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Cover picture
“Bristol Lunatic Asylum, Case Studies 1” by Serena Curmi
© Serena Curmi

‘Bristol Lunatic Asylum, Case Studies 1’ (April 2019) is a small oil painting of a patient who was at Glenside Hospital in Bristol in 1895. The hospital was then known as Bristol Lunatic Asylum. I am a painter and over the last couple of years, I have been working on a series of these small portraits featuring patients resident at the asylum from the late 19th to early 20th century. The 10×10cm paintings are rendered in oils and are produced from photographs which were included in the patients’ admission books, now housed at Bristol Archives. These photographs provide a glimpse into the emotional state of those facing incarceration and it is the subtleties of their fleeting expressions that I aim to capture in my paintings. The project highlights those on the fringes of society, challenging traditional, hierarchical assumptions about the subjects of portraiture. By focusing my attention upon these patients, I hope to imbue their lives with a sense of value, as we are invited to confront their steady and often melancholy gaze.

We are always looking for interesting and visually appealing images for the cover of the Journal and would welcome suggestions or pictures, which should be sent to Dr Allan Beveridge, British Journal of Psychiatry, 21 Prescot Street, London, E1 8BB, UK or bjp@rcpsych.ac.uk.