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Art and Mental Health Care as Cultural Heritage and Current Practice

There is a tradition of integrating art in psychiatry. When Aby Warburg suffered a painful mental breakdown he was treated at the Bellevue psychiatric hospital, Switzerland, from 1921 to 1924. Bellevue was central for existential psychiatry, and artistic expressions were encouraged. During past decades, bio-medical perspectives have become domineering. Simultaneously, there is an increasing interest in the health promoting aspects of art. The artistic heritage of psychiatry is rediscovered. It is also acknowledged that users of psychiatry might express pain as well as joy through arts activities and art thus promote wellbeing. Art is however not easily integrated in current psychiatry. In this paper I present interviews with four managers in psychiatry who have integrated artistic activities in a psychiatric clinic in Gothenburg, Sweden.