

Psychiatry in pictures

CHOSEN BY ROBERT HOWARD



Christmas Cats by Louis Wain (1860–1930) was painted on a ward mirror at Napsbury Hospital as part of the Christmas decorations. Wain's humorous drawings of cats and other animals were enormously popular for more than three decades, but during the First World War he found it increasingly difficult to get work. Around this time he began to show the first signs of the mental illness that was to remain with him for the rest of his life. In 1924 he was certified insane and admitted to Springfield Hospital in Tooting, but was soon moved to Bethlem Hospital where he stayed for 5 years. In 1930 he was transferred to Napsbury, dying there 9 years later. At Bethlem he was said to be "full of a mass of fantastic delusions", but was "very quiet and amenable, with a quaint old world courtesy in his manner". He remained in much the same state for the remainder of his life. Although he grew increasingly confused as time wore on, he continued drawing and painting with all his old skill, giving away many of his pictures to members of the hospital staff. This painting from the Guttman-Maclay Collection is now in the Bethlem Royal Hospital Archives and Museum, Monks Orchard Road, Beckenham, Kent, along with many more works by Louis Wain. The Museum is open Monday to Friday 09.30 to 17.00 (Tel: +44 (0)20 8776 4307). A very happy Christmas to readers of this page and thanks to Patricia Allderidge, Archivist and Curator at the Museum, for details about Wain.



2001: A 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

