

## Psychiatry in pictures

CHOSEN BY ROBERT HOWARD

Rosemary Carson (b. 1952): *The Hospital Ward at Night* and *The Wednesday Night Dance* (both oil on board)

Since her childhood Rosemary Carson has intermittently experienced sensations of maggots moving within her body. She attempted suicide at the age of 15 and spent long periods of her early adult life admitted to psychiatric hospitals where she was treated with medication and electroconvulsive therapy. Marriage, the birth of her daughter and a move to Cornwall led to a 17-year remission in her affective symptoms and sensations of maggots, but in 1996 she became ill again and began to hear voices. Her pictures reflect a need to capture memories of fellow patients and situations from her earlier admissions. This is reinforced by the urgings of 'the underlings': spirits of dead patients who speak to her under the voices of others. Writing in 2002, Carson explained these pictures as follows: 'The Hospital Ward. This is Hubert Bond Ward (the admissions ward) at Longrove Hospital (closed in 1992) one of five mental hospitals outside Epsom in Surrey. The painting looks down on a side corridor containing seven isolation rooms. These are small rooms, that you could be locked in if you became violent or needed special attention, often you would only have a thin mattress on the floor. There would be a small window high up on the end wall through which you could see a patch of sky, and a spy hole in the door (you never knew when you were being watched). The three patients coloured luminous green had been given ECT treatment. The two patients in dark blue were undergoing deep sleep treatment. I am the paler blue patient. I have just arrived on the ward and am having a sleepless night surrounded by maggots and very frightened. At the end of the corridor, doors lead into the day room where the night nurse is sitting knitting' and 'The Wednesday Night Dance. This dance took place in the main hall of Longrove Hospital, Epsom when I was there in the late 1960s and early '70s. A nurse would play records and as the hall filled with the dance music the dancers would fill the air as well as the floor. In reality the dance was poorly attended and rather a sad affair with nearly all the patients shuffling around on their own'. Images reproduced by kind permission of the artist and courtesy of Henry Boxer Gallery ([www.outsiderart.co.uk](http://www.outsiderart.co.uk)).

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 Professor Robert Howard, Box 070, Institute of Psychiatry, London SE5 8AF, UK.

