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psychiatry
in pictures

Portrait of fellow patient (date unknown) by Denis Reed (1917-1979)



Denis Reed was born in Bristol in 1917. Despite suffering ill-health in youth, he had a happy boyhood. He enrolled at London's Royal College of Art in 1938 but his studies were interrupted by the outbreak of World War II and his subsequent enlistment in the British Army. Reed eventually qualified in 1948 and the Principal of the College, P.H. Jowett, remarked, 'His painting is always good in colour and interesting in design.' Denis Reed's work was displayed in many galleries during the post-War years. He became a member of the Royal West of England Academy and was appointed Senior Lecturer in Painting at Loughborough College of Art. Increasingly severe bouts of depression forced him to relinquish this post and he became a resident at Glenside Psychiatric Hospital in Bristol during the 1950s and 1960s.

While at Glenside, Denis Reed painted and drew prolifically. The collection of sketches and paintings provide a unique window into ward life at that time and his portraits offer an insight into the mental state both of himself and his subjects. Denis Reed died unexpectedly in 1979. In his life, he painted some 250 oils, numerous watercolours and sketches. His peers have commented on his unending interest in producing art. The details of his personal life remain almost unknown. The collection of work produced by Reed during his time at Glenside is held in the Glenside Hospital Museum in Bristol.

This image is Reed's portrayal of one of his fellow patients.

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