

Psychiatry in pictures

CHOSEN BY ROBERT HOWARD

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.



Miss X (b. 1962) *Untitled (Computer)* (2001)

X graduated from the Ruskin School of Art in 1985. *Untitled (Computer)* was painted as one of six large updated replacements of a group of a thousand pictures that she had destroyed 15 years earlier. Writing in 2003, X explains the background and content of the picture: 'I have been diagnosed with schizophrenia (18 years), depression (14 years) and bulimia (10 years, now cured). This is a reflection on my teenage years and emotional and sexual development. The girl (myself) is fantasizing, tall and slim with her promise of success indicated by a ladder from her pubic area to the stars. The stars are her breasts, her self-image as a future star being almost sexual. The painting is covered with big, immature kisses and the computer desk is studded with hearts. The work is not about pornography via the Internet or the male gaze but the outlook upon life of the girl herself. The school tie and the computer merge with symbols of puberty. The gun is a reference to a friend of mine when we were both sixteen who shot himself dead when I rejected him. As the picture shows, it was as if the gun shot me too. Did everything go wrong because I used to masturbate? Is that what set the gun off? There is a biological clock in the bottom left of the picture. I'm forty now. So much for my sexual dreams, not having ever yet had a sexual partner. The picture is partly a reference to *Las Meninas* by Velazquez that features the beautiful infanta beside a dwarf. My own work shows the fantasy of myself as an infanta contrasting the reality on the right hand side of myself as spotty and plain. There is an arrow sweeping down towards a gravestone from the computer and another circling back from the gravestone towards the computer. Frustrated by the demands of education and modern life, I sink into a death-like sleep. Then I rise again to face modern life and the computer. There is the circle of life and death, hopefully an inevitability of resurrection'. With thanks to X for permission to reproduce her picture.