

Understanding British Portraits

Henry Hering's early asylum photography at Bethlem Hospital; the collection in context

Thursday 21 January 2016, 9.30 — 13.00

A workshop devised by Caroline Smith, Education and Outreach Officer, Museum of the Mind, and *Understanding British Portraits* bursary recipient.

Chaired by Colin Gale, Archivist, Bethlem Royal Hospital, Archives and Museum

Venue: Bethlem Museum of the Mind, Bethlem Royal Hospital, Monks Orchard Road, Beckenham, Kent BR3 3BX

Programme

9.30—10.00 **Registration and light refreshments**

10.00-10.05 **Welcome from chairperson Colin Gale**

10.05-10.35 **Caroline Smith**

Visual sources had long played a part in medical diagnosis and classification but the advent of photography was thought to provide doctors with a more objective image. Henry Hering's photographs of Bethlem patients taken in the late 1850's will be considered in the light of asylum photography of the time but also the wider culture of portraiture both painted and photographic.

10.35—11.05 **Dr Allan Beveridge, Consultant Psychiatrist, Queen Margaret Hospital, Dunfermline**

This paper considers Sir Alexander Morison's contribution to the portrayal of the mentally ill. It looks at the original portraits of patients that Morison commissioned professional artists to undertake and compares them to the subsequent engravings that appeared in his *Physiognomy of Mental Diseases*. The paper compares Morison's approach to portraying patients with that of others such as Sir Charles Bell, Esquirol and WAF Browne. It also considers the texts which accompany the published portraits to see what they reveal about the patient's story and contemporary notions about diagnosis and treatment.

11.05—11.35 **Time for delegates to visit the Museum**

11.35—12.05 **Subhadra Das, Curator, UCL Teaching & Research Collections (Biomedical and Galton), and Dr. Debbie Challis, Audience Development Officer at Petrie Museum of Egyptian Archaeology, UCL**

Sir Francis Galton, the Victorian scientist who propounded eugenics, spent much of his career attempting to uncover how an individual's character, intelligence, aptitude and behaviour are manifest in their physical appearance. In the 1880s, he employed the new technology of photography in an attempt to quantify these traits. This talk will explore how Galton's work with composite portraiture reveals his attitudes to Victorian society and brings into focus attitudes inherent in our own through his images of patients in Bethlem asylum, which were discussed at a public event as part of the Galton Centenary at UCL.

12.05—12.35 **Caroline Smith**

The Hering photographs form an important part of the new museum display and are also used in learning workshops particularly to challenge preconceptions around mental illness. This presentation will explore the ways in which they have been used but also examine the ethical considerations around their use and the reactions of the *Museum of the Mind*'s varied audiences.

12.35—13.00 **Delegate questions and comments for the speakers, chaired by Colin Gale**



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