

Press Release

Victoria Miro Gallery

Stephen Willats

From My Mind To Your Mind

2- 30 September 2006

Private View Saturday 2 September, 6 – 8pm

Victoria Miro Gallery is delighted to present *From My Mind to Your Mind* by British artist Stephen Willats. The exhibition comprises three major new collaborative works conceived in the last two years, alongside other new film and text works and recent drawings.

Over forty years, Willats' pioneering work – from his early large-scale works made directly with, and sited within, communities in diverse locations such as Berlin, Paris, Rome, Liverpool and London up to the works in this exhibition - has explored and defined interactions between the viewer and the artist. *From My Mind to Your Mind* extends this practice through the active participation of collaborators and employment of a variety of media to create clues, associations and prompts for the viewer. Willats' new work creates a multi-sensory, multi-channel framework to encourage viewers to engage in their own creative process. The sensations of walking down a street, the sounds, the signs, the details and the surfaces are all recorded to re-create an experience and moment of passing. This exhibition develops the artist's observation: 'that the fabric of daily reality is filled with signs and symbols that radiate their messages to people without them being able to directly intervene in their origination, but that people, in response to these messages, construct the consciousness they have of themselves and the world in which they live, the world they want to see'.

Stephen Willats has long located his work in urban territories meaningful to his practice. London's Barbican Centre, developed in the late 1960's as a template for modern contemporary living, provides the environment for the major new work in this exhibition entitled, *New Visions*. Combining a pictorial language of diagrams, graphic techniques, photography and audio-visual footage, *New Visions* offers an interpretation of the future of modern reality through three key philosophical viewpoints – Sartre, Wittgenstein and McLuhan. Through this work the viewer can explore the different ways the philosophers might have viewed certain environments and encounters. In the making of *New Visions*, the outcome was purposefully left open to personal interpretation; there was no right or wrong conclusion. Ultimately, it is the viewer who has to actively become involved, to answer the questions and to create their own vision.

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From My Mind to Your Mind (also the title of the exhibition) continues the artist's interest in chance meetings and meanings. This multi-dimensional work uses Super 8 film recording, audio recording, personal writings and still photography to document an imagined encounter the viewer might have with someone else in an archetypal suburban shopping parade located in Rayners Lane, outer London. *From My Mind to Your Mind* considers how what we see and how we interpret reality is determinate not upon oneself, but upon ones exchanges with other people and random variables inherent within those exchanges. Similarly, *An Imaginary Journey* examines the encounters of people making a journey from Pinner High St, northwest London to Ruislip Lido. Documented in the manner of *From My Mind to Your Mind*, this piece considers the world as a fluid entity to be determined and mediated by its inhabitants. In both works the viewer is encouraged to personalize an element of the narrative and to impose their own individual experiences and conceptions on to the framework Willats provides.

The works included in this exhibition underscore the continuing relevance of Willats' ideas in the discussions around art practice as an examination of the socio-urban environment. His exploration into interaction and personal perception, and the range of ways he involves people in his work has provided a seminal framework for other artists to consider. Using the everyday as a site of investigation, *From My Mind to Your Mind* presents a vehicle of exchange through which viewers can re-examine and transform the way they perceive the fabric of existing reality. Pushing the boundaries of traditional fields of art practice, this exhibition creates meaningful ways forward to approach the future.

Biographical Details

Born in London in 1943, Stephen Willats was one of the very few serious representatives of international Concept Art in England during the sixties and seventies. In the 1960s he founded and edited the magazine *Control*, which was not only an outlet for his own work but gave a voice to a number of other artists, philosophers and scientists. From 1972 - 1973 he was Director of the Centre of Behavioural Art, Gallery House, London, and from 1979-1980 he was the D.A.A.D. Fellowship artist in West Berlin. Solo exhibitions include *Messages from the Polemical City*, Galerie Thomas Schulte, Berlin, 2004; *Through Your Symbolic World*, Victoria Miro Gallery, 2002; *Macro to Micro*, Gallery Laure Genillard, London, 2000; *Changing Everything*, South London Art Gallery, 1998; *Multicult*, Berlin, Gallerie Franck & Schulte, Berlin, 1998; *Museum Mosaic*, Tate Liverpool, 1994; *Meta Filter and Related Works*, Tate Gallery London, 1982; *4 Inseln*, in Berlin, National Gallery, Berlin, 1980 and *Concerning our Present Way of Living*, Whitechapel Art Gallery, London, 1979. Group exhibitions include *Kritische Gesellschaften*, Badischer Kunstverein, Karlsruhe, Germany, 2004; *Art & The 60's: This Was Tomorrow*, Tate Britain, 2004, *The Gap Show*, Museum am Ostwall, Dortmund, 2002; *Protest and Survive*, Whitechapel Art Gallery, London 2000. His seminal work, *Multiple Clothing*, was re-presented at Tate Modern in April 2006. The artist will be the subject of forthcoming retrospectives at Musuem für Gegenwartskunst, Siegen in September 2006, Kunstwerke, Berlin in December 2006 and an exhibition of work from the past five years is to be shown at Milton Keynes Gallery, England in May 2007.

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Victoria Miro Gallery open Tuesday to Saturday
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