A new home for Bethlem Gallery and Museum of the Mind

A pioneering arts and museum space at the heart of Bethlem Royal Hospital will soon be open to the public.

The Bethlem Gallery and Museum will be situated in the original administration building at the site which has been radically redesigned to contain a permanent exhibition space, a temporary exhibition space for the Bethlem museum’s collection and a contemporary art exhibition space for artists who have experienced mental difficulties.

In the vastly increased exhibition spaces, you will now be able to view centuries of significant historic artworks and objects together with inspiring contemporary works by current artists and service users. The new building is open to the public and free of charge.

The Bethlem Museum has been on site for 40 years in one small building and the Bethlem Gallery has been on site for 17 years as part of the Occupational Therapy department, both organisations have gained an international reputation for excellence in the field of arts in health. For the first time they will be under one roof bringing together their specific areas of expertise to curate exhibitions informed and enlivened by the historical import of the collection and archives and new perspectives from artists and patients of South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust (SLaM).

Bethlem Museum of the Mind offers an unparalleled resource for the history of mental healthcare and treatment. It cares for the archives of Bethlem Royal Hospital, the Maudsley Hospital and Warlingham Park Hospital, as well as a collection of historic objects and art, including works by former Bethlem patients such as Jonathan Martin, Richard Dadd and Louis Wain. It has a wealth of resources to support learning and offers group visits, outreach sessions and regular events.

Victoria Northwood, Head of the Archives and Museum, said: “The Archives and Museum at Bethlem have always been rather a ‘hidden gem’. The move to new facilities will be transformative, enabling us to publicise our collections more widely and welcome an increased number of visitors.”

The Bethlem Gallery, established in 1997, provides a professional platform for artists who are current or former patients of South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust (SLaM). The annual exhibitions and events programme incorporates collaborations with Bethlem Museum of the Mind, artists-in-residence, interdisciplinary research, and partnerships with arts organisations across the UK and beyond. The gallery has earned an international reputation for the originality and talent of its exhibitors. It is a professional space for high-quality artwork and fosters a supportive patient-focused environment.

Beth Elliott, Director of Bethlem Gallery, said: “The new building signals a significant era for the artists we exhibit, as well as our local, national and international audiences. The space will provide an accessible professional framework for the work, opening up creative dialogues that will influence our cultural landscape.”
The move to the new building secures the unique collections for future generations and enables the public to see more of the incredible artwork both from the historic collection and from current artists involved with our services today. The old administration building’s grand art-deco staircase will provide a fitting showcase for the world-renowned statues of ‘Raving’ and ‘Melancholy’ Madness, which originally stood above the gates of 17th century ‘Bedlam’.

The project has been made possible by the generosity of the Maudsley Charity, South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust, The Heritage Lottery Fund and a number of trusts and foundations.

The new space will open to the public 19 February.

Interviews with public figures who support the Bethlem Gallery and Museum can be arranged and high resolution jpegs are available.

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Notes to editors

Bethlem Royal Hospital was founded in 1247 and was the first institution in the UK to specialise in the care of the mentally ill. The hospital continues to provide in-patient care as part of the South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust and is a provider of mental health and substance misuse services for people locally and specialist services for people from across the U.K. For more information on our services please visit: www.slam.nhs.uk

1 in 4 people will experience a mental health problem in any given year. This is the most commonly quoted statistic, and the one which has the most research evidence to support it - www.mind.org.uk

Around 300 people out of 1,000 will experience mental health problems every year in Britain. 230 of these will visit a GP, 102 of these will be diagnosed as having a mental health problem, 24 of these will be referred to a specialist psychiatric service, and 6 will become inpatients in psychiatric hospitals.

For more information visit: bethlemgallery.com | bethlemmuseumofthemind.org.uk
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