

Psychiatry in pictures

EDITED BY ALLAN BEVERIDGE

Do you have an image, preferably accompanied by 100 to 200 words of explanatory text, that you think would be suitable for Psychiatry in Pictures? Submissions are very welcome and should be sent direct to Dr Allan Beveridge, Queen Margaret Hospital, Whitefield Road, Dunfermline, Fife KY12 0SU, UK.



Joseph Askew (1825–1904), untitled

One of the most original of the patient-artists at the Crichton Royal Asylum, Joseph Askew was admitted in 1853. At that point, he was 28 years old, unmarried, and was described in the case notes as a 'Merchant in South America'. He felt he was subjected to 'the manipulations of certain mesmeric impostors', who were able to 'penetrate his thoughts and are constantly conversing with him'. He also believed that he was 'the focus of concave mirrors which act at incalculable distances and are . . . directing rays of transcendental light on him from Jesus'. In addition, he was 'affected by seven magnetic seals' and was also trying to 'prove that he is not the person he is reputed to be'. A diagnosis of 'monomania of suspicion' was made. He was considered to be 'a most gentle and courteous inmate'. Askew was to remain at Dumfries until his death in 1904. A review of his clinical state in 1885 revealed that he believed that 'his internal organs are taken out of his body and floated about in the air'. He was given a revised diagnosis of 'monomania of unseen agency'. Askew's artwork displays a wide range of styles and subject matter. This particular picture anticipates the eerie street scenes of the surrealist painter, Giorgio de Chirico.

Thanks to Morag Williams, Archivist to NHS Dumfries and Galloway, Solway House, Crichton Royal Hospital, Dumfries.