



Grayson Perry, The Agony in the Car Park (detail) 2012 © the artist, Arts Council Collection, Southbank Centre, London and British Council. Gift of the artist and Victoria Miro Gallery with the support of Channel 4 Television, the Art Fund and Sfumato Foundation with additional support from Alix Partners.

Grayson Perry: The Vanity of Small Differences

Education Pack

Pack contents:



Grayson Perry, *Expulsion from Number 8 Eden Close (detail)* 2012 © the artist, Arts Council Collection, Southbank Centre, London and British Council. Gift of the artist and Victoria Miro Gallery with the support of Channel 4 Television, the Art Fund and Stumato Foundation with additional support from AIX Partners.

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How to use this pack

This pack is designed for use by teachers, gallery education staff and other educators. It introduces the work of artist Grayson Perry and explores the tapestry series *The Vanity of Small Differences* through a number of different themes inspired by the work, offering ideas for educational projects and activities:

- The tapestries provide rich inspiration for learning in a number of curriculum areas including art, English, geography and citizenship and for developing core skills.
- The activity suggestions are targeted primarily at pupils aged 7-14, although they could be adapted for older and younger pupils.
- The activities may form part of a project before, during or after a visit to see the tapestries or take place at school using the images of the tapestries in this pack or the information on the British Council Collection online.

Please note that this pack is intended as a private resource, to be used for internal educational purposes only. As such, the images included within this pack are for internal use only and may not be copied, distributed or used for any other purposes without appropriate permissions being sought. It was adapted from the resource commissioned by the Arts Council Collection, Southbank Centre that was researched and written by Fiona Godfrey, Arts & Education Consultant (www.fionagodfrey.org.uk).

The British Council Collection

The British Council has been collecting works of art, craft and design since 1938 to promote the achievements of the very best British artists, craft practitioners and designers around the world.

In 2012 the British Council Collection announced with the Arts Council Collection the joint acquisition of Grayson Perry's *The Vanity of Small Differences*. Channel 4 Television, the Art Fund, and Sfumato Foundation supported this major work, which was gifted to the Arts Council Collection and the British Council by the artist and Victoria Miro Gallery, London.

Speaking at the time Grayson Perry said: "I am hugely pleased and proud that *The Vanity of Small Differences* will be shared by the Arts Council and British Council Collections because this means the work will be able to travel all around the UK and the world."

Background to the exhibition

The six tapestries in the exhibition *The Vanity of Small Differences* came about as a result of the artist Grayson Perry making a series of documentaries with Channel 4 television in the UK. The title of the exhibition comes from a phrase 'the narcissism of small differences', used by Sigmund Freud in *Civilization and its Discontents* (1929-30), alluding to the fact that we often most passionately defend our uniqueness when differentiating ourselves from those who are very nearly the same as us.

The three television programmes followed Perry as he investigated the taste of those traditionally considered 'working class,' 'middle class' and 'upper class.' (You can find out more about the class structure in the UK here https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_structure_of_the_United_Kingdom). Perry's investigations included visiting 'working class' communities in Sunderland in the north of England, 'middle class' communities in Tunbridge Wells in the south east of England and 'upper class' families living in grand homes in the Cotswolds in the south west of England.

Perry's particular interest was in the emotional attachments we make to objects, and how the judgments we make about our own and other people's taste are often delineated along class lines. In order to gather material, he spent time in the company of different groups interviewing them, photographing them and making sketchbook drawings and notes.

In Sunderland, he was curious to investigate aspects of working class taste in the UK that are sometimes deemed 'tasteless' by others. He observed the pleasure that women took in dressing up for a night out, and the enjoyment the young men took in displaying their cars. He noticed how these displays create an almost tribal sense of belonging. He discovered how much emotional affection people have for the objects in their homes and he also saw an enduring and nostalgic allegiance to the industries that had given the town a sense of unity in the past.

In middle class Tunbridge Wells, Perry discovered two distinct 'taste tribes'. The first group he spent time with was the new affluent middle class whose homes were filled with signs of wealth. Here the emphasis was often on owning brand new, shiny designer things. People in this group seemed concerned to fit in by surrounding themselves with objects that conformed to a social norm typified by smartness and newness.

In contrast, the second middle class group Perry identified gravitated more towards the individual; surrounding themselves with all things vintage, hand-made and organic. He sensed among this group a desire to be individual; yet this individuality still had to fit within a particular set of norms. Among this group he noticed a lot of anxiety about health and the environment. He also noted that the second group placed more value on owning books than the first group.

Among the upper class estates in the Cotswolds, Perry found a sense of poverty and decay. This was a group of people who seemed content to live with the shabbiness of antiquity. Here he met families burdened by their assets, crippled by taxes and lacking the money needed to stop the decay of their buildings or to lavish on their own comforts. He sensed the huge weight of responsibility bestowed on this class by their inheritance. He also met those determined to find new ways to bring new life, creativity and investment to the historic buildings and countryside in their ownership.

The photographs and drawings that Perry made as a result of these investigations were amalgamated into a series of compositions. Each of these six compositions was then interpreted as a tapestry. These were designed on Photoshop and woven by computer-operated machinery at the Flanders Tapestries in Belgium. The labour of making the tapestries was in the designing, with Perry taking around two weeks to turn his drawings into compositions. It then took three months to adapt his computer files, and programme the computers that control the looms. Yarns had to be specially sourced and dyed to carefully match the colours in Perry's drawing. Different yarn combinations had to be trialed to ensure a good colour match. Lacing a loom ready for weaving took about 4 days. With the design finalised, the actual process of weaving each tapestry then took about 5 hours. Several copies of each tapestry were then produced.

Perry's decision to immortalise his visits and observations in a series of tapestries was partly inspired by the history of tapestry making as a traditional means of recording stories, as well as by their associations with wealth and grandeur.

*'Why tapestries? I always work with traditional media. Each historic category of object has accrued over time intellectual and emotional baggage. I depend on this to add inflection to the content of the works. Tapestry is the art form of grand houses. On my television taste safari I only saw tapestries hanging in stately homes. They depicted classical myths, historical and religious scenes or epic battles like Hannibal crossing the Alps. I enjoy the idea of using this costly and ancient medium to show the commonplace dramas of modern British life.'*¹

1. <http://www.channel4.com/programmes/in-the-best-possible-taste-grayson-perry>

The six tapestries tell a story of 21st century social mobility in the UK. In them we see Tim Rakewell; a man rising from a working class birth, making money, marrying into the middle classes, experiencing the crippling financial burdens of the upper classes, and finally dying an untimely death.

Perry's tapestries make direct reference to the series of paintings called *A Rake's Progress* by British artist William Hogarth (1697-1764), which hang in the Sir John Soane's Museum in London. The eight paintings in Hogarth's series tell the story of Tom Rakewell, a young man who inherits a fortune from his father and who goes on to squander his inheritance. Tom marries for money, gambles away his second fortune, is imprisoned for his debts and finally ends his life in the madhouse.

The tapestries also pay homage to early Renaissance painting, another favourite art form of Perry's.



William Hogarth *A Rake's Progress IV: The Arrest 1733*. Courtesy of the Trustees of Sir John Soane's Museum, London

Things to do: looking at the tapestries

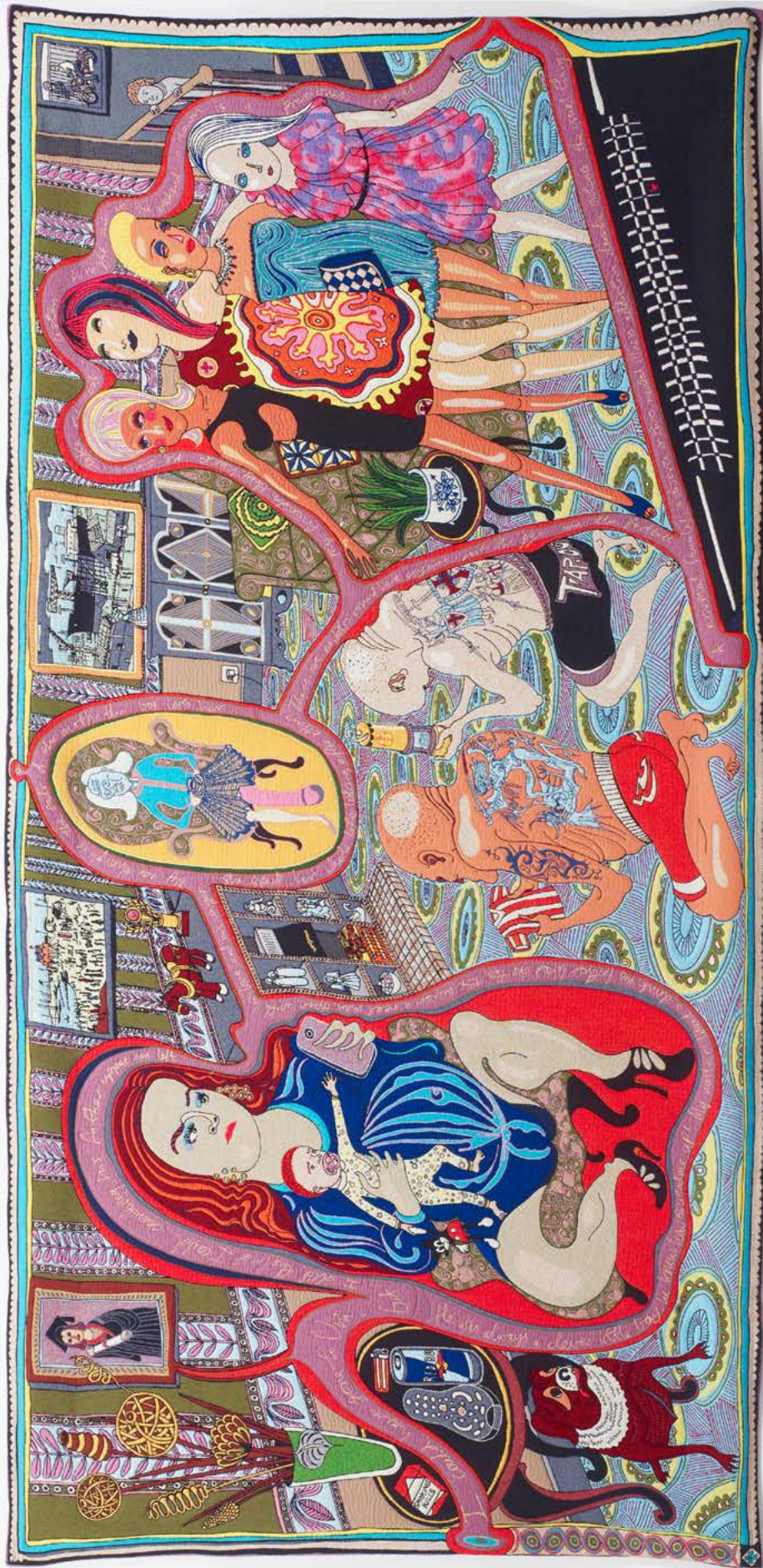
You may find these suggestions for general discussion points and activities useful when looking at the tapestries in the gallery or at the reproductions in the classroom.

Discussion points

- Use the sentence stem 'I can see...' to invite pupils to look really carefully into the detail of each of the tapestries. Challenge pupils to keep finding more and more detail. (This starting point is good for developing the powers of careful observation.)
- Use the sentence stem 'I feel...' to invite pupils to share their emotional reactions to one or more of the tapestries. (This starting point is good for encouraging pupils to acknowledge their felt response and express their own responses.)
- Use the sentence stem 'I think...' to invite pupils to share their ideas about the tapestries. (This starting point is good for encouraging pupils to express their opinions and ideas about art works and how and why they were made.)
- Use the sentence stem 'I wonder....' to invite pupils to pose questions about the tapestries. Support pupils by suggesting question words they could use such as 'where...', 'how...', 'who...', 'why...' etc. (This starting point is good for encouraging curiosity and further research.)
- Talk about the different people represented in the six tapestries. Find out what pupils themselves understand about class and discuss their own thoughts about the taste of each class. What understanding do they have of different social classes? How does this relate to society in their own country?

The following six images show the tapestries in order as they appear in the exhibition:

1. The Adoration of the Cage Fighters
2. The Agony in the Car Park
3. Expulsion from Number 8 Eden Close
4. The Annunciation of the Virgin Deal
5. The Upper Class at Bay
6. #Lamentation



Grayson Perry *The Adoration of the Cage Fighters* 2012 © the artist. Arts Council Collection, Southbank Centre, London and British Council. Gift of the artist and Victoria Miro Gallery with the support of Channel 4 Television, the Art Fund and Stumato Foundation with additional support from Alix Partners.



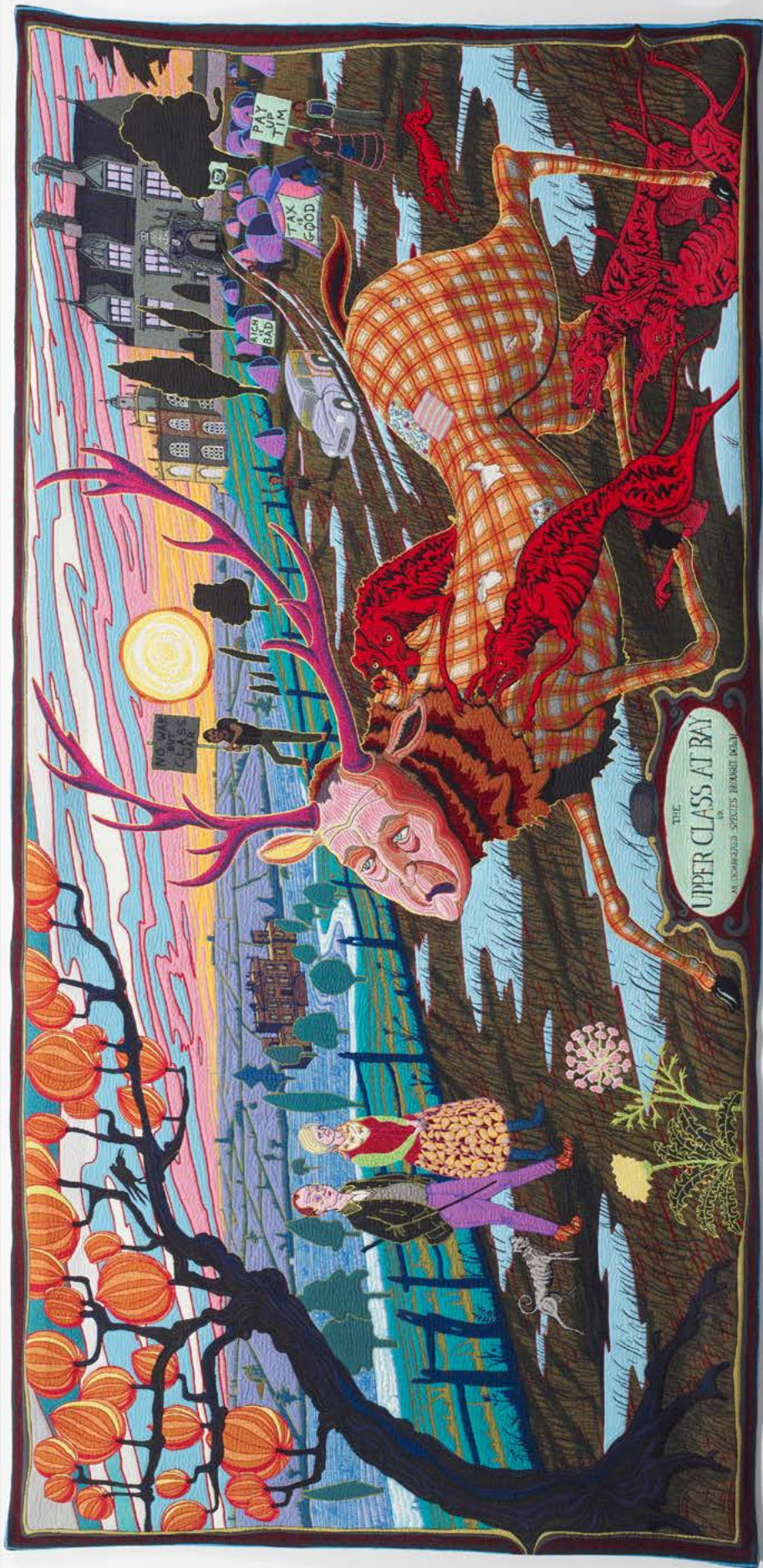
Grayson Perry *The Agony in the Car Park* 2012 © the artist, Arts Council Collection, Southbank Centre, London and British Council. Gift of the artist and Victoria Miro Gallery with the support of Channel 4 Television, the Art Fund and Sfumato Foundation with additional support from Alix Partners.



Grayson Perry *Expulsion from Number 8 Eden Close* 2012 © the artist. Arts Council Collection, Southbank Centre, London and British Council. Gift of the artist and Victoria Miro Gallery with the support of Channel 4 Television, the Art Fund and Stumato Foundation with additional support from Alix Partners.



Grayson Perry *The Annunciation of the Virgin Deal* 2012 © the artist. Arts Council Collection, Southbank Centre, London and British Council. Gift of the artist and Victoria Miro Gallery with the support of Channel 4 Television, the Art Fund and Stumato Foundation with additional support from Alix Partners.



Grayson Perry *The Upper Class at Bay* 2012 © the artist. Arts Council Collection, Southbank Centre, London and British Council. Gift of the artist and Victoria Miro Gallery with the support of Channel 4 Television, the Art Fund and Stumato Foundation with additional support from Alix Partners.



We were walking home, from a night out, these two cars, racing each other, speed
fiddle aged men showing off, the red one lost control. The driver wasn't wearing a seatbelt.
He didn't stand a chance. The female passenger was okay but, catastrophic with shock.
I'm a nurse. I tried to save the man but he died in my arms. Guy, Rakewell
It was only afterwards I found out that he was that famous computer guy. Rakewell
All he said to me was 'Mother. All that money and he dies in the gutter.'

Grayson Perry #Lamentation 2012 © the artist. Arts Council Collection, Southbank Centre, London and British Council. Gift of the artist and Victoria Miro Gallery with the support of Channel 4 Television, the Art Fund and Sfumato Foundation with additional support from Alix Partners.

Activity Ideas

- If you are in the gallery ask pupils to go and stand by the tapestry they like the best. If you are working in the classroom, print and display A3 versions of the six images on different tables and ask pupils to stand by the table with the image that is their favourite.
- Invite them to respond to the objects and environment in the tapestry in terms of what interests or appeals to them. Pupils could note down and make drawings in sketchbooks of the objects they are drawn to. Observe how pupils group themselves. Encourage each group to talk about what they like in the tapestry they've chosen. Do their choices link them in some way? What words would they use to describe the world depicted in the tapestry they've chosen?
- Ask pupils to find and sketch all the different facial expressions that can be found in the tapestries. They could be asked to annotate these drawings with words describing the emotions and / or the personalities of the people they've sketched. Provide pupils with large pieces of paper, chunky felt tip pens and scissors. Ask them to make speech and thought bubbles telling more of what they think is going on in the minds of the people represented in the tapestries. They could also take on the persona of one of these characters, and speak aloud their thoughts and answer questions in role as a hot – seating activity.
- Ask pupils to choose one of the tapestries and create their own story idea from it. Invite them to identify what style of story the tapestry might suggest – a soap opera, comedy or tragedy for example. Get them to think about a title, characters and plot. They could be challenged to tell an improvised story on the spot, or they could create a story together by going round the group and adding a sentence each. Their story could be written in more detail at a later date.
- Pupils could be provided with postcards or prints of the historical art works that Grayson Perry made reference to when designing the tapestries, including the paintings from Hogarth's 'A Rake's Progress'. Ask pupils to see if they can work out which elements of each of these paintings Perry makes reference to in the tapestries.

Partner School Activities

If you are working with a partner school you could:

- Exchange thoughts about their favourite tapestry and the objects that particularly interested them.
- Share their stories inspired by the tapestries.

Themes and project ideas

This section of the pack outlines some of the themes explored in the tapestries that might be investigated further through classroom projects. Each section provides background information and offers ideas for discussion points and activities.

Activity ideas are geared primarily at pupils aged 7-14. The themes are as follows:

1. Objects, choices, tribes and belonging
2. The human figure - character and emotion
3. Places, local traditions and culture
4. Imaginary worlds and stories
5. The tapestry making tradition



Grayson Perry: *The Vanity of Small Differences* at Pera Museum, Turkey. © Pera Museum

Objects, choices, tribes and belonging

Curriculum links: Art, Citizenship, Geography, English, Personal, Social and Health Education

Core skills: Creativity and Imagination, Communication and Collaboration, Personal Development

Ideas to explore

In his tapestries, Grayson Perry examines the different 'tribes' or groups to which we may belong, and how our choices in dress and belongings give us a sense of allegiance or belonging.

The first two tapestries denote what he sees as 'working class taste' in the UK. Women dress up for a night out, while the men display their cars. People collect objects for their homes that have a sentimental attachment for them. They enjoy making a statement and putting on a display.

The second two tapestries depict 'middle class taste' in the UK. This class is divided in their cultural choices. On the one hand there are those who enjoy buying smart houses and belongings, belonging to the golf club and wearing designer clothes. For this group, there is an element of conformity, of neatness and perfection. Then there's another group; those who seek individuality in the homemade, the vintage and the organic.

The fifth and sixth tapestries in the series depict the taste of the 'upper classes' in the UK. Often it would seem, upper class taste is based on what is old and has been in the family for years. Age-old traditions and understated wealth count more than shows of ostentation.

Among all three groups, the objects people choose to have around them give them a sense of belonging to a particular group or tribe. It seems that whether we choose to wear the colours of a particular football team, drive a particular car or fill our kitchens with a particular style of utensil, more often than not we are consciously or unconsciously influenced by the particular 'tribe' or group to which we feel we belong.

There are many examples in art history of portraits where the sitter is painted either in an environment, or surrounded by objects, that tells the viewer something about their wealth, status or interests.

There are also similarities with how different tribes around the world denote their allegiances. There are traditions in some countries where tribal belonging is denoted by particular forms of dress, jewelry, tattooing or scarring.

Discussion points

- Pupils could be invited to discuss the choices they make in terms of the clothes, décor and objects they surround themselves with. What objects do they cherish that say something about who they are? Who influences their choices? Their friends? Their family?
- Pupils could discuss their own experiences of feeling they belong to a group or of being an outsider. Discuss how groups at school form their own sense of belonging, perhaps through dress, language or behaviours.
- Discuss with pupils the ethics of tribal marking. In some countries for example, children are scarred at an early age to denote the tribe to which they belong. What views do pupils have about tattooing in our own country?

Activity ideas

- Pupils could cut out pictures of objects from magazines and explore their thoughts about what they consider fashionable and desirable, or bad taste or undesirable? How do pupils think they have come to hold these views? What influences their choices? Do they for example prefer old things or new things? Is there agreement across the group? Do they respect difference or hold a prejudiced view about other peoples' taste?
- Pupils could be asked to take photographs or paint a self-portrait wearing clothes and surrounded by belongings that say something about them. They could look at Jan van Eyck's *Arnolfini Portrait* (page 26) as a starting point and find out about the objects in the picture that denote wealth and status.
- Pupils could be asked to look at the still life tradition and put together a still life arrangement of objects that mean something to them. They could work in groups to agree on a selection of objects that says something about their life today. As a sketchbook / homework activity, they could draw objects in their home or bedroom that they consider particularly special to them.
- Pupils could be asked to bring in an object that has a particular value for them (such as an old teddy bear or a special birthday present). They could draw their object and write about the stories and associations that give this object value for them.
- Pupils could research the tribal traditions of a particular country, including contemporary and ancient practices. How do people across the world denote their sense of belonging? They could work in groups focusing on different themes such as dress, shoes, jewellery, body-markings or make-up.

Partner School Activities

If you are working with a partner school you could:

- Exchange ideas about fashion and taste in their country
- Share their stories about objects that are important to them and photographs of their self portraits and still life collections

Useful resources

Images of objects from different cultures can be found in the British Museum collections database at: http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/search_the_collection_database.aspx

Resources from the National Portrait Gallery in London can be found at: <http://www.npg.org.uk/learning/digital/>

Information about the Arnolfini Portrait by Jan van Eyck in the National Gallery in London can be found at: <https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/jan-van-eyck-the-arnolfini-portrait>

British Council Education packs Let's Talk About Art and Syria Third Space have related resources particularly about portraits and special objects and can be found at the following links: https://schoolsonline.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/f198_schools_online_arts_pack_final_hi_res.pdf

https://schoolsonline.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/syria_third_space_teacher_resources_-_print.pdf

Further activities relating to the themes of identity and belonging are explored in the Shakespeare Lives in Schools pack which can be found at: https://schoolsonline.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/identity_and_equality.pdf

Depicting the human figure – character & emotion

Curriculum links: Art, Drama, English, Personal, Social and Health Education, Religious Education

Core Skills: Creativity and Imagination, Communication and Collaboration, Personal Development

- What emotions do pupils think they can identify in Perry's tapestries? Discuss with pupils the emotional stories and dynamics depicted in the tapestries. What details of posture and facial expression create the impression of different emotional states?
- Discuss with pupils the ethical issues that are raised when the depiction of emotions are used to persuade people of a particular viewpoint, as for example in propaganda art and in advertising. How do these examples compare to the kind of religious paintings that Perry has taken inspiration from in his tapestries?

Ideas to explore

In his tapestries Grayson Perry uses both posture and facial expression to capture the mood, feelings and personality of the characters he depicts. An example is the club singer depicted in *The Agony in the Car Park*, pouring out emotion in his song. To capture these moments of feeling and drama, Perry worked from photographs of the people he met as they went about their lives.

There is long history in art of artists attempting to capture emotion in their work. Perry depicts a whole range of emotions from love, affection and pride to nostalgia, anxiety, horror and sorrow.

Some artists have focused on capturing human suffering. Many paintings in the Christian tradition (including some of those that Perry was inspired by in designing the tapestries) sought to help ordinary people get in touch with the suffering that Christ went through. There are also many artists in more recent times that have attempted to capture feelings of sadness and suffering. Think of Frida Kahlo's self-portraits, which capture the physical pain she endured, Edward Munch's famous *Scream*, or Pablo Picasso's *Weeping Woman*. Other artists have sought to draw people's attention to the suffering inflicted on humans by each other. Examples are Francisco Goya's depictions of war or the powerful drawings and woodcuts made by Käthe Kollwitz.

There are also many artists who have sought to capture the emotions of peace, love, affection and joy. Good examples are Marc Chagall and Gustav Klimt, who often depicted lovers. In the Christian tradition, there are many examples of art depicting religious feelings such as saintliness, ecstasy and serenity. In the tradition of Russian socialist art, expressions of contentment, happiness and pride were used as propaganda, in an attempt to persuade people of the glories of living in the Soviet regime. We can think too about how positive emotions are often depicted in advertising.

Discussion points

- Discuss with pupils how good they think they are at judging people's emotions. Can they describe the facial changes that create different expressions and moods?

Activity ideas

- Using sketchbooks, pupils could be asked to make drawings of all the different facial expressions in Perry's tapestries and annotate these with notes about the feelings represented. Ask them to use their process of drawing to try to work out how Perry has created a particular expression.
- You could invite pupils to look at the Grayson Perry tapestries in detail and choose a single character. Then ask them to use their imagination to write a description of this person, aided by the clues given in the tapestry. Encourage them to give the character a name, some outside and inside characteristics – are they tall or short, kind or mean? Encourage them to use similes in their writing and give their character a secret that nobody else knows!
- Pupils could search the Internet for examples of art work in which people are depicted in a way that captures mood or personality. What emotions are they conveying? They could also be invited to collect examples of faces showing different emotions from newspapers and magazines. (The sports pages are great for this.) Using sketchbooks, pupils could make drawings of each other or (of themselves using a mirror) to practice drawing faces that show different emotions.
- You could invite pupils to dress up as different characters and strike a pose that captures something of the mood or personality of that character. Using a timer, invite pupils to make quick, expressive drawings of each other that attempt to capture this.
- Pupils could be challenged to design a poster that uses facial expression and emotion to persuade an audience of a particular viewpoint.

Partner School Activities

If you are working with a partner school you could:

- Exchange drawings, written descriptions and posters with your partner school.
- Discuss how the emotions conveyed by the posters help to persuade the audience to certain viewpoints.

Useful resources

The National Portrait Gallery has an online collection, which is a good starting point for looking at and comparing portraits:

<http://www.npg.org.uk/collections.php>

There are many portraits among the examples of paintings in the British Council Collection:

<http://visualarts.britishcouncil.org/collection>

The BBC has Your Paintings website:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/arts/yourpaintings/>

You can gauge your ability to judge emotions from looking at facial expression and body posture on a number of free online tests including:

http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/ei_quiz/

<http://www.dnalc.org/view/867-Reading-Faces.html>

In 1980 psychologist Robert Plutchik invented a wheel illustrating all the different emotions and their variations.

<http://whatis.techtarget.com/definition/Plutchiks-Wheel-of-Emotions>

Places, local traditions and cultures

Curriculum links: Art, Citizenship, Geography, History

Core skills: Communication and Collaboration, Critical Thinking and Problem Solving, Digital Literacy

Ideas to explore

Each of the tapestries depicts and celebrates a locality and its history. The first two tapestries (*The Adoration of the Cage Fighters* and *The Agony in the Car Park*) were based on Perry's visit to Sunderland in north east England. The town is famous for its football team, and is populated by large working class communities.

Sunderland's industrial history includes a strong history of shipbuilding, with records of ship building companies going back to the 14th century.

Perry's second two tapestries (*The Expulsion from Number 8 Eden Close* and *The Annunciation of the Virgin Deal*) are based on Perry's visit to Tunbridge Wells in south east England. Here, he was particularly interested to visit Kings Hill, a new development of housing that was built in 1989. Kings Hill was identified by The Guardian newspaper in 2004 as one of the wealthiest places in Britain in terms of average household income.

Unlike many more established communities, Kings Hill has no dedicated parish church, though many other amenities were integrated into the development including a pub, supermarkets, two primary schools, a doctor's surgery, restaurants, a health club, a cricket club and a golf club. Public art works were also commissioned as part of the development. On his visit, Perry heard how homeowners in Kings Hill are generally expected to keep their houses and gardens tidy and well maintained.

For the fifth of his tapestries (*The Upper Class at Bay, or An Endangered Species Brought Down*) Perry travelled to the Cotswolds in Gloucestershire. Here he met the occupants of several stately homes (a large and impressive house that is occupied or was formerly occupied by an aristocratic family) and met families living a much more isolated existence. With each estate occupying large areas of countryside, miles from its neighbours; their occupants rely on cars to travel to the nearby towns for food and services.

Discussion points

- Discuss with pupils what kind of place they think each of the tapestries depicts. What can they tell from the tapestries about each of the localities that Perry visited?
- Discuss what their local area is famous for? What are its particular associations? What major changes have taken place in the area's history? What people or groups is their area known for? What might be included in a tapestry depicting the pupils' own local area?

Activity ideas

- Pupils could be provided with access to maps or software such as Google Earth showing each of the areas that Perry visited. Ask pupils to identify the three locations on a map of the UK and use their research and map-reading skills to find out what they can about the characteristics of each of these areas and compare their findings with how the localities are depicted in the tapestries. They could compare and contrast the three localities, identifying similarities and differences in the features of these areas; looking for example at the proximity of rivers to the locations of towns or how this may have been dictated by topography.
- Pupils could research and make a collaborative textile piece depicting and celebrating their local area. This could depict notable buildings, people, attractions or something of the local history of the area. They could experiment with compositions first using drawing or collage. They could include themselves within the piece.
- Pupils could be asked to find unusual maps that don't adhere to standard conventions. These might include maps from across different times and cultures or maps by artists mapping localities in more imaginative ways. They could be set the challenge of making an unusual map of their own area.
- Pupils could work collaboratively to invent and draw a map of a locality that would be ideal to them; including the amenities that are important to them. They could use their knowledge of mapping symbols to create their map, or invent their own and provide a key.

Partner School Activities

If you are working with a partner school you could:

- Share your research about the areas that Grayson Perry visited
- Help each other to find out more about the locality of your partner school and use this information to create illustrated maps or collaborative textile pieces about the area

Useful resources

There are many examples of contemporary artists making artworks based on maps on the Axis database of contemporary art. (Search for 'map' in 'artworks'.) <http://www.axisweb.org/>

The Agile Rabbit Book of Historical and Curious Maps (Pepin Press, 2005) is a collection of unusual maps from across times and cultures and includes a CD of images.

Imaginary worlds and identities

Curriculum links: Art, Citizenship, Geography, History, ICT, English, Personal, Social and Health Education

Core skills: Creativity and Imagination, Communication and Collaboration, Digital Literacy, Citizenship

Ideas to explore

Tapestries have long been associated with the telling of stories, whether real or imaginary. *The Bayeux Tapestry* in Normandy, France shows a cartoon like version of the Norman invasion of Britain and the Battle of Hastings in 1066. As in Grayson Perry's tapestries, words are used to add detail and explanation to the scenes depicted. The Flemish series of six tapestries known as *The Lady and the Unicorn* depict the senses.

In each of his six tapestries, Perry creates the impression of a world by amalgamating fragments that he has observed and photographed. His drawings are an important part of the process. He works in felt tip pen, playing with and filling out his compositions with objects, buildings, people and colour; at the same time experimenting with how details of his sketches might be altered or exaggerated.

From when he was young until the age of fifteen, Perry spent much of his time creating stories around an imaginary world. His teddy bear Alan Measles was a central character that reigned supreme, with Tortoise (a knitted tortoise toy stuffed with cardboard) second in command. Perry's world consisted of four islands; a cold, fish-shaped island called Shark Island, a round mountainous island called Round Island, an empty desert island called Elfin Island and a forested European Island called Tree Island (Alan Measles' home). This island held the secret valley (Grayson Perry's bedroom) where Alan Measles lived in an underground house with his army camped out around him. One of Perry's key roles was to design and make the instruments of war and rebellion, according to Alan Measles' command. Another part of Perry's role was as reporter and documenter of Alan Measles' exploits and adventures. It was into this illusory land that Perry escaped from the difficulties of his childhood.

There are many artists who've based their work on imaginary places. Scottish artist Charles Avery has based all of his art on his explorations of an imaginary island. Paul Noble, another Scottish artist, creates detailed technical pencil drawings of his own fictitious town Nobson. These are intricately rendered; similar in some ways to the disturbing realism of artists Hieronymus Bosch or Richard Dadd. 'Outsider artist' Henry Darger, who Perry was very inspired by, also depicted imagined landscapes.

Discussion points

- What adjectives could be used to describe the worlds depicted in each of the tapestries?
- Discuss with pupils how artists and writers sometimes depict the real world in their work, while others create imaginary worlds. Do they know of artists from their own country and culture who feature this in their work?
- Sometimes artists choose to distort or exaggerate the real world, playing with our perceptions of reality. Discuss with pupils which elements they consider to be real, imagined or exaggerated in Perry's tapestries?
- Discuss with pupils how Perry created his own imaginary world as an escape from the things he found difficult as a child. How do pupils find their own escape from the challenges of the real world when they need to? What do they do to relax or reduce their own anxieties?

Activity ideas

Taking inspiration from the way Perry tells the story of Tim Rakewell through his six tapestries, pupils could be given a story (a traditional tale or period of history for example) and asked to tell the story in a series of six drawings, paintings or collages. How can they create a storyboard that isolates the key dramatic moments to tell their story?

- Pupils could work together individually or in groups to create drawings of imaginary islands. They could also create these as 3D models. What will the climate and topography of their island be like? How will they defend their island from attack? What imaginary creatures might live there? As ruler of their island, what laws will they impose?
- Pupils could be asked to find examples of art works that depict real, imaginary or distorted worlds. Pupils could create their own altered version of the real world using collage or using ICT. This could be a vision of their world in the future, or how they would like to make changes to their environment.
- Inspired by Perry's teddy bear Alan Measles, pupils could be asked to draw or paint a favourite toy, superhero or fantasy sub-personality. They could identify the qualities and achievements they see in this character. Perhaps some of these are qualities they have in themselves or aspire to?
- Pupils could be asked photograph their face and then combine this with collage or painting to depict themselves as their fantasy character or superhero. (Pupils may also be interested to see the work of artist Cindy Sherman who dresses up and photographs herself as many different characters.)

Partner School Activities

If you are working with a partner school you could:

- Exchange information about writers and artists from their own countries who invented imaginary worlds
- Share photographs and descriptions of your imaginary islands or fantasy characters

Useful resources

Examples of the work of Henry Darger can be found at:

www.folkartmuseum.org/darger

Information about the Bayeux Tapestry can be found at:

http://www.bayeuxmuseum.com/en/la_tapisserie_de_bayeux_en.html



Grayson Perry: *The Vanity of Small Differences* at Pera Museum, Turkey. © Pera Museum

The tapestry making tradition

Curriculum links: Art, Design and Technology, Geography, History

Core skills: Creativity and Imagination, Digital Literacy, Communication and Collaboration, Critical Thinking and Problem Solving.

Ideas to explore

Tapestry is a form of weaving. In a woven piece of cloth, warp threads run top to bottom and weft threads run horizontally. In many woven cloths the weft threads continue from one side of the piece right across to the other edge, creating stripes or checks. In a tapestry the threads fill blocks of colour to create shapes and images. Tapestry usually refers to a woven piece of cloth in which this method is used to create a picture.

Traditionally, tapestries were hand-woven on a loom. However, fabric pieces made by embroidery have also been described as tapestries. For example, the Bayeux tapestry was stitched onto a background fabric. The tradition of making tapestries can be traced back in time and across cultures.

In the early 19th century, the French weaver Joseph Marie Jacquard first demonstrated his mechanical loom, now known as a Jacquard loom. Grayson Perry's tapestries were woven on Jacquard looms by the company Flanders Tapestries. Traditionally, this loom operated by a series of punched cards, each of which corresponded to a row of weaving. The holes in the card would determine where hooks could penetrate to pick up the harness carrying the weft thread. In this way blocks of colour could be created. The use of punched cards for the Jacquard loom was instrumental in the early evolution of the computer. Modern Jacquard looms are operated by computers. Compared to the laborious process of hand-weaving, these work at incredible speed.

Discussion points

- Find out what pupils know about tapestry and how they're made. Is there a tradition of tapestry making in their country and culture?
- Invite pupils to talk about the textiles that they have seen. Which are woven? What other ways are there of constructing textiles (e.g. knitting, crocheting and felt-making)? Where are they most commonly found? Why do pupils think this is?

Activity ideas

- Pupils could explore the history of tapestry. Small groups could work together to carry out research into traditions in different periods and across cultural traditions. Each group could then share their results as a presentation with the rest of the class.
- Pupils could be invited to try different weaving

techniques using card looms and paper or wool. Examples and links to different resources and techniques can be found at the end of this section. Get them to time themselves completing a given size, or measure how much weaving they're able to produce in a given time, say 15 minutes. Invite them to use their maths skills to calculate roughly how long it would take them to produce a tapestry the size of Grayson Perry's which measure 200cm x 400 cm.

- Pupils could be invited to imagine that they live in a castle or large house and be asked to design a tapestry to hang on a wall in their home. They could use felt tips for their design (as Grayson Perry does) or collage to experiment with bold blocks of colour. Invite them to look at their designs from a distance as well as close up to assess their visual impact and provide helpful feedback to each other.
- Pupils could explore how different coloured warp and weft threads can combine to create new colours. This is a useful way to explore colour mixing. Using for example coloured pencil, felt-tip pen or watercolour paint, pupils could make sketchbook experiments combining warp and weft threads. They could start with the same colour for the weft and then experiment with adding different colours for the warp.
- Pupils could create large-scale tapestry designs by weaving into plastic mesh (such as the sturdy plastic pond mesh available from hardware stores) using recycled materials such as cut-up strips of coloured plastic bags. They could create a bold coloured painted design first on paper using large brushes to use as a guide for filling areas of their weaving.

Partner School Activities

If you are working with a partner school you could:

- Exchange information about tapestry traditions in your countries
- Photograph and share your tapestry designs and finished pieces

Useful resources

Examples of different tapestries can be found in the V&A's online collection at: <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/>

Information about the six tapestries

This section provides detailed information on each of the tapestries, along with explanations of the art works that inspired them. The quotations in italics are Grayson Perry's own descriptions.

All the tapestries measure 200 x 400 cm.



Grayson Perry: *The Vanity of Small Differences* at Pera Museum, Turkey. © Pera Museum

1. The Adoration of the Cage Fighters*



Grayson Perry *The Adoration of the Cage Fighters* 2012 © the artist. Arts Council Collection, Southbank Centre, London and British Council. Gift of the artist and Victoria Miro Gallery with the support of Channel 4 Television, the Art Fund and Sfumato Foundation with additional support from Alix Partners.

'The scene is Tim's great-grandmother's front room. The infant Tim reaches for his mother's smartphone – his rival for her attention. She is dressed up, ready for a night out with her four friends... Two 'Mixed Martial Arts' enthusiasts present icons of tribal identity to the infant: a Sunderland A.F.C. football shirt and a miner's lamp. In the manner of early Christian painting, Tim appears a second time in the work: on the stairs, as a four-year-old, facing another evening alone in front of a screen. Although this series of images developed very organically, with little consistent method, the religious reference was here from the start: I hear the echo of paintings such as Andrea Mantegna's *The Adoration of the Shepherds* (c. 1450).'

Text (in the voice of Tim's Mother): 'I could have gone to Uni**, but I did the best I could, considering his father upped and left. He (Tim) was always a clever little boy; he knows how to wind me up. My mother liked a drink, my father liked one too. Ex miner a real man, open with his love, and his anger. My Nan*** though is the salt of the earth, the boy loves her. She spent her whole life looking after others. There are no jobs round here anymore, just the gym and the football. A normal family, a divorce or two, mental illness, addiction, domestic violence... the usual thing... My friends they keep me sane... take me out... listen... a night out of the weekend in town is a precious ritual.'

*Cage fighting is a form of mixed martial arts that takes place in a cage or similarly enclosed arena.

**University

***Grandmother



Andrea Mantegna *The Adoration of the Shepherds* c. 1450 Metropolitan Museum of Art © photo SCALA, Florence.

Historical art references

Perry's composition was inspired by the 15th century Italian artist Andrea Mantegna's biblical painting *The Adoration of the Shepherds*. In the scene, Mary worships her newborn, while Joseph sleeps in

the left of the painting. The bare tree that stands out above the shepherds in the right of the painting perhaps suggest the cross on which Jesus' life will end.

Mantegna was an early prodigy of the Italian Renaissance. Artists at the time were just working out how to use perspective to create a sense of distance. Although the perspective is flawed in some places, for example the bars on the building, we can see Mantegna experimenting with and demonstrating his skills. He uses architectural detail in the foreground to show closeness and a carefully detailed landscape to show distance. The way the scene is shown is typical of a trend at the time that encouraged worshippers to think about biblical scenes in everyday terms. Hence shepherds are tatty in dress. The way he depicts the holy family also shows his love of the 'classical' art of the Ancient Greeks, who were interested in the ideals of human beauty, excellence and architectural perfection.

2. The Agony in the Car Park



Grayson Perry *The Agony in the Car Park* 2012 © the artist. Arts Council Collection, Southbank Centre, London and British Council. Gift of the artist and Victoria Miro Gallery with the support of Channel 4 Television, the Art Fund and Sfumato Foundation with additional support from Alix Partners..

'This image is a distant relative of Giovanni Bellini's *The Agony in the Garden* (c. 1465). The scene is a hill outside Sunderland—in the distance is the Stadium of Light*. The central figure, Tim's stepfather, a club singer, hints at Matthias Grünewald's *Isenheim Altarpiece*. A child-like shipyard crane stands in for the crucifix, with Tim's mother as Mary – once again in the throes of an earthly passion. Tim, in grammar school uniform, blocks his ears, squirming in embarrassment. A computer magazine sticks out of his bag, betraying his early enthusiasm for software. To the left, a younger Tim plays happily with his step-grandfather... To the right, young men with their customised cars gather in the car park of 'Heppie's' social club.'

Text (in the voice of the Tim's stepfather): 'I started as a lad in the shipyards. I followed in my father's footsteps. Now Dad has his pigeons and he loves the boy [Tim]. Shipbuilding bound the town together like a religion. When Thatcher** closed the yards down it ripped the heart out of the community. I could have been in a rock band. I met the boys' mother at the club. I sing on a Saturday night between the bingo and the meat raffle. Now I work in a call centre, the boss says I am management material. The money's good, I could buy my council house, sell it and get out. I voted Tory*** last time.'

*Football stadium, home of Sunderland A.F.C in the north east of England

** The Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher

***the Conservative Political Party



Giovanni Bellini *The Agony in the Garden* c.1465 Courtesy the National Gallery, London, UK/Bridgeman Images.

Historical art references

This is Giovanni Bellini's painting of the biblical scene *The Agony in the Garden* from which Perry took his inspiration. Bellini was an Italian artist who worked in Venice from around 1459 onwards. He was admired for his sensitive paintings of the Virgin Mary.

The painting portrays Christ kneeling in prayer on the Mount of Olives, knowing of his impending arrest and crucifixion, while Judas and the soldiers approach across the distant landscape. An angel appears in the sky, holding a cup, as a symbol of strength and comfort. Although the central focus of the painting is Christ on the rock, the white Italian city at the left of the picture is also a focus, perhaps suggesting the heavenly city. Meanwhile beneath this heavenly scene, the disciples Peter, James and John sleep close by, too tired to stay awake. Bellini was particularly skilled at depicting the effect of light, and the dawn light creates an unearthly atmosphere.

3. Expulsion from Number 8 Eden Close



Grayson Perry *Expulsion from Number 8 Eden Close* 2012 © the artist. Arts Council Collection, Southbank Centre, London and British Council. Gift of the artist and Victoria Miro Gallery with the support of Channel 4 Television, the Art Fund and Sfumato Foundation with additional support from Alix Partners.

'Tim is at university studying computer science, and is going out with a nice girl from Tunbridge Wells. To the left, we see Tim's mother and stepfather, who now live on a private development and own a luxury car. She hovers the AstroTurf lawn, he returns from a game of golf. There has been an argument and Tim and his girlfriend are leaving. They pass through a rainbow, while Jamie Oliver,* looks down. They are guilty of a sin, just like Adam and Eve in Masaccio's *The Expulsion from the Garden of Eden* (c. 1425). To the right, a dinner party is just starting. Tim's girlfriend's parents and fellow guests toast the new arrival.'

Text (in the voice of Tim's girlfriend): 'I met Tim at College; he was such a 'geek.'** He took me back to meet his mother and stepfather. Their house was so clean and tidy, not a speck of dust... or a book, apart from her god, Jamie.*** She says I have turned Tim into a snob****. His parents don't appreciate how bright***** he is. My father laughed at Tim's accent but welcomed him onto the sunlit uplands of the middle classes. I hope Tim loses his obsession with money.'

* A famous TV Chef

** an unfashionable or socially inept person.

*** Jamie Oliver TV chef

**** a person with an exaggerated respect for high social position or wealth who seeks to associate with social superiors and looks down on those regarded as socially inferior

***** clever



Tommaso Masaccio *Adam and Eve banished from Paradise* c. 1425
Courtesy Brancacci Chapel, Santa Maria del Carmine, Florence, Italy/
Bridgeman Images.

Historical art references

In figures of Tim and his girlfriend, Perry makes direct reference to Tommaso Masaccio's biblical painting *Adam and Eve banished from Paradise*. Masaccio was another 15th century Italian early Renaissance artist who only lived to the age of 27. During his short life, his particular interest was in the mastery of the human figure, creating the effect of solidity through the use of light and shade.

These frescoes of the Brancacci Chapel in Florence, Italy painted

with Masolino in the mid-1420s, are considered to be his masterpiece. In this fresco, Adam and Eve are expelled from the Garden of Eden, having tasted the fruit they were forbidden to eat. Above them hovers an angel pointing to the outside world. Remorse and horror are clearly shown in the faces and their stance. Eve clearly experiences grief as well as shame at her nudity, while Adam covers his face in remorse. Masaccio's work typified a new movement in art at the time, from rather static depictions of human figures to a greater emphasis on emotion, expression and muscularity.

4. The Annunciation of the Virgin Deal



Grayson Perry *The Annunciation of the Virgin Deal* 2012 © the artist. Arts Council Collection, Southbank Centre, London and British Council. Gift of the artist and Victoria Miro Gallery with the support of Channel 4 Television, the Art Fund and Sfumato Foundation with additional support from Alix Partners.

'Tim is relaxing with his family in the kitchen of his large, rural (second) home. His business partner has just told him that he is now an extremely wealthy man, as they have sold their software business to Richard Branson*. On the table is a still life demonstrating the cultural bounty of his affluent lifestyle. To the left, his parents-in-law read, and his elder child plays on the rug. To the right, Tim dandles his baby while his wife tweets. This image includes references to three different paintings of the Annunciation by Carlo Crivelli (the vegetables) Matthias Grünewald (his colleague's expression) and Robert Campin (the jug of lilies). The convex mirror and discarded shoes are reminders of that great pictorial display of wealth and status, *The Arnolfini Portrait* (1434) by Jan van Eyck.'

Text (in the voice of Tim's business partner):
'I have worked with Tim for a decade, a genius, yet so down to earth. Tim's incredibly driven, he never feels successful. He's calmer since his mother died. He's had a lot of therapy. He wants to be good.'

On a copy of *The Guardian* newspaper used to wrap organic vegetables is the story 'A Geek's Progress, Tim Rakewell: risen without trace.' On the iPad the story - 'Rakewell sells to Virgin for £270m'

*A British businessman



Jan van Eyck *The Arnolfini Portrait* c. 1434 Courtesy the National Gallery, London, UK/Bridgeman Images.

Historical art references

In this tapestry, Perry makes reference to the famous *Arnolfini Portrait* by 15th century Belgian artist Jan van Eyck, which shows a conscious display of wealth. The mirror and the chandelier are centrally placed, and attention is given to the rich fabrics in which the couple is dressed. Oranges (under the window) were a very expensive

and prized fruit at the time. The small dog is a symbol of loyalty, and its rare breed (an affenpinscher) also suggests wealth. The text above the mirror literally translates from Latin as 'Jan Van Eyck was here', which also links to Grayson Perry's use of text in the tapestries.

Cont.



Carlo Crivelli *The Annunciation, with Saint Emidius* c.1486 Courtesy the National Gallery, London, UK/Bridgeman Images.

Historical art references continued

In this tapestry Perry also makes reference to three different paintings of the biblical Annunciation. His inclusion of fruit and vegetables references this detail from Carlo Crivelli's 15th century Italian painting on this theme.

The expression on the face of Tim's colleague is influenced by German 15th Century artist Matthias Grünewald's Painting of the Annunciation. The painting is one panel of twelve that made up an altarpiece that hung in the monastery of St Anthony in Isenheim, France. The outer wings of the altarpiece were opened for important festivals, and the Annunciation is on the left wing. In it, the Virgin Mary is shown in a chapel, reflecting the sacred nature of the event.

The jug of lilies makes reference to 15th century Netherlandish artist Robert Campin's version of the Annunciation. Many of the objects in his painting were chosen for their symbolism. Here, the lilies in the ceramic jug represent Mary's virginity.



Matthias Grünewald *The Annunciation and Resurrection* c. 1515 Courtesy De Agostini Picture Library/G. Dagli Orti/Bridgeman Images.



Workshop of Robert Campin *Central panel of Annunciation Triptych (Merode Altarpiece)* c. 1427-32 Courtesy the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, USA/ De Agostini Picture Library/Bridgeman Images.

5. The Upper Class at Bay, or an endangered species brought down



Grayson Perry *The Upper Class at Bay* 2012 © the artist. Arts Council Collection, Southbank Centre, London and British Council. Gift of the artist and Victoria Miro Gallery with the support of Channel 4 Television, the Art Fund and Sfumato Foundation with additional support from Alix Partners.

'Tim Rakewell and his wife are now in their late forties and their children are grown. They stroll, like Mr. and Mrs. Andrews in Thomas Gainsborough's famous portrait of the landed gentry (c. 1750), in the grounds of their mansion in the Cotswolds. They are new money they can never become upper class in their lifetime. In the light of the sunset, they watch the old aristocratic stag with its tattered tweed hide being hunted down by the dogs of tax, social change, upkeep and fuel bills. The old land-owning breed is dying out. Tim has his own problems; as a 'fat cat' he has attracted the ire of an 'Occupy'-style protest* movement, who camp outside his house. The protester silhouetted between the stag's antlers refers to paintings of the vision of Saint Hubert, who converted on seeing a vision of a crucifix above the head of a stag.'

*A protest movement campaigning against social inequality

Historical art references

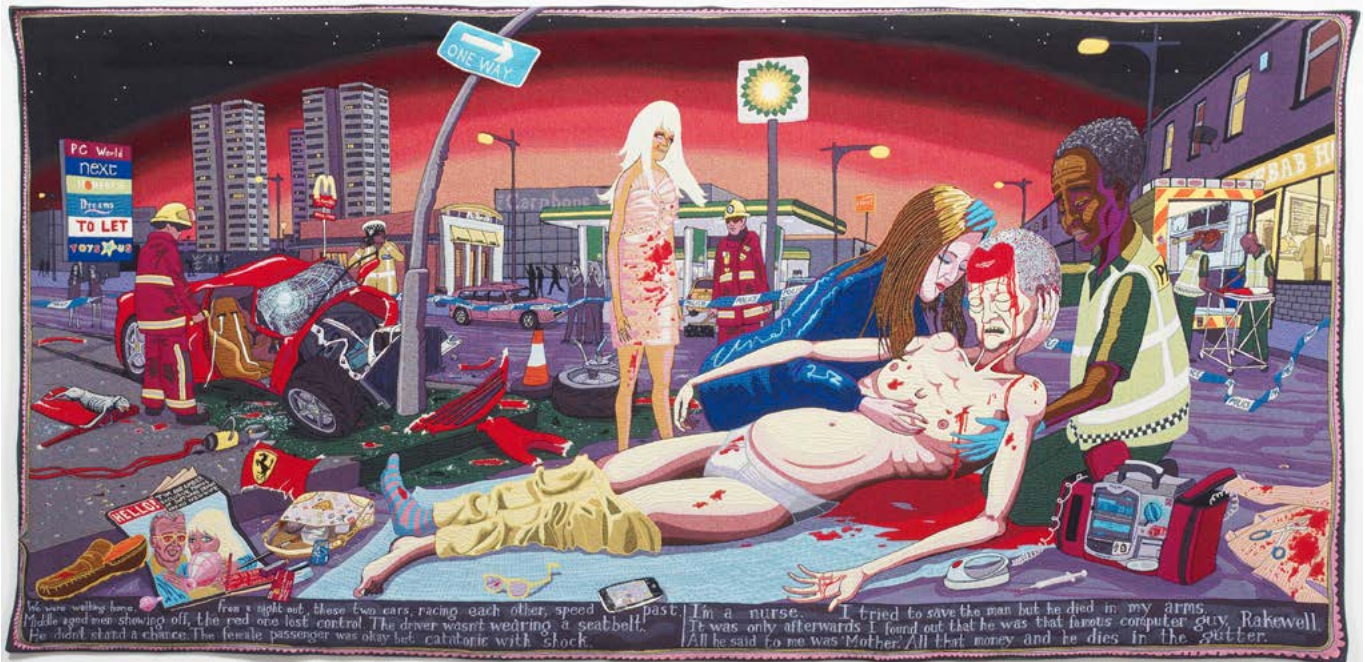
In *The Upper Class at Bay* Tim Rakewell and his wife stroll like Mr and Mrs Andrews in 18th century British artist Thomas Gainsborough's famous painting *Mr and Mrs Andrews*. Painted soon after their marriage, Gainsborough shows the couple at their estate. It is a conversation piece, a genre fashionable in the eighteenth century, showing groups of people in a rural or domestic setting. The large area of meadows and rolling hills on the right allowed Gainsborough to demonstrate his skill as a landscape painter, which was unusual at the time.



Thomas Gainsborough *Mr and Mrs Andrews*, c.1750 Courtesy the National Gallery, London, UK/Bridgeman Images.

Mrs. Andrews sits on an elaborate bench and it has been suggested that the unfinished section of her lap might have been intended for a child. Behind the couple stands an oak tree, a symbol of stability and continuity, and, to their left, sheaves of corn, a symbol of fertility.

6. #Lamentation



Grayson Perry #Lamentation 2012 © the artist. Arts Council Collection, Southbank Centre, London and British Council. Gift of the artist and Victoria Miro Gallery with the support of Channel 4 Television, the Art Fund and Sfumato Foundation with additional support from Alix Partners.

'The scene is the aftermath of a car accident near a retail park. Tim lies dead in the arms of a stranger. His glamorous second wife stands stunned and bloodstained amidst the wreckage of his Ferrari. To the right, paramedics prepare to remove his body. To the left, police and firemen record and clear the crash scene. Onlookers take photos on their camera phones to upload to the Internet. His dog lays dead. The contents of his wife's expensive handbag spill out over a copy of Hello magazine that features her and Tim on the cover. At the bottom of Rogier van der Weyden's *Lamentation* (c. 1441), the painting that inspired this image, is a skull; I have substituted it with a smashed smartphone. This scene also echoes the final painting of Hogarth's *A Rake's Progress*, where Tom Rakewell dies naked in *The Madhouse*.'

Text (in the voice of a female passer-by): 'We were walking home from a night out, these two cars, racing each other speed past. Middle-aged men showing off, the red one lost control. The driver wasn't wearing a seatbelt. He didn't stand a chance. The female passenger was okay but catatonic with shock. I'm a nurse. I tried to save the man but he died in my arms. It was only afterwards I found out that he was that famous computer guy, Rakewell. All he said to me was "Mother". All that money and he dies in the gutter.'



Rogier van der Weyden *Pietà* c. 1441 © Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, Brussels / photo: J. Geleyns - Ro scan

Historical art references

Perry's final tapestry #Lamentation draws on 15th century Belgian artist Rogier Van Der Weyden's biblical painting of the same theme, painted around 1441. The Virgin Mary and John the Evangelist hold the body of the crucified Christ. Mary Magdalene looks on, also mourning. The skull in the foreground reminds us that we are at Golgotha (which translates as 'place of the skull').

Van der Weyden came to be renowned for the pathos and naturalism he used in his portraits and religious subjects. Late medieval religious art often depicted the humanity of Jesus in a way that was intended to evoke empathy and understanding in the viewer.

Grayson Perry Biography

Grayson Perry came to public attention when he won the prestigious Turner Prize in 2003. This is an annual prize presented to a British visual artist under the age of 50. He was born into a working class family in 1960, and spent the first years of his life in Chelmsford, Essex. He joined the Art Foundation course at Braintree FE College and then applied for a BA in Fine Art at Portsmouth Polytechnic.

Perry talks openly about the difficult times of his childhood and how these experiences have fed into his work. His stepfather created a world of violence and fear and Perry's survival tactic was to retreat into an imaginary world of play; a world of island kingdoms, wars and rebellion, in which the central hero was his teddy bear Alan Measles. In this world, Perry's creative spirit flourished as inventor, maker and designer – of guns, planes, cranes and vehicles. Between the ages of five and fifteen, this became Perry's place of refuge from the unstable and sometimes violent world of his family. He also discovered his ability to represent this world through his skills in drawing. Another influence on Perry's creativity was the early memory of his father's shed. This was a world of cobbled together cupboards and drawer with mismatched drawer knobs, improvised tools and a colourful wall where his father tried out different paints. In his autobiography, Perry describes how these experiences shaped his appreciation and enjoyment of his own creativity.

*'My own creativity and art practice has been a mental shed – a sanctuary as well as a place of action – where I've retreated to make things. It gives me a sense of security in a safe enclosed space while I look out of the window onto the world.'**

An influence on Perry's work during his time at Art College was the work of so called 'outsider' artists. An exhibition called *Outsiders* was shown at the Hayward Gallery in 1979. The exhibition comprised pictures and sculptures by people with no formal art training, many living outside of society, some mentally ill, eccentric or reclusive. Perry saw the exhibition and was particularly drawn to the work of Henry Darger; an obsessive, reclusive eccentric, much of whose childhood had been spent in a mental asylum.

Perry's first experience of success as an artist came in 1980, at the end of his first year at Art College, when he made a small sculpture that appeared something like a gutted fish or a boat, with a wigwam roof. This was accepted for an annual exhibition of art student work organised by the Institute of Contemporary Arts called *The New Contemporaries*.

In 1982, Perry decided to join a pottery class, and took great delight in the skills, techniques and possibilities of ceramics, as well as discovering a wealth of examples of decorative pottery, in places like the V&A museum. Perry's work at this time was provocative and angry; sculptural pieces incorporating bits of broken pottery and glass. This work was shown in a mixed exhibition in a little gallery opposite the British Museum in London.

His work developed into making the large pots for which he is perhaps best known, and which sell for many thousands of pounds. These are one-off pieces, often on large scale, hand built with the traditional method of coiling. He uses colourful glazes and underglaze colours, lustres and photographic transfers to decorate his pots with motifs and figures that often suggest narratives, maps and family trees. These symbolic combinations often sum up experiences of the absurdity, curiosity and pain of everyday human experience. He describes in his autobiography how he never likes to do trials. Trials take place on the pot itself, maybe in a new combination of colours, glazes and transfers. He often 'bodges'^{**} with gold lustre when something goes wrong. He sees bodging as part of being human.

Though pottery continues to play a central role in Perry's work, he also makes work using a wide range of other art forms including printmaking, film and embroidery. His first work using tapestry was in 2009. *The Walthamstow Tapestry* is a detailed depiction of modern day life, including hundreds of familiar brand names.

Perry's first solo exhibition was in Amsterdam in 2002, followed by a solo show at the Barbican in London in the same year. He has also had solo shows in Pittsburgh (2006), Japan (2007) and Luxembourg (2008). In 2008, Perry curated the exhibition *Unpopular Culture*, selecting works from the Arts Council Collection. In 2011, he curated the exhibition *The Tomb of the Unknown Craftsman* at the British Museum. This combined Perry's own work in pottery, textiles and sculpture with objects by unknown craftsmen and women from the museum's collection. In the same year, he was elected a member of the Royal Academy of the Arts.

Perry lives in London with his wife Philippa and their daughter Florence, as well as spending some of his time near Eastbourne where he has a cottage and studio. He has become almost as well known for his sub-personality Claire as for himself, as he often publicly dresses as Claire in outrageously girly costumes and frocks.

* Jones, Wendy Grayson Perry, *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Girl*, Vintage 2007 p23

** make or repair (something) badly or clumsily.

Further reading and sources of information

Exhibition catalogue

The Vanity of Small Differences, Grayson Perry, Hayward Publishing 2013

Books

Grayson Perry, Jacky Klein, Thames and Hudson 2009

Grayson Perry, Portrait of the Artist as a Young Girl, Wendy Jones, Vintage 2007

Websites

The Channel 4 programmes *In the Best Possible Taste* that document the research, design and making of the tapestries are available at <http://www.channel4.com/programmes/in-the-best-possible-taste-grayson-perry>

Grayson Perry can be heard on *Desert Island Discs* (2007) at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/features/desert-island-discs/castaway/377f2ab0>

Further information on Grayson Perry can be found on the Victoria Miro Gallery web-site at http://www.victoria-miro.com/artists/_12/

Information on the Hogarth series that inspired Perry's tapestries can be found at http://www.soane.org/collections_legacy/the_soane_hogarths/rakes_progress

Grayson Perry discusses taste and the tapestries for the Royal Academy online magazine at <http://www.royalacademy.org.uk/ra-magazine/summer-2012/opinion-grayson-perry-on-taste.362.RAMA.html>

Follow Alan Measles' on Twitter at https://twitter.com/Alan_Measles

The Let's Talk About Art education pack contains various pieces of artwork from the British Council Collection that explore the different facets of Britain.

https://schoolsonline.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/f198_schools_online_arts_pack_final_hi_res.pdf

Each year the National Gallery in London invites primary schools to use one of its paintings as the stimulus for learning across the curriculum. For 2016, Thomas Gainsborough's *Mr and Mrs Andrews* was chosen as the inspiration. Further information can be found here:

<https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/about-us/press-and-media/press-releases/take-one-picture-6>

Grayson Perry Reith lectures:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b03969vt>

In the first of four lectures, recorded in front of an audience at Tate Modern in London, the artist Grayson Perry reflects on the idea of quality and examines who and what defines what we see and value as art.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b03dsk4d>

Grayson Perry asks whether it is really true that anything can be art.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b03f9bg7>

Grayson Perry asks if revolution is a defining idea in art, or has it met its end?

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b03g9mn1>

Grayson Perry discusses his life in the art world; the journey from the unconscious child playing with paint, to the award-winning successful artist of today.

