

STEPHEN WILLATS
THE STRANGE ATTRACTOR

September 17 – October 23

Reena Spaulings presents *The Strange Attractor*, an exhibition of new work by the British conceptual artist Stephen Willats. Since the early 1960s, Willats has developed a practice at the intersection of art and the scientific disciplines of cybernetics, systems research, and communications theory. A pioneer of Concept Art in Europe, Willats continues to influence and challenge the contemporary context through an approach that subverts normative definitions of the artwork, emphasizing the fluidity and transience of shared social realities. The new works in this exhibition continue to take forward his vision of how art can function within society.

The subject of this exhibition is New York City, a “strange attractor” that includes and escapes us all. As a further thematic link between the works, Willats reflects on how we are drawn/ attracted into the future. Elaborating his concept of the “artwork as channel,” Willats has produced a series of works in the form of “data streams” and “social diagrams,” all based on audio and visual material gathered directly in the streets of New York. The result is an installation that stages the complex dynamics of perception and communication in the urban context, advancing the artist’s commitment to the idea that art is a transformative process whose meaning and use remain open to a multiplicity of participant-observers.

Presented on a freestanding wall that divides the gallery in two, *Data Stream Portrait of New York*, 2011, is a double-sided, “multi-channel” diagram produced with the participation of the gallerists and a team of local artists and writers. Willats has also worked with a young family living in Brooklyn and a three-panel wall installation (*How the Future Looks from Here*, 2011) invites us to share in their search for a harmonious future. Super-8 films of people in pairs shot in various New York locations are presented on monitors both inside the gallery and in the windows of nearby storefronts (Hi-Tech Electronics Service Center at 47 Canal St., Vida Graphics and Signs at 25 Canal St., and Café Grumpy’s at 13 Essex St.). Extending this gesture, fragments of diagrams have been printed on small stickers and affixed to lampposts and walls around the neighborhood, displacing the exhibition out and beyond the container-like limits of the gallery.

In these works, Willats uses everyday life as the site of an investigation that examines processes of communication between multiple subjects, elaborating a practice grounded in the variables of social relationships and settings. The installation, like the city itself, is a multi-dimensional environment and a vehicle of exchange encouraging viewers to organize their own perceptions of the realities they inhabit and the future as it might be.

Previous exhibitions by Stephen Willats include: *COUNTERCONSCIOUSNESS*, Badischer Kunstverein, Karlsruhe, Germany (2010) & publication, *Art Society Feedback. The World As It Is and The World As It Could Be*, Victoria Miro Gallery, London (2010) *Assumptions and Presumptions*, Art on the Underground, London (2007) *From my Mind to Your Mind*, Milton Keynes Gallery, (2007); *How the World is and How it could be*, Museum für Gegenwartskunst, Siegen (2006); *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). Further information: www.stephenwillats.com. In the 1960’s, he founded the magazine *Control*, still in publication. *The Strange Attractor* is the artist’s first solo exhibition in New York.

REENA SPAULINGS FINE ART
165 EAST BROADWAY
NEW YORK, NY 10002

+ 1 212 477-5006
reena@reenaspaulings.com
www.reenaspaulings.com

