Winning the Turner Prize in 2003 catapulted Grayson Perry into the public eye and established his career, yet this volume from Thames & Hudson is the first major survey of his work to date, perhaps because Perry is such a controversial figure in the art world. His chosen medium, ceramics, is associated more with craft than with high art and is typically underappreciated in the contemporary art world. Perry is also a cross-dresser, and frequently appears at art functions (such as the Turner Prize ceremony) in full drag. Finally, Perry’s work is, as he describes it, “spiky”—unabashedly critical of everything from the art world to consumerism, war, religion, gender, and more.

Author Jacky Klein does a superb job of navigating these deep and turbulent waters, helping readers see a fuller picture of the outrageous cross-dressing potter about whom they may have read in the popular press. Klein’s central purpose in this book is not to discuss the more sensational aspects of Perry’s public persona, but is, as she states, “to explore more deeply Perry’s imaginative world, uncovering for the first time the full breadth of his practice as well as the thinking that underlies it.”

Klein organizes Perry’s oeuvre into eight thematic sections: beginnings, class, war and conflict, sex and gender, religion and folk culture, inner landscapes, the art world, and pottery and aesthetics. This approach contextualizes Perry’s work, as in each section the reader sees the artist grappling with a single (complex) issue at various points in his career. A simple chronological approach would not be as effective in illustrating the artist’s creative process.

Each section begins with a short introductory text by Klein, and then launches into oversized photographs of representative works. The densely decorated surfaces of Perry’s pots are featured in detail, showing readers images that are in turn shocking, humorous, disgusting, beautiful, and thought-provoking. Commentary from Perry accompanies every work; it is this commentary that makes the book invaluable for students of contemporary art and ceramics. In reading Perry’s words, readers get a first-hand account of how each piece was created, including the inspiration for the piece and the intellectual, psychological, and ceramic processes used in making the work.

There are many other useful features in the book, such as the list of group and solo exhibitions and the extensive bibliography which includes a list of selected articles Perry wrote for *The Times* (he had a column in the paper from 2005 to 2007) as well as a list of television and radio coverage on Perry.

It may have taken a long time for a thorough survey of Perry’s career to be published, but this book is so well-executed and thoughtfully assembled, it was well worth the wait. A highly recommended purchase for all libraries with an interest in ceramics, contemporary art or gender studies.

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