

The Art of Postcards – Transcript

By the middle of the 20th century, it may have seemed as though the art of the postcard had been consigned to the seaside postcard of little artistic merit. But in fact throughout the century the postcard had been used as a tool of expression by a number of serious art movements, giving it credibility and a whole new dimension.

During the First World War, Berlin Dadaists produced anti-war photo montage postcards. This meant that they were able to send messages which, if written in words, would not have got passed the mail censors.

Futurism was an artistic movement obsessed with visions of the future. Latching on to the popularity and low cost of postcards at the turn of the 20th century, the Futurists used them to publicise their latest projects.

Nowadays it would be easy to assume that the postcard has been made redundant by technology and for many of us, the holiday postcard has been replaced by a photograph taken on a smart phone and posted to friends and followers on social media.

In many ways I think postcards are more popular than ever. In our increasingly virtual world, a postcard's a pleasingly tangible thing to receive, and to send well it's so easy, just a short message and the rest of the work's done by the image on the front. And because so many of us received them when we were children, they have this enchanting smell of nostalgia about them.

The success of movements like Post Secret, where participants send out homemade postcards demonstrates the continuing popularity of the format.

Postcards have gone from cool to cliché to cool again. And 1950s seaside postcards have now become valuable collector's items.

So for postcard art, it's not time yet to sound the last post.