

Street Smarts

New York debut of Rose Wylie, newly celebrated Brit

By [DAVID COHEN](#) | October 18, 2010

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*Courtesy of Thomas Erben
Gallery New York*

Rose Wylie, Princess with
Earring, 1997. Oil on canvas,
72 x 66 inches

Most viewers of Rose Wylie's show at Thomas Erben Gallery, titled "WHAT with WHAT", would want to conclude that the rambunctious, street-smart brutalism on display there is the work of an inner city kid who has been introduced with reluctance to the conventional and transportable medium of oil on canvas. Rotten luck with the guesswork. The author of these magisterially unrefined, at times gargantuan canvases, is a demure, "well spoken" English lady who resides in rural Kent: Think Miss Marple channeling Jean-Michel Basquiat. This 17-year survey is the New York debut for the septuagenarian Wylie, who shows at Union in London and was recently also included in a group show at the prestigious Timothy Taylor Gallery. But Wylie had already turned sixty when she had her first solo show anywhere. Appropriately for a late bloomer who is also "ever a beginner" in Rilke's sense, Wylie is a painter of sophisticated naiveté. There is nuance where you least expect it.