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Gilbert and George

CRUSADE

An Exhibition of Post Card Pieces

13 January - 13 February 1982

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It might seem impossible for Gilbert and George to follow their two recent exhibitions in London - Modern Fears - with us in December/January and the great Whitechapel photo-piece retrospective this summer - but it now looks as if they have done it again. We had not expected to be having another exhibition with them again so soon, but when we saw the new work we moved the whole schedule up to accomodate it.

This time they have made a glittering kaleidoscopic galaxy of postcard pieces - more than a hundred of them. Inside the front cover of the invitation card, on which an image of Prince Andrew is juxtaposed with that of a sprig of flowering mint above the title Mint Prince, is a short note headed What is a Post Card Piece? It runs as follows:

"The form of the Post Card Piece lends itself to the expression of finer feelings, stirring thoughts and beautiful views.

Through our hearts, brains and bodies the cards crystallise into our crosses of Monarchical, Christian, Nationalistic, Violent, Pagan, Floral, Sexual Post Card Pieces.

They are our shields, our swords, our emblem, our vision, our tombstone and our life masks."

Gilbert and George were pioneers of postal sculpture in the sixties, but the sending of postcards, except in the sense of their original purpose is a red herring in this context. Between making larger works they have always made such collages - originally entitled postcard "sculptures", in the days when battles raged over categories. These combined mainly old postcards into images with a new meaning with a high literary and psychological as well as decorative content.

But in many of the older postcard pieces, as in their earlier works in general, there is a sense of nostalgia for a vanished past. Conversely these are all new postcards, with nothing antique about them. The nostalgia, if that's what it is, is instant - bought in ordinary newsagents and souvenir shops in the city. These postcards depict The Wedding, The Royal Family, Horse Guards, Piccadilly Circus, The London Dungeon, budgerigars, kittens and pretty flowers - all the usual things which we select for our own everyday aesthetic purposes to send as greetings to friends.

So individually they don't even have a rarity value. But they have instead a more interesting value as ordinary art. Over them Gilbert and George have waved their professional wand to produce the most exotic, heraldic, cruciform images, giving them a more complex formal structure and a new subject matter reflecting their own

personal crusade towards Art for All.

So many artists have said that to follow art is an adventure. Gilbert and George pursue it like the medieval knights to whom they have often alluded in their work, fearless of, even enjoying the dangers they encounter along the road. Artistic perils aside, the kind of dragons they like to fight are lack of imagination, meanness of spirit, intellectual, political and social snobbery. Gilbert and George dare to look at life as it is and to record it at its ripest, its most strong-tasting, its most violent. They find beauty in the ordinary things around them. But beware! They are daring you to deny Art for All, to be mean-minded, to say this is not great art. They are daring you to misunderstand their motives. They are daring you to accuse them of inhumanity, prejudice, nostalgia, nationalism and other unfashionable attitudes. In a sense they are daring you to crucify art, and they are certainly daring you to use your brains.

Their "responsibility suits" are symbolic of the stand they have taken. A dozen years after they first put them on they still seem peculiarly up to date. Punk and pageantry go hand in hand in their work, which reflects with extraordinary clarity how exotic and varied life in Britain in our time can be.

The postcard pieces are ample evidence of this, as on a grander scale is their recent film The World of Gilbert and George, produced by The Arts Council. This remarkable work, regarded by many as the best thing they ever made, is being shown at the Tate Gallery lecture theatre on the evenings of 2nd, 9th, 16th and 23rd February at 6.30 pm.

We look forward very much to seeing you at the opening of the exhibition on Tuesday 12th January. We are sure that even those who have little interest in art and its various contexts will enjoy the sheer beauty of these objects, of their brilliant colours, formal pattern and often apparently magic substances, and of course the images, which include something for everyone.

Information and photographs are available as usual from Anne Seymour and Marie-Louise Laband at 23 Dering Street (01-499-4695).