

THE MAGIC OF MADNESS

THE LOOPS AND LINKS
BETWEEN ART, DREAMS,
MAGIC, AND MADNESS HAVE
LONG FASCINATED AND
AGITATED THE HUMAN
SPECIES IN EQUAL MEASURE.
WHY?

MADNICITY SYMPOSIUM

10AM–5PM 23 APRIL 2022,
MADNICITY PAVILION, ISOLA
SAN SERVULO, VENICE



A malign disorder or a magical diversity? From the Renaissance fool to Surrealism, the archetypal mad scientist to the poet, and everything in between, the mentally diverse have long been venerated in art and culture as innocent seers of truths shorn of complicity with power and money. Yet this contrasts starkly with society's systemic treatment of the 'mad' as unfit for purpose, shameful, a danger to society, even a figure of entertainment. A problem to be force-healed to normalcy and productivity or ridiculed, excluded, and isolated.

Can both be true? Or does our treatment of madness and mental 'health' serve to spotlight a different kind of madness? A malignant insanity – triggered by the agricultural revolution – lying at the heart of present day 'normalcy' denying the validity and value of different [or: other] lenses in favour of perceived productivity optimisation and the organised demonisation of diversity. A homogenisation of all things in pursuit of economic efficiency gains, "fairy tales of eternal growth" and other stories walking us along the path to extinction? In fact, who's the madman in the room, the guy in the straight jacket or the guys who put him in the straight jacket?

SPEAKERS

In the wake of the vast impacts on mental health from the pandemic crisis, this one day symposium will ask tough questions and present the ideas of **important voices in the fields of art, culture, entertainment, psychiatry, psychology, critical theory and philosophy** on the topics of:

- ▶ Mental diversity versus mental 'health': isolation in lockdown versus isolation in the asylum
- ▶ Subverting expectation, weaponizing the loops & links between art, madness, dreams and magic in counter-culture
- ▶ Social control and capital interest: war and peace, and the path to extinction

MADNICITY PAVILION is an off-Biennale collateral event showcasing LUNATICS, with ten installations of new work by Dominik Lejman in collaboration with Bianca O'Brien, Mario Caeiro and Richard Hallward on the site of a former insane asylum on San Servolo island opposite the Giardini della Biennale in Venice. Curatorial board partners are Raffaele Gavarro and Hubertus von Amelnxenin cooperation with team members: Katarzyna Grucszynska, Katarzyna Sliwniska, Agata Wiorko, Johnny Acton and Peter Morris. The symposium will take place the same day as the official opening of the Venice Biennale, with keynote and panels beginning at 10am and Vernissage cocktails from 5:30pm.

THE MAGIC OF MADNESS

**I AM ARMED WITH MADNESS
FOR A LONG VOYAGE.**

Leonora Carrington

10 – 17.30 23 April 2022

Isola di San Servolo

Venice

This symposium brings together leading voices from across the world in the areas of psychiatry, psychology, philosophy, critical and social theory, art theory, the arts and society to discuss and analyse the place of madness in society, the place of society in madness, and implications for the future of humanity.



10:00 Welcome: Richard Hallward

10:10 Keynote: Prof WJT Mitchell (Chicago), “Seeing Through Madness”

▶ **SESSION 1: MADNESS IN SOCIETY**

PANEL 1: Expectation and its disruption: The theory and practice of madness versus the treatment of madness, have we got this constructively right or destructively wrong?

11:00 Presenter: Dr Françoise Davoine (Paris), “The Theatre of Fouls”

11:20 **Chair:** Prof. Sir Simon Wessely (London)

Prof. David Bates (San Francisco)

Dr Richard Bulmer (Guildford)

Dr Françoise Davoine (Paris)

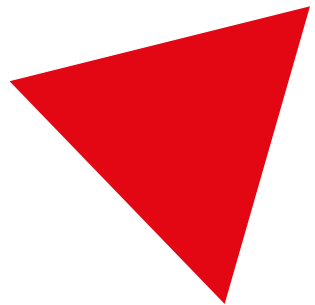
Dr Shruti Kapila (Cambridge)

Dr Catarina Pombo Nabais (Lisbon)

Richard Hallward (Warsaw)

12:00 Audience Q&A

12:20 LUNCH



▶ SESSION 2: MADNESS AND ASYLUM

PANEL 2: Who's the madman? The reality of madness inside the asylum, outside the asylum, and the path to extinction

13.40 **Presenter:** Angela Findlay (Stroud), "The sanity of the arts within the madness of a prison".

14.00 **Chair:** Johnny Acton (Stroud)

Dr Mario Caeiro (Óbidos)

Angela Findlay (Stroud)

Erwin James (Wrexham)

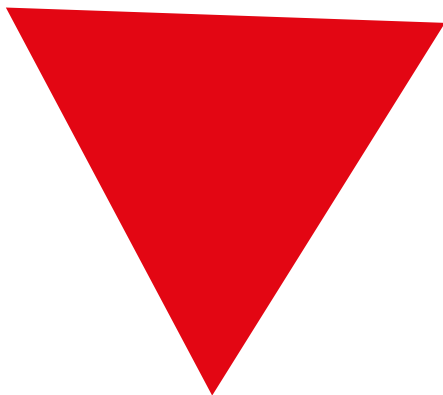
Dr Wouter Kusters (Gouda)

Bianca O'Brien (Paris)

Ratnaboli Ray (Kolkata)

14.50 Audience Q&A

15:05 TEA BREAK



▶ **SESSION 3: MADNESS IN ART**

PANEL 3: The surreal versus the real: What common ground or tension is there between madness, dreams, magic, and normalcy, and why?

15.30 Presenter: Prof. Yehuda Safran (New York), “Laughter and Madness”.

15:50 **Chair:** Prof. Hubertus von Amelunxen (Berlin)

Carlos Amoraes (Mexico City) (online)

Prof. Paul Ardenne (Amiens)

Prof. Raffaele Gavarro (Rome)

Prof. Dominik Lejman (Berlin/Poznan)

Prof. Yehuda Safran (New York)

Prof. Avital Ronell (New York) (online)

Prof. WJT Mitchell (Chicago) (online)

16:50 Audience Q&A

17.00 CLOSING REMARKS

Krzysztof Leon Dziemaszkiewicz – performative intervention in the Kids Asylum

17.30 **COCKTAIL VERNISSAGE**



SPEAKERS **AND** PANELISTS



Johnny Acton is a direct descendent of the great Victorian historian Lord Acton, best known for his dictum that 'Power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely'. He has authored over 20 non-fiction books on a bewildering range of subjects. In his twenties, he worked in a therapeutic community run by a disciple of RD Laing, an experience which cemented a lifelong interest in mental health issues. He is currently working on a book about Maytree, a revolutionary London-based respite centre for the acutely suicidal.



Hubertus von Amelnunxen is the director of the *Archivio Conz* in Berlin with large holdings of Lettrism, Concrete Poetry and Fluxus. He holds the Walter Benjamin Chair at the European Graduate School, specialising in Media Philosophy and Cultural Studies, and from 2013 was the school's President and Provost. A member of the Akademie der Künste in Berlin, von Amelnunxen has written and contributed to several books on photography, media theory and post-structuralism. He has also curated numerous high-profile international exhibitions, among them *Photography after Photography* (1995-6), *Notations* (2008) and *Cy Twombly* (2012).



Carlos Amorales is a multidisciplinary artist who explores the limits of language and translation systems. He uses graphic production as a tool for developing linguistic structures and alternative working models that allow new forms of interpretation. Born in 1970 in Mexico City, he studied at Rijksakademie van Beeldende Kunsten, Amsterdam. He has subsequently held solo exhibitions at institutions including the Philadelphia Museum of Art and the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, with works in the collections of Tate Modern, MoMA and the Guggenheim. Amorales has represented both the Netherlands (2003) and Mexico (2017) at the Venice Biennale.



Paul Ardenne is Professor of History at the University of Amiens, and an art critic and curator. He grew up in a farming family in Charente and was himself a farmer for a period. After studying literature, history and philosophy at the Universities of Poitiers and Toulouse, he completed a doctorate in the history of art at the University of Paris. Since 1990, he has been a regular contributor to the prestigious French contemporary art review *Art Press*. His specific interests include art and politics, art and the body, and art and public space.



David Bates is Professor of Rhetoric and Director of the Center for New Media at UC Berkeley. His work has two main focuses: the history of legal and political ideas, and the relationship between technology, science, and the history of human cognition, with an emphasis on concepts of error and pathology. He is currently working on a new book entitled *Human Insight: An Artificial History of Natural Intelligence*, in which he explores the emergence of human thinking in terms of the entanglement of machine technologies, somatic processes, media practices, and, social/political organisation.

Richard Bulmer has been involved with leading developments in Physics and technology for forty years. During the early 1980s, he worked on a Nobel Prize winning project at CERN's antiproton accumulator, before moving into the field of Semiconductors. In retirement, he has taught Physics to disadvantaged teenagers and is currently exploring neutrino oscillations in relation to dark matter. His scientific viewpoint will provide a fascinating counterpoint to the more conventionally 'psychological' perspective and take us down unexpected avenues relating to magic and magical thinking.





Mário Caeiro is a lecturer, cultural programmer, curator and researcher. He has for many years been an independent cultural activist, focusing on the urban condition through lenses such as the concept of Nothing, the value of Light, and the emergent notion of Mythical Public Space. He is the author of *Arte na Cidade – História Contemporânea* ('Art in the City – Contemporary History', 2014) and has numerous curatorial credits, including *Time-Space-Existence* by Alessandro Lupi at the 2014 Venice Biennale. Mario teaches at ESAD.CR | Polytechnic Institute of Leiria (Portugal) and has been curating works by Dominik Lejman since 2010.



Françoise Davoine is a French psychoanalyst with thirty years practice in public psychiatric hospitals. For many years, she and her late husband Jean Max Gaudillière held a weekly seminar at L'École des hautes études en sciences sociales in Paris entitled 'Madness and the Social Link'. Françoise Davoine is the author of numerous articles and books, including *History Beyond Trauma*, *Wittgenstein's Folly*, and *Mother Folly*, adapted by Mieke Bal and Michelle Williams Gamaker for their film *A Long History of Madness*. She brings to the table both an in-depth knowledge of the history of madness and an insider's perspective on contemporary attitudes and practice.

Angela Findlay is an Anglo-German artist, author, and speaker. Originally trained as an art therapist, she taught art in prisons for many years. Her work explores, through a variety of mediums, the interchangeable nature of destructivity and creativity in our lives. She has a particular interest in the intergenerational relationships between war, trauma, crime, guilt, and art. Her first book will be published in July 2022.



Raffaele Gavarro is an art historian, critic and curator. He has curated numerous exhibitions in museums, public spaces and private galleries in Italy, and is the author of many texts on Italian and international artists. These include *Oltre l'estetica* (Meltemi Editore, 2007); *L'arte senza l'arte – mutamenti nella realtà analogicodigitale* (Maretti Editore, 2020); *Avanti&Indietro – 16 conversazioni sull'arte nel tempo e nella realtà analogicodigitali* (Maretti Editore, 2021). Raffaele is a professor of History and Theory of New Media at the Academy of Fine Arts in Rome.



Richard Hallward has been engaged academically, personally, and professionally with madness, creativity, ideology, and society for more than forty years. A diversity warrior and highly experienced event organiser, he has created and led numerous high profile transformative projects and enterprises across arts, culture, entertainment, government and business, among them *Beyond Bedlam*, which culminated in the publication of the first mainstream anthology of poems by survivors of mental illness. He is also the founder of CEEQA, the leading market insight platform and awards body for commercial real estate investment in Central, Eastern and South East Europe.

Erwin James became a writer while serving twenty years of a mandatory life sentence for murder. He has been a contributor and columnist for *The Guardian* since 1998 and is currently Editor-in-Chief of *Inside Time*, the UK's only national newspaper for people in prison. Erwin is the author of three books: *A Life Inside – A Prisoner's Notebook*, (Atlantic, 2003), *The Home Stretch – From Prison to Parole*, (Atlantic, 2005) and *Redeemable – a Memoir of Darkness and Hope* (Bloomsbury, Feb 2016). He is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts and an Honorary Master of the Open University.





Shruti Kapila is an Associate Professor of Indian History and Global Political Thought and a Fellow of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge. Born, educated, and made in India, she has a long standing interest in the history of the modern subject or 'self' as understood through disciplines of the psyche and mind, notably psychoanalysis and psychiatry. She is currently training to become a psychoanalyst.



Wouter Kusters is a Dutch philosopher and linguist, best known for his books *Pure Madness*, *A Quest for the Psychotic Experience* and *A Philosophy of Madness: The Experience of Psychotic Thinking*. Having experienced two episodes of what is commonly known as 'psychosis', he is particularly qualified to explore and explain the phenomenon through the lenses of philosophy, spirituality and mysticism. His fundamental position is that philosophy and madness can both be understood as different ways of searching for the answers to what he describes as "the most fundamental questions of existence."



Dominik Lejman is one of the most important Polish artists active today. Based in Berlin, he has been described as working in the same manner as a magician, daring us to see the invisible. In recent years his socially-engaged concept of hybrid painting has been highly influential for the younger generation of artists. He connects painting with video projection, produces video murals, creates large-format photo wallpapers, and initiates projects in public space. His works have been widely exhibited internationally. Winner of the 2018 Berlin Art Prize, he is currently Professor of Painting at the University of Arts in Poznań.



WJT Mitchell is the Gaylord Donnelley Distinguished Service Professor of English and Art History at the University of Chicago. An eminent philosopher of media, visual art and literature, he is the editor of *Critical Inquiry*, an interdisciplinary journal devoted to critical theory in the arts and human sciences and of numerous books. He is also the author of *Mental Traveler: A Father, a Son, and a Journey through Schizophrenia*, a moving and powerful account of his son Gabe's quest to transform madness from a curse to a critical perspective.

Catarina Pombo Nabais is a Researcher at the Department of History and Philosophy of Science at the University of Lisbon. After studying philosophy at the Universities of Lisbon and Amiens, she obtained her PhD in Contemporary Philosophy at the University of Paris. Her research interests include contemporary philosophy, aesthetics, metaphysics, science and art, epistemology, ethics and ecosophy – the philosophy of ecological harmony or equilibrium. She focuses her work on concepts of territory, body, ecosophy and creation. She has also developed a parallel career as Art Curator.



Bianca O'Brien is active in an astonishingly wide range of creative mediums and enterprises. She was, *inter alia*, the founder and curator of The Atelier in Paris, which provided a platform for talented artists and photographers overlooked by the 'system', and an editor and producer for *Under the Influence* magazine. She is an accomplished performance artist, who has performed at the Palais de Tokyo, and a photographer whose reportage on Detroit-based artists has been the subject of two exhibitions. Muse to numerous painters, designers and artists, Bianca O'Brien is also a highly successful model, featured on seventy-five magazine covers, including *Vogue*.



Ratnaboli Ray is a trained clinical psychologist and mental health activist, and the founder of Anjali, a rights based organisation based in Kolkata, West Bengal, which works for people with mental health conditions and/or psychosocial disabilities. She is an Ashoka Fellow and has received the Alison Des Forges Award for Extraordinary Activism from Human Rights Watch. She has been recognised as a 'powerful impact woman' by Business Today, and a 'Woman Hero' by the Times Of India.

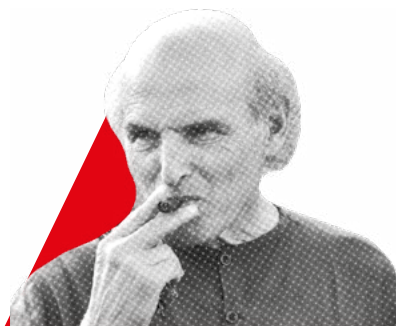
Avital Ronell is the Jacques Derrida Chair and professor of philosophy at The European Graduate School. She is also University Professor of the Humanities and Professor of German, Comparative Literature, and English at New York University, where she co-directs the trauma and violence transdisciplinary studies program. Her work extends across the fields of literary studies, philosophy, feminist theory, technology and media, psychoanalysis, deconstruction, ethics and performance art. The author of more than a dozen books, Avital famously argues for 'the necessity of the unintelligible'.





Simon Wessely is one of the most eminent psychiatrists in the world. A former President of the Royal College of Psychiatrists, he is the UK's first Regius Professor of Psychiatry – an appointment made directly by the Monarch – a chair he holds at King's College, London. His main areas of research include unexplained symptoms and syndromes, military health, and the ways in which people react to adversity.

Yehuda Safran is an intellectually wide-ranging critic of art and architecture. Having studied in London, he has gone on to teach at a range of institutions, from the Jan van Eyck Academy in Maastricht to Nanjing University in China. The author of *Mies van der Rohe* (2000), he is also a prolific contributor to and editor of architectural journals. Safran reminds us that “...things that exist in our mind and nowhere else determine more profoundly what does exist for us than anything outside our mind.”





PONTIFICIO CONSIGLIO
DELLA CULTURA

COMMENTO DEL CARDINALE GIANFRANCO RAVASI SULL'ARTE DI DOMINIK LEJMAN ALLA CHIESA DI SAN SERVOLO

La scelta di collocare queste due immagini all'interno della Chiesa di San Servolo è felice. È un luogo comune per teologi e predicatori adattare alla religione il ruolo originariamente attribuito da Finlay Peter Dunne al giornalismo: confortare gli affitti e affiggere i tranquilli. Se in passato questa cappella era un luogo di conforto per i pazienti dell'ex ospedale psichiatrico, ora ha lo scopo di sfidare noi – i tranquilli e soddisfatti – perché apriamo gli occhi sulla nostra perdurante tendenza ad emarginare o bandire coloro che sono diversi.

Michel Foucault ci ha messo in guardia, svelandoci la follia come una costruzione sociale, un rifiuto di coloro che non rientrano nelle nostre categorie convenzionali di normalità. Ha riconosciuto la capacità della medicina di ridurre l'incidenza della malattia mentale, ma ha insistito sulla realtà persistente di una forma inevitabile di follia: „una cosa rimarrà, la relazione tra l'uomo e le sue fantasie, ciò che non può realizzare, il suo dolore non corporeo, la sua carcassa della notte; una volta che il patologico è nullificato, l'oscura appartenenza dell'uomo alla follia continuerà come memoria perenne di un'infermità la cui forma come malattia è stata cancellata, ma che vive ostinatamente come infelicità”. Le due immagini – *Re-enactment* – ci invitano a guardare nuovamente, a mettere in discussione la nostra rigida separazione „ortodossa” tra sanità e follia.

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Le immagini, con il loro movimento velato, catturano la nostra attenzione e poi cercano di scuoterci o sorprenderci. Questa è una funzione primordiale dell'arte, come ha detto Papa Benedetto XVI: "Una funzione essenziale della vera bellezza, infatti, già evidenziata da Platone, consiste nel comunicare all'uomo una salutare 'scossa', che lo fa uscire da se stesso, lo strappa alla rassegnazione, all'accomodamento del quotidiano, lo fa anche soffrire, come un dardo che lo ferisce, ma proprio in questo modo lo 'risveglia'". Il movimento nell'immagine orizzontale rompe l'apparente passività della figura centrale e parla di un risveglio o di un'ascesa. La manipolazione forzata o obbligata del performer nell'immagine verticale, che ricorda la posa forzata dei pazienti per le fotografie, obbliga chi guarda a considerare la nostra attenzione o il nostro sguardo, il nostro modo di vedere e valutare.

Hubertus von Amelnunxen prende l'idea di Samuel Beckett dello svelamento per spiegare la realizzazione di Dominik Lejman di queste opere. Questo mi spinge ad attingere all'opera del connazionale di Beckett e collega premio Nobel, Seamus Heaney. In una meravigliosa opera intitolata *Seeing Things*, – un titolo che nell'uso colloquiale irlandese suggerisce qualcosa di folle – egli parla di una visita a una cattedrale la cui facciata presentava il battesimo di Cristo scolpito nella pietra. In una sezione della poesia introdotta dalla nozione di *claritas* (la parola latina dagli occhi asciutti, nelle parole del poeta), egli descrive gli squisiti dettagli dell'intaglio ma insiste: „E tuttavia in quella totale visibilità, / La pietra è viva per ciò che è invisibile”. In questi svelamenti, il nostro artista ci porta oltre e sotto la superficie, nel regno del mistero.



PONTIFICIO CONSIGLIO
DELLA CULTURA

CARDINAL GIANFRANCO RAVASI'S COMMENT ON DOMINIK LEJMAN'S ART IN THE CHURCH OF SAN SERVOLO

The choice to locate these two images within the Chiesa di San Servolo is a happy one. It is commonplace for theologians and preachers to appropriate to religion the role originally ascribed by Finlay Peter Dunne to journalism – *to comfort the afflicted and to afflict the comfortable*. If in the past this chapel was a place of comfort for the patients of the former psychiatric hospital, it is now intended to challenge us – the comfortable or complacent – to open our eyes to our enduring tendency to marginalize or banish those who are different.

Michel Foucault has alerted us all to the understanding of madness as a social construct, as a dismissal of those who do not fit into our conventional categories of normality. He acknowledged the capacity of medicine to reduce incidences of mental illness but insisted on the lingering reality of an inevitable form of madness *'one thing will remain, which is the relationship between man and his fantasies, his impossible, his non-corporeal pain, his carcass of night; that once the pathological is nullified, the obscure belonging of man to madness will be the ageless memory of an ill whose form as sickness has been effaced, but which lives on obstinately as unhappiness.'* The two images – *Re-enactment* – invite us to look again, to question our 'orthodox' rigid separation of sanity and insanity.

The images, with their veiled movement, capture our attention and then seek to shock or surprise us.

This a primordial function of art, as Pope Benedict XVI said, *an essential function of genuine beauty, as emphasized by Plato, is that it gives man a healthy 'shock', it draws him out of himself, wrenches him away from resignation and from being content with the hum-drum – it even makes him suffer, piercing him like a dart, but in so doing it 'reawakens' him.* The movement in the horizontal image shatters the seeming passivity of the central figure and speaks of an awakening or rising. The forced or constrained manipulation of the performer in the vertical image which recalls the forced posing of patients for photographs obliges those who watch to consider our own focus or gaze, our way of seeing and evaluating.

Hubertus von Amelunxen takes Samuel Beckett's idea of unveiling to explain Dominik Lejman's achievement in these works. This prompts me to draw on the work of Beckett's countryman and fellow Nobel laureate, Seamus Heaney. In a wonderful work called *Seeing Things* – a title which in colloquial Irish usage suggests something of madness – he speaks of a visit to a Cathedral where the façade featured the baptism of Christ carved in stone. In a section of the poem introduced by the notion of *claritas* (the dry-eyed Latin word as the poet says), he describes the exquisite details of the carving but insists: *And yet in that utter visibility, / The stone's alive with what's invisible.* In these unveilings, our artist takes us beyond and below the surface into the realm of mystery.



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