

Michael Craig-Martin / Julian Opie

14 July – 19 August 2017 (opening night: 6-9pm Friday 14 July)

The inaugural exhibition at *-f-i-l-t-e-r-* features works by Michael Craig-Martin and Julian Opie, two artists who have been central to British contemporary art for at least three decades.

Michael Craig-Martin (b. 1941) is regularly referred to as the godfather of ‘Brit Art’ due to his influence on a younger generation of artists whom he taught at Goldsmiths in London between 1974 and 2000, including Damien Hirst, Sarah Lucas, Gary Hume and Julian Opie. He first gained recognition for his seminal conceptual work *An Oak Tree* (1979), in which he asked the viewer to accept that he had transformed a simple glass of water on a glass shelf into a mighty oak tree without physically changing the object itself. This act of ‘transubstantiation’ (or making a change that you can’t actually see) not only pointed to the power of an artistic gesture, it also set the scene for Craig-Martin’s ongoing post-Duchampian investigation into ‘readymades’ and how mass-produced and designed objects are shaped by and shape the world we live in.

In recent years, Craig-Martin has become widely known for his vibrant coloured paintings, silkscreen prints and outline sculptures of everyday objects – such as mobile phones, laptops, lightbulbs, briefcases, credit cards, takeaway coffee cups and USB memory sticks – depicted in a distinctive graphic shorthand which resembles that found in instruction manuals.

Design and Architecture (2017) is a set of four silkscreen diptychs which juxtapose a piece of classic modern furniture with a well-known building created by the same designer/architect: Frank Lloyd Wright, Gerrit Rietveld, Le Corbusier and Mies van der Rohe. The four designed objects (a desk, a buffet and two chaise lounges) appear amplified by the architecturally-designed buildings. Consistent with other recent works by Craig-Martin, the *Design and Architecture* series graphically reveals how objects are inherently linked to a point in time and, in a similar way to a hit song, can come to represent and define an era.

Commenting on design, Craig-Martin has said:

“I’m not a designer, and I don’t make any of these things. I don’t design laptops and I don’t design chairs. [...] I’m actually just an observer. The thing that I think is interesting about what I do is that I actually don’t invent anything. I just use what’s in front of me. I increasingly think that invention is the realm of design, and observation is the realm of art”.

Michael Craig-Martin: Transience (London: Serpentine / Koenig Books, 2016) p.57

Michael Craig-Martin has had numerous solo exhibitions and retrospectives at galleries around the world including the Serpentine, London (2015/6), Gagosian, Hong Kong (2014), the National Art Centre, Tokyo (2007) and the Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin (2006). In 2015 he was appointed Chief Co-ordinator for the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition, and in 2016 he was knighted for his services to the arts.

Julian Opie (b. 1958) has developed a reductive visual language compatible with that of Craig-Martin, but at the same time unique and instantly recognisable as his own. He is best known for his abbreviated black outline and block colour portraits of people on flat backgrounds which retain just enough detail to convey the essential characteristics of his subjects, thereby questioning what it means to create something that is ‘realistic’. He is also known for his side on views of people walking or running, which are often animated using contemporary technology such as LED, LCD or lenticular panels.

Opie's landscapes, on the other hand, are predominantly unpopulated; but like his images of people, they have a computer-graphic sensibility which creates an oscillation between digital simulation (or virtual space) and the physical world.

His images are in fact observations and visual grabs taken from the real world, via photography, which are then processed through a computer. As with Craig-Martin, Opie is a true observer of contemporary life and the things that surround him.

“Artworks are like little experiments designed to bring out, mimic, reveal what is already there but hard to hold.”

Julian Opie - *The Complete Editions Vol. 2: 2012-2015* (London: Alan Cristea Gallery, 2015) p.9

Nature 1 – Pebbles (2015) is a set of four wall-mounted aluminium profiles which provide a way of making a drawing that has no definitive edge or frame – the wall effectively becomes the ground. Opie has noted that pebbles, when drawn, are little more than wobbly circles in endless variations, but are nonetheless recognisable due to their groupings, which in turn are being continually redistributed and composed by the motion of the sea.

Julian Opie is one of the most prominent and influential artists of his generation. He has exhibited extensively at international galleries and museums since the 1980s, and has completed numerous major public art commissions including *Walking in Hong Kong* (2016) on Tower 535 in Causeway Bay, Hong Kong, and a permanent freestanding LED monolith on Carnaby Street, London. In 2000 he received a Music Week CADS award for his album cover for British pop band Blur.