

UNPOPULAR CULTURE

Grayson Perry selects from the Arts Council Collection

A Hayward Touring Exhibition from Southbank Centre

Mead Gallery, Warwick Arts Centre

Fri 22 January to Sat 13 March 2010

Grayson Perry was catapulted into the public consciousness in 2003 when he won the Turner Prize for his delicate coil pots adorned with drawings and text suggesting a range of subject matter. Perhaps less well-known is Perry's work as a curator. **Unpopular Culture** highlights this aspect of Perry's practice and offers his personal view of the Arts Council Collection: one of the foremost national collections of British post-war art, with over 7,500 works. The show includes works by; **Kenneth Armitage; Frank Auerbach; Ian Berry; Anthony Caro; Lynn Chadwick; Barbara Hepworth; L.S. Lowry; Henry Moore, Paul Nash; Eduardo Paolozzi; John Piper; Tony Ray-Jones** and **Homer Sykes** as well as two striking new works by Perry himself. It comes to the **Mead Gallery** at **Warwick Arts Centre** from **Friday 22 January to Saturday 13 March** as part of a national tour.



Grayson Perry, photo credit Eric Great-Rex. Copyright the artist 2007

Unpopular Culture examines a period in history which Perry argues was 'before British Art became fashionable.' The exhibition of more than 70 works by 50 artists encompasses a variety of media, figurative painting, bronze sculpture and documentary photography. Spanning the era from the 1940s to Thatcherite Britain of the 1980s, the selection epitomises a time when we as a nation had a different sense of self, one less defined by interventions of television, mass media and digital communications.

Grayson Perry said:

"The first time I trawled through the catalogues of the Collection I was drawn to these three distinct categories of art, which are bound together both by the period of their inception and their ineffable sense of mood; subtle, sensitive, lyrical and quiet in contrast to today when much art can seem like shouty advertisements for concepts or personalities. I also felt a need to confront the hackneyed version of the recent past that is the default mode of the nostalgia industry. Take the swinging sixties - this psychedelic, mini-driving, mini-skirt wearing, Beatles-loving supposed glory age which I suspect was really only enjoyed by a minority. This exhibition shows another side."

Caroline Douglas, Head of Arts Council Collection, Southbank Centre said;

“We are delighted Grayson Perry agreed to select works from the Arts Council Collection to create this fascinating touring show. Unpopular Culture is the next chapter in a long history of working with artists in this capacity, whose unique vantage point as both practitioner and curator ensure critical and insightful selections. Grayson’s choices are not anchored to a period in art history, rather they span the time in which he and his parents grew up. The works on show reflect this personal narrative.”

For his selection, Perry gravitated towards those painters and photographers whose work was an honest reflection of British life and society. The lyricism and rigour of painters **Paul Nash**, **Elinor Bellingham-Smith** and **Victor Pasmore** are keenly juxtaposed with the frivolity and celebration of the beauty contests, seaside trips and Pearly Kings and Queens immortalised in the photographs of **David Hurn**, **Tony Ray-Jones** and **Patrick Ward**.

Perry was drawn to the Collection’s holdings of bronze sculpture because of its archetypal nature, representing craftsmanship and the epitome of all that is thought of as art. The selection includes the cast bronzes of **Henry Moore**, **Antony Caro** and **Kenneth Armitage**, the polished abstraction of **Barbara Hepworth** and the linear, spiky forms of **Lynn Chadwick**, **Eduardo Paolozzi**, **Elisabeth Frink** and **Meg Rutherford**.

Unsurprisingly for an artist who has always positioned himself at the margins of the art world, Perry has found himself drawn to art that embodies a quiet nostalgia and restraint. **Unpopular Culture** presents an alternative view of British art, bringing a fresh, new perspective on this period.

For the exhibition, Grayson Perry has designed a limited edition silk scarf which will be available to buy from the Mead Gallery.

Exhibiting Artists: Michael Andrews; Kenneth Armitage; Frank Auerbach; Gerry Badger; Clive Barker; Elinor Bellingham-Smith; John Benton-Harris; Ian Berry; John Bratby; Edward Burra; Anthony Caro; Lynn Chadwick; Robert Colquhoun; Elisabeth Frink; Duncan Grant; Bert Hardy; Anthony Hatwell; David Hephner; Barbara Hepworth; Thurston Hopkins; David Hurn; Bryan Kneale; Margaret Lovell; Alan Lowndes; L.S. Lowry; Henry Moore; Francis Morland; Tish Murtha; John Myers; Paul Nash; Eduardo Paolozzi; Martin Parr; Victor Pasmore; Christine Pearcey; Edwin Pickett; John Piper; Tony Ray-Jones; Alan Reynolds; Brian Robb; William Roberts; George Rodger; Leonard Rosoman; Meg Rutherford; William Scott; Jack Smith; Ruskin Spear; Homer Sykes; William Turnbull; Patrick Ward; Carel Weight; John Wragg; Bryan Wynter.

The Arts Council Collection was formed in 1946 by the Arts Council of Great Britain and has been managed by The Hayward, Southbank Centre since 1987. From the outset, the intention was to support artists living and working in Britain through the purchase and display of their work, and to tour exhibitions across the country thereby encouraging public appreciation of modern and contemporary art, making it the widest circulated collection of its kind.

There will be an Opening Party on Thu 21 January from 7pm at the Mead Gallery. Everyone is welcome.

-ends-

Date of release: 15 December 2009

For further information please contact

Keri Wills, Press Officer: keri.wills@warwick.ac.uk / 024 7652 3804

Unpopular Culture: Grayson Perry selects from the Arts Council Collection
Mead Gallery, Warwick Arts Centre, University of Warwick, Coventry, CV4 7AL
Fri 22 Jan – Sat 13 Mar, noon until 9pm Mon to Sat
Entry is free
www.warwickartscentre.co.uk

For hi res images go to

http://gallery.warwickartscentre.co.uk/gallery/v/press/spring_2010/visual_art/unpopular+culture/

Note to Editors:

Biography - Grayson Perry

Grayson Perry was born in Chelmsford in 1960. He studied at Braintree College of Further Education and received a BA in Fine Art from the Portsmouth Polytechnic. In the early 1980s Perry was a member of the Neo-Naturist group, and took part in performance and film works. He has continued to create work in a variety of media that includes embroidery and photography and is best known for his ceramic works. Grayson Perry won the Turner Prize in 2003. His exhibitions include solo presentations at the Andy Warhol Museum in Pittsburgh, USA, 2006; and Galeria Il Capricorno, Venice 2004. His group exhibitions include *A Secret History of Clay from Gauguin to Gormley*, Tate Liverpool, 2004; *Collection Intervention*, Tate St. Ives, St. Ives, 2004; *Guerilla Tactics*, Barbican Art Gallery, London, and Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, 2002. In 2006, Grayson Perry curated *The Charms of Lincolnshire* a critically acclaimed exhibition of historical artefacts selected by the artist from the Museums of Lincolnshire. After opening at The Collection in Lincoln in February 2006, the show then toured to the Victoria Miro Gallery in London in July 2006.

The Arts Council Collection is the largest national loan collection of modern and contemporary British art and includes work by all of this country's most prominent artists. With over 7,500 works by 2000 artists it can be seen in public exhibitions and displays across the UK and abroad. For further information please visit www.artscouncilcollection.org.uk