ALMINE RECH

Gwen O'Neil
Atlantic Ave

Oct 8, 2026 — Jan 29, 2027 | Monaco

Almine Rech Monaco is pleased to present 'Atlantic Ave,' Gwen O'Neil's third solo exhibition with the gallery, on view from October 8, 2026 to January 29, 2027.

Gwen O'Neil has come home. After ten years in California, the artist returned east—where she was born and raised—last year. Since moving to Brooklyn, she has been spending more time at her childhood home in East Hampton. A new body of work, presented in the show 'Atlantic Ave' at Almine Rech Monaco, reflects on her newfound yet familiar surroundings, articulating O'Neil's attention and attachment to a place that has only deepened after a decade away.

Staining is central to O'Neil's practice, a starting point that orients each painting. Informed by the soak-stains of Helen Frankenthaler, she has developed a method of mixing pigment with water and soap, coaxing the stain to completely permeate the canvas. In these recent works, the stains can be appreciated more than ever before. O'Neil has left them visible as central compositional elements, and especially as representations of the uncontrollable and the instinctual, saying it would be "silly to cover up all these beautiful happenings." Emphasizing the stains led her to, in her own words, "leave the canvas open." Her whirling, kaleidoscopic marks therefore enter into a new dialogue with the stains, developing the interplay between surface and interior, foreground and background, the fortuitous and the decided.

Out East, O'Neil likes to walk to the bay by her home, sometimes multiple times a day. The constantly changing colors of sea and sky reappear across these works: the thick mist of the morning, the gold of the evening, waves and wind and reflections. Changing coasts has brought an entirely new color palette to the fore, coupled with the artist's recent exploration of color theory, especially through the work of Josef Albers. Simultaneous contrast has been on her mind, bringing a new way of seeing the environment around her. O'Neil originally studied photography and takes Polaroids that provide source material for paintings. Her mother is an avid gardener, and photos of her flowers have also helped define the palette of this body of work. But these paintings aren’t only in dialogue with the warmer months. The artist's return last year coincided with a brutal winter, marked by intense snowstorms and ice floes in the bay. Experiencing these extremes after the lush, edenic stasis of Southern California has been a dramatic reintroduction to the cycles that drive life in the Northeast. Living through the seasons again means rediscovering the gratitude for spring and summer that only comes after a bleak, dark winter.

O'Neil is aligned with a long tradition of painters drawing inspiration from Long Island, most notably Lee Krasner and Jackson Pollock ("The country is wonderful," Pollock famously wrote), but also Helen Frankenthaler and the de Koonings. Krasner's breakthrough *Little Image* paintings were born from experiments at her Springs home, not far from where O'Neil works today. These small works, which Krasner made on a tabletop in her bedroom, came to mind as O'Neil showed me her own recent experiments in scale. We spoke from her childhood bedroom, where she had set up a studio just as Krasner did so many years before. The petite works glittered like striking, compact jewels. This new format represents a major departure for the artist, introducing new conceptions of space and intimacy to her sprawling, swirling style.

Named for a street in Amagansett that leads to the ocean, 'Atlantic Ave' seeks to articulate the quiet splendor of a moment spent in nature, as well as the timeless rhythms that undergird these single experiences. Light, water, and the movement of animals nourish her process, and now her own migration has opened a new chapter, allowing her work to cycle back, old emotions combining with new observations, all captured in breathless color and brushstroke.

— Louisa Mahoney, Researcher