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Cover picture

Untitled (c. 1980). Robert Lenkiewicz (1941–2002). Robert Oskar Lenkiewicz was inspired to paint at the age of 9 after seeing Charles Laughton portray Rembrandt in Korda’s biopic. He attended St Martin’s School of Art at 16 and later enrolled at the Royal Academy but pursued an independent course, working in a figurative style and often on a large scale. Lenkiewicz conceived of his paintings as parts of ‘The Relationship Series’ – large-scale exhibitions of paintings on social and existential themes. Themes such as Vagrancy (1973), Mental Handicap (1976), Old Age (1979) and Death (1982) examined in depth the effects of human isolation and spotlighted taboo sections of the community. Lenkiewicz also investigated the nature of personal relationships in ironically titled projects such as Love & Mediocrity (1976), and human physiology in a state of crisis in Jealousy (1977) and Orgasm (1978). He concluded that intense feeling isolates people rather than bringing them together – that intense aesthetic attraction, towards other people or ideas or beliefs, took us down ‘the straight road to fascism’, the tendency to treat other people as property. Thus, his Projects and his 25000 volume library were intended as ‘an investigation of the origins of fascism by enquiring into obsessional behaviour in all its forms’.

The picture shown here was sold at auction in 2007 as Woman on a bed. Its true title is not known. It is oil on canvas, 28 x 28 cm and appeared in the Suicide exhibition in 1980, Section 12 of ‘The Relationship Series’. Picture selected by Martin Humphreys. With thanks to Mark Penwill and The Lenkiewicz Foundation.

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, 17 Belgrave Square, London SW1X 8PG, UK or bjpsych@rcpsych.ac.uk