

Psychiatry in pictures

CHOSEN BY ROBERT HOWARD



Broach Schizophrenie

The paintings of Brian Charnley (1949–1991) are now widely known, particularly his final sequence of pictures, painted while he took himself off medication in order to experience his schizophrenia in an unadulterated form, which culminated in his suicide. *Broach Schizophrenie* formed part of his portrayal of his own personal experience of his illness. In an ‘Artist’s statement’ to accompany his pictures, he wrote in 1988: “Sigmund Freud, commenting on his work on the mind, said that wherever he had been, an artist or poet had been there before him. I hope, to some extent, my work might exist in a similar way. I try to avoid being too direct about the privations suffered as a schizophrenic and try instead for more oblique poetic metaphors as I feel the truth can be more nearly approached this way. My work is also a much needed form of exorcism. Apart from my pictures, I regard my illness as completely negative, involving the sufferer in a vicious downward spiral. Current medical practice attempts to suppress both the patient and his symptoms, convenient but evasive. My paintings stand as an attempt to penetrate this wall of silence and I hope they can throw some light on a condition which has largely eluded medical science”.



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