

Psychiatry in pictures

CHOSEN BY ROBERT HOWARD

Do you have an image, preferably accompanied by 100 to 200 words of explanatory text, that you think would be suitable for Psychiatry in Pictures? Submissions are very welcome and should be sent direct to Professor Robert Howard, Box 070, Institute of Psychiatry, London SE5 8AF, UK.

Stefanie (b. 1977) *Untitled (watercolour painting)* (1995)

Stefanie developed psychotic symptoms while studying for her A-levels. She believed that she had discovered a chemical formula that would save the world. Convinced that evil forces were trying to obtain the secret of her formula, she burnt the paper on which it was written in a fire that she started in her bedroom. Unfortunately, the family house was destroyed by fire as a result. Happily, nobody was hurt, and she was admitted to the Westphalian University Clinic in Münster. She painted this picture during art therapy while she was still psychotic. The image is dominated by a huge menacing eye representing the evil forces that she believed were watching for an opportunity to acquire her formula. The dark colours within the painting reflect her pessimistic feelings that her formula would fall into the wrong hands, but she introduced musical notes and a flower to indicate her hopes that she would prevail. She later made a full recovery from psychosis. With thanks to Dr Peter Lepping for permission to reproduce the picture and for providing information about Stefanie.

