

London-based artist Stephen Willats is a pioneer of conceptual art and has made work examining the function and meaning of art in society since the early 1960s. Willats' first South London Gallery exhibition in 1998, *Changing Everything*, was the culmination of a two-year project with local residents. Aiming to create a cultural model of how art might relate to society, the work was made with and invigilated by the project's participants, and visitors were also invited to make their own contributions to it. Fourteen years later, Willats' new show, *Surfing with the Attractor*, re-presents material from *Changing Everything* alongside a new installation featuring a huge 'data stream' spanning 15 metres and made in collaboration with 14 London-based artists. Comprising hundreds of carefully ordered images from diverse media, the data stream documents two contrasting streets in London: Rye Lane in Peckham and Regent Street in the West End. Willats' intention for the data stream is to present a dynamic picture of the transient world we live in, with its constant change and movement embodying the relativity in the perceptions that people create for themselves.

Extending beyond the gallery space, the show also includes films from the data stream shown on monitors in shops on Peckham Road and Camberwell Church Street, and graphic stickers will be widely distributed.

The data stream is a diagrammatic representation of a multiplicity of individual viewpoints on a shared experience, in this case that of walking down two contrasting streets of London. In 2011, Willats worked with artists living in New York to create *Data Stream Portrait of New York*, presented there at his exhibition, *The Strange Attractor*, at Reena Spaulings Fine Art. The data streams for that show and for *Surfing with the Attractor* were made through a process of allocating each participating artist a medium (such as a disposable camera, digital camera, video camera, audio description, rubbing etc.), and a 'channel', such as 'facial expressions' or 'signs of nature', within which to frame their documentation of the two very different streets. Willats then worked with some of artists to edit and 're-media-ise' their documentation into the diagrammatic format of the data stream in which the multiple viewpoints and channels are brought together. Cutting across the gallery space, the vast data stream divides it in two, analogous to the separation between the two streets recorded, and invites visitors to create their own walks, both through the gallery and along the two streets, via whichever channels they choose to focus on. The mass of information presented in the data stream, and visitors' interaction with it, combine to make a clear and powerful statement about Willats' understanding of reality as a cultural phenomenon which is shared and present within everybody's consciousness, albeit through individual and therefore differing registers. The contributing artists are: Gareth Bell Jones, Laura Bygrave, Reem Charif (Febrik), Lucy Clout, Alex Crocker, Philip Ewe, Luke Kemp, Nicholas Lawrence, Harold Offeh, Paul Pieroni, Philomene Pirecki, Ros Taylor, Edward Thomasson and Laura Wilson.

This exhibition also re-presents a colour data stream from Changing Everything in 1998, made from footage shot in the 1990s around the South London Gallery, alongside film works on 14 monitors.

*(This document was automatically generated by Contemporary Art Library.)*