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CLIMATE CHANGE

Postcards From the Future: London's Climate Change Stiff Upper Lip

Climate change? Successful British artists Robert Graves and Didier Madoc-Jones were trying to digest all that nervous dinner party cross-talk. But a climate apocalypse? It had to be more than damp carpets and mildewed, seven-figure, London flats, nannies stranded across town by a flooded subway. And stop whining about property values. A real sense of proportion and urgency was missing.

Something this serious required a grander vision. Turner? Too old, grumpy. How about something Spielbergian-- the dark, massing clouds were tempting-- too bloody American.

The two artists started doing serious research, digging up scientifically reliable information about the effects of climate change on [London](#)--the city where they lived, worked, and feared a clammy, lingering senility. Results condensed to a post-it note: possible extremes-- colder winters and hotter summers. Translated through inter-office email: just googled Tuscan real estate agents.

Fortunately Graves and Madoc-Jones run [GMJ](#), a successful communications and architectural imaging company, and even as constantly-in-demand digital artists, they were able to find time to flesh out their vision. "Tell Buckingham Palace, photoshopping the Queen's corgis will have to wait-- we're rendering. And please, Bridgett, let the Malbec stand a while longer."

"Parliament Square rice paddies"

They created a future London transformed by floods, harsher winters (because of a Gulf Stream slow-down), and fiercer storms. The images were also comfortably nostalgic: the former British Empire condensed into an image of rice paddies and Parliament; orderly slums crouched an obedient distance from Buckingham Palace; a Venetian golden age recreated by a half-submerged, golden-hour Parliament Building (a combo platter of British self-regard and self-loathing); skater's shadows stretched across a frozen Thames (Victorian Christmas cards). Soon a well publicised show opened at the [Museum of London](#)-- ignoring a cease and desist letter citing "[disaster brand dilution](#)" from the American [Producer Roland Emmerich](#).

"Buckingham Palace Shanty"

The public's response was unpredictable. Madoc-Jones' memorable press conference quip: "It's disconcerting the Manyamar Junta think a similar campaign would increase foreign investment and tourism. But look, even my kids say they'd drive into the city if it looked like this. It reminds them of Paris Disneyland and Las Vegas."

"Skating at Tower Bridge"

"We didn't want to create the stuff of nightmares although we did make images showing the potential disasters London could suffer." Didier Madoc-Jones confessed, "We were shooting for [J.G. Ballard](#), but fell short of the mark. Frankly, I could never finish his books. But I'll say

this-- my real estate agent refuses to attend the show. Too frightened."

"Piccadilly Circus- water lilies, fish and wind turbines"

"London as Venice"

All of the preceding scenes and dialogue were as freely imagined as the images themselves.

Do such beautiful images contradict or deflect the artist's message?

All images created by Robert Graves and Didier Madoc-Jones

