

**THE NEW YORK TIMES**  
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Art in Review  
Gilbert and George: Perversive Pictures  
Sonnabend Gallery  
536 West 22nd Street, Chelsea  
Lehmann Maupin Gallery  
540 West 26th Street, Chelsea  
Both through Dec. 18

By Holland Cotter

The British artists Gilbert and George have been such bad boys for such a long time that you figure they will eventually run out of steam. But they haven't yet, on the evidence of a gratifyingly high-pitched two-gallery show that is set at just the right eye-splitting volume for a suddenly becalmed political atmosphere.

Satirists and polemicists, for more than three decades Gilbert and George have fielded all manner of politics - economic, social, sexual - in work that has combined photography with performance, and embraced aspects of commercial advertising, pornography, vaudeville, scatology and eschatology. In the patch of working-class England that has served as a backdrop for their mimed shenanigans, revolution is always in the air, and the artists are street-fighting geeks in matching suits and ties.

So it is in the three dozen new pieces in "Perversive Pictures." Digitally souped-up versions of the artists' customary multipanel photographic format, the pictures add up to a Babel of graffiti-style phrases in English, Hebrew and Arabic, with scrawled racist and homophobic sentiments alternating with utopian slogans: "Abolish commodity; create community," "Capitalism Needs War. Do You?" And in each piece, the artists themselves appear semaphorically gestulating or primally screaming, their figures distorted as if in a funhouse mirror.

They may look a little scarier than usual, but they continue to be the not-at-all-foolish Holy Fools of contemporary art, bitter, buttonholing and unembarrassed. Here's hoping they don't retire the act any time soon.