

PRESS RELEASE

Ordinary Moments
Cynthia Pell

28th August – 20th September 2013

The Bethlem Gallery invites you to an exhibition exploring Cynthia Pell's life through a selection of artwork from Bethlem Archives and Museum's reserve collection. On display will be works made during Pell's time at Camberwell Art College, in the French countryside in the 1950s, and drawings made whilst she was residing in Bexley Hospital in the 1970s. Regardless of subject matter, Cynthia's evocative work depicts an intense emotional view of the world, her experiences and others.

Cynthia Pell was born in March 1933 and spent her early life in Finchley, brought up with her elder sister Barbara by their nanny and parents. At boarding school, Cynthia showed a great aptitude for art, which led to her enrolment first at Bournemouth Art College, and then Camberwell Art College in London.

In 1957, Cynthia had a solo exhibition at the Beaux Art Gallery in London and afterwards, on the pavement outside, set fire to work that had not been sold. Cynthia's mental health began to decline in the late 1950s, and she was admitted to St Bernard's Hospital in Southall 1961. She subsequently spent 10 years in and out of hospital, suffering with bipolar disorder.

Cynthia was admitted to Bexley Hospital in May 1973 during a manic phase, and there met art therapist Britta von Zweigbergk. Britta encouraged Cynthia to visit the art studio at Bexley, and brought materials to Cynthia in her ward so that she could continue to make a record of everything she saw – from fellow patients to nurses and the view from the ward's windows. Cynthia gave many of these drawings and paintings to Britta, who recently donated a number of the works included in the exhibition to Bethlem Archives and Museum.

Opening Event: Wednesday 28th August, 3 - 6pm

Exhibition continues: Thursday 1st - 29th August - 20th September 2013

Opening times: Wednesday – Friday 11am – 6pm
Gallery and Museum will be open Saturday 7th September 11am - 5pm

Address: The Bethlem Gallery, Bethlem Royal Hospital, Monks Orchard Road, Beckenham, Kent BR3 3BX

Travel: Nearest British Rail: Eden Park / East Croydon

Contact: Beth Elliott, Gallery Director
020 3228 4101

Email: thebethlemgallery@gmail.com

Website: www.bethlemgallery.com

Notes to editors:

1) The Bethlem Royal Hospital Archives and Museum records the lives and experience and celebrates the achievements of people with mental health problems. It documents the rich history of the Bethlem since it began in 1247 along with its affiliated hospitals, as well as owning an impressive collection of over 1000 pieces of art created by artists many of whom have experienced mental health difficulties.

Visit www.bethlemheritage.org.uk for further information

2) The Bethlem Gallery provides a showcase for the inspirational talents of artists who have experienced mental health difficulties through professional exhibitions, residencies and events. We promote access and participation within arts and health settings and campaign for greater awareness of mental health.

3) The Bethlem Gallery is funded by the Maudsley Charity, a charity working with the NHS. They support mental health and wellbeing by investing in projects that aid innovation in health services; training and education; and research and infrastructure. For more information visit: www.maudsleycharity.co.uk

4) Bethlem Royal Hospital is the oldest psychiatric hospital in the world 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

5) One in four 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
6 will become inpatients in psychiatric hospitals.

6) Interviews with the curator can be arranged

7) High resolution jpegs are available