

Journeys into Madness: Representing Mental Illness in the Arts and Sciences, 1850-1930

A Two-Day Conference organised by the University of Plymouth to be held at the Wellcome Centre, London on 11 and 12 October 2007

Call for papers

In recent years, the territory of mental illness has been re-mapped. In the Sciences, mental life and behaviour are linked to the workings of the brain and the body's neurochemistry. In the Arts, creative genius and madness are interwoven by the belief that mental illness can provide a unique world view. These discursive constructions often fail to place mental illness into larger social, cultural, and historical landscapes. By focusing on the representation of mental illness across disciplines, this conference intends to re-think the divide between scientific and aesthetic approaches. This event will bring together scholars from a wide range of disciplines such as art history, medical history, music, film, psychiatry, literature and intellectual history. The focus will be on Europe, but papers considering exchanges between Europe and other continents are also welcomed. We hope to initiate a dialogue that reconstructs some of the ideological fabric in which mental illness was embedded from 1850 to 1930.

Possible topics include, but are not restricted to:

- Mental illness as a representational strategy
- The new medium of photography
- The production, distribution, and consumption of art by the mentally ill
- Early discussions of the therapeutic value of art
- Gender and psychiatry
- Psychiatric utopias in space and time
- The "Nervous Age"
- The architecture and culture of sanatoria
- Asylum versus university psychiatry
- Psychiatry and the modern subject
- Re-thinking the Freudian contribution to modernism
- Contemporary artists' encounters with art of the mentally ill and psychiatric spaces

This conference emerges from the research project "Madness and Modernity: Architecture, Art and Mental Illness in Vienna and the Habsburg Empire, 1890-1914," which is funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC).

We invite abstracts of 200 words to be forwarded electronically to both:

Dr Gemma Blackshaw
gemma.blackshaw@plymouth.ac.uk

Dr Sabine Wieber
sabine.wieber@plymouth.ac.uk

The Deadline for Abstract Submissions is 9 March 2007

