

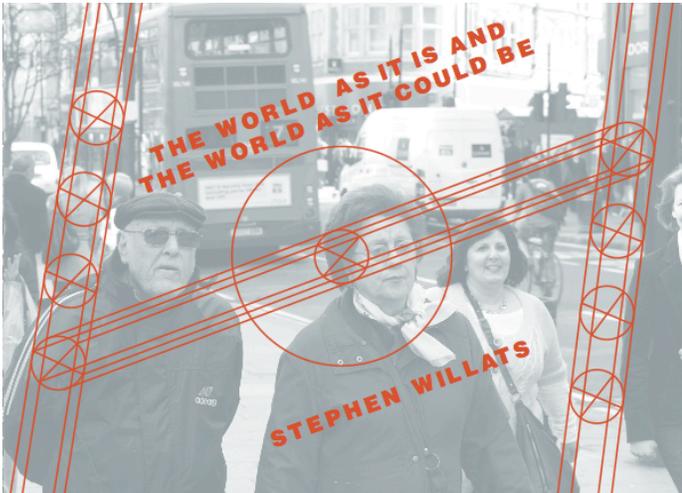
# Victoria Miro

**PRESS RELEASE**

## **STEPHEN WILLATS**

**THE WORLD AS IT IS AND  
THE WORLD AS IT COULD BE**

7 May - 12 June 2010



From the 1960's until today, London-based conceptual artist Stephen Willats has concentrated on ideas that today are ever-present in contemporary art: communication, social engagement, active spectatorship, and self-organization. Stephen Willats has situated his pioneering practice at the intersection between art and other disciplines such as sociology, cybernetics, systems research, learning theory, communications theory and computer technology.

Victoria Miro is delighted to present new and unseen works by Stephen Willats in **THE WORLD AS IT IS AND THE WORLD AS IT COULD BE**. This exhibition furthers Willats' interrogation of social interactions and the polemics of contemporary life in urban society.

Through his ongoing preoccupation with developing a new graphic language that establishes continuity between film, photography, text and drawings, here Willats takes the idea of a journey through two parallel realities, the world as it is - the world we live in - and its transformation into the world as it could be. Via this strategy, Willats explores the idea of art as something that motivates people to change their perceptions of reality, to embrace the notion that the world in which they live could be quite different, that one can effect change.

The exhibition features a large new installation *Cybernetic Still Life* (2010), comprised of a monumental wall drawing that incorporates film projections, as well as several photographic and text based works. Employing a diagrammatic framework to express fluidity and transience in relationships - concepts that define the locus of production and exchange of information - these new works explore the very human side of perceptions, our relationships to each other and our tendency to stereotype and make instant assumptions based on brief glimpses into the lives of others.

*Cybernetic Still Life* takes as its starting point the world of objects and structures in which social activity takes place. The wall drawing appears almost as a sci-fi cityscape, depicting two simplified high-rise residential towers and several seemingly outlandishly-shaped buildings. The odd forms of these structures, however, are derived from designs of modernist vases and other small domestic objects, greatly enlarged in scale. The structures are connected by arrows that represent directions of communication, and incorporate two looped film projections, one depicting people endlessly walking towards the camera, and the other a filmed sequence of ceramic objects. The installation describes relationships between the designed spaces in which we live, the designed objects we surround ourselves with, and our interaction between these two.

# Victoria Miro

In *Starting Afresh With A Blank Canvas* (2009), poverty and poor social housing are addressed. This photographic work serves as a kind of portrait of a single mother living in a suburban estate, and looks specifically at how she transformed her life and her surrounding environment by acting as a catalyst within her community. In works such as *Multi Channel Messenger* for instance photographs of people as couples are shown in relation to four developing sources of information and the increasing complexity of the information we receive from many different channels. The process is shown as almost circular and continuous, as we move from simpler frameworks within the world as we see it, towards the more and more complex world we can imagine.

Willats described it thus: 'Ultimately, I'm interested in the idea that reality is a construction of ourselves, that we build it and we create the reality we want in our life. There's no real one way of viewing reality.'

Importantly, Willats represents particular individual relations in a generalized form, affirming that it is useful to consider social situations on both a universal and a personal level. Observations of the macro- and micro-scale, of the generic and the specific, and of engagement and distance in Willats' work serve to problematise and present various points of entry into contemporary social relationships.

**Coinciding with the opening of the exhibition will be the launch of the new website:**

[www.stephenwillats.com](http://www.stephenwillats.com).

The website will provide a range of information about the artist, his writing and his work, gradually expanding to provide a full catalogue of Willats' work. It has been designed by Fraser Muggeridge - <http://pleasedonotbend.co.uk> and Wolfram Wiedner <http://wiedner.co.uk>.

## **Biographical Details:**

Born in London in 1943, Stephen Willats lives and works in London. Solo exhibitions include: *In Two Minds*, Galerie Erna Hecey, Brussels (24 April - June 2010); *Cybernetic Still Life*, Galerie Balice Hertling, Paris, (2009), *In and Out the Underworld*, European Kunsthalle, Cologne, (2009); *Assumptions and Presumptions*, Art on the Underground, London (2007); *From my Mind to Your Mind*, Milton Keynes (2007); *Changing Everything*, South London Art Gallery, (1998); *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). In the 1960's, Stephen Willats founded and edited the magazine *Control*. From 1972-1973, Willats 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.

**Kathy Stephenson**  
**Director of Communications**  
**0207 549 0422**  
[kathy@victoria-miro.com](mailto:kathy@victoria-miro.com)

**Victoria Miro Gallery**  
**16 Wharf Road,**  
**London N1 7RW**  
[www.victoria-miro.com](http://www.victoria-miro.com)

**Open Tues to Sat**  
**10am to 6pm,**  
**Admission Free**  
**Tube: Old Street & Angel**