

KUKJE GALLERY | PRESS RELEASE

Julian Opie Solo Exhibition Julian Opie

Press Conference: October 7 (Thurs.), 2021, 11AM at Kukje Gallery K3

Exhibition Dates: October 7 – November 28, 2021

Venue: Kukje Gallery K2 and K3

Kukje Gallery is pleased to present a solo exhibition of work by the British artist Julian Opie, on view from October 7 through November 28, 2021. Through solo museum exhibitions at the Suwon Museum of Art (2017) and F1963 (2018), and permanent installations in Seoul, Busan, Daegu, Jeonnam, and Gimpo, Opie has continuously maintained a strong presence in Korea. Following his last presentation in 2014, the show marks Opie's third solo show at Kukje Gallery, his largest to date. Spanning K2, K3, as well as the garden, Opie creates a walk-through environment inhabited by 31 statues and paintings of buildings, people, and animals. Using a variety of familiar materials and techniques, the show references the visual language of the modern city while taking inspiration from art of the past.

As one of Britain's most prominent artists, Julian Opie and his works are known throughout the world. Opie's distinctive formal language is instantly recognizable and reflects his artistic preoccupation with the idea of representation, and the means by which images are perceived and understood. He captures familiar, ubiquitous subjects from everyday life—people, animals, buildings, and landscapes—but transforms them into simplified, modern images that easily and powerfully resonate with the audience. The images drawn from the artist's observations come to life as sculptures and paintings of various mediums and techniques, both modern and ancient. Inspired by classical portraiture, Egyptian hieroglyphs, Japanese woodblock prints, as well as public signage, logos, and traffic signs, his graphic style connects visuals of the cosmopolitan city with more traditional forms of visual art.

The majority of the works have been made specifically for this exhibition, allowing a tight and legible narrative that plays with the variety of spaces. The second floor of K2 is inhabited exclusively by animals of various shapes, sizes, and colors that are as compelling and lively as people. Animals have long been a central subject in the artist's oeuvre. Images of deer, roosters, cows, and dogs—commonly encountered in nature—are rendered in artificial primary colors associated with industrial environments. The animals decorate the walls in the form of brightly-lit lightboxes, reminiscent of familiar public signage and corporate logos easily seen across the modern city. Depictions of animals rendered in Opie's distinctive formal language float in and around the space as aluminium sculptures elevated on plinths, transforming into symbols. The hard, bright fabrication balances and contrasts with the natural empathy and innocence of nature.

The first floor below is given over to human city dwellers. Strangers, drawn from the area of East London around Opie's studio, plough through the streets in protective winter clothing as animated LED films, back-lit paintings and aluminium statues. In contrast to the vivid colors upstairs, a naturalistic palette of colors emerges based on the clothes, skin, and hair of the individuals. Diverging from the artist's familiar primary colors, the muted tones of the figures reflect the wintry atmosphere, enhanced by the black and white backgrounds. The light passing through the black background of the lightbox emphasizes the color of each line. Opie delineates the individuality of each fleeting passerby with keen observation, which has always been central to his practice. By depicting figures in the act of "walking," the artist captures the natural beauty of such ordinary movement into art.

In K3, citizens begin to inhabit a virtual city conjured by three-dimensional metal installations of modern and ancient architecture. Here, more people, drawn from the artist's travels to the Belgian town of Knokke this year, emerge as sculptures. With more time in London due to the lingering pandemic, Opie took a fresh look at the city's modern and historical buildings, reinterpreting them as three-dimensional metal sculptures. Fabricated with meticulous detail, two sets of installations from the *City* series, each standing over four meters, harmonize with life-size sculptures, demonstrating Opie's command and sense of space. The historic buildings from the City of London create delicate, lacy, folded screens, while in the garden, a generic apartment block from nearby Incheon dazzles the eye with its hundreds of welded steel windows and sky-scraping lines. The artist typically includes works drawn from local images in his exhibitions, as he had done during his last show with the gallery in 2014, where he portrayed walking figures around Seoul, such as in *Walking in Sadang-dong in the rain*. (2014). Opie instead gathered inspiration by virtually traveling through the streets of Incheon via 3D Google maps in lieu of his travels. An ordinary apartment building in Incheon manifests into a sculpture of hundreds of windows and distinct geometric lines and placed in the garden, emulates the abstract and ubiquitous nature of the urban landscape.

"I like to keep the viewer interested and guessing, making connections and being surprised," Opie explains, "...using the qualities of the spaces on offer to create the most powerful and successful experience possible for the visitor." The artist curated the show using an interactive VR model, meticulously planning and placing each work while viewing the space through VR goggles. Drawing, color, scale, subject, movement, and material energetically bounce from wall to floor, from painting to sculpture, inviting the audience to explore and read the show as one might a new town. From large-scale installations to smaller two-dimensional paintings, the exhibition will provide an opportunity for viewers to walk through the various spaces and engage with the familiar world around them, distilled into its essence through Opie's minimalist approach.

About the Artist

Born in 1958 in London, Julian Opie graduated in 1982 from Goldsmith's School of Art and is currently based in London. Opie has exhibited widely across the globe, including solo exhibitions at the Pitzhanger Manor & Gallery, London, UK (2021); Berardo Museum, Lisbon, Portugal (2020); Tokyo Opera City Art Gallery, Tokyo, Japan (2019); F1963, Busan, Korea (2018); National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Australia (2018); National Portrait Gallery, London, UK (2017); Suwon Museum of Art, Suwon, Korea (2017); Fosun Foundation, Shanghai, China (2017); Fundación Bancaja, Valencia, Spain (2017); MOCAM Museum of Contemporary Art, Kraków, Poland (2014); MAK, Vienna, Austria (2008); CAC, Málaga, Spain (2006); Neues Museum, Nürnberg, Germany (2003); Ikon Gallery, Birmingham, UK (2001); Kunstverein Hannover, Hannover, Germany (1994); and the Institute of Contemporary Arts, London, UK (1985). Opie's works can be found in many significant collections, including the Tate Modern, London, UK; British Museum, London, UK; Victoria and Albert Museum, London, UK; National Portrait Gallery, London, UK; Museum of Modern Art, New York, USA; ICA, Boston, USA; National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo, Japan; and Israel Museum, Jerusalem, Israel.

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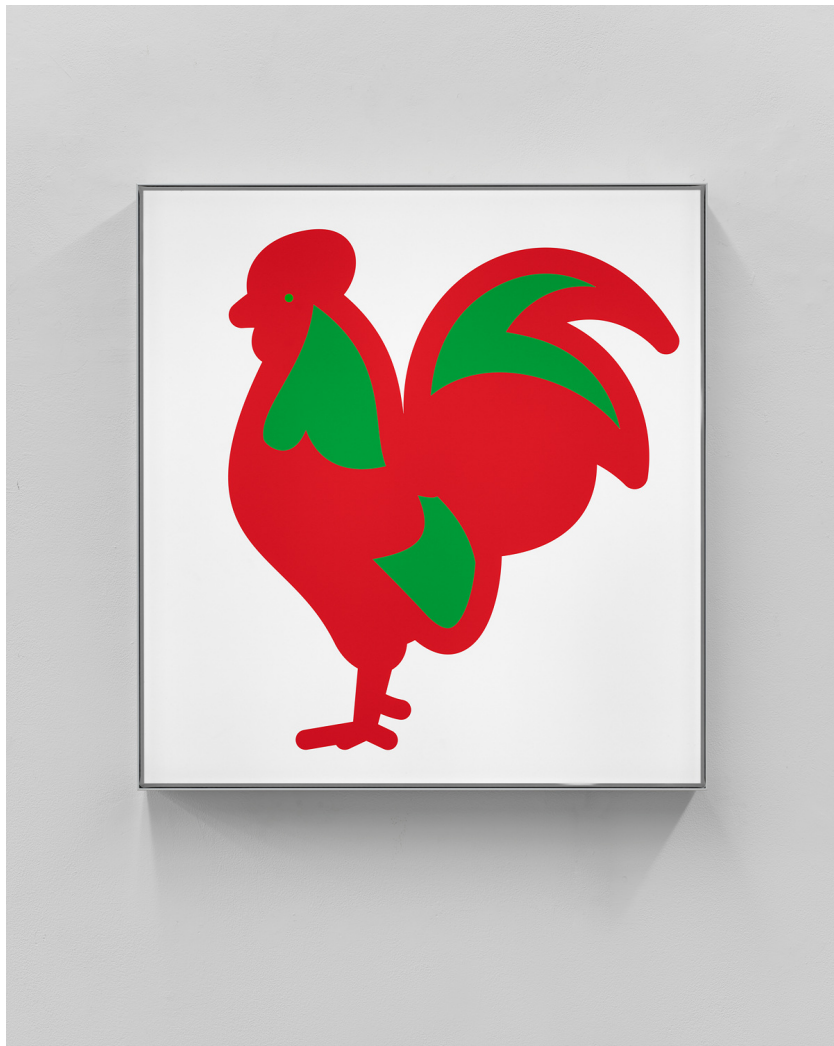
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Julian Opie (b. 1958)

Rooster 3.

2021

Aluminium, nylon, and lights

68 x 64 x 9 cm

Courtesy of the artist and Kukje Gallery

Image provided by Kukje Gallery



Julian Opie (b. 1958)

Deer 1.

2020

Aluminium, nylon, and lights

128 x 140 x 9 cm

Courtesy of the artist and Kukje Gallery

Image provided by Kukje Gallery



Julian Opie (b. 1958)

Winter night 2.

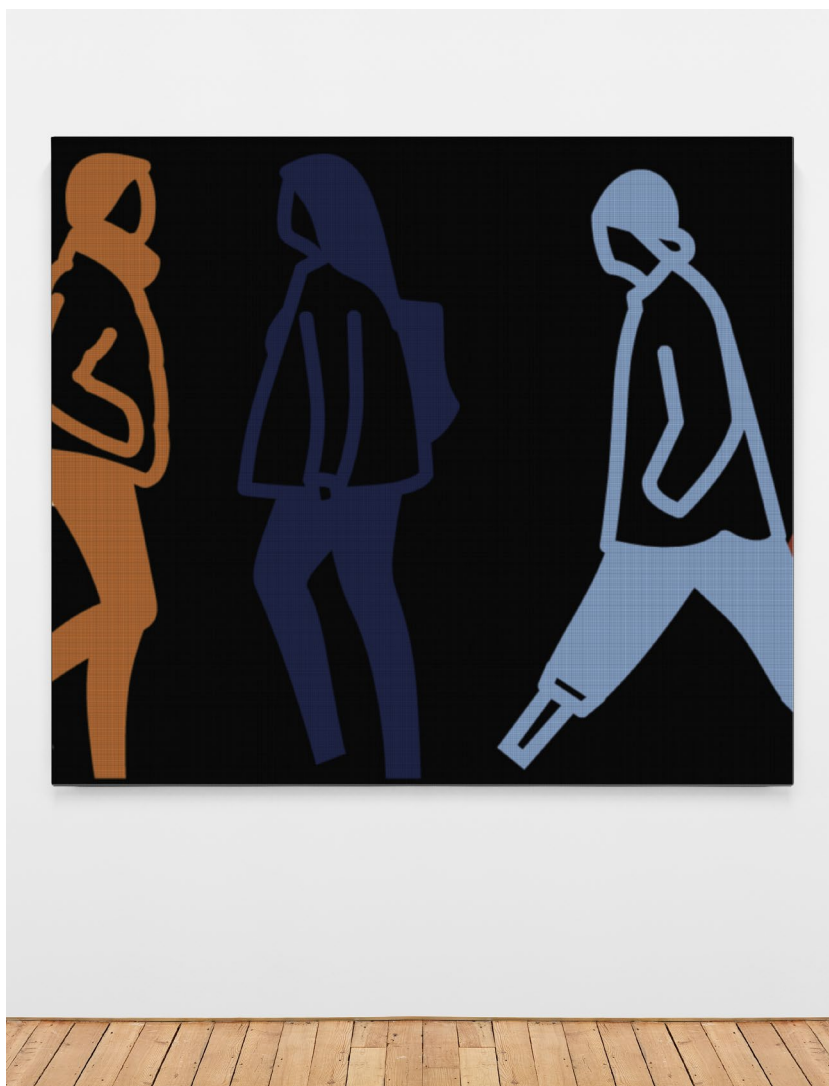
2021

Aluminium, nylon, and lights

291.8 x 291.8 x 9 cm

Courtesy of the artist and Kukje Gallery

Image provided by Kukje Gallery



Julian Opie (b. 1958)

Nighttime 3.

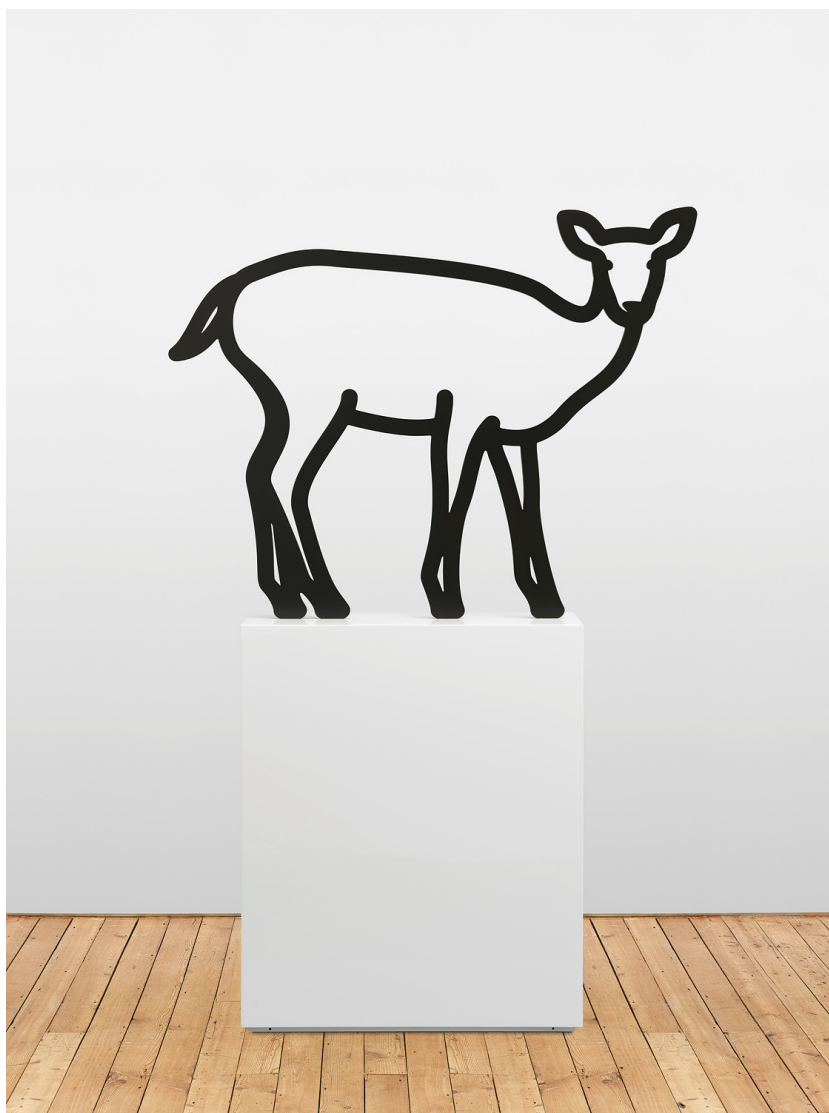
2021

Continuous computer animation on LED screen

175 x 200 cm

Courtesy of the artist and Kukje Gallery

Image provided by Kukje Gallery



Julian Opie (b. 1958)

Deer 3.

2020

Auto paint on aluminium with metal base

103 x 132 x 2.5 cm

Courtesy of the artist and Kukje Gallery

Image provided by Kukje Gallery



Julian Opie (b. 1958)

Two bags fur hood.

2021

Auto paint on aluminium

202.1 x 80.7 x 3 cm

Courtesy of the artist and Kukje Gallery

Image provided by Kukje Gallery



Julian Opie (b. 1958)

City 1.

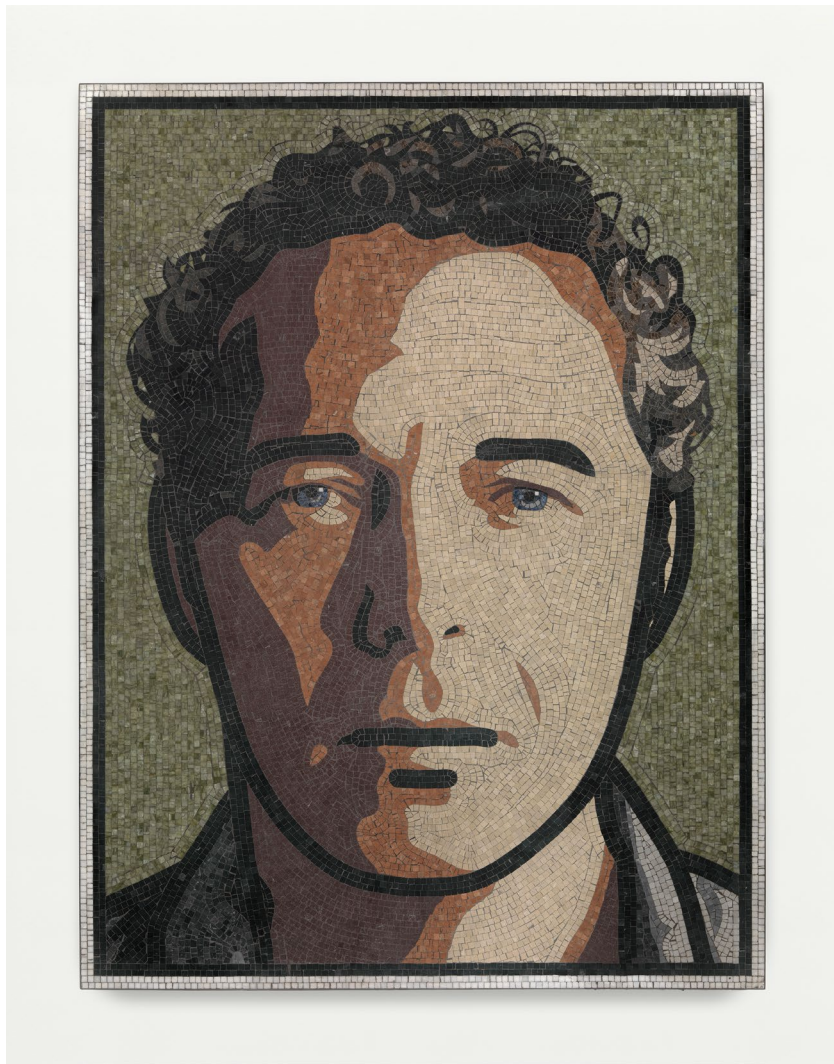
2021

Powder coated aluminium

428 x 163 x 178 cm

Courtesy of the artist and Kukje Gallery

Image provided by Kukje Gallery



Artist portrait of Julian Opie
Image provided by Kukje Gallery