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**WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY'S EZRA AND CECILE ZILKHA GALLERY
PRESENTS MELISSA STERN'S *LOOSE LIPS***

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ARTIST BOOK IMAGES INVITE VISITORS TO CHOOSE THEIR OWN ADVENTURE IN
PLAYFUL VISUAL STORYTELLING

Melissa Stern: *Loose Lips*

Ezra and Cecile Zilkha South Gallery, Wesleyan University
283 Washington Terrace
September 9–October 8, 2006
Hours: Tuesday–Sunday, noon–4pm

Middletown, CT, August 28, 2006— The Ezra and Cecile Zilkha Gallery at Wesleyan University presents *Loose Lips*, curated by Nina Felshin. The project began with a collection of visual stories by artist Melissa Stern (Wesleyan '80) compiled in a hand-made book entitled *Loose Lips*. The installation takes the stories out of the book format and onto the wall. Each story begins the same way, with the page and text from the book, but concludes with three drawings that illustrate variations of its ending. The intention of this installation format is to give viewers the chance to choose the ending they desire for each story. The ending drawings are variously drawn, collaged, burnt, sewn, and painted. Using collage elements from old *Life* magazines as well as encaustic, oil paint, acetate and pastel, Stern has conveyed a myriad of visual and verbal solutions. The drawings are amusing and occasionally dark. The stories themselves are fun, provocative, odd, quirky, open-ended, and highly accessible. They are certain to provoke a reaction.

Loose Lips will be on view from Saturday, September 9 through Sunday, October 8, 2006. The public is invited to attend the opening reception on Friday, September 8 from 5 to 7pm.

Stern commented, "The phrase 'Loose Lips' is a potent one in our culture. One thinks of the children's game of 'telephone' or 'whisper down the lane,' as well as the misunderstandings that gossip can cause. The title is also a reference to 'Loose Lips Sink Ships,' a slogan found on World War Two propaganda posters."

The first image in each series is reproduced in *Loose Lips*, an artist book in a limited edition of 100 copies. The book is both a catalogue and document of the experience. The goal of both the book project and the gallery installation is to interest the audience, visually, as

well as to draw them in as active participants in the completion of the work. Viewers will be asked to vote for their preferred ending to each story on a tally sheet at the show.

Stern's plan is to have the exhibition travel to three arts institutions, in three different regions of the country, tallying viewer votes along the way. "It will be interesting to see if people's choices vary according to who they are and where they live," Stern commented.

At the completion of the final exhibition, Stern will make one "überbook" containing the beginning of each story and the endings that received the most viewer votes. In the end, the audience who attended the exhibitions will have created the final artwork. Each participant will be invited to leave their email and will be notified of the winning endings. Each institution, in this case Wesleyan's Davison Art Center, will receive a copy of the final "überbook" for its permanent collection and documentation of the entire project.

Admission to *Loose Lips* is free and open to the public. For more information or directions, call 860-685-3355 or visit www.wesleyan.edu/cfa.

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