



Temporary exhibition  
Floor 0

# JULIAN OPIE

**New Works**

19/03–30/08/20

Julian Opie is regarded as one of the most important contemporary artists in the world. His works are immediately recognisable for their distinct formal language and for the simplicity of representation of portraits, figures, and landscapes, resulting from digital manipulation. In his works, the stylised treatment of the subjects portrayed—painted in solid colours, with thick black outlines for their features—is inspired by art, design, and language, as well as Japanese prints, seventeenth- and eighteenth-century portraits, nineteenth-century silhouettes, Roman busts, and Ancient Egyptian art. Opie is able to bring all these established artistic genres into the twenty-first century.

This will be his first solo exhibition in Lisbon. The artist sought to extend the exhibition space in all possible directions, including as part of his project the square in front of the Jerónimos Monastery, the internal courtyards and gardens of the CCB, and the galleries devoted to contemporary art within the

### Statues

How do images exist in the world? When you make an artwork, it looks like other things. It has to, or it would be pretty invisible or at least unreadable. We see by comparing and referring. Our brains shuffle similar things we know and see similarities and differences. I am always on the lookout for different systems of making images. The first images that were made might have been drawn with a stick in the sand (apparently elephants do this), or perhaps the shape of a stone tool counts as an image. The stone axes made by Homo erectus over half a million years ago are beautiful, elegant pear drop shapes and were made in huge numbers. Sometimes they were too large to use, so perhaps were made as objects of beauty—as art—rather than just functional tools. Then silhouettes of hands drawn in mouth-blown pigment, charcoal drawings of leaping animals; mosaic, carved stone, ink on papyrus, stained glass, cut paper, photographs, and printing; computer-cut vinyl, water jet, and laser-cut metals, LCD, lace, offset lithography. Each method carries a huge baggage of reference, mood, and meaning. An image carved in limestone and in-filled with dark bronze reads as heavy and funereal, valuable, and lasting,

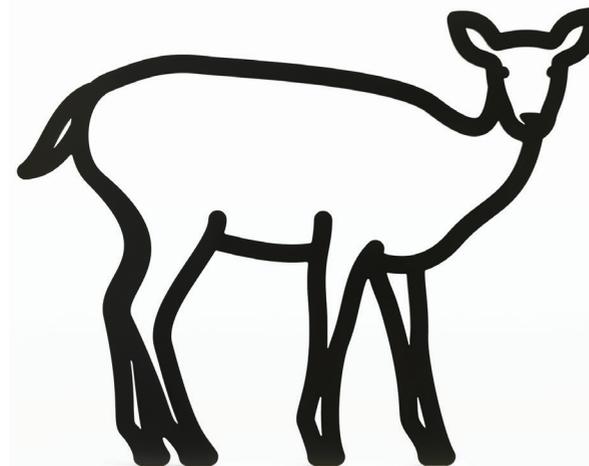
Museum. Most of the works on display were produced specifically for this exhibition and gallery, making use not just of the walls, which stand eight metres tall, but also, going even higher, the roof. People are the central theme of the exhibition, portrayed in various ways and with various materials; sometimes static, sometimes moving; sometimes painted, sometimes sculpted. There is also space for some buildings and animals, to expand on the theme and develop the subject matter. In the second room, different computer animations use intermittent LED to show stylised pigeons that evoke hieroglyphics, jumping in all directions and hopping from one canvas to another. For the final room, the artist produced a gigantic installation that, inspired by the beautiful Belém Tower, sends us back to Manueline architecture.

Rita Lougares  
Artistic director

while bright, shiny, laser-cut plastic or glowing back-lit inkjet reads as fun, appealing, and cheap. Road sign colours and LED screens carry bureaucratic authority, while hand-painted matte paint feels personal and gentle. These elements read as loud as subject matter in a picture. When I am looking for ways to make something or conversely hunting subject matter to utilise a technique, it is the combination that creates the final meaning or taste of the work.

### Animals

A drawing can not only transfer the representation of something but also evoke its presence. Photographs can show you exactly what something looks like, but a drawing can make your body react, feel the weight and life of something. This sense of reality and reincarnation can be maintained even when the drawing is seemingly quite abstracted. Cave drawings often give you the sense of the energy of a leaping animal, as if the life is still in it. In fact, the more stylised the drawing is, the more shocking and visible the sense of experiencing something living.



Deer 3. 2020. Auto paint on aluminium

### Boxes

When planning an installation, which I usually do first in flat plan and then using computer 3D models, I always start with the first view of the work. First impressions. How you react to the first view of something sets up how you feel about the work and what you read as a rolling experience, as you approach and circle the work. When the object is outside in the public world, it's not always possible to predict where the first or main view will be from. Increasingly the choice and design of the work is arrived at in order to meet the possible approaching views. It's best if a work does not fully explain itself at first, if there is a reason to explore and some



Street 3. 2019. Auto paint on aluminium

satisfaction to be gained from the journey. Mick Jagger once said that it's best if people can't quite make out all the lyrics in a song. I want to avoid a flat-on gaze that leaves you wondering *why is the thing there? and is it any good?* I find it better to tell a story that has to be read and followed, so that the engagement is more active and less confrontational.

### Buildings

My children are used to flying, but I only really experienced it in my 20s, when I began to exhibit abroad. Getting high above the world's surface turns the deeply spatial environment in which we

live into a flat map and a picture. Being only a few feet tall, humans see a very tight perspective, the landscape layers up and sweeps back sharply. Up in a plane, all becomes clear, and consequently the ground views that you know shift and become more understandable as a particularity. Instead of object seen up against object, slices of hills and mountains up against sky and sea, flying makes it possible to see the distance between things and their place in the land. Train and road travel also give a different and particular type of picture of the world. The speed allows images of buildings and trees to become layered in time. Unlike walking, where your mind and reading works at the same pace as the passing scenery, when moving at speed the images fly at you and pile up—like a time-based animated movie overlaying each other, highlighting differences and categories, shapes, and colours.



Towers 1. 2018. Auto paint on aluminium

billboards, and city statues depict life-sized or larger humans that echo one's own presence, that can act as extensions of our own sense of being. To be in a room hung with many full-length portraits feels a bit like being at a party. Romans used to carry portrait busts of their ancestors through the town on festival days, while statues of their emperors oversaw outlying cities. The image does not just represent, it also evokes. Egyptians placed painted portraits onto the mummified heads of the dead—in multiple layers from the real person outwards—ever closer to the living world, keeping them present but also allowing them to see back out into the world. Indonesian tribes keep dead ancestors' bodies in their homes, walking with them in ceremonies, and display models of the dressed figures. Greek and Roman buildings were built with integrated stone human figures. We are humans, but also animals that need to be aware of other animals

nearby, that need to take action before even thinking it through, that need to accommodate other bodies slipping and twisting down the crowded high street, recognising a friend from afar by their stance or overall colour and style.

Julian Opie

### Crowds

One thing I can be sure of about my audience is that it is made up of humans. Whoever is looking at these images of people is also a person. This creates a unique dynamic, though a commonly used one. Stately homes, churches, advertising

### Education Department

Guided visits and activities for schools and families

Bookings and informations  
T. 213 612 800  
servico.educativo@museuberardo.pt  
www.museuberardo.pt/educacao



### Exhibition catalogue

Featuring a comprehensive photo record of the artist's work  
Hardcover; 210 x 279 mm; 152 pp.  
For sale at the Museum's shop: 29,00 €.

### Share your visit

@museuberardo

#museuberardo

Museu Coleção Berardo

### Follow us



/museuberardo

Museu Coleção Berardo  
Arte Moderna e Contemporânea

Catalogue support:

GALERIA  
MÁRIO SEQUEIRA

Sponsor:

Tintas Robbialac<sup>SA</sup>

REPÚBLICA  
PORTUGUESA  
CULTURA

Media partner:

RTP 2

Exhibition support:

BACALHÔA  
WINES OF PORTUGAL