

News Release from Milton Keynes Gallery

26 May-8 July

Stephen Willats: People to People, Person to Person

Admission free

Exhibition supported by Milton Keynes Community Foundation and Arts Council England Grants for the Arts.

Preview: Friday 25 May 5.30-8pm. All press and media welcome

Since the early 1960s British artist Stephen Willats has been making socially engaged, multi-media art projects in areas and communities as diverse as tennis clubs, housing estates, tower blocks, art galleries and night clubs. This exhibition, his first in a public gallery for nearly ten years, will feature a project Willats has made on and with residents of the Netherfield estate in Milton Keynes, as well as a number of other projects from the last five years.

At the heart of Willats' practice is the encouragement of the active participation in a work of art by collaborators and viewers, in order to stimulate an engagement in their own creative processes. Examples to be seen at Milton Keynes include *New Visions* (2006) made for the Barbican Centre in London, where viewers could explore the different ways three philosophers might have viewed certain environments and encounters, and *From My Mind to Your Mind* (2006) and *Imaginary Journey* (2006) where viewers could experience the surroundings of typical suburban outer London towns.

For Milton Keynes Gallery Willats has made a new work, *People to People, Person to Person* by collaborating with eleven residents from the Netherfield estate, Milton Keynes. Each of the residents used super 8 film and instant cameras to record their differing observations on the same walk around the estate. The results of the project will be displayed in multi-channel wall mosaics and DVDs, both at the gallery and in a space on the estate, inviting viewers to construct their own meaning from the information presented, as if they too were participating in the walk.

To accompany these works, a number of Willats' drawings will be on display. Willats employs the methods of cybernetic and philosophical models, information theory, systems analysis and semiotics in making his work, and a number of his working drawings will be shown. Alongside these can be seen drawings of modernist domestic objects, which bridge the gap between people's domestic realities and the social organisational structures in which they live.

The exhibition catalogue will include contributions from Emily Pethick, Director of Casco Projects, Utrecht, and Chris Hammonds, Director of MOT, together with a conversation between Stephen Willats and Milton Keynes Gallery Director, Michael Stanley.

Press Information: Please contact Giselle Richardson on 01908 558 318 or email g.richardson@mk-g.org.

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