

David Wilson: More Than Blue
Atelier Gallery: October 4 – 27, 2007

"There Is No Blue Without Yellow and Without Orange"

--Vincent van Gogh Letters

East on Keefer Street is one of David Wilson's 2007 night views that is consistent with the highly successful paintings he has been creating for the last several years. Although it reflects his absolute knowledge of Vancouver's Downtown East Side it is a evocation (rather than an accurate representation) of that particular site.

His post-Impressionist nightscapes are influenced, in part, by the fog-shrouded mysterious of Whistler's late 19th century Thames-side nocturnes. Their hyped-up colours and their almost-dangerous auras are more reminiscent, however, of Van Gogh's *Night Cafes* which were rendered when the Dutch genius was sliding into madness. The deep, dark blues of Wilson's lapis lazuli midnight skies roil with turbulence and the strident, highly contrasting hues used to construct edifices and the rooms contained within them, the shop-fronts and the awnings, the cars, taxi-cabs and buses that roam the empty streets project a prevailing mood of sadness and impending danger, the more unsettling, perhaps, because it is non-specific. Wilson's paintings hint at the insanities that plague today's cities—the unprovoked murders, drive-by shootings and bombings which create uneasiness and adrenaline-fueled tension. But beauty predominates. He seduces us with the riches of gold building interiors, amber and ruby vehicle lights and the precious diamond street lamps that festoon his city overviews.

The hues in the water-soaked pavements in the foreground of the large panorama *Just Before Six* are particularly dazzling. Here brilliant blue and blood red calligraphic strokes swim frantically over the slick streets like tetras that have leapt from the fish bowl. The yellow and amber streaks skip over slick surfaces and sizzle before being consumed by blackness. Wilson's versions of white traffic lines (although entirely non-functional) lash the unstable streets of the composition together. In several new nightscapes like this, Wilson has deliberately "increased the percentage of the format given over to painterly strokes of colour, experimenting for the first time with a more fully abstract presentation."

In *More Than Blue* there are other demonstrations that Wilson is moving forward while retaining most of the characteristics of his tried and true style and content. The canvases that present the city in evening light when the roads are dry and the expressionistic sketches of the Burrard Bridge that are rendered in black and white represent occasional shifts into the gray scale away from the typical range of blues.

By Ann Rosenberg, Vancouver-based critic and curator