

British artist Julian Opie takes pandemic experience as opportunity to evolve art

May 4, 2023 | By Park Yuna

Page 1 of 1

British artist Julian Opie takes pandemic experience as opportunity to evolve art

By Park Yuna

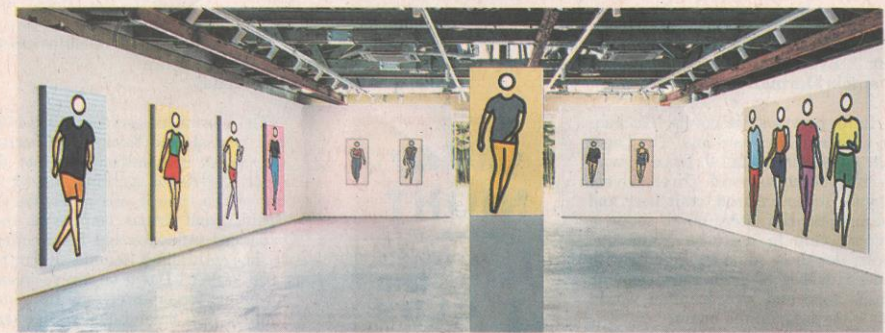
Returning to Busan after five years, British artist Julian Opie showcased the evolution of his art during the pandemic lockdown.

The lockdown provided new inspiration to the artist, who has experimented with different forms of art over the years.

Opie is famous for bringing life into images with use of LEDs, which are used to animate figures. His iconic LED installations of walking people have become familiar to commuters in Seoul with his large-scale media display, "Crowd," that was shown on the Seoul Square building opposite Seoul Station.

When the pandemic left people stranded, the artist happened to see videos of people shuffle dancing on social media such as TikTok and YouTube. The artist recalled he was fascinated by the "explosive energy" contained in the repetitive dancing moves, leading him to try something different.

"During the lockdown, I wanted to do something very fast and lively to pull away from this quiet and lonely time. That was a feeling that went on for a year and a half. I came across these people filming themselves with the camera leaving on the shelves, doing a very fast dance," Opie said at Kukje Gallery Busan on Wednesday where his solo exhibition, "OP.VR@Kukje/F1963.Busan," kicked off.



An installation view of "OP.VR@Kukje/F1963.Busan" at Kukje Gallery Busan Park Yuna/The Korea Herald

When the idea struck him, he collaborated with his daughter, a professional dancer. His daughter and her friends choreographed various dances, based on which Opie created animated images with 60 drawings for each LED work. The work is accompanied by sound, with multilayered scores that frame the movement with rhythm and vivacity, echoing across the whole gallery.

"For me, making an artwork is a series of small steps, moving from the world and back into the exhibition," he said.

Haeundae Beach, one of the most visited beaches in the port city, has become a new inspiration to Opie who showcases site-specific works at the region where his exhibition

is shown. As the first time of its kind, Opie invites people in Busan to become part of his work, "Walking in Busan," as a form of performance by walking on treadmills.

The four treadmills on display are placed in front of a background that is reminiscent of the sea. The kinetic element allows people to engage in the work by strolling on the treadmill as if they are the figures in the painting "Walking in Busan. 5." that is on display next to it.

"This is the first time I've ever done this (exhibition with a performance element), but I thought 'why not?' I also have an idea making a live dancing (performance)," he jokingly said, before he hopped onto a treadmill with his daughter.

Opie also challenges the con-

ventional concept of exhibitions through VR technology. At one of the booths at his exhibition, participants can wear VR goggles and explore a virtual exhibition space with sculptures and paintings.

"In the end, it is all about looking and drawing. I could be in the VR, and it could be with chalks on the floor. I found VR actually quite extraordinary that you can enter into this image," he said. "For me, it is quite exiting and new, and I don't really know where I would go. I am just taking little steps at the moment but I do have plans for the future."

The exhibition runs through July 2 at Kukje Gallery Busan and F1963 Sukcheon Hall.

(yunapark@heraldcorp.com)