

The Unvarnished Self

Grayson Perry's 'Aspects of Myself' Comes to Exeter

Exeter City Council's Royal Albert Memorial Museum & Art Gallery (RAMM) is set to host the city's first-ever exhibition of Sir Grayson Perry's work. Opening in January 2026, 'Aspects of Myself' promises a powerful and intimate exploration of identity by one of Britain's most vital and influential contemporary artists.

Perry has long been a social critic, chronicler of modern life, and has built a career on confronting the complexities of contradiction in contemporary society.

Born in Chelmsford, Essex, in 1960, he rose to international prominence after winning the 2003 Turner Prize - the first ceramicist to receive this prestigious award. His artistic journey has often been said to be rooted in a troubled childhood marked by his father's departure and a turbulent home life with an abusive stepfather. This early experience led him to create a rich, imaginative escape world, often centred around his beloved teddy bear, Alan Measles, and an early fascination with cross-dressing.

Within traditional craft techniques Perry's work often depicts unsettling images, sharp social critique, and deeply personal stories. As the artist himself states, this use of traditional media—often historically considered as 'craft' or 'feminine'—is a deliberate choice, a "guerrilla tactic" to smuggle challenging or provocative ideas past the art world's usual gatekeepers and into the public consciousness.

The RAMM exhibition will explore the concept of self through a diverse range of media. Perry states, "I investigate our slippery sense of who we feel we are... the ongoing process of 'being ourselves'," and the works chosen highlight this theme with unflinching honesty. Pieces like the ceramic pot 'Aspects of Myself' and the powerful 'Mad Kid's Bedroom Wall' directly incorporate autobiographical elements, reflecting the emotional landscape of his childhood.



Aspects of Myself, Grayson Perry, 2001. Tate: Purchased from Laurent Delaye Gallery with assistance from David and Janice Blackburn 2002. Courtesy the artist and Victoria Miro. © Grayson Perry. Photo: Tate

Beyond personal history, Perry shifts his focus to the collective self. The work 'A Map of Days' explores how the interests, habits and psychological traits that make up a sense of 'self' can be mapped onto towns, reflecting an emotional geography of contemporary society.

Other works such as the ceramics 'Aspects of Myself' and 'Mad Kid's Bedroom Wall' show how Perry incorporates autobiographical elements that reflect his own childhood experiences.

The exhibition will also feature elements from Perry's 'A House for Essex', a secular chapel dedicated to the fictional Essex woman Julie Cope.

Rarely are all four large tapestries shown together, so this is a unique opportunity to see them without

visiting the house. Through these works and tile moulds from the house's construction, Perry tells the story of place and belonging.

Councillor Bob Foales, Exeter City Council's lead councillor for Arts, Culture and Tourism, expressed the city's excitement: 'We're delighted to host this exhibition of Grayson Perry's work in Exeter. Perry is a much-loved artist across the country, and to have his work on display in our city is a real privilege.'

Grayson Perry: Aspects of Myself opens at RAMM from Saturday, January 24th, to Sunday, May 3rd, 2026. Visitors should be aware that some works in the exhibition depict adult themes.



A Perfect Match, Grayson Perry, 2015. Crafts Council Collection: 2016.18. Acquired with Art Fund support (with a contribution from The Wolfson Foundation) and a donation from Maylis and James Grand. Courtesy the artist, Paragon, Contemporary Editions Ltd and Victoria Miro. © Grayson Perry