

The New York Times

October 21, 2005

Art in Review; Helen Miranda Wilson

By Grace Glueck

DC Moore Gallery
724 Fifth Avenue, at 57th Street
Through Nov. 5

In what seems like a radical departure from her previous painting, which focused recognizably on the natural world, Helen Miranda Wilson shows oil-on-panel geometrical abstractions composed entirely of small colored squares, rectangles and parts thereof. Each of these "calendar paintings" refers to events in her life about the time they were painted; each unit of color represents a day.

The switch in her work to this kind of shorthand, she explains, has occurred because of a busier life. Having moved back to the Cape Cod town where she grew up, she has become an elected official and a beekeeper. So the patches of color, neatly laid out but with a handmade look – edges that bleed slightly, drips of primer material – represent a diminution in her desire "to work from observation."

Although there is no recognizable subject matter in the panels, they do have titles, like "Tom's Salad, Thanksgiving Day," in which the patches, not uniformly aligned and occurring in intense colors modified by silvery grays and blacks, could conceivably celebrate a salad blitz made for a large company. And some have dates for titles, one being "February 19, 2004," in which a bright red rectangle (a red letter day?) stands out among more sedate hues. Other visual stimuli include flags, quilts and honeycombs.

The softness and eccentric placement of the patches leavens the severity of their geometrics, giving the panels a folksy quality that reminds me of the painter Al Jensen's garrulous (and far more complex) schemes, minus their philosophical underpinning.