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Flights of fancy New year treats for travellers in Aberdeen, Edinburgh, Manchester, London and beyond



Living doll

Grayson Perry on
his latest show

CULTURE

Artist, ceramicist, cross-dresser, national treasure: Grayson Perry the man is as multi-faceted, and eye-catching, as much of his work. His latest exhibition, now at London's National Portrait Gallery, is saturated with Perry's trademark blasts of colour, contrasting with the gallery's more sober paintings of 19th-century prime ministers and marble busts of literary figures.

Grayson Perry: Who Are You? is about discovering the details behind our identities, finding out what makes us who we are. Created during the filming of a Channel 4 series that followed the artist as he spent time with people going through major life changes, the works don't depict your usual NPG subjects. A reality TV star, a transgender man, a couple coping with Alzheimer's - they're all part of 'the parade of the unusual and the troubled'.

'I'm hoping they'll throw light on experiences that we all share,' Perry says. 'I've attempted to portray the ongoing process of "being ourselves".'

'As an artist, you're part psychologist, part detective. You hunt for clues to the inner life, distil everything you see and one image is all you get. But get it right and that image tells you something a thousand selfies never could.'

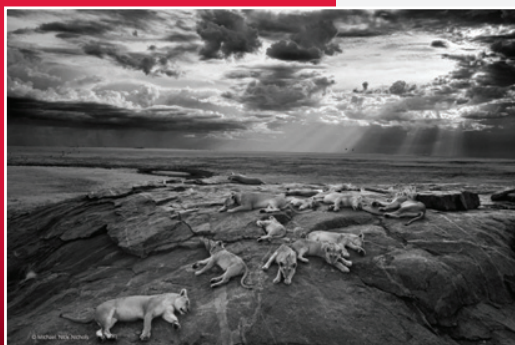


Portrait of an artist

Grayson Perry explores what makes us tick in his latest London show

Words Jo Caird

Arts calendar Must-see shows



Wildlife Photographer of the Year 2014

Now in its 50th year, this photography competition is open to professionals and amateurs. About 100 images, selected by judges, are on display at London's Natural History Museum until 30 August. The winning photograph, of a pride of lazing lions in Tanzania, was taken by Michael 'Nick' Nichols.

nhm.ac.uk



The Two Roberts: Robert Colquhoun and Robert MacBryde

The Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art in Edinburgh is, until 24 May, hosting a retrospective dedicated to the work of a pair of Scottish artists who enjoyed great success in the 1940s. Colquhoun and MacBryde were lauded for their expressionistic still-lives (MacBryde) and figurative works (Colquhoun).

nationalgalleries.org



Grayson Perry has a fresh look at who we are

All the pieces in the show – whether pots, silk-screen prints, tapestries or porcelain miniatures – started with Perry making preliminary sketches of his subjects from life, as well as hanging around with them to get a sense of the way they live their lives.

The Huhne Vase, for example, a portrait of the disgraced British politician Chris Huhne, references the way the former cabinet minister refused to open up to Perry. The large ceramic pot is covered in repeating motifs that symbolise Huhne's preference for soundbites over sincere admissions about life following his conviction for perverting the course of justice.

Perry won the Turner Prize in 2003, and made his acceptance speech wearing a pink frilly dress and patent

leather Mary Janes, open and honest about his transvestism. He was made a CBE in 2013 for services to contemporary art, but writes regularly about the pernicious effects of the establishment. He's happily married with a grown-up daughter, yet is devoted to a ragged teddy bear he's had since childhood.

'Our identity is something we perform over a lifetime,' says Perry in the Channel 4 programme, 'and so this idea that we're this static thing is an illusion. We're a series of bits of baggage, but eventually they build up into this ongoing lifelong artwork that is our individual identity. And we feel it and we live it and we perform it.' ●

Grayson Perry: Who Are You? is at the National Portrait Gallery until 15 March. npg.org.uk



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BP Portrait Award 2014

The world's most important portrait painting competition was won last year by German artist Thomas Ganter for *Man with a Plaid Blanket*, which depicts a homeless man in a way usually reserved for nobles or saints (pictured). The painting is on display at Edinburgh's Scottish National Portrait Gallery until 12 April, along with more than 50 other works.

nationalgalleries.org



Election! Britain Votes

With just a few months to go until the country goes to the polls, the People's History Museum in Manchester is presenting objects from every general election since 1906 in an exhibition designed to get visitors excited about voting

(14 February-28 June). Displays will be updated daily as the latest campaign progresses, making this a show worth returning to.

phm.org.uk

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