

Rose Wylie *Which One*

April 28–June 12, 2021
533 West 19th Street, New York

Appointment bookings available
on davidzwirner.com



Rose Wylie, *Black Pete, Blackbird and Lizard*, 2020. © Rose Wylie. Courtesy the artist and David Zwirner.

David Zwirner is pleased to present an exhibition of new works by British artist Rose Wylie (b. 1934) at the gallery's 533 West 19th Street location in New York. Following her acclaimed 2020 solo presentation at the Aspen Art Museum, this will be the artist's fourth exhibition with the gallery, and her first with David Zwirner in New York.

Wylie paints uniquely recognizable, colorful, and exuberant compositions that at first glance appear aesthetically simplistic, not seeming to align with any discernible style or movement, but on closer inspection are revealed to be wittily observed and subtly sophisticated meditations on the nature of visual representation itself. As curator Clarrie Wallis notes, "[Wylie's] large pictures are painted in a kind of visual shorthand that is direct and legible. The ability to elicit a range of responses is made possible precisely because of her reduction of form to an essential vibrancy that incorporates, via the very physicality of her medium, not just what the artist sees but an accompanying multitude of thoughts, feelings, and memories. Wylie's work is a sophisticated transmutation, or sifting of perceptual experience, carrying as it does a wealth of affective and allusive resonances, into the painted form."¹

This exhibition features a group of paintings that were made in Wylie's home—a seventeenth-century house in Kent, England. Often painting through the night and in different rooms of the house, these works are at once representative of the experience of solitude and confinement felt by so many in 2020 as well as Wylie's approach to her medium. As she relates, "Ages ago, someone said to me, 'Tell me, are you more interested in what's painting or how it's painted?' ... Well, I just said, 'Both, I suppose.' But I think how is really more important.... The narrative, it doesn't actually matter.... It's the difficulty of choice and discrimination and aesthetic judgement. In a lot of painting, I think that is what matters."² This sentiment is echoed in the exhibition's title—*Which One*—a wry and open-ended comment on her creative process.

Debuted in this exhibition are a group of canvases that take inspiration from traditional Mexican *retablos*,

¹ Clarrie Wallis, *Rose Wylie* (London: Lund Humphries, 2018), p. 8.

² Rose Wylie in conversation with Rodolphe von Hofmannsthal, April 2021.

or devotional paintings, which the artist has long admired for their pictorial directness. A type of folk art, these small works are functional religious objects, intended to bring Catholic iconography into the home and to convey moralizing stories, which Wylie explores, adding her characteristic humor to the compositions as means of experimenting with the form. In her paintings, Wylie takes individual *retablos* as a starting point and then transforms them according to her own subjective reading, mixing traditional points of reference with her own text and visual signifiers, often based on current affairs, contemporary movies, and art history. These works belong to Wylie's larger "Homage" series, in which she looks to modes of picture-making outside the dominant Western canon and from different time periods as a means of studying and internalizing compositional strategies other than, and as well as, traditional Renaissance perspective.

Several works speak directly to the artist's day-to-day life, transforming Wylie's surroundings into readymade subject matter. *Breakfast* (2020) is a still life of the dish from which Wylie eats her breakfast every morning. Painted from sight, the bowl is set against a dark, burnt umber with flecks of blue background rendered in thick, painterly brushstrokes. *Fluffy Head* (2020)—a rare self-portrait—derives from Wylie's observations of her own image in the mirror before going to bed. Executed on a grand scale, across two canvases, her short, untamed hair conjures a sense of freedom from societal norms. Wylie's cat, Pete, also recurs, tracking his everyday misadventures while integrating his recognizable short-legged, long-bodied form into her painterly idiom.

Two paintings riff on a line from the Beatles song "Octopus's Garden"—"I'd like to be/Under the sea"—and feature swimmers suspended mid-current. Prompted by an invitation to participate in a group show honoring John Lennon, Wylie picked the first Beatles song that entered her head as the subject of her entry, only to later realize that she selected one of the only hits written by Ringo Starr. The ensuing series of paintings, executed on a grander scale than the initial drawing, makes light of this lapse, and Wylie embeds the initials of both musicians within the composition. Wylie notes that these works are likewise a response to being left alone in her studio without assistants to hold her own "paint in." By distorting perspective, Wylie mimics the simultaneously disorienting and freeing feeling of being adrift in a large body of water.

A work from a new series of sculptures will also be on view for the first time in this exhibition, introducing a third dimension into the artist's practice. This body of work derives from motifs found in earlier paintings and drawings—in this case, a pineapple, which is appealing for its surreal shape and tropical origins. Wylie purchased a pineapple, which was grown in Ghana, at her local market, and ended up making multiple drawings, intrigued by its vaguely human proportions and prickly exterior as well as its unusually large crown of leaves. For Wylie, working in three dimensions represents a further act of translation from original image to painting to sculpture that equally brings out the formal qualities of these shapes as well as their symbolic resonances. Produced in an oversized scale, *Pineapple* extends Wylie's distinctive visual language to the realm of the viewer.

An exhibition catalogue will be forthcoming from David Zwirner Books.

Rose Wylie (b. 1934) studied at Folkestone and Dover School of Art, Kent, and the Royal College of Art, London, from which she graduated in 1981. The artist's first solo exhibition took place in 1985 at the Trinity Arts Centre, in Kent. In recent years, she has had solo presentations at venues including the Rosenwald-Wolf Gallery, The University of the Arts, Philadelphia (2012); Jerwood Gallery, Hastings, England (2012); Tate Britain, London (2013); Haugar Vestfold Kunstmuseum, Tønsberg, Norway (2013); Städtische Galerie Wolfsburg, Germany (2014); The Douglas Hyde Gallery, Dublin (2015); Space K, Seoul (2016); Chapter, Cardiff (2016); Turner Contemporary, Margate (2016); Serpentine Sackler Gallery,

London (2017); Plymouth Arts Centre and The Gallery at Plymouth College of Art, England (2018; traveled to Newlyn Art Gallery & The Exchange, Cornwall, England); Centro de Arte Contemporáneo de Málaga (2018); and The Gallery at Windsor, Vero Beach, Florida (2020).

In 2020, *Rose Wylie: where i am and was*, the artist's first solo museum presentation in the United States, was on view at the Aspen Art Museum in Colorado. Also in 2020, the solo exhibition *Hullo Hullo Following-on* was on view at the Hangaram Art Museum in Seoul, South Korea. A solo exhibition of the artist's work is currently on view at the Museum Langmatt, Baden, Switzerland, through May 24, 2021.

In 2014, Wylie was awarded the John Moores Painting Prize, presented by the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool (2014), and was also elected as a Senior Royal Academician. In 2015, she received the Royal Academy of Arts' Charles Wollaston Award. In 2018, she was awarded an OBE (Officer of the Order of the British Empire) for her services to art.

Wylie's work can be found in prominent collections throughout the United States, Europe, and Asia, including the Arario Museum, Seoul; Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Washington, DC; Space K, Seoul; Städtische Galerie Wolfsburg, Germany; Tate, London; and Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool.

The artist has been represented by David Zwirner since 2017. She lives and works in Kent, England.

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