



Installation view of Julian Opie's exhibition at K2 exhibition hall in Kukje Gallery Keith Park/Kukje Gallery

Fashionable Seoulites redrawn a la Julian Opie

Acclaimed British artist showcases his portrayal of Seoul passers-by, moving images on LED panels and 3-D head sculptures in his solo exhibition

By Lee Woo-young

British artist Julian Opie is amazed at how well dressed people are in Seoul.

"People in London tend to wear black and gray. And there's not particularly much light and I found myself drawing very much shadow," said Opie at the press preview of his solo exhibition at Kukje Gallery on Thursday.

To transfer the impression he had onto his paintings, he chose to highlight the colors and details of the clothes worn by Seoulites.

"When I looked at photographs taken in Seoul, there was not so much shadow. I dropped shadows and focused on the amount of color and details in accessories, shoes with red stitches, different bags and a lot of shopping bags."

The artist chose passers-by in Seoul as subjects of his trademark vinyl paintings for his second exhibition in the city. The people walking through various areas of the capital city are portrayed in his



Installation view of Julian Opie's exhibition at K3 exhibition hall in Kukje Gallery Keith Park/Kukje Gallery

signature style: prominent black outlines, filled with vivid blocks of color.

He had never visited the areas. He observed them in more than 3,000 photographs a commissioned photographer took and sent him. While trying to be as objective as possible in describing people

from different cultures, the artist pointed out that many people were always on the phone.

"How, individually, each person dressed seemed like a project about themselves. Like presenting a specific look they had built and chosen. I found that unusual," he said.

The paintings on view portray

people walking in the fashionable district of Sinsa-dong and the busy area of Sadang-dong. His second solo exhibition in Seoul — the first was in 2009 — also presents LED panels that show animations of people walking in London's streets, and large three-dimensional head sculptures.

The two massive models of human heads are part of a new body of work by Opie, inspired by Roman and Egyptian sculptures. He chose his neighbors Lily and Fin, who babysit Opie's children from time to time, and made the modern version of the ancient head sculptures.

The head sculptures, paired with matching portraits, feature more detailed features of his models than his previous portrait works — curled eyelashes and cartoon-like liquid eyes.

His previous portraits were characterized by minimal details, with button eyes and two dots that indicate a nose.

"There are no certain messages or narratives that I want to impress. These are really my activities, what I have been noticing and what I have been interested in," said Opie.

The exhibition runs through March 23 at Kukje Gallery on Samcheong-ro in Jongno, Seoul. For more information, call (02) 735-8449, or visit www.kukjegallery.com.

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