

JAKE OR DINOS CHAPMAN @ WHITE CUBE; MASON'S YARD AND HOXTON SQUARE

They are the Tweedle-Dum and Tweedle-Dee of the YBAs (the now not so young British Artists) that brought Damien Hirst, Tracey Emin, Sarah Lucas et al to international fame, the mini-mes to those original Bad Boys of Britart for whom they worked as studio assistants, Gilbert and George. Insouciant, iconoclastic, fiercely intelligent, puerile and irritating in about equal measure, the Anglo-Greek siblings imbibed the importance of self-promotion with their mother's milk. For the past year Jake and Dinos Chapman have been stirring up press interest by implying there has been a rift. Has it simply been a media-savvy hoax? Who knows? But for the current show at both the White Cube galleries in Piccadilly and Hoxton they have been working in separate studios in isolation from each other. When I asked Dinos who had done what, he waved his arm proprietorially and claimed he had done the lot. As Jake was being interviewed by someone else at the time I was never able to get his version. Anyhow, the show is ambiguously entitled "Jake or Dinos Chapman," leaving us guessing about the possibility of fraternal divorce; just as they like it.

They have made a career out of *épater la bourgeoisie*. There were those naked penile-nosed children that upset the ladies who lunch at the Royal Academy show "Sensation" in 1997, and the gory dismembered figures à la Goya, hanging life-size from a fiberglass tree. Then there was *Hell*, which turned the Third Reich into a plastic theme park, featuring 5,000 hand-painted Nazi figurines, which was bought by Charles Saatchi for £500,000 before, ironically, being burnt to ash in the notorious MOMART warehouse fire.

At Mason's Yard the viewer is lulled into a false sense of security by the 47 painted cardboard sculptures like something from *Sesame Street* arrayed on the ground floor. But walk downstairs and you are assaulted by a room full of larger-than-life mannequins in black Nazi uniforms, crisp white shirts and black ties, and a smiley face arm band where a swastika might have been expected. They stand around in conspiratorial groups. All their hands and faces are black — not African black, just black — and they have glass eyes and real teeth. One stands with his trousers round his ankles sodomizing another, others watch. Elsewhere a taxidermied pigeon splatters bird shit down the back of another guard. On the walls are hand-colored etchings from their "Human Rainbow" and 80 blackened etchings from



the Goya series, and a series of dot-to-dot pencil drawings with arcane titles. Outside there is another mannequin dressed in a Technicolor Ku Klux Klan robe that covers a huge erection. He is standing in front of *Oi Pieter, I can see your house from here! 1607-2010*, a painting à la Breughel.

Whizz across from the Piccadilly to the badlands of Hoxton and you will discover bronze sculptures like tacky tourist versions of primitive art. A series of oil paintings with titles such as *George's House*, *George Paints the Bunny*, *One Rabbit Contemplating the Moon* cover the walls. These Disney-style cartoons seemed to have crossed with something out of a David Lynch movie so that when I first walked into the gallery I was shocked to see a class of small primary school girls in brown tracksuits absorbed in one of the paintings. But the laugh was on me. As I walked closer I saw that each one had an animal snout or duck beak protruding from her face and was wearing a Cub Scout badge bearing a swastika and

the motto: "They teach us nothing."

The top gallery has been designed — complete with peeling walls, old tiles, cheap lamps and battered furniture — like the sacristy of some rural French or Italian church. Religious paintings have been overlaid with what look like an incipient skin disease while the furniture is topped with religious reliquaries. A Madonna has had her lips stapled together, while the child in her arms spews out a mouthful of octopus-like bloody tendrils. Elsewhere a statue of Christ appears to have lost his nose to either amputation or leprosy. He has an elongated bloody animal tongue and a swastika engraved on his forehead.

What you make of all this will depend on what it is you want from art. If you believe in its transformative powers you won't find much transformation here, but if it's shock you're after, well, against the odds, Jake and/or Dinos still come up with the goods. They are so media savvy that there'll always be column inches written about them. ☺

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Above: Jake or Dinos Chapman, White Cube Mason's Yard and Hoxton Square, London, ends September 17, 2011. © the artists. photo by Ben Westoby, courtesy White Cube.