

Grayson Perry *The Vanity of Small Differences*

7 June – 11 August 2012



In *The Vanity of Small Differences* Grayson Perry explores his fascination with taste and the visual story it tells of our interior lives in a series of six tapestries at Victoria Miro and three programmes, *All in the Best Possible Taste* with Grayson Perry, for Channel 4. The artist goes on a safari amongst the taste tribes of Britain, to gather inspiration for his artworks, literally weaving the characters he meets into a narrative partly inspired by Hogarth's *A Rake's Progress*.

Grayson Perry comments: "The tapestries tell the story of class mobility, for I think nothing has as strong an influence on our aesthetic taste as the social class in which we grow up. I am interested in the politics of consumerism and the history of popular design but for this project I focus on the emotional investment we make in the things we choose to live with, wear, eat, read or drive. Class and taste run deep in our character - we care. This emotional charge is what draws me to a subject".

Perry has always worked with traditional media; ceramics, cast iron, bronze, printmaking and tapestry. He is interested in how each historic category of object accrues over time intellectual and emotional baggage. Tapestry is the art form of grand houses: depicting classical myths, historical and religious scenes and epic battles. In this series of works Perry plays with idea of using this ancient allegorical art to elevate the commonplace dramas of modern British life.

The artist's primary inspiration was *A Rake's Progress* (1732 -33) by William Hogarth, which in eight paintings tells the story of Tom Rakewell, a young man who inherits a fortune from his miserly father, spends it all on fashionable pursuits and gambling, marries for money, gambles away a second fortune, goes to debtors' prison and dies in a madhouse. *The Vanity of Small Differences* tells the story of the rise and demise of Tim Rakewell and is composed of characters, incidents and objects Perry encountered on journeys through Sunderland, Tunbridge Wells and The Cotswolds.

Hogarth has long been an influence on Perry's works, his Englishness, his robust humour and his depiction of, in his own words, 'modern moral subjects'. The secondary influence comes from Perry's favourite form of art, early Renaissance painting.

Each of the six images, to a greater or lesser extent, pays homage to a religious work. Including Masaccio's *Expulsion from the Garden of Eden*, Matthias Grünewald's *Isenheim Altarpiece*, Rogier Van de Weyden's *Lamentation* and three different paintings of *The Annunciation* by Carlo Crivelli, Grünewald and Robert Campin. The images also reference the pictorial display of wealth and status in *The Arnolfini Portrait* by Jan Van Eyck and *Mr & Mrs Andrews* by Thomas Gainsborough. Woven into each tapestry are snatches of text, each one in the voice of a participant in the scene illustrated. Each image also features a small dog, reminiscent of Hogarth's beloved pug, Trump.

Biographical Details: In 2011 Grayson Perry curated *The Tomb of the Unknown Craftsman* at the British Museum, he has had solo exhibitions amongst others at: Musée d'Art Moderne Grand-Duc Jean, Luxembourg (2008), 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa, Japan (2007). Perry has also curated two further exhibitions - *Unpopular Culture*, de la Warr Pavilion (then touring) (2008) and *The Charms of Lincolnshire*, The Collection, Lincoln (2006). Perry's works are in numerous public collections including: 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa, Japan, Arts Council Collection, British Council Collection, The British Museum, Government Art Collection, Manchester City Art Gallery, Musée d'Art Moderne Grand-Duc Jean (Mudam) Luxembourg, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, Tate Gallery, London and Victoria & Albert Museum, London. Solo publications include a major monograph by Jacky Klein published by Thames & Hudson in 2009, and to be reissued in an updated version for Autumn 2012 and *Grayson Perry: Portrait of The Artist as a Young Girl* by Grayson Perry and Wendy Jones. Perry has been the subject of a South Bank Show in 2006 and an Imagine documentary in 2011. Born in Chelmsford, Essex in 1960, Grayson Perry lives and works in London.

List of Works:



***The Adoration of the Cage Fighters*, 2012**
Wool, cotton, acrylic, polyester and silk tapestry
200 x 400 cm, 78 3/4 x 157 1/2 in
Edition of 6 plus 2 APs



***The Agony in the Car Park*, 2012**
Wool, cotton, acrylic, polyester and silk tapestry
200 x 400 cm, 78 3/4 x 157 1/2 in
Edition of 6 plus 2 APs



***Expulsion from Number 8 Eden Close*, 2012**
Wool, cotton, acrylic, polyester and silk tapestry
200 x 400 cm, 78 3/4 x 157 1/2 in
Edition of 6 plus 2 APs



***The Annunciation of the Virgin Deal*, 2012**
Wool, cotton, acrylic, polyester and silk tapestry
200 x 400 cm, 78 3/4 x 157 1/2 in
Edition of 6 plus 2 APs



***The Upper Class at Bay*, 2012**
Wool, cotton, acrylic, polyester and silk tapestry
200 x 400 cm, 78 3/4 x 157 1/2 in
Edition of 6 plus 2 APs



***#Lamentation*, 2012**
Wool, cotton, acrylic, polyester and silk tapestry
200 x 400 cm, 78 3/4 x 157 1/2 in
Edition of 6 plus 2 APs



***RA Pot*, 2012**
Pen and felt tip on paper
59.5 x 42.5 cm, 23 3/8 x 16 3/4 in



***Voting Patterns*, 2012**
Glazed ceramic
Height 46 cm, diameter 34.4 cm



***The Existential Void*, 2012**
Glazed ceramic
Height 47.5 cm, diameter 29.3 cm



***A Work in Progress*, 2012**
Glazed ceramic
Height 60 cm, diameter 31 cm