

Press Release

Julian Opie

19 November 2022 – 26 March 2023

4/F, Building D7, Yard No.3, Jinhang East Road, Beijing

Opening: 19 November 2022, 3pm – 6pm

For Julian Opie's first exhibition at Lisson Gallery's new Beijing space, the leading contemporary artist unveils a series of new works, all created in 2022. The exhibition highlights new and innovative techniques developed by Opie, featuring some of his most iconic motifs, from landscape lightboxes to reclining stainless steel figures, alongside new formats including dancers in animated LED, vinyl and mosaic. Together, this body of work evidences Opie's ongoing fascination with the contemporary experience, whether urban, rural or virtual. The exhibition marks the artist's second solo exhibition with Lisson Gallery in China, following his 2020 presentation at the gallery's Shanghai space.

With a practice that encompasses painting, sculpture, billboard posters, LED screens, large-scale public works and even album covers, across a diverse range of mediums, Opie's distinct pictorial language has developed from an acute observation of his surroundings, allowing him to distil an infinite number of influences and visual references into a reduced, symbolic representation of the world. Rather than a photographic record of a moment, Opie is interested in capturing a complete picture of reality in the present; simple signs and pictograms are expanded to evoke real people and places.

The exhibition includes a series of reclining stainless-steel figures, inspired in form by wooden tribal antique statuary from southeast Asia, presented in the South Gallery of the Beijing space. Exhibited alongside these are four lightboxes denoting landscape scenes – stylised depictions of vistas from the French rural countryside, with roads, grasslands and mountains transformed into abstracted graphic forms.

In the adjacent space, visitors can experience a sequence of figures dancing in Tik-Tok inspired routines, presented here in motion and in static form. For this, Opie invited four dancers to perform a specific dance sequence, inspired by a "shuffle dance" popular to the short-form social media platform. This fast-pace dance is animated across the large-scale LED screens, as well as one free-standing work. To complement the rhythm and energy of the experience, Opie also commissioned a musician to create a series of looped soundtracks inspired by early 2000s electronic dance music that mirror and further animate the dance.

Singular steps from the dance routine are also captured in a series of vinyl and mosaic paintings that accompany the animations. The forms and colours of these vinyl figures nod to specific modern attire, such as the winter nylon ski suits visible on ski slopes. Despite a very different technique, the smaller mosaic tile paintings relate closely to pixelated LED screens, indicating the contrasting references of historic and contemporary.

In parallel with this exhibition, Opie's solo show 'OP.VR/HEM@shenzhen', presented by He Art Museum, is now on view at MIXC World in Shenzhen, China, focusing on the artist's latest virtual reality work alongside more historic work.

About the artist

The work of Julian Opie is known throughout the world. With public commissions from New York to Seoul, London to Shanghai, and an uninterrupted flow of international museum exhibitions, Opie's distinctive formal language is instantly recognisable and reflects his artistic preoccupation with the idea of representation and the means by which images are

perceived and understood. “Everything you see is a trick of the light,” Opie writes. “Light bouncing into your eye, light casting shadows, creating depth, shapes, colours. Turn off the light and it’s all gone. We use vision as a means of survival and it’s essential to take it for granted in order to function, but awareness allows us to look at looking and by extension look at ourselves and be aware of our presence. Drawing, drawing out the way that process feels and works brings the awareness into the present and into the real world, the exterior world.” Always exploring different techniques both cutting edge and ancient, Opie plays with ways of seeing through reinterpreting the vocabulary of everyday life; his reductive style evokes both a visual and spatial experience of the world around us. Drawing influence from classical portraiture, Egyptian hieroglyphs and Japanese woodblock prints, as well as public signage, information boards and traffic signs, the artist connects the clean visual language of modern life, with the fundamentals of art history.

Julian Opie was born in London in 1958 and lives and works in London. He graduated from Goldsmith’s School of Art, London in 1982. Exhibitions have been staged at Pitzhanger Gallery, London, England (2021); Le Nau Cultural Centre, Valencia, Spain (2021); Berardo Museum, Lisbon, Portugal (2020); Tokyo Opera City Art Gallery, Japan (2019); Lehmbruck Museum, Duisberg, Germany (2019); The National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Australia (2018); F1963 Busan, S. Korea (2018); National Portrait Gallery, London, UK (2017); Suwon Ipark Museum of Art, Korea (2017); Fosun Foundation, Shanghai, China (2017); Kunsthalle Helsinki, Finland (2015); Museum of Contemporary Art Krakow (MoCAK), Poland (2014); National Portrait Gallery, London, UK (2011); IVAM, Valencia, Spain (2010); MAK, Vienna, Austria (2008); CAC Malaga, Spain (2006); Neues Museum, Nuremberg, Germany (2003); Ikon Gallery, Birmingham, UK (2001); Kunstverein Hannover, Germany (1994); Hayward Gallery, London, England (1993); and Institute of Contemporary Arts, London, UK (1985). Major group exhibitions include NGV Triennale, Melbourne, Australia (2020); 57th Venice Biennale, Venice, Italy (2017); the Victoria & Albert Museum, London, UK (2016); Barbican Art Gallery, London, UK (2014); Tate Britain, London, UK (2013); the Shanghai Biennale (2006); Tate Modern, London, UK. (2000); 11th Biennial of Sydney (1998); documenta 8, Kassel, Germany (1987); and XIIème Biennale de Paris (1985). Public projects include ‘Running in Venice’ Italy (2022); Parade, Hong Kong. (2020); ‘Waking in Shanghai’ Shanghai, China (2019); ‘Walking in Taipei’, Taipei, Taiwan (2016); ‘Walking in Hong Kong’, Hong Kong (2016); Arendt & Medernach, Luxembourg (2016); Heathrow Terminal 1 (1998); and the prison Wormwood Scrubs, London (1994); as well as public work for hospitals, such as the Lindo Wing, St. Mary’s Hospital, London (2012) and Barts & the London Hospital (2003). His design for the band Blur’s album ‘Best of Blur’ (2000) was awarded the Music Week CADS for Best Illustration in 2001.

About Lisson Gallery

Lisson Gallery is one of the most influential and longest-running international contemporary art galleries in the world. Today the gallery supports and promotes the work of more than 60 international artists across two spaces in London, three in New York, and one in Shanghai, and one in Beijing, as well as forthcoming gallery in Los Angeles. Established in 1967 by Nicholas Logsdail, Lisson Gallery pioneered the early careers of important Minimal and Conceptual artists, such as Art & Language, Carl Andre, Daniel Buren, Donald Judd, John Latham, Sol LeWitt, Richard Long and Robert Ryman among many others. It still works with many of these artists as well as others of that generation from Carmen Herrera to the renowned estate of Leon Polk Smith.

In its second decade the gallery introduced significant British sculptors to the public for the first time, including Tony Cragg, Richard Deacon, Anish Kapoor, Shirazeh Houshiary and Julian Opie. Since 2000, the gallery has gone on to represent many more leading international artists such as Marina Abramović, Ai Weiwei, John Akomfrah, Susan Hiller, Tatsuo Miyajima and Sean Scully. It is also responsible for raising the international profile of a younger generation of artists led by Cory Arcangel, Ryan Gander, Van Hanos, Hugh Hayden, Haroon Mirza, Laure Prouvost, Pedro Reyes, Wael Shawky and Cheyney Thompson.

For press enquiries, please contact

Victoria Mitchell, Head of Communications
+44 (0)207 724 2739
victoria@lissongallery.com

i: [@lisson_gallery](https://www.instagram.com/lisson_gallery)
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