



Biography

Stephen Wiltshire

For over 30 years, the name Stephen Wiltshire has been synonymous with finely detailed, vigorous pen and ink drawings of the world's great cities. This young artist produces energetic street scenes and panoramas that are immediately recognisable to his fans and are much sought after by private and corporate collectors alike. Stephen's drawings – often drawn from memory and at great speed – are sketched on the spot at street level, drawn from the top of skyscrapers or sometimes made after whistle-stop helicopter rides over the city.

Today Stephen is well-known the world over. His talent has been recognised with an MBE for services to art; he has a thriving gallery in the heart of London and originals of his work fetch thousands of pounds. He regularly travels all over the world on private and public commissions, the most famous of which are his 15 city panoramas drawn from memory. Drawing street life and modern architecture have been Stephen's passions for as long as he can remember. His amazing talent is even more incredible considering that he was diagnosed with autism when he was three years old. Stephen, who was born in London in 1974, was completely mute as a small child, and found it hard to relate to other people.

At the age of five, Stephen was sent to Queensmill School, London, where it soon became apparent that he communicated through the language of drawing. His teachers encouraged him to speak by temporarily taking away his art materials; eventually he uttered his first words – "paper" and "pencil" (just like Picasso) - but didn't learn to speak fully until the age of nine.

Drawing was Stephen's passion and he was seldom to be found without pen and paper: animals, London buses, cityscapes and classic American cars were all sketched with increasing maturity as the years went by. Once the school started to enter his art into competitions, news of his prodigious talent began to spread. Early fans included the late Prime Minister Edward Heath who bought his drawing of Salisbury Cathedral, made when Stephen was just eight.

But Stephen came to wider public attention when the BBC featured him in the programme, 'The Foolish Wise Ones' in 1987, when he was introduced by Sir Hugh Casson (a past president of the Royal Academy of Arts), as "the best child artist in Britain".



After that, Stephen's artistic career developed quickly, and his first book, *Drawings*, a volume of his early sketches prefaced by Casson, was published that year. Stephen's reputation grew worldwide. His first visit to New York was a career highlight; he was completely captivated by the city's atmosphere, streets, squares, skyscrapers, cars and its people, and to this day the resulting New York sketches are among his personal favourites.

Visits to other cities - Paris, Edinburgh, Venice, Amsterdam, Leningrad and Moscow – quickly followed, with Stephen attracting awed crowds wherever he stopped to draw. A second BBC documentary in 2001 showed Stephen flying over London in a helicopter and subsequently completing a detailed and perfectly scaled aerial illustration within three hours. This masterful drawing of a four-square-mile area included 12 historic landmarks and 200 other structures, and is a perfect example of his natural artistry and astonishing eye for detail.

By now, Stephen's work was increasingly in demand all over the world. In 2005, he was commissioned to undertake vast panoramic drawings of ten world cities starting with a 10 metre long canvas representation of the Tokyo skyline. Stephen subsequently took on commissions from Hong Kong - where he produced a 10 metre long drawing of Victoria Harbour after just a 20 minute helicopter ride - Rome, Frankfurt, Madrid, Dubai, Jerusalem, London and – his spiritual home - New York. Further trips followed to Sydney and Shanghai in 2010, Brisbane in 2011, Singapore, Istanbul, Houston TX, Mexico City and Doha, Qatar later.

In 2006 Stephen was recognised for his services to the art world, when he was made a Member of the Order of the British Empire. That year was also memorable as Stephen and his family opened a permanent art gallery in London's historic Royal Opera Arcade.

Today Stephen continues to amaze art lovers with his fresh, vibrant sketches of world cities, and wherever he goes, people are fascinated by his prodigious talent. Various described by the media as 'the leading architectural artist in the world' and 'the living testament to what can be achieved when potential is realised and developed early on', Stephen enjoys accolades from all over the world. But perhaps he would enjoy most the description of one journalist who also noted his enduring love of music: "he is a rock star in the art world."

At one of his recent exhibitions in Singapore he set attendance records by welcoming 150,000 visitors in his venue in just 5 days. His motto remains 'Do the best you can and never stop'.



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FURTHER RESOURCES

Stephen's full bio and key points: stephenwiltshire.co.uk/biography
Press releases and Q&A: stephenwiltshire.co.uk/press-office
Stephen's London Studio: stephenwiltshire.co.uk/london-gallery

SOCIAL MEDIA LINKS

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/Stephen.Wiltshire.Artist>
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Billions of Windows

A documentary by Stephen Wiltshire

