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Patrick Wilson: Curator's Office

[Art in America, Dec, 2009](#) by [Sidney Lawrence](#)

[ILLUSTRATION OMITTED]

Patrick Wilson makes friendly geometric abstractions. The five smallish acrylic-on-canvas works in this show (all from 2008 or '09) share a glowing, borderline-playful presence and associative titles, their textures and colors calling forth poppies, olive trees and butterscotch stucco, among other things. The Los Angeles-based artist (b. 1970) has a bit of Albers, Mondrian and Robert Irwin in him, but Ed Ruscha's teasingly everyday enigmas are there, too. Wilson seduces the viewer gradually, which is why his title for the show, "Slow Food," is so apt.

Mi Casa is composed of overlapping planes in whites and grays that suggest a luminous foggy day. Bright rectilinear borders in cadmium yellow, sky blue and vermilion start, stop, disappear and reappear, like thoughts or pathways around, through, over and under these opaque areas of paint. You envision a come-on-over kind of "casa" with many rooms to explore, light filtering in, and a lot of talk and human activity. Similarly, the orange-russet Pepper Jelly and the oak leaf-green Farmer's Market take you, respectively, to an aromatic, Mexican-tiled kitchen and a bounteous vegetable patch on dry land.

If the bumpy matte grounds look familiar, it's because Wilson, a Claremont College MFA trained in construction, creates them using everyday house-paint rollers. His surfaces often have an exquisite sheen, which he achieves not by polishing them but by spreading acrylic with a drywall blade (a squeegee-like metal tool). His masked edges are precise to the point of obsession, leaving ridges undisguised. The viewer feels engaged with the making of the work.

Wilson's titles, the artist stressed in a recent conversation, are an intuitive guide rather than

a directive or illustration. Still, visions of Chinatown distract from the tiny Lantern (12 inches square), whose juicy purplish reds remind me of eating a plum. Eight or nine planes float within the larger, punning Gray Area, presumably a work about indecision and uncertainty, though I see something else, to borrow Kenneth Baker's right-on observation about Wilson's work from a recent review: "the cascading windows of computer software." But Wilson's soulful minimalism, with its subliminal hints of screens, reminds us that life can be savored without ever turning on a power switch.

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