

STEPHEN WILLATS
“LIVING FOR TOMORROW”

13.12.2013 – 01.02.2014
Opening: 12.12.2013, 6-9 pm

The exhibition "Living for Tomorrow" gathers together a number of recent art works by British artist Stephen Willats. The selection hinges on the idea of speculation about imminent scenarios and the way those could be encoded in our daily environment—laying out a diagrammatic path in the life of humans and objects, that which links the past to the present, and thus on to the future.

Among the exhibited works, *Yesterday Today Tomorrow* (2011) explicitly matches this program. The work pivots on an archetypal suburban street in England: along three panels, the landscape is confronted with a growing intricacy of signs, echoing the hunger for emancipation from the normality of a middle-class lifestyle, through a projection of the self into an unspecified (but rather systematized) elsewhere. A video accompanying the panels records the lack lustre eloquence of the signs along the street: they are dejectedly verbose, far from the immediacy of middle-class status symbols.

In the Beginning (2011) explores similar territory, recounting meditations of a newly-married couple: the two point to the unusualness of their shared life, the uncertainty (but also excitement) regarding their future together, and progresses into utopian musings on their role in a primary social group within a larger community of people. The three panels which structure the work are completed by a video made by the couple wandering around and processing the language of signs in their neighbourhood, their conversations daring to propose a semantic understanding of that vocabulary.

Three works in the exhibition focus on the relationships among pedestrians, as they walk in pairs. Filmed in the streets of Antwerp, the video *People and Diagrams* (2013) records behavioural patterns of people walking and identify six stages of increasing complexity in the diagrams of their interaction.

From Moment to Moment (2006) depicts couples walking along Oxford Street in London, in two separated moments: just before and soon after crossing a line traced on the pavement. Placed one above the other on the same panel, the subtle difference between the two pictures presents the various interpersonal visual languages expressed in the relationships between two people after placing them into a schematic reading of their demeanour in that social environment of the street.

Finally, the exhibition features two drawings from the series *Conceptual Tower* (both 2011). Initiated in the 1980's, these works read buildings as objects, and objects as buildings, in the presumption that architecture's talkativeness does not necessarily translate into affection towards the urban fabric of our surroundings: buildings in fact inspire a language of metaphors and dogmatic belief which jeopardizes their being objects inhabiting an existing reality.

"Living for Tomorrow" displays many of the strategies which Willats has been exploring since his early artistic outputs in the 1960's, from neighbouring disciplines such as cybernetics, communication theory and information technology. Rooted in the everyday, his works usually result from collaborative, interactive and participatory processes—and, in doing so, engage us viewers in a conscious understanding of our role of active participants in the shaping of the world we all live in.