International Post Corporation

Celebrating 50 years of Pride

23-06-2022

Issued exactly 50 years to the day, the stamps celebrate the march that took place from Trafalgar Square to Hyde Park, which was the first to bear the name â€˜Gay Pride Rallyâ€™. The march was inspired by events in the USA, where the first Pride events had taken place to commemorate the anniversary of the Stonewall riots in New York.

The stamps, specially commissioned by Royal Mail, were art directed by NB Studio and illustrated by award-winning artist Sofie Birkin. Her illustrations have featured in campaigns for brands such as Nike and Apple.

Royal Mail worked with journalist and published author Amelia Abraham on the stamp issue and also consulted with Royal Mail's internal LGBT & Friends Network.

Beginning in 1972, the stamps tell a story of Pride over time. They depict the first 'Gay Pride rally' and early Pride events where participants shouted slogans such as, "Gay is fun! Gay is proud! Gay is beautiful!", to the more recent update on the traditional rainbow flag, its design encompassing the flags of trans and intersex people, while also referencing the inclusion of LGBTQ+ people of colour.

David Gold, Director External Affairs & Policy, Royal Mail said: "The vibrant, colourful Pride events that take place in towns and cities across the UK today trace their origins to a small number of people who marched through central London half a century ago to raise awareness of discrimination and inequality. There have been huge changes in laws and social attitudes, but Pride events continue to play a key role in raising awareness of discrimination, as well as celebrating diversity and individualism."

Pride animation:
The designers of the stamps, NB Studio, have, in collaboration with animation studio, Animade, created a film using the illustrations featured in the stamp issue.

The film builds on the diverse and beautiful characters featured on the stamps and draws them together using rich storytelling throughout - which uses complex hand-drawn, frame by frame animation.

NB Studio selected Animade to bring Sofie Birkin's illustrations to life - assisted by NB Studio's writer Dan Radley, sound engineers Box of Toys Audio and voice actor Layton Williams.

Alan Dye, Creative Director at and owner of NB Studio, said "It was a real honour to be asked to design this iconic series for The Royal Mail, as they represent such an important part of British LGBTQ+ history. It was an absolute joy to work with Sofie Birkin who's work we've admired for some time. Watching these beautiful illustrations come to life you could easily imagine yourself as part of the 'March Through Time…'.

Jennifer Judd, co-founder and Managing Director at Animade, said: "This was a joyous project for Animade to be part of and gave us an opportunity as part of our creative industry to do something beautiful to celebrate Pride and the diverse LGBTQ+ community. Animation adds an extra narrative dimension, which helped to bring this important project for Royal Mail to life."

Pride in the UK from 1972 to the present:
On 1 July 1972, a crowd of people gathered in London's Trafalgar Square before marching to Hyde Park. This was not the first march for LGBTQ+ rights in the UK; similar protests had taken place in Highbury Fields, Islington, in 1970, and another in Trafalgar Square in 1971. But it was the first with the name 'Gay Pride Rally'. The inspiration came from the USA, where the first Pride events had taken place to commemorate the anniversary of the Stonewall riots, the 1969 clash between the LGBTQ+ community and police in New York City. The spirit of Pride was one of defiant visibility. At London's first event there was even a 'kiss-in' – a mass display of same-sex affection, while people at early Pride events chanted slogans such as, "Gay is fun! Gay is proud! Gay is beautiful!"

One of their demands was greater legal equality for gay people. Homosexuality was partially decriminalised in England and Wales in 1967, yet police arrests of gay and bisexual men remained common in the years following. Over the course of the first decade of Pride events, calls for basic safety and freedom were a priority; during Gay Pride Week in 1978, pamphlets were distributed to raise awareness of violent assaults on the LGBTQ+ community, such as the National Front's then recent attack on the popular South London LGBTQ+ venue the Royal Vauxhall Tavern.

During the 1980s, an increased climate of homophobia in the wake of the AIDS epidemic meant that attacks on LGBTQ+ people in the UK continued. The health crisis also sparked new Pride events, such as Manchester Pride, which began as an AIDS fundraiser.

Throughout the 1990s, Pride spread across the UK. Pride Scotia launched in Scotland, with annual marches alternating between Edinburgh and Glasgow, and the first Cardiff Pride followed in 1999. In the 2000s, attendance at Pride in London grew alongside increasing support for LGBTQ+ rights, and

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more events were launched under the Pride banner. In 2002, same-sex couples won the right to adopt; two years later, same-sex civil partnerships were legalised.

In 2013, an even more historic shift took place when the law was changed to allow same-sex marriage. The following year, Pride began to attract large corporate sponsorships, signalling its increased mainstream acceptance. By 2015, Pride in London, as it was now known, attracted a million people, and it continued to grow in the years following, until Pride celebrations had to be cancelled in 2020 and 2021 due to the coronavirus pandemic. Today, Pride in London remains the main event in the UK, though many others are flourishing across the country.

The stamps are available to pre-order from today (23 June) www.royalmail.com/pride, by phone on 03457 641 641 and at 7,000 Post Offices across the UK. They go on general sale on 1 July. A Presentation Pack, containing all eight stamps, is priced at £12.96

Freddie Mercury's childhood stamp album to be displayed at London's Postal Museum:
The Postal Museum in London is to display one of Freddie Mercury's childhood possessions - his stamp album - for the first time.

The album will be on display in the museum from 13 July until 30 October this year and is part of the celebrations to mark the 50th anniversary of the UK Pride movement.

The 54-page album consists predominately of stamps from the British Commonwealth and reveals not only Freddie's early life in Zanzibar, but also his artistic talent.

Source: Royal Mail

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