

Psychiatry in pictures

CHOSEN BY ROBERT HOWARD

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



Stanley Lench (1934–2000): *Marlene Dietrich* (top left, 1975), *Lord Clark 1* (top right, 1977), *The Evil Ones of Art* (bottom left, 1978).

Episodes of manic–depressive illness punctuated Stanley Lench's life from his childhood and he was first a patient of the Maudsley children's department. He studied stained glass at the Royal College of Art and had a West End exhibition at the Beaux Arts Gallery when he was only 21. His pictures record his obsession with appearances and the very different reality that may underlie them. He called this theme 'the illusion of illusions'. All his subjects were drawn into its exotic imagery but the glamorous stars of the silent screen held a special fascination for him. As they aged they fitted well into his view of life, taking on the role of decaying beauties fighting off the ravages of time beneath their painted masks of youth. Written messages appear in some of his pictures, sometimes transforming them into manifestos against the professed art-lovers – *The Evil Ones of Art* – whom he felt were destroying the artist within himself through their bourgeois values. He worked as an attendant at the Tate Gallery and took perverse pleasure in the fact that many visitors who were eminent in the arts world failed to recognise the true artist in their midst. On one occasion Lord Clark came by with a small entourage, satisfactorily ignoring Stanley and triggering off a series of stylish and mocking paintings. These pictures, together with others by Stanley Lench, can be viewed at the Bethlem Royal Hospital Archives and Museum in Beckenham, Kent (Telephone 020 8776 4307). With thanks to Patricia Allderidge for information about Stanley Lench.