

Helen Miranda Wilson *Halos* at Victoria Munroe Fine Art Boston, MA
May-14th - June 20th 2009

Helen Miranda Wilson continues to set the bar high, taking risks and challenging those who admire her work to go beyond their comfort zone. Her new gouaches on paper at Victoria Munroe Fine Art are a departure from the stunning “calendar” and striped series of oils on panel she has exhibited recently, in both medium and geometry.

Wilson’s abstractions consistently combine openness with boundaries, but while her previous work’s stripes and rectangles prompted a natural tendency to ‘read’ the progression of colors, echoing Wilson’s painting process itself, the concentric rather than orthogonal parallelism of the halos provides a more optical experience, drawing the viewer into each target-like figure.

Admittedly, gouache is a notoriously unforgiving medium, but there is a certain sense of manhandling that was not present in the oils. This is less evident in the ones in which the targets are given space to be in, instead of overflowing on all sides, and the free-floating compositions have a sense of place and acceptance that is lost in the busier ones, which appear strangely distended, their edges paradoxically concave.

Wilson’s brush-handling skills translate better from oils to gouache than the colors themselves do. What she does is never easy, and she does it impeccably well, but I found myself welcoming the flaws and smudges as much for evidence that she is not, indeed, superhuman, as for relief from the incessant show of skill itself. This was never an issue with the oils, where the luscious color and surface is accomplished with grace however the colors encounter one another. There is a sense of revision in some of the concentric compositions, but the best of them exhibit Wilson’s more characteristic and vast capacity for discovery.

Susan Post