

Press Release

15 December 2020

## Grayson Perry: The Pre-Therapy Years



*Essex Plate*, 1985, Glazed ceramic, Private Collection  
© Grayson Perry Courtesy the artist and Victoria Miro

### Grayson Perry: The Pre-Therapy Years

12 January - 16 May 2021

High-resolution images available for download: <https://bit.ly/2Y6lgJV>

The Sainsbury Centre presents a new exhibition that surveys for the first time Grayson Perry's earliest forays into the art world, re-introducing the explosive and creative works made during his formative years between 1982 and 1994. His ground-breaking pots of this period have been reunited for the first time following a hugely successful appeal to the public in 2018 by Perry and The Holburne Museum in Bath, where this exhibition first opened in January 2020.

Today, Perry and his instantly-recognisable alter-ego, Claire, enjoys a reputation bordering on National Treasure status by virtue of his distinctive tapestry, collage and ceramic works that often explore themes of gender, identity and social class, as well as his remarkable work as a witty social commentator on television and in print.

The exhibition was conceived by Dr Chris Stephens, Director of the Holburne. He said, *"I was delighted when Grayson liked the idea of bringing together his earliest works as they had never been displayed together before. The first step was to find out where we could find these pieces, so we made a public appeal and were overwhelmed by the response from across the country. We were thrilled with the range of irreverent, witty, and downright explicit artworks that came together to form the show. It is a fantastic celebration of Grayson's work."*

It was when looking through the extraordinary and varied selection of artworks that Grayson remarked that seeing the works again was a reminder of his *"pre-therapy years."*

The exhibition will display the earliest works – pots, plates and sculptures – that first made Perry's name, and will shine a light on his experimentation and exploration of the potential of pottery to address radical issues and human stories. For art lovers, *Grayson Perry: The Pre-Therapy Years* represents a unique opportunity to enjoy the artist's clever, playful and politically-engaged perspective on the world through a number of pieces, many of which have not been seen in public since they were first exhibited. Often challenging and explicit, these works reveal the early development of Perry's distinctive voice that has established him as one of the most compelling commentators on contemporary society.

*Grayson Perry: The Pre-Therapy Years* begins in 1982, when Perry was first working as an artist and then charts his progress to the mid-90s, when he became established in the mainstream London art scene. The exhibition provides a snapshot of a very British time and place, and reveals the transition of Grayson's style from playful riffs on historic art, such as old Staffordshire pottery, along with crowns (the mixed-media *Crown of Penii*, 1982) and thrones (*Saint Diana, let them eat shit*, 1984 – inspired by his fascination with Princess Diana) into a style that is patently his own: plates and vases rich with detail that tell tales of our times and experiences, such as 1989's *Cocktail Party*.

Grayson says *"This show has been such a joy to put together and to see these early works again, many of which I have not seen since the 80s. It is as near as I will ever get to meeting myself as a young man, an angrier, priapic me with huge energy but a much smaller wardrobe."*

Ghislaine Wood, Deputy Director of the Sainsbury Centre says, *"We are thrilled to be hosting this exhibition which brings together such a large collection of previously unseen works by one of Britain's most recognisable and innovative artists. The Sainsbury Centre's outstanding global ceramics collection spans over 5000 years of human creativity and provides a compelling context in which to explore Perry's deep interest in the medium."*

Exhibition organised by The Holburne Museum, Bath. It is accompanied by a major new book published by Thames & Hudson that explores, for the first time, Perry's artistic origins through the artworks that made his name in the years 1982–94.

***Grayson Perry: The Pre-Therapy Years* is at The Holburne Museum until 3 January 2021 and travels to the Sainsbury Centre from 12 January – 16 May 2021, followed by York City Art Gallery. Tickets £12/£11 concessions, on sale now at [sainsburycentre.ac.uk](http://sainsburycentre.ac.uk).**

– ENDS –

## Notes to Editors

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### **Exhibition Information**

Grayson Perry: The Pre-Therapy Years  
12 January - 16 May 2021  
£12 | £11 concessions, tickets on sale now  
50% off for under 18s, full-time students and Art Fund Members  
FREE for Sainsbury Centre Members, UEA and NUA Student Members  
Visit [sainsburycentre.ac.uk](http://sainsburycentre.ac.uk) or call 01603 593199 (Monday–Friday, 9am–5pm)

### **About the Sainsbury Centre**

The Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts is one of the most important public university art galleries in Britain. It was founded in 1973 at the University of East Anglia (UEA) with the support of one of the nation's great philanthropic families, Sir Robert and Lady Sainsbury, who donated their extraordinary art collection. A radical new building by Norman Foster was designed to house the collection and was his first public work.

The Sainsbury Centre holds one of the most impressive art collections outside of the national institutions. It includes a significant number of works by modern masters of European art such as Pablo Picasso, Edgar Degas, Alberto Giacometti, Henry Moore, Francis Bacon, Jacob Epstein, Jean Arp, Chaïm Soutine and Amedeo Modigliani. There is also a remarkable collection of art and antiquities dating from prehistory to the late 20th century from across the globe. There are major holdings from Oceania, Africa, the Americas, Asia, the ancient Mediterranean cultures of Egypt, Greece and Rome, as well as Medieval Europe. Alongside these permanent collections, it hosts a range of exhibitions in the largest suite of temporary exhibitions galleries in Eastern England.

[sainsburycentre.ac.uk](http://sainsburycentre.ac.uk)

### **About The Holburne Museum**

The Holburne Museum's mission statement is 'Changing Lives Through Art', signalling its commitment to opening up the enjoyment of art to people of all ages and from every walk of life. The Holburne was founded in 1882 with the gift of Sir William Holburne's collection of 16th and 17th century Italian and Dutch paintings, silver, sculpture, furniture, porcelain and diverse objets d'art of national and international significance. That founding gift has been augmented with a collection of 18th century paintings by such artists as Gainsborough, Lawrence, Ramsay, Stubbs and Zoffany. Set within the historic Sydney Pleasure Gardens, the Museum reopened in May 2011 after ambitious renovations and with a new, award-winning extension by Eric Parry Architects. The Holburne has since secured a national reputation as an outstanding museum which holds critically acclaimed exhibitions. Its programme of exhibitions, commissions and events aims to bring to Bath great art of all periods and from around the world, seeking to set the art of the past in dialogue with contemporary practice in exciting and dynamic new ways.

[holburne.org](http://holburne.org)