

# Julian Opie

## Walking on the Vltava

26|04—24|06|2007

press release

# Julian Opie | Walking on the Vltava

Julian Opie is a distinguished contemporary artist of international renown.

Born in 1958, he now lives and works in London. He studied at Goldsmiths College of Art and soon afterwards he held exhibitions at the Lisson Gallery and the ICA in London, Groninger Museum, Kunstverein Köln and Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain, all in just three years.

His works can be seen in major collections and museums worldwide, including The Tate Modern and The National Portrait Gallery, London, MOMA, New York, MOMAT, Japan, and the Stedelijk in Amsterdam.

Julian Opie's work represents a new approach to images and forms, referring to modern work through new materials and media.

Using computer animation, sound and LED screens he surprises with unexpected interpretations of the classical portrait. The spectrum of influences on which Julian Opie draws is wide, from billboard graphics, through the classical portrait and sculpture, to Japanese Manga comics, as wide as the spectrum of media and technologies he uses in his work. His work is characterised by reduction to the essential, this principle being clearest in his portraits. How far can one go to simplify facial features without losing an individuality? His highly stylised work includes conversion of photographs (and short films) into figurative reproductions created by means of computer animation.

In 2001 the reputation of Julian Opie transcended the boundaries of contemporary visual art when he designed the cover for an album by the British group Blur entitled *Best of Blur*, which received a prize for the best illustration awarded by the magazine Music Week.

At the Prague exhibition there will be 13 works on display, including a premiere of a trilogy named *Kirika*, which will be premiered together with another six installations. Art in the open will be presented with the light installations *Suzanne walking* and *Bruce walking* – figures over two metres in height displayed on LED screens fixed to a weir near Charles Bridge, which will move against the current of the Vltava.

“Bruce is a professional dancer, a member of London's Ballet Rambert. His partner has commissioned me to paint his portrait; as I was doing that I used him as a model for this film. Suzanne is a fashion designer and writer, and in addition she collects art. She was buying one of my prints when my gallery keeper noticed her gait and thought I might like to paint her. Twice I asked my models to walk on a treadmill wearing different clothes and moving at different speeds. I transferred the video recording to a computer where things can be modified and sections can be saved as separate frames. Every frame is drawn over and the drawings are superposed and smoothed. One of my friends then animates the frames and after another smoothing, whose aim is to get rid of any jerks, the film is converted to a format that can be played on LED screens. I join the first frame to the last to make a loop with the figure moving continuously (this is easy to say but hard to do).

The figures are drawn schematically and modelled on a system of public signs. They have a minimum of detail, no neck or feet; but they keep their clothes and movements, the peculiarities that reveal the identity and use of the model. The work was inspired by a small picture of a horse in taximeters in South Korea. The horse is animated in such a way that when the taximeter is running the horse appears to be galloping. I found this small moving animation hugely impressive and I liked the way the movement appeared extraordinarily relaxed.” This is how the author presents the inception of the installation *Suzanne walking* and *Bruce walking*.

Through the exhibition *Walking on the Vltava* at Museum Kampa and the light installations *Suzanne walking* and *Bruce walking* in the Vltava the City of Prague clearly manifests its interest in contemporary art.

The exhibition is organised by the agency w.art projects. The owners of this arts agency, Gisela Winkelhofer and Quirin Wimer, want to concentrate on staging exhibitions of leading contemporary artists from the whole world in Prague.

In co-operation with Museum Kampa – the Jan and Meda Mládek Foundation

The exhibition is open from 26 April to 24 June 2007  
Museum Kampa – Jan and Meda Mládek Foundation  
U Sovových mlýnů 2, Praha 1  
Open daily from 10:00 to 18:00

**If you want further information and/or visual materials please contact:**

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