

SPERONE WESTWATER
257 Bowery New York 10002
T +1 212 999 7337 F +1 212 999 7338
www.speronewestwater.com

Amir, Yaelle. "Man of the Year." www.artslant.com/ny (*ARTslant*), 9 January 2010.

ARTslant

Currently on view at Sperone Westwater Gallery are meticulous black ink drawings by Martin Wilner that recall various news segments from 2007 and 2008. The title of the exhibition, *A Life in Days*, captures the essence of Wilner's practice in its reference to the Beatles' song "A Day in the Life." This song was the result of a writing collaboration, where Lennon contributed lyrics inspired by newspaper headlines, while McCartney provided verses recounting personal memories. In his ongoing series *Making History*, Wilner works in a similar fashion—he scans the newspaper on a daily basis in search of an image or story to illustrate in a Roman calendar format. His selections are subjective, and usually adhere to a self-imposed theme such as geography or political portraits. As time moves forward, the depictions coalesce to form a cohesive drawing that captures the main events of the past month.

On view are works from all twelve months of 2008, as well as the final six months of 2007. In *Making History: March 2008*, he mined the daily newspaper during the month of March to find headlines that involve animals, and meticulously depicted one every day. The resulting drawing features an intertwined elephant, cheetah, owl and giraffe, amongst others, superimposed onto quotes from corresponding stories. *Making History: July – December 2007* is a series of six works in which Wilner mapped the location of news items within the calendar grid. As a result, Brooklyn borders California, while New Jersey is adjacent to Alaska.

Although the series *Making History* has had quite a bit of exposure in recent years, this exhibition provides a novel perspective of Wilner's work; several drawings are hung on hinges to expose the work's verso, where the artist details the illustrated event in minuscule script. This view provides a rare glimpse into Wilner's work method, and further underscores his lasting dedication to this demanding project.

Also featured in the exhibition are two artist books from the series *Journal of Evidence Weekly* (Volumes 120 and 123, 2005). Wilner began this project following a dream he had in 1998 in which he missed a deadline to submit an article to an academic publication by the same name. The acronym of this title, JEW, was the key to understanding the dream; he related it to his heritage as a child of Holocaust survivors who instilled in him the belief that one should make constructive use of time, and appreciate the value of life. These Leporello journals include sketches of people that Wilner encountered exclusively during his daily commute on the NYC subway. Outlined by descriptions of his route, the anonymous cartoonish portraits merge into each other—highlighting the individual's defining characteristics, like facial hair or a hat.

Although Wilner is forever depicting someone or something other than himself, his work is all but impersonal. He is the curator of events, people and places—thoughtfully selecting them from numerous newspaper pages and unfamiliar faces on the subway. He thus creates a narrative out of disparate components that belongs as much to him, as they do to our culture.