

STEPHEN WILTSHIRE

Born 1974 - London

Stephen Wiltshire was born in London to West Indian parents on 24th April, 1974. His mother, Geneva Wiltshire had come from St Lucia and his father, Colvin, from Barbados. Colvin was killed in a motorcycle accident when Stephen was three years of age. His sister, Annette, is two years older than her brother. He lives with his mother in West London.



As a child, Stephen was mute and did not relate to other human beings. Aged three, he was diagnosed as autistic. He had no language, uncontrolled tantrums and lived entirely in his own world. At the age of five, Stephen was sent to Queensmill School in London, a school for children with special needs, where it was noticed that the only pastime he enjoyed was drawing. It soon became apparent he communicated with the world through the language of drawing; first animals, then London buses, and finally buildings. These drawings show a masterful perspective, a whimsical line and reveal a natural innate artistry.

Aged eight, Stephen started drawing cityscapes after the effects of an earthquake (all imaginary) as a result of being shown photographs of earthquakes in a book at school. He also became obsessed with cars and illustrations of cars at this time (his knowledge of them is encyclopaedic) and he drew most of the major London landmarks. The teachers at Queensmill School encouraged him to speak by temporarily taking away his art supplies so that he would be forced to ask for them. Stephen responded by making sounds and eventually uttered his first word - "paper." He learned to speak fully at the age of nine. In 1987, the BBC QED programme, 'The Foolish Wise Ones', featured Stephen's astounding talent. The programme was devoted to three autistic savants: musical, mathematical and artistic. Stephen was introduced by Sir Hugh Casson (past president of the Royal Academy), who described him as "the best child artist in Britain". Stephen's work has since been the subject of numerous television programmes around the world, and the writer and psychologist, Oliver Sacks, has devoted an essay to Stephen in his book *An Anthropologist On Mars* (Picador 1995). Stephen is the only artistic autistic savant in the world whose work has been recorded and published since his childhood. His third book - *Floating Cities* (Michael Joseph, 1991) - was number one on the Sunday Times bestseller list.

Meanwhile, Stephen's artworks were being exhibited frequently in venues all over the world. In 2001 he appeared in another BBC documentary, *Fragments of Genius*, for which he was filmed flying over London aboard a helicopter and subsequently completing a detailed and perfectly scaled aerial illustration of a four-square-mile area within three hours; his drawing included 12 historic landmarks and 200 other structures. In October and November 2003, thousands flocked to the Orleans House gallery in Twickenham near London, England, to see the first major retrospective of Stephen's work. The exhibition covered the 20-year period, from 1983 to 2003, and comprised 150 examples of Stephen's drawings, paintings and prints. In May 2005 following a short helicopter ride over [TOKYO](#) he drew a stunningly detailed panoramic view of the city on a 10-meter-long canvas. Since then he has drawn [ROME](#), [HONG KONG](#) and [FRANKFURT](#) on giant canvasses, and NYC in 2010. In January 2006 it was announced that Stephen was being named by Queen Elizabeth II as a Member of the Order of the British Empire, in recognition of his services to the art world. (No specific mention of his disability was made in the citation) Later that year he opened his permanent gallery at the Royal Opera Arcade, London. In 2011 and 2012, Stephen joined Strokes of Genius in NYC during the McCarton Foundation Genius of Autism events in NYC.