

An Illustrious Monument to the Prophet Daniel (in true enlightenment fashion)

Mikey Cook is interested in research into and the exploration of user defined mythologies – semi-fictional narratives or anachronistic alternate histories which are subject to distortion or change via the presentation within the space and the viewer's interpretation. These narratives or alternate histories are created by research into the historic, social or scientific through a synchromystic filter. Synchromysticism is the view that everything in the universe is connected, originating from Carl Jung's writings on Synchronicity¹: a term used to describe the occurrence of two mutually acausal events unlikely to occur together by chance yet do so in a revelatory manner, which we call "chance".²

Cibber created Melancholy and Raving Madness to sit aside the gates of Bethlem Hospital on its relocation to Moorfields, one of which is supposedly based on Oliver Cromwell's mad porter Daniel, who was a patient at the hospital admitted for religious mania.³ Daniel correctly prophesied the Great Comet of 1664, now known as C/1664WI, the Great Plague and the Great Fire of London, both in 1666. As unlikely as Daniel was to correctly predict these events, they are all explicitly linked, making their significance seem even greater – pseudoscientific research suggests that comets are often harbingers of plague and pestilence, with C/1664WI being no different, and the foreshadowed Great Fire which successfully eradicated the bacteria responsible for the Plague, Yersini Pestis, from the streets of London.

The idea of privacy in Cook's work is conveyed subtly with the use of one way mirror film, which is applied to the entire area of the windows behind the installation, with the exception of two cut outs of pineapple rings. These shapes, which were chosen to reference two portland stone pineapples atop each side of a viewing area into the hospital from the gardens⁴, take up an area equivalent to 53p worth of the total amount of film used. This bears reference to the fact that visitors of Bethlem used to be able to pay 2d, or two Old Pennies, to observe the patients of the hospital as entertainment, an amount now equivalent to approximately 53p.

The film is translucent from the inside, providing an unrestricted view out and allows only allows 53p worth of the installation to be seen from the outside. The acrylic shapes are based upon microscope images of the Gram-stained bacterium, created from clear tubing to suggest the aesthetics of neon signage⁵. The gram-negative bacteria are consistently referenced throughout the installation, whether via fragments of their 3D models or laser cut silhouettes in the digital prints, or their 'shadows' created from black ash – made from Samuel Pepys' recipe for small cakes⁶, which supposedly initiated the Great Fire.

The Great fire is again referenced via the magic lantern slide mounted to the window depicting the Monument to the Great Fire, significant for two reasons; that the bas relief carving at its base was executed by Cibber; and that the magic Lantern was one of the first forms of

¹ Carl. G. Jung, *Synchronicity: An Acausal Connecting Principle*, (England 1955).

² *Parerga und Paralipomena*, I, ed., R. von Koeber (Berlin, 1981) 40.

³ Jane Kromm, *The Art of Frenzy: Public Madness in the Visual Culture of Europe, 1500-1850* (A&C Black, 2003) 90.

⁴ a symbol of welcome, dating back to the days of British Colonialism where Pineapples were brought back from further afield and hung above doorways to welcome visitors, and also a sign of wealth due to the rarity of the fruit at that time.

⁵ A reference to the original context of the statues as advertisements or signs for the hospital, and what, or who, was contained within it's walls.

⁶ Samuel Pepy's was a 17th Century businessman who's dairies explored London in great detail.

entertainment for the patients introduced by Sir Charles Hood⁷, whose role as Superintendent signified a new era of Enlightenment within the hospital. Another point of interest surrounding the Monument is that it was commissioned by Robert Hooke, architect responsible for the design of Bethlem at Moorfields, and scientist accountable for the first accurate depiction of *Ceratomyllus Faciatus* in *Microphagia*, 1665, the flea responsible for the rapid spread of the Black Death. Hooke also studied the path of C/1664WI in great detail using pioneering telescopes of his own design.

The digital print on silk draped over the handrail utilises a design based on an image of straw, referencing the straw matting that patients, and in stone form for Melancholy and Raving Madness, were provided to sleep on until the reformation of basic living conditions introduced via Hood. The print is produced on a high quality silk, similar to that used in luxury bedding and made to the exact dimensions of a standard single mattress. This subtle hint between rich and poor at once gives significance to the amount of personal space patients had throughout their stay at Bethlem, but also denotes the class divide of the rich who made the buildings for the (mostly) poor to reside.

The enlightened views towards the treatment of the mentally ill on the advent of Hood's time as superintendent, via a process of learning and understanding through research and progress, are translated throughout the installation by employing an office space aesthetic – utilising office ceiling tiles, components of office screens to hang prints, a plinth made from whiteboard material, and Microsoft Office graphics. Another important decision within the assemblage was the choice of colour of the Camira Cara fabric, the industry standard cloth for the fabrication of office screens. The colour of the fabric, 'Portland', is a nod to the type of stone Cibber used to create the statues and works well in the corporate aesthetic environment of the Royal College of Psychiatrists.

Mikey Cook's assemblage, although not fully understandable on an initial viewing, asks important questions surrounding the treatment of patients of Bethlem in the seventeenth century but also in patients of every hospital in present times: how far has the treatment of, not only mental illness, but other illnesses *actually* come? Are economy and politics still enforcing rules which may not be considerate of the people who matter?

"Do you know what the definition of insane is? Yes. It's the inability to relate to another human being."⁸

⁷ "Charles Hood was born at Lambeth, the son of a doctor, and sent to school at Brighton. He was admitted to Trinity College, Dublin, at the age of seventeen, but acquired his professional training at Guy's Hospital, qualifying in 1845 and taking the St. Andrews degree in the year following. He held an early appointment as resident physician to a private asylum, Fiddington House, Devizes, but was soon made the first medical superintendent of Colney Hatch. In 1852 he obtained the same post at the Bethlem Hospital, where for ten years he worked indefatigably for the improvement of the patients' conditions, and particularly for the segregation of the criminal insane. He resigned on appointment as a Lord Chancellor's visitor in lunacy. He was elected treasurer of Bridewell and Bethlem Hospitals in 1868, the year of his knighthood. He died in the treasurer's house at Bridewell."

E. G. O'Donoghue, *The Story of Bethlehem Hospital*, (1914) 416

⁸ Revolutionary Road, Richard Yates (Methuen, 1961)