PRESS RELEASE

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Helen Miranda Wilson at DC Moore

There's something almost medieval about Helen Miranda Wilson's small, carefully detailed paintings of the contemporary world. The human presence seems momentarily silenced by God's vast works, whether evidenced in distant vistas or in humble objects. Wilson anoints these moments: how the sky looked on a particular day (*Clouds, Early Afternoon, July 1999*, oil on wood, 11 by 14 inches), what was on her desk on another (*Tooth*, November 1999) or what it's like at the town dump (*At the Transfer Station, Wellfleet, Ma.*,1999). This diaristic exhibition, a gathering of improvised and sustained projects, included interior still lifes oppressively framed in glossy black wood as well as a series of sumi ink drawings of nasturtiums and honeysuckle, and some pencil drawings that seem to be studies for parts of paintings. Then there were the landscapes, which seem to communicate Wilson's vision of the world most directly. These unframed outdoor scenes of Cape Cod and rural New York State reveal a kind of tremulously peaceable kingdom.

Helen Miranda Wilson: *Wild Apple, from the Top of Mt. Rascal, Argyle, N.Y.*, 1992, oil on panel, 11 by 11 inches; at DC Moore.

One aspect of many of the inland scenes recalls Martin Johnson Heade, the 19th-century American artist who specialized in landscapes poised ahead of approaching rain. *Wild Apple, from the Top of Mt. Rascal, Argyle, N. Y.*, an 11-by-11-inch oil-on-wood painting, for example, depicts an apple tree in the foreground of rolling mountainside fields interrupted by lines of dark green trees. The deep blue sky above is heavy with weather, and the distant mountains are almost completely obscured by moisture-laden air. The view feels simultaneously antique and immediate, as if you were looking at the distant landscape in a Brueghel and recognized the Catskills. There is also remarkable depth to Wilson's painted skies, and from a few feet away they almost seem to come alive.

Being the daughter of the novelist and literary critic Edmund Wilson may account for her seemingly innate trust in the power of description, the area where the visual and the verbal most comfortably overlap. Unlike her poetic-realist contemporaries, Wilson doesn't appear to require a specific psychological manner, such as the apprehension that is a constant presence in Catherine Murphy's paintings or the infinite longing that is discernible in Vija Celmins's work. Wilson's art might just be about luck—the luck to be alive for these moments and give them their due in paint. —*Joe Fyfe*