

# 1. The Adoration of the Cage Fighters\*



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'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.

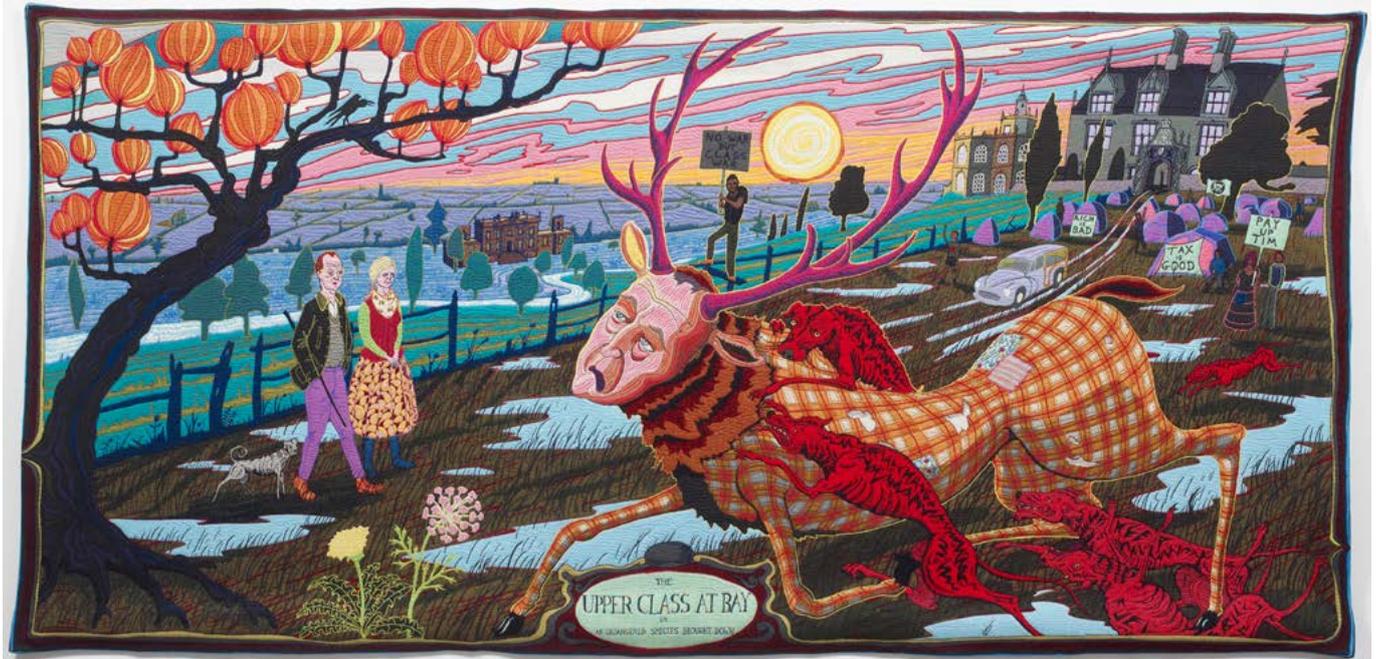


Matthias Grünewald *The Annunciation and Resurrection* c. 1515 Courtesy De Agostini Picture Library/G. Dagli Orti/Bridgeman Images.



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

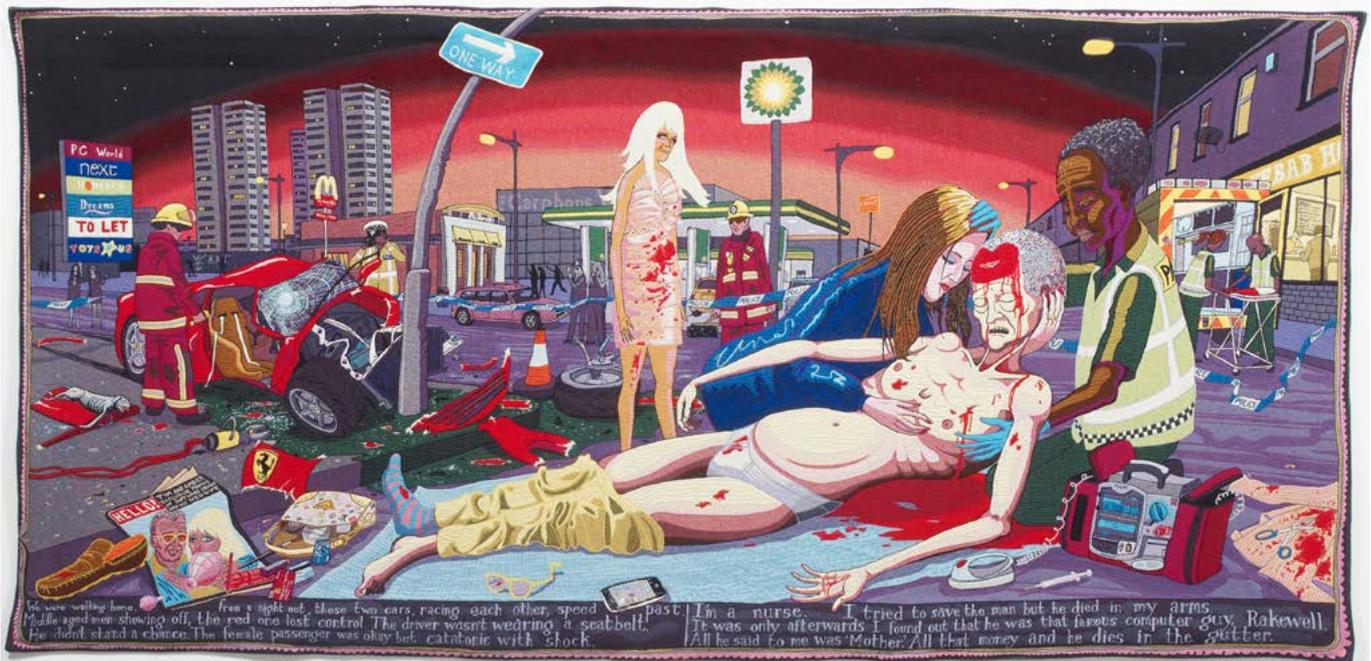
In *The Upper Class at Bay* Tim Rakewell and his wife stroll like Mr and Mrs Andrews in 18th century British artist Thomas Gainsborough's famous painting *Mr and Mrs Andrews*. Painted soon after their marriage, Gainsborough shows the couple at their estate. It is a conversation piece, a genre fashionable 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.