



## Savage Beauty

It seems that Joe Public desires 'beauty'. Art theorists may loathe this fact or deny there is such a definable thing. Maybe they believe the public to be stupid. As Grayson Perry said in his 2012 Reith Lecture: "Democracy has bad taste". But perhaps the public is right? People see the "Emperor's New Clothes" and proclaim his nakedness rather than his imaginary garments. They want the Emperor with clothes on - and they must be tremendous clothes, as they were in 'Savage Beauty'. As Grayson said, "When I go into a gallery I want to see something amazing - not something I could have phoned in when I was in the bath."\*\* Well said.

On 23rd July I visited the Alexander McQueen exhibition at the V&A. People queued to see the beauty therein. From the gasps, open mouths and exclamations of admiration, they were clearly not disappointed. I must say, that in all my years of looking at art and design, and visiting exhibitions, this was, by far, the most breath-taking, memorable experience I have ever had. No wonder it was a sell-out. No wonder each person stumped up £17.50 to be let through. And groups were let through every half-hour, eight hours a day, for months. In fact, the museum extended visiting to 24-7 during the last week to cope with demand.

I haven't seen queues on this scale for some of the conceptual art in our galleries. No doubt some of it is truly memorable, and truly art, but (let's face it) some of it is, as Grayson has described, rubbish.\*\*\* And ugly.

\* Reith Lecture 2012 \*\*/\*\* Quotes/referencing from interview with Decca Aitken at the Guardian Open Weekend, 2012.