us. I call this power "poetry"."[1]

Atassi's mastery of composition allows her to layer and effectively unite the mundane and the fantastic, constructing works that play in the space between dreams, reality, and perception. Through the creation of shifting, liminal places, the artist delves into the subconscious, creating portals to the unknown. The triptych *The Dawn* is the artist's largest-scale work to date. Three flower women appear in a sprawling desert. From this seemingly barren landscape, beauty has arisen, growth and change are possible– what seemed arid is in fact fertile, generative.

To dream is to suspend disbelief, accept the inexplicable. It is also to wake, head filled with vivid images, only for them to collapse as soon as you try to describe them. For Atassi, an exciting, unreal world is close at hand. We just have to close our eyes and see it.

— Louisa Mahoney, Researcher

[1] René Magritte, et al, *René Magritte Selected Writings*, Edited by Kathleen Rooney and Eric Plattner, University of Minnesota Press, 2016, p. 167.