

This Billboard Could 'Draw' Attention – The New York Times

A British artist is creating an unusual ad for a Swiss bank to display at an American airport. The artist, Stephen Wiltshire, lives outside of London. He has become known for an ability to draw detailed panoramas of sprawling cities after flying over them in helicopters, drawing from memory what he has seen.

Mr. Wiltshire, who is autistic, flew over New York City on April 26. The trip lasted two and a half to three hours and ranged from Brooklyn and the Brooklyn and Manhattan Bridges to the East Side of Manhattan and a bit of Queens.

Mr. Wiltshire began sketching his panorama later that day in a makeshift studio set up in a building on West 36th Street in Midtown Manhattan. He worked for three days that week before finishing the drawing.

The result of Mr. Wiltshire's efforts is to be featured on a billboard that will be displayed in the international arrivals hall in Terminal 1 at John F. Kennedy International Airport. The billboard, which is to go up next month, will advertise the Swiss bank UBS.

The billboard will be in three sections, totaling 250 feet long; it will be seven feet wide. It is part of a campaign for UBS by the London office of Publicis Worldwide, part of the Publicis Groupe, that carries the theme "We will not rest."

"The whole idea, in financial services terms, is attention to detail, commitment to even the smallest things to make the big picture successful," said Jay Williams, executive vice president and executive creative director at the Publicis New York office. "Stephen's work is an analogy for how UBS approaches finance," he added. Mr. Williams was on hand to watch Mr. Wiltshire draw the panorama. When a reporter visited the studio on April 28, Mr. Wiltshire's sister, Annette, was also there, along with a couple of other people on Team Wiltshire.

As Mr. Wiltshire drew, he listened to pop, soul, Motown and funk music on his new iPhone 4. At one point, he worked on the Empire State Building. "He's just in his own zone," Ms. Wilshire said, watching her brother block out the panorama in pencil and then use a black Staedtler pen to draw in the details.

At times, it seemed as if Mr. Wiltshire were looking out the window onto West 36th Street to take another glimpse at what he was drawing. But he was blocks away from the section of Manhattan he was working on. The canvas on which Mr. Wiltshire drew the panorama was 14 feet long and 3 feet high; his drawing was 12 feet long by a foot high.

UBS has advertised on the Terminal 1 billboard since 2002, said Nadine Genet, managing director and head of global advertising for UBS, who is based in the Weehawken, N.J., office.

When Publicis executives suggested a Wiltshire drawing for the space, "we were enchanted with the idea almost immediately," Ms. Genet said, because of "his attention to detail, his way of challenging himself by trying new things." The panorama will present "a great opportunity to welcome people to New York and the United States," she added.

The panorama will run 160 feet long and make up the middle panel of the billboard.

The other two sections will flank the panorama and provide information about Mr. Wiltshire and the "We will not rest" campaign. There are discussions about offering visitors to ubs.com a look at a "making of" video that would chronicle how Mr. Wiltshire produced the panorama.

Mr. Wiltshire has drawn New York City before; in 2009, "The Early Show" on CBS brought him over to create a panorama at the Pratt Institute in Brooklyn. Visitors to Pratt were able to watch him at work in a gallery there.

The panorama Mr. Wiltshire has created for UBS is to be on display at an exhibit, "New York City: Through Our Eyes," at the art gallery in the UBS Building at 1285 Avenue of the Americas. Mr. Wiltshire is to be on hand at the gallery for a news conference that is scheduled for next Thursday.

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by Stuart Elliot – New York Times

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