

## Press Release

Kukje Gallery

## Julian Opie

Julian Opie (British, B.1958- )

2014. 2. 13 - 3. 23

Kukje Gallery K2 & K3

Press Conference: 2014. 2. 13 (AM 11), K2

[www.kukjegallery.com](http://www.kukjegallery.com)



Kukje Gallery is very pleased to announce the opening of a solo show featuring new works by British artist Julian Opie. This is the artist's second exhibition at the gallery. The exhibition will include works in multiple mediums including vinyl paintings and LED panels as well as new large-scale sculptures. Widely known in Korea, Opie is internationally

celebrated as a vitally important artist whose work links the postmodern interdisciplinary genres of sculpture and painting.

The artist's best known works include simply drawn portraits and landscapes that showcase a highly refined and personal style that resembles a kind of contemporary pictogram. Coupled with his use of unusual materials such as LED signs and vinyl painting, as well as his sophisticated color palette, Opie's art synthesizes a rare combination of beauty and conceptual rigor to create highly sought after works.

Julian Opie established himself as an internationally recognized artist first as a sculptor in the 1980s, constructing provocative objects that reinterpreted architecture and prosaic objects of urban life. These seminal early works were followed by a shift towards landscape and computer generated media in what would become a signature of the artist. In these and later works, Opie translated his own photographs of people and places by drawing on a computer and then outputted the resulting interpretation using an evolving vocabulary of digital media. This interest in both the act of digitalization and the use of innovative printing and fabrication

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techniques would become a central theme of his subsequent work. It was in the mid-nineties that Opie began to incorporate figures in what has become the most iconic element of his work. Starting with highly simplified portraits that evoked public signage or glyphs, the artist began to develop a cast of characters that included familiar people in his own life. Resembling a cross between an illustration and animation, these early paintings featured real people such as “Ellen,” the arts administrator, and “Paul,” the teacher. Opie’s portraits are defined by their subtle color palette and line quality that capture a remarkable amount of emotional intensity. It is this play, between succinct gesture and profound feeling that makes his work so powerful.

One of the important themes established by Opie in these early pictures was that his portraits portrayed people he knew, friends or acquaintances from work. The importance of locating his work in a specific place or person continues to be of vital importance to the artist as he investigates the dynamic systems that define urban life. This interest is best articulated by Opie himself who has written, “Stop for a moment on any street and watch the passing crowd. There is a beauty and energy in the striding figures. Each person wrapped in their own purpose, dressed in their own way, combining with strangers to create a constantly changing, random dance.”

The work of Julian Opie powerfully engages central themes of postmodernism. What is real and what is a copy; how does consumer vernacular and advertisement affect our interpersonal relationships and the definition of self? One of the most original artists of the twenty-first century, Opie has skillfully hacked into the technologies designed to shape mass production and communication to create a poignant and intellectually rigorous critique of contemporary society. What is more, he has been able to do this while at the same time creating exquisitely rendered and hauntingly beautiful images of everyday people—thereby establishing a totally unique postmodern genre.

For this second solo exhibition at Kukje Gallery, the artist will install work in both the K2 and K3 galleries. In each, the installation will include works from all three series. Utilizing both the floor and wall space, these multimedia works coalesce to present a dynamic exhibition filled with the kind of energy and personal movement Opie is most interested in. The show centers around a set of new paintings of people walking in Seoul. Framing crowds of people on the street and in markets, these articulated groups are composed in what resemble historical friezes, presenting a drama of shopping and hurried commuting highlighted by fashion choices and handbags.

Hung alongside these compelling new works are a series of LED animated paintings depicting pedestrians in London. Using only black and white LED lights these familiar moving signs evoke a kind of melancholy poetry as they showcase the quiet unassuming movement of

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tourists and everyday street-goers. Juxtaposed with the bright colors of the Seoul works, they cement Opie's reputation as a highly sensitive observer of movement.

Finally the exhibition will include a new body of work consisting of two massive resin models of human heads. Resembling a kind of neolithic totem, these portraits are made out of dense resin and are painted with the same palette and iconic style as his vinyl paintings. In much the same way as the Seoul street-scene images, these colossal portraits capture the gravity of a body in space. In addition, Opie's use of color animates these awesome objects reminding us that historical sculptures were also polychromed in their day. This play between ancient and new typifies the artist's intense interest in the way social fabric frames individual experience and sense of self.

Julian Opie's ambitious art practice involves a spell-binding array of mediums, appropriating the language and even the placement of advertising and signage in commercial sectors around the world. This interest in crossing genres and pushing the boundaries of "fine art" means that the artist has collaborated with the music industry, installed his work on public transportation and in unorthodox venues, and exploited the technology of the marketplace to radically challenge the definition of art and the role of the artist in the twenty-first century. His potent psychological portraits of contemporary urban life have successfully pushed art making even further into the public domain and subconscious of an entirely new generation.



Artist: Julian Opie

Julian Opie was born in 1958 in London. He graduated from Goldsmith's School of Art, London in 1982. While at Goldsmith's, he studied with prominent artists Richard Wentworth and Michael Craig-Martin both of whom influenced his ideas about the nature of visual art. Shortly after graduating, Opie began exhibiting in galleries and museums across Europe and his works are now in the collections of major institutions around the world including the Arts Council, England; British Museum, London; Carnegie Museum, Pittsburgh; IVAM Museum of Modern Art, Valencia, Spain; National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo; National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne; National Portrait Gallery, London; Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus, Munich; Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; Tate Collection, London and the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

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- Image editing cannot be performed without prior permission.

## Julian Opie

*Walking in Sadang-dong in the rain*

2014

*Vinyl on wooden stretcher*

230 x 344.3 cm

Image provided by Kukje Gallery

Courtesy of the artist and Kukje Gallery



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**Julian Opie**

*Man with a beard and dark glasses holding a water  
bottle.*

2013

*Vinyl on wooden stretcher*

216.1 x 94.2 cm

Image provided by Kukje Gallery

Courtesy of the artist and Kukje Gallery



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**Julian Opie**

*Lily, eyes straight, head right, slight smile.*

2013

*Inkjet on canvas on wooden stretcher*

*216.6 x 141 cm*

Image provided by Kukje Gallery

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**Julian Opie**

*People 2 (square).*

2014

*LED wall mounted*

*168 x 168 x 12 cm*

Image provided by Kukje Gallery

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