

HUDSON, NEW YORK

La Wilson

John Davis Gallery

Now in her mid-80s, Ohio-based, primarily self-taught La Wilson has long made resonant, even transgressive-feeling assemblage works. Her signature form is the box, which she uses to hold compositions made up of everyday objects, very much like a conventional frame provides a border for a painting's pictorial space. For years, she has scoured flea markets in search of antique

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The old wooden boxes become integral elements of each work and often set the overall tone, from subtly subversive to eloquent. In her recent works, Wilson takes a more pared-down approach, using fewer kinds of elements in her compositions. Thus, the ephemeral-feeling *Étude* (2010) consists of just a group of felt piano hammers placed inside a small, shallow box, like the delicate, color-streaked shoots of an exotic tropical plant. In *Night Light* (2010), a single, large black die with

school-cafeteria tray. Each element evokes a heightened sense of awareness in its airless, timeless little chamber.

Wilson has studied Buddhism for many years, and its meditative spirit can be felt in her work, as can a sense of spontaneity. About the odds and ends that are her raw materials, the mostly reclusive artist told me a few years ago: "I just try to find a home for them...The thing is to go in and find relationships [between them] that I never imagined or heard of or thought about. I just love that feeling of them coming together."

—Edward M. Gómez



La Wilson, *Holy Wisdom*, 2010. Mixed media, 13.5 x 19 x 3.25 in. open.

packing boxes, the kinds of containers that once held sewing notions or hardware.

Over the years, Wilson has gained a cult following among fellow artists working in collage and assemblage. Because her work is more funky-abstract than literary-romantic, it has never really sunk into the consciousness of viewers whose under-

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white dots stands on its own little shelf in a vertically oriented box with thick, time-weathered walls; a larger compartment below is packed full of black-stained upright sticks. *Holy Wisdom* (2010), an open, hinged box, reveals faded, red-and-yellow letter blocks, a green folding ruler, a blue-painted stone, a wooden spool, and rolls of white string, each type of object contained in a separate compartment like oddly gathered items on a