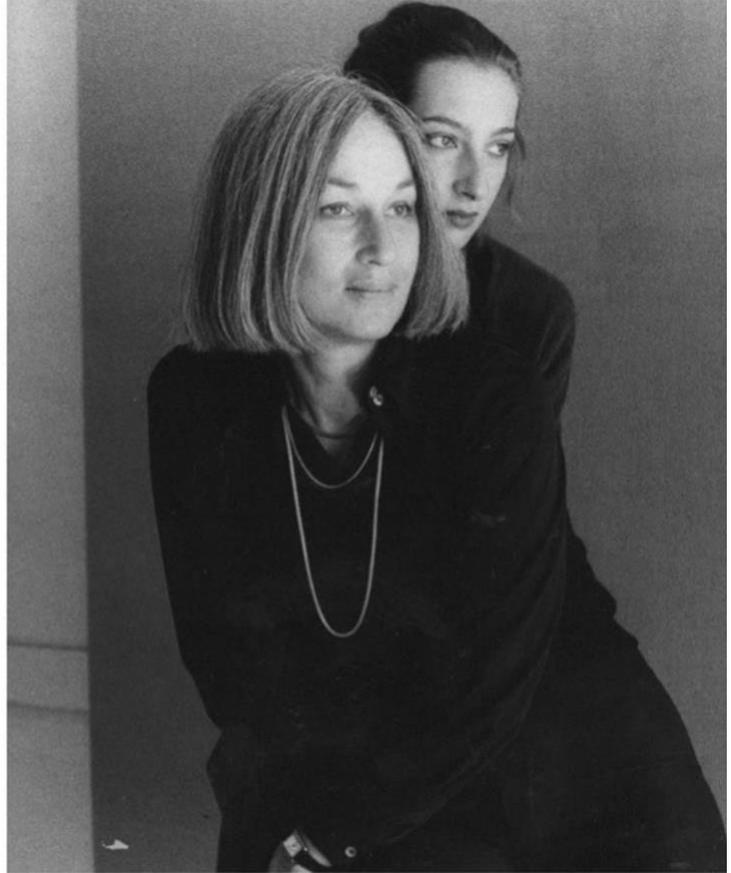


DC MOORE GALLERY

From the Studio:

Recollections of Jane Wilson

By Julia Gruen



Jane Wilson and Julia Gruen. New York, NY, c. 1980.
Photo ©Michael Leonard.

Over the past few months, DC Moore Gallery has been providing inside views into how our artists continue their practices to create new works of art, while sharing perspectives of their current, everyday lives. For this announcement, we are looking back at artist Jane Wilson (1924-2015), and her life in Water Mill, NY, as told by her daughter, Julia Gruen.

We are excited to continue this initiative and welcome your thoughts about these features, as we hope they will bring together our friends, families, and colleagues. Please follow us at our gallery's [Instagram](#) or [email us](#) with questions or comments.

From Julia Gruen:

My parents bought a house in Water Mill, NY, in 1960. Previously, they had spent summers with friends in the area: Jane Freilicher and Joe Hazan; Arthur Gold and Robert Fizedale; Fairfield and Anne Porter; Ellen and David Oppenheim, among others. I was born in 1958, so I also stayed with the above-mentioned friends, though I know this only from photographs and my parents' stories.

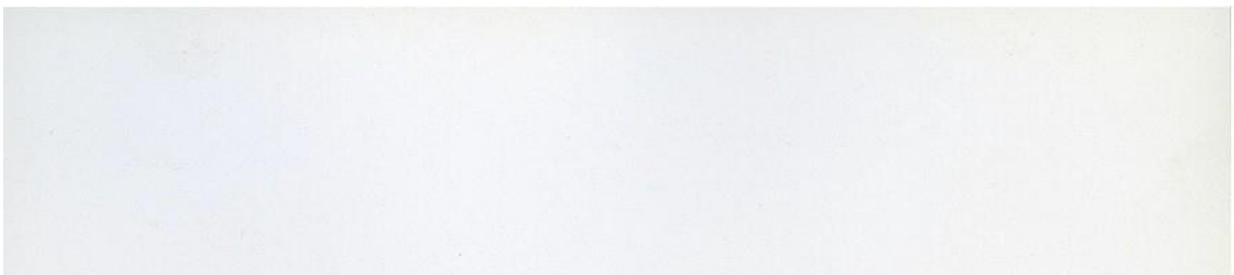


Southampton, NY, 1962.

Left to Right: Mary Rattray Kanovitz, Howard Kanovitz, Clarice Rivers, Willem de Kooning, Jane Wilson holding daughter Julia, Larry Rivers.
Photo ©Estate of John Gruen.

Once my parents bought their own house, a 1920s carriage house with a huge studio upstairs, we would spend most of our summers in Water Mill. My mother didn't paint every day, but when she did, it was often in the mornings and after lunch. The studio has ten incredible north-facing skylights, and those were one of this home's great features. But even when my mother wasn't painting in Water Mill, she painted almost daily in her various city studios.

We would often go to the nearest (Flying Point) beach for hours on end, just she and I, or with my father and groups of their friends, including Willem de Kooning, Jane Freilicher, Fairfield Porter, Robert Rauschenberg, Larry Rivers, Jasper Johns, and the writers, poets and playwrights Frank O'Hara, James Schuyler, Janice Koch, John Ashbery, Edward Albee, Arnold Weinstein, and many performing artists, as well.





Top Image: Jane Wilson and daughter Julia. Montauk, NY, 1963. Photo: ©Estate of John Gruen.

Bottom Image: Water Mill, NY, 1962.

Top Row: Tibor de Nagy, Rudy Burckhardt, Roland Pease.

Middle Row: Jane Wilson, Yvonne Jacquette, Jane Freilicher.

Bottom Row: Arthur Gold, Robert Fizdale, Joe Hazan.

Photo: ©Estate of John Gruen.

The summers of the 1960s and 1970s, when my parents and their wide circle of friends were mostly in their 40s, were a time of great freedom and creativity. But also, of endless parties! The social scene during that era in the Hamptons was incredibly active, and the art community was creating and celebrating in what was then a uniquely affordable, beautiful, and serene setting, far from the steamy city summers with no air conditioning. Out here, the sea breezes and periodic dramatic summer storms were more than sufficiently cooling.



Water Mill, NY, 1960.

Back Row: Robert Rauschenberg, Maxine Groffsky, Fairfield Porter, Larry Rivers, Morton Feldman.

Front Row: René Bouché, Jane Freilicher, Jane Wilson holding daughter Julia, Arthur Gold, Katie Porter, Naomi Newman, Anne Porter, Robert Fizdale, Lizzie Porter.

Photo: ©Estate of John Gruen.

As with many artists who frequented the East End of Long Island, it was the unique light that drew them to this region. The air, the sea, the clouds, the fields, and the then openness of the landscape provided so many artists of my parents' generation with the inspiration to summer out here.

My mother's landscapes were most inspired by the meeting of the sky, the sea, and the potato fields that she found in Water Mill. She was born and raised in land-locked Iowa, so the essential horizon line in her landscapes was not only that line between sea and sky and fields, but between the huge skies and endless plains of her birthplace.



Receding Sea, 1987. Oil on canvas, 80 x 74 inches.

My mother's subject matter evolved during these and the following decades. She painted cityscapes, portraits, still lifes, and even abstractions, but ultimately, her soul was most connected to landscape, and it is in those landscapes that she found her truest self.



Green Palisade, 1997. Oil on canvas, 30 x 36 inches.



Eclipse, 1991. Oil on canvas, 74 x 80 1/4 inches.

Even while teaching at Columbia (and previously at Parsons, Pratt, the New School, Dartmouth, the Vermont Studio School, and others), my mother ALWAYS painted. But during the summers, while happy to be in this beloved place, she sometimes felt pressured to create, and that pressure was rarely productive. To be creative without feeling obligated, she would turn and return to drawing and watercolors, largely landscapes and nature.



Fourth of July, 2003. Watercolor on paper, 8 x 8 inches.

It must also be said that my parents put the house in Water Mill to good use by renting it out, facilitating frequent summers in Europe, where my mother would spend hours in the great museums and do many, many watercolors and drawings. She was, in a sense, documenting the places visited, but also finding inspiration in simply being elsewhere, absorbing the astonishing history of European art that she had studied for her entire life.



Blue Carafe, 1979-81. Oil on linen, 30 x 30 inches.

My mother was a loner, as am I. Difficult as this period is for the whole world, I think my mother would have eventually thrived, and would be painting more than ever. She always loved being in Water Mill for its serenity and abundant nature. With the city being under lockdown for so long, I believe she would have been perfectly happy to spend much more time out in Water Mill. Although renowned for her wit, intelligence, talents, and great beauty, my mother was not a particularly social animal (nor am I). It was my father who most needed other people – both professionally and personally. He would have gone completely mad during this period of isolation and social distancing!



Jane Wilson in her studio. New York. June 4, 2000. Photo: ©Estate of John Gruen.

In the city, when cooking for just the three of us, or for an intimate dinner party, she would sometimes prepare elaborate meals. Somehow these always felt relatively informal, and she loved to experiment with cuisines from all over the world. Whenever my parents hosted large parties in the city (these were always my father's idea), she would pull out all the stops. With no assistance, she might make, for example, cassoulet for 50! During our Water Mill summers, however, her meals were simpler, making use of the abundant fresh produce and seafood. She often made gazpacho and other cold soups such as lettuce, cucumber, and potato-leek, as well as a multitude of salads, grilled fish, raw clams, the occasional lobster, and anything incorporating corn, tomatoes, cucumbers, and greens.

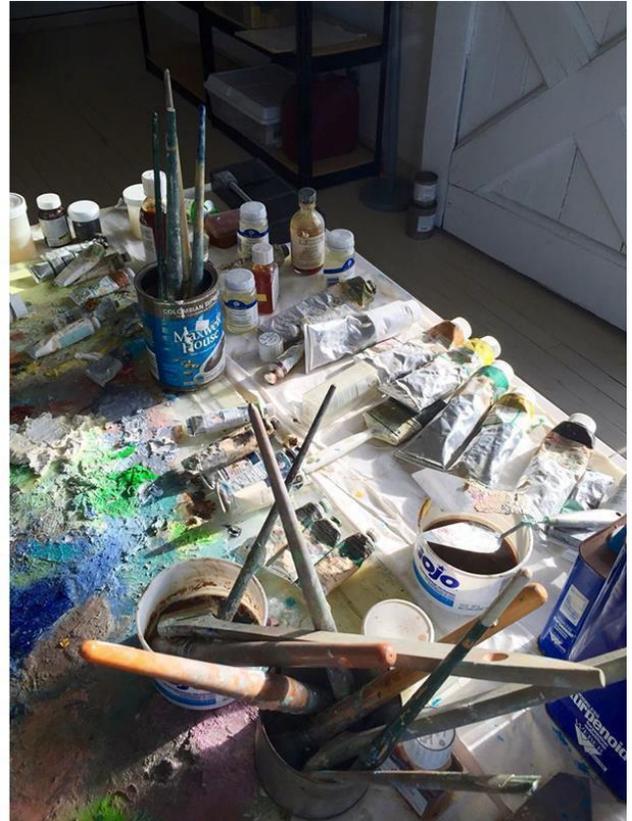
I have written these words in Water Mill, in the very house my parents bought 60 years ago. I feel my parents all around me here. Although I was born, raised, educated, and employed in New York City, I have always thought of Water Mill as my heart's home. As I read the newspaper, listen to classical music, play the piano, or take long beach walks, my father is omnipresent in my mind. But it is my

mother's essence that inhabits this place. I cook in her kitchen, I cultivate her garden, I am surrounded by her paintings, and upstairs in her studio, the fading scent of turpentine remains for me the smell of home.



Left: Jane Wilson and John Gruen. Water Mill, NY, c. 2005.

Right: Jane Wilson's painting table. Water Mill, NY, 2012. Photo: ©Julia Gruen.





Still Dawn, 2006. Oil on canvas, 24 x 24 inches.



Jane Wilson and Julia Gruen. Water Mill, NY, 2005. Photo: ©Estate of John Gruen.

For More Information about Jane Wilson

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