

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

'Jane Wilson: Recent Paintings'

By Lance Esplund
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DC Moore Gallery

724 Fifth Ave.

Through Dec. 23

The Dutch, who in the 17th century made landscape into an autonomous genre of painting, often devoted two-thirds of their pictures to Holland's fluctuating sky. Eighty-five-year-old artist Jane Wilson has upped the ante. For decades she has created her signature big sky pictures, in which nine-tenths or more of her land- and seascapes are anchored, à la Rothko's horizontal bands, by mere slivers of horizon line.

In her current work, besides Rothko, Ms. Wilson pays homage to Bonnard, Burchfield, Marin and Dove, as well as, seemingly—in some works' calligraphic wind and clouds—to her own Abstract Expressionist origins. But felt mostly in this show of 28 oils and watercolors (all from 2008 or 2009), of restless, effervescent surf, sky, light and storm, is the turbulence of J.M.W. Turner. Scumbled and atmospheric, Ms. Wilson's morning and evening pictures are streaked edge to edge with wispy sunlight. Her nighttime skies, dark and dreamy, are lighted by lime-green moons. Ms. Wilson can overstate the obvious. And sometimes her pictures feel uncomfortably torn between literal and romantic tendencies. But this show might be one of her best. Her most satisfying paintings, often smaller, depict rolling storms and midnight skies. Undulating, frontal and rising, as if worlds were about to collide, they leave their landscape sources behind to immerse us in the forces of nature.