

anzjat

AUSTRALIAN AND NEW ZEALAND JOURNAL OF ARTS THERAPY

Editorial team

Editors Sheridan Linnell and Catherine Camden-Pratt
Journal Coordinator and Editorial Assistant Jill Segedin
Copy Editors Constance Ellwood and Belinda Nemeč
Proofreaders Rigel Sorzano and Belinda Nemeč
Research Sub-committee Chair Kirsten Meyer

International advisors

Andrea Gilroy, Ronald P.M.H. Lay, Jordan Potash

Peer review panel

Jan Allen, Annette Coulter, Karen Daniel, Jo Davies, Claire Edwards, Cornelia Elbrecht, Bettina Evans, Patricia Fenner, Esther Fitzpatrick, Fiona Gardner, Andrea Gilroy, Deborah Green, Jennie Halliday, Rainbow Ho, Jo Kelly, Adrian Lania, San Leenstra, Amanda Levey, Annetta Mallon, Shaun McNiff, Kirsten Meyer, Julia Meyerowitz-Katz, Nikki O'Connor, Jean Parkinson, Radhika Santhanam-Martin, Mariana Torkington, Carla van Laar, Jill Westwood, Sue Wildman, Daniel Wong.

The editorial team wishes to thank those members of the Peer Review Panel and others who generously contributed their time and expertise to the peer review of this edition of *ANZJAT*.

Published by Australian and New Zealand Arts Therapy Association
ABN 63 072 954 388
PO Box 303 Glebe, NSW 2037, Australia
www.anzata.org

© Australian and New Zealand Journal of Arts Therapy, 2016

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording or any other information storage and retrieval system without prior permission in writing from the publisher.

Opinions of contributors are not necessarily those of the publisher. The publisher makes no representation or warranty that the information contained in articles is accurate, nor accepts liability or responsibility for any action arising out of information contained in this journal.

ISSN: 1833-9948

Design and production Jill Segedin

Printing McCollams, Auckland, New Zealand and Documents On Call, Melbourne, Australia

Exhibition review

How do we audience the artwork we see? A response to the exhibition *Grayson Perry: My pretty little art career*

Museum of Contemporary Art Australia, Sydney

Curated by Rachel Kent

10 December 2015 – 1 May 2016

Reviewed by Rachael Ireland

This response reflects on my experience as a trainee art therapist attending the exhibition as a formal learning activity in the Master of Art Therapy program at Western Sydney University, and draws on my experience working as an artist educator at the Museum of Contemporary Art (MCA), Sydney. It considers audience engagement and the processes of viewing artwork and constructing meaning. In discussing my response to *Grayson Perry: My pretty little art career*, I also explore Gilroy's (2008) discussion on audiencing, and influences on art therapists' practices of looking and meaning-making.

My pretty little art career was a major survey exhibition of the work of British artist Grayson Perry (b. 1960), held at the MCA as part of the 2015–16 Sydney International Art Series. Curated by MCA chief curator Rachel Kent, the exhibition brought together Perry's work from a period spanning more than 30 years, encompassing ceramics, sculpture, drawing, prints, photography, and garments. Autobiography infuses Perry's practice and he has made much work that reflects upon his childhood and adult life experiences (Kent, 2015). His work probes personal and social questions of identity, exploring themes such as gender, sexuality, nationalism, and social and economic status (Kent, 2015).

Additionally, Perry describes therapy as a major influence on his practice, both through his own experience of six years in therapy,

and through discussions about the profession with his wife, a trained analyst (ABC, 2016; Kent, 2015). This is reflected not only in his artworks, but also in how he talks about his art practice. Perry states that his role as an artist is to notice things (Kent, 2015; Perry, 2014). He describes this as “delving into my own and the communal unconscious and bringing things I notice up into the light of awareness” (Kent, 2015, p.37). This process results in Perry investigating aspects of himself that are similar to other people, and exploring how personal experiences intersect with shared experiences in society (ABC, 2016). I contend that, in so doing, he has created artworks that reach out to audiences, inviting them to participate in a collective inquiry, and reflection, around social constructions of identity.

This aspect of the exhibition was significant for me. It prompted me to reflect further on the processes of viewing and interpretation when audiencing artworks, and the construction of meaning through relational experiences that connect artist, artwork, and audiences. It also led me to wonder about how, as art therapists, do we audience the artwork we see, and how do these processes differ or translate between museum and art therapy contexts. Working as an artist educator, my experience of audiencing is grounded in fostering personal connection and active participation in viewing and responding to artworks and artists' practices, and collaboratively constructing meaning.