

## KUKJE GALLERY | PRESS RELEASE

### Julian Opie Solo Exhibition *OP.VR@Kukje/F1963.BUSAN* at Kukje Gallery Busan

Press Conference: May 3 (Wed.), 2023, 12pm at Kukje Gallery Busan

Exhibition Dates: May 3 – July 2, 2023

Venues: Kukje Gallery Busan, F1963 Sukcheon Hall

Kukje Gallery is pleased to present *OP.VR@Kukje/F1963.BUSAN*, a solo exhibition of the acclaimed British contemporary artist Julian Opie, on view at Kukje Gallery Busan and F1963 Sukcheon Hall from May 3 through July 2, 2023. Five years after his first solo show at F1963 in 2018, the artist returns to Busan, promising that “the great and varied spaces at F1963 allow me to present a far-reaching exhibition covering many new areas of investigation.” Bringing together paintings, sculptures, mosaics, films, Virtual Reality (VR) experiences, and a live action performance, the artist’s fifth exhibition at Kukje Gallery unveils a comprehensive presentation of Opie’s manifold practice and his longstanding interest in diverse digital media and technology.

Kukje Gallery Busan will primarily feature a series of LED works, accompanied by sound, depicting moments of people dancing. The artist, while in search of a different bodily movement to continue his creative exploration of “walking people,” discovered the “shuffle dance” through social media platforms such as TikTok and YouTube and was fascinated by the explosive energy contained in its simple and repetitive moves. In response, the artist collaborated with his daughter—a professional dancer—choreographing various dances and translating them into animated images. He also began incorporating sound into these works, creating multi-layered scores that frame the movement with rhythm and vivacity. For the upcoming show, Opie has taken still images from these animations and reproduced them as paintings and stone mosaics. The contrast between the hard stone (used to construct the mosaics) and the soft, malleable curves of the human body, enriches Opie’s visual language. For the artist, mosaics and LED screens are media tied to different eras but share similarities in that both are composed of “units”—small stone tiles and pixels—that construct an image. As demonstrated by his continuous material exploration, the artist persists in experimenting with modes of representation by staying inspired by visual languages and techniques that reflect and transcend time.

The exhibition will be held not only at Kukje Gallery Busan but also across Sukcheon Hall—another space in F1963, adjacent to the gallery—for the first time since the gallery opened its outpost in the coastal city. Utilizing the hall’s expansive environment, Opie weaves together multiple bodies of work framing the past, present, and future, especially as presented in his new VR simulations. Displayed by the entrance is *Walking in Busan. 5.*, a painting from a series of images documenting passersby in Haeundae and Centum City, Busan, in the summer of 2022. Opie once again includes works made from photographs taken in the exhibiting city, thereby enabling the local audience to intimately experience his works, further layering the experience of time and space. Alongside this painting are four treadmills on which people will be walking—as a form of performance—throughout the duration of the exhibition. The first of its kind for the artist, this kinetic element allows anyone the opportunity to voluntarily engage in the work by strolling on the treadmill. Giving the sensation of bringing his beloved “walking people” (seen in his paintings) to life using three-dimensionality, this interactive installation presents an unusual experiential platform where the city, audience, and the work become integrated.

Installed at the front and back of Sukcheon Hall are a total of four VR booths (two in each area), temporarily built to enhance visitors’ VR experiences. Inside these booths, participants will be able to wear VR glasses and freely explore a virtual exhibition space constructed with sculpture, film, and painting. As with his previous works, Opie utilizes cutting-edge technology that engages the subjects of media, technology, and image perception. Exploring how contemporary audiences are more accustomed to seeing things through digital

devices than direct visual perception, Opie points to this familiar but problematic phenomenon; engaging his audiences with deeply perceptive and innovative approaches to portraiture, he wittily raises questions about our contemporary culture and representation.

Installed at the center of Sukcheon Hall are sculptures of figures in various scales and poses; sculpted in both stainless steel and oak, these works provide a bridge between the virtual and the actual worlds. The largest sculptures are drawn from passersby in Busan, while the stainless steel works are inspired by people Opie encountered at parks in London. The thin and delicate outlines of the stainless steel sculptures mirror the movement of actual joints in the body, evoking how the human form is in close interaction with space, gravity, and scenery. The wood sculptures, in contrast to the stainless steel figures, are made entirely out of straight lines, as the artist employed dense and robust oak to express this linearity.

Powered by keen observation and a profound interest in technology, material, and (art) history, Julian Opie has captured ordinary and ubiquitous subjects from everyday life and reinterpreted them with his unique formal language, building his own distinctive bodies of works. Opie's subjects—real or virtual—offer viewers a chance to look anew at the familiar world we inhabit.

### **About the Artist**

Born in 1958 in London, Julian Opie graduated in 1982 from Goldsmiths College of Art and is currently based in London. Opie has exhibited widely across the globe, including solo exhibitions at the Mango Art Museum, Changsha, China (2023); Parco Museum, Tokyo, Japan (2022); He Art Museum, Shenzhen, China (2022); 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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**Julian Opie (b. 1958)**

*Dance 3 figure 2.*

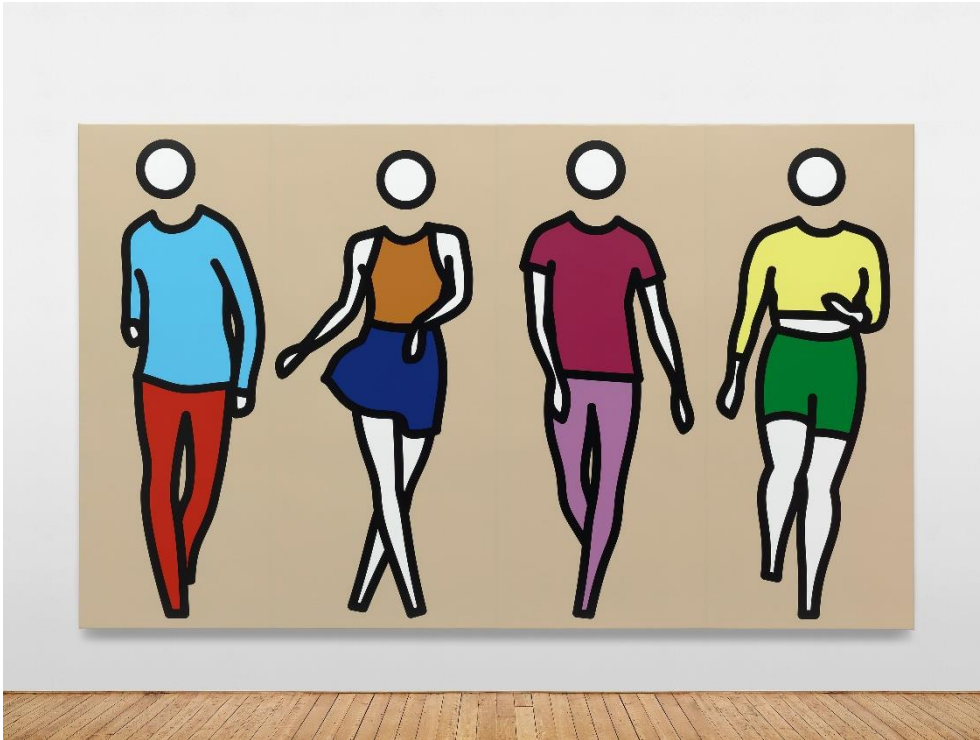
2022

Continuous computer animation on LED screen with sound

200 x 100 x 8 cm

Courtesy of the artist and Kukje Gallery

Image provided by Kukje Gallery



**Julian Opie (b. 1958)**

*Dance 2 step. 1.*

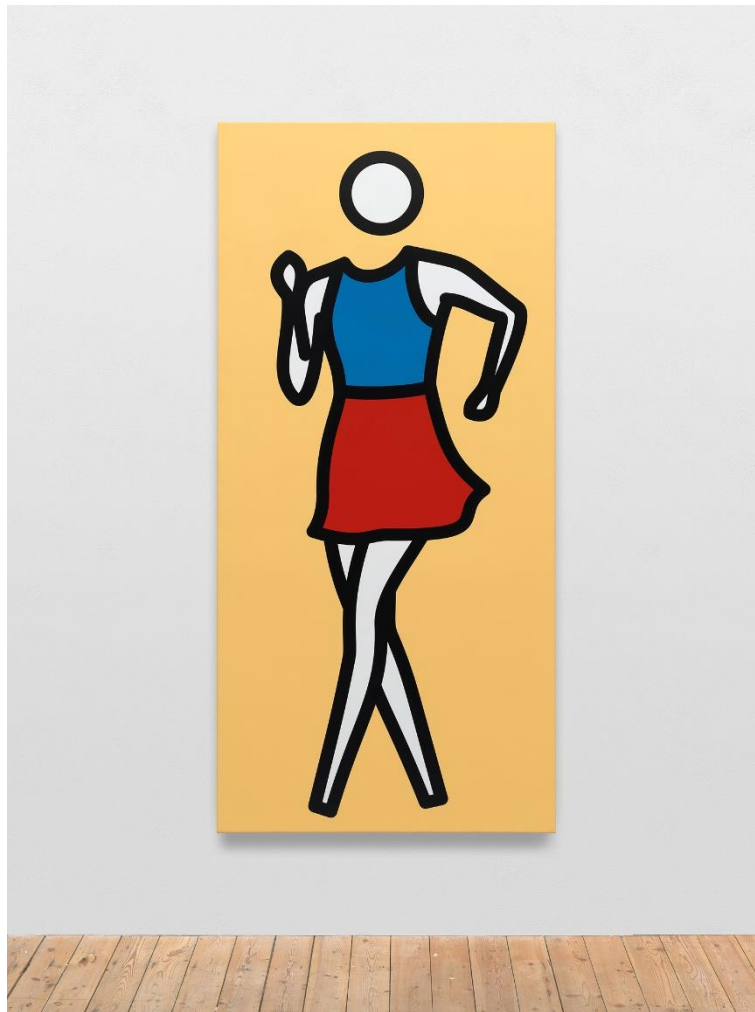
2022

Vinyl on aluminium stretcher

230 x 381 x 3.5 cm

Courtesy of the artist and Kukje Gallery

Image provided by Kukje Gallery



**Julian Opie (b. 1958)**

*Dance 3 figure 1 step 2.*

2022

Vinyl on aluminium stretcher

210 x 100 x 3.5 cm

Courtesy of the artist and Kukje Gallery

Image provided by Kukje Gallery



**Julian Opie (b. 1958)**

*Dance 4 figure 4 step 2.*

2022

Mosaic tiles

121 x 59 cm

Courtesy of the artist and Kukje Gallery

Image provided by Kukje Gallery



**Julian Opie (b. 1958)**

*Figure 2, position 9.*

2022

Polished stainless steel

62 x 74 x 176 cm

Courtesy of the artist and Kukje Gallery

Image provided by Kukje Gallery



**Julian Opie (b. 1958)**

*Joshua. 1.*

2023

Wood

183.2 x 86.1 x 35 cm (base: 3.9 x 50 x 35 cm)

Courtesy of the artist and Kukje Gallery

Image provided by Kukje Gallery