

An abstract artwork featuring a white bird with spread wings in the upper center, set against a background of horizontal bands of blue, orange, yellow, and purple. A black snake with yellow eyes slithers across the middle. The lower half has a red ground with various symbols: a black cross, a black figure in a hat and cape, a black key, a black rectangular object with a grid pattern, a black pitchfork, a black hammer, and several yellow and orange shapes. The text 'Art, Power and the Asylum' is written in white serif font across the middle, and 'Exploring the Adamson Collection' is written in white sans-serif font below it. The letters 'RЯ' are at the bottom center.

# Art, Power and the Asylum

Exploring the Adamson Collection

RЯ

# Art, Power and the Asylum: Exploring the Adamson Collection

**What is the value of art created in the asylum? Who does it belong to and how should it be used?**

Edward Adamson is seen as the father of art therapy in the UK. Between 1946 and 1981, he encouraged paintings, drawings and sculptures by people (mainly women) compelled to live in Netherne Psychiatric Hospital in Surrey. In doing this, he pioneered a humanistic approach which focused on individuals at a time when treating mental illness often meant controlling symptoms through drugs, electric shocks or operations. Adamson collected many of these artworks, and 5,500 of the paintings and drawings are at Wellcome. They raise sensitive and contentious questions which span art, health and culture.

Join contributors from the fields of mental health, art, libraries and ethics for a series of intimate discussions exploring value, power and identity, and shape how the Adamson Collection is framed.

The events will take place in the Reading Room at Wellcome Collection. They are drop-in events. First-come, first-seated – places are limited.

Find out more about the Adamson Collection online:

**[blog.wellcomelibrary.org](http://blog.wellcomelibrary.org)**

**[wellcomelibrary.org/adamsonartworks](http://wellcomelibrary.org/adamsonartworks)**

**[wellcomelibrary.org/adamsonarchives](http://wellcomelibrary.org/adamsonarchives)**

Photography will be taking place during this event. Please speak to a member of staff for further information.

## Creative Control

Thursday 13 July, 19.00–20.00

Viewing of selected paintings 18.00–19.00

Who owns art created in the asylum? How should it be used, and by whom?

Join David O'Flynn (Adamson Collection Trust), Niall Boyce (*Lancet Psychiatry*) and Daniel O'Connor (Wellcome) to discuss the roles and responsibilities of the maker, the practitioner, the collector and the public.

## Naming the Unnamed

Tuesday 18 July, 15.00–16.00

Viewing of selected paintings 14.00–15.00

Should patient artists be named, or should they remain anonymous? Join Val Huet (British Association of Art Therapists), Michael Barham (dramatherapist), Fiona Johnstone (Birkbeck) and Marie-France (former mental health service user) to explore issues of sensitivity, identity and agency.

## The 'A' Word

Thursday 20 July, 19.00–20.00

Viewing of selected paintings 18.00–19.00

Is work from the asylum art or medical record? What art history period does it fit into, if any?

Join Beth Elliot (Bethlem Gallery), Marc Steene (Outside In) and Lamis Bayar (Dragon Café) to discuss how art from the asylum (and beyond) can be framed, and the value of terms such as Outsider Art and Art Brut.

**The Reading Room** is an innovative hybrid of gallery, library and events space, designed to encourage you to indulge your curiosity and explore more than ever before. Find out more:  
**[wellcomecollection.org/readingroom](http://wellcomecollection.org/readingroom)**

Cover image: Adamson Collection/Wellcome Library

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