

British artist Stephen Willats returns to Modern Art Oxford for his fourth solo exhibition since 1968. Willats creates visually intensive works that explore the nature of human interaction, communication and connection between individuals and communities.

Examining social interaction, the influence of technology on daily life and the way we look at and think about our surroundings, Conscious – Unconscious presents a large dynamic mural work, an environmental datastream installation, photographic and text wall-based works and a series of new drawings centering on flows of ideas and data.

Conscious – Unconscious includes a striking mural work, Cybernetic Still Life No.5 which reflects on architecture and urban living, depicting high rise tower blocks with oversized ceramic vessels in primary colours.

Willats extends his enquiry into the idea of the local through Signs and Messages (2013), which captures the visual language of a walk along two busy streets in Oxford; How the Future Looks From Here, a work made with a couple living in New York in 2011, and How Others See Us and How We See Ourselves (2012), a semiological analysis of contemporary ways of living.

‘All art is a product of society, of relationships between people in which it is quite clear that the most important element in the network between the artist and society is the audience. For without two people there can be no work of art.’ Stephen Willats

A new work commissioned by Modern Art Oxford, Oxford Community Datastream will dominate the ground floor spaces in the gallery presenting alternative and highly personal perspectives on life in Oxford. Working with residents from two contrasting communities over a two year period, this installation explores perceptions of the local environment and proposes ways in which these perceptions could be transformed.

A selection of new drawings reveal the artist’s conceptual processes and propose the development of new social models.

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