

Psychiatry in pictures

CHOSEN BY ROBERT HOWARD



The Cross (above, painted around 1967)
and
Depression (left, 1975),
Marion Patrick (1940–1993)

Marion Patrick suffered from a severe bipolar illness and was first admitted to hospital at the age of 15. She had been born and brought up in Lancashire and trained at Burnley School of Art. In 1963 she moved to Gravesend and continued to exhibit into the 1970s when she gave up painting, distressed by the mess it made in her home which she kept obsessively clean. She specialised in painting disturbingly sad and isolated young children, sometimes seen in groups, but never communicating. In an introduction to a 1964 exhibition she wrote: 'A child endures or enjoys overwhelming misery or overwhelming happiness because he isolates the moment and does not connect it with the future or the past. In my work I try to convey this isolation'. In 1969 she wrote: 'My work is an attempt to communicate beyond the isolation of the individual'. Her pictures of children, even those in which she has tried to make some concessions to parental feeling, are always unsentimental and capture the awe-inspiring solemnity of small children. She had no children of her own, having been told at an early age that she should not have them because of her psychiatric condition. It is not difficult to see how this might have influenced her choice of children as subjects for so many of her pictures. In *Depression*, the image of a hopeless and vulnerable adolescent woman may be a remembered self-portrait. These and other pictures by Marion Patrick can be seen at the Bethlem Royal Hospital Archives and Museum, Monks Orchard Road, Beckenham, Kent BR3 3BX (telephone: 020 8776 4537).

Mind Odyssey is a celebration of the arts, psychiatry and the mind. For further information see <http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/campaigns/2001/> or e-mail: awedderburn@rcpsych.ac.uk