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Inward / In-ward (Madness and its Ghostly Echo)

I walk along the main corridor of the disused ward, glancing through the small viewing holes cut into the doors that line both sides. Peering through any of these holes, I find a tiny-white-geometric chamber. Unlit, these spaces, once designed to restrain bodies for hours and days on end, are dank and bunker-like.

They continue to disturb me, I am somehow consumed by psychiatric institutions built at the turn of the twentieth century. Perhaps this is because they seem like containers of time: architectural vessels for the memories of whatever took place - denying any hands that may have scrubbed at the bricks and timber to remove the truth of what took place inside them, inside the one I am now walking through. If the various objects, the relics and ornaments once found here, have been taken away, nothing can erase the perturbing energy that continues to circulate within these walls, seeping from the cracks that spider across every surface, radiating from the grid of bars that try to obscure every window. It is an energy that cannot be seen or touched; but its ghostly whispers linger all the same - always haunting, always unfathomable; always haunting *because* it is unfathomable.

How do I find a voice to speak of the people once confined in such spaces, those whose experiences are imperceptible, unable to be caught by or contained in language? What use is a discourse that can only ever describe in a 'given set of articulations' that 'can only signify madness' (Kaufman 1998: 230), bringing us no closer to the actual experiences of those diagnosed as 'mad'? Isn't this what Foucault points to so precisely in *Madness and Civilisation* when he sees the problem of speaking of madness in 'the language of reason'? (Foucault 1989: xiii). In 'Madness and Repetition', Eleanor Kaufman traces this problem through an equation between madness and what she calls an 'absence of work' (Kaufman 1998: 230), suggesting that there is no body of work that can ever speak of the experience of madness. Such a work must remain absent because, as Foucault suggests:

... Western madness has become a nonlanguage because it has become a double language (a language that only exists in this speech, a speech that only says its language) - which is to say a matrix of language that, strictly speaking, says nothing. Fold of the spoken which is an absence of work. (Foucault cited in Kaufman 1998: 231)

It seems impossible, then, to produce a work - of theory or of art - where words like 'reality' and 'madness' might be spoken in the same breath. These words I write are nothing but imaginings; they are not descriptions or representations of any particular experience of madness, but words that will only ever refer back to an 'originary madness' that 'serves as an all encompassing sign for anything that may arise from it' (Kaufman 1998: 221). Even Antonin Artaud - in the tiny white cells that for much of his life closed him off from the outside world - was unsettled by the problems posed by language, 'often resorting to nonsense and magical incantations in his efforts to transcend its limitations' (Hayman 1977: 7). As Marthe Robert notes, most people can only ever have a 'passing, fragmentary, intellectual experience' of what Artaud tolerated every second of the day, not only mentally but also physically (Robert 1996: 27). (note 1)

The speculations of Foucault and Kaufman are warnings about the problems of speaking of those with whom this work is concerned, those whose subjective experiences, I would argue, couldn't be more amorphous, shifting and diverse, and of relying on a term that denotes a singularity - 'madness' - as if the word itself could give that which is indeterminate and ineffable a stable, fixed shape. If I let this word 'madness' leak from my mouth, if I say it once, twice, even ten times in a row, what does such an utterance really mean?

But it is not just this word that haunts my work. It is all words, for, as Kaufman says: 'all the terms fold perfectly back against each other and net a resounding absence' (Kaufman 1998: 231). That is, no matter what words I might choose, madness will never be present in this work nor will this work ever know anything of madness, except through languages (be they visual or textual) that can only ever abstract, signify and represent far too schematically. Thus it can be said that as soon as madness is spoken it is already dead, already nothing but a detached surface of motionless black letters that form the words on a white page or the sounds articulated by a throat and lips to turn rhythm or pitch into words. Perhaps this is what Artaud was trying to describe:

Those who are alive are living off the dead.
So death must live
and there is nothing like a lunatic asylum for hatching death gently
and keeping corpses in an incubator. (Artaud cited in Hayman 1977:
3-4)

Does all this mean, then, that I should settle with knowing there is a place where it is better for the secrets to remain? In the crevices which are the only recollection now of sounds once made by hearts; crevices knotted in bundles, in patterns with strange indices of feeling that know no language? Should I stop at the asylum corridor, at the unmoving black letters, ill with the gut-wrenching sensation that this place provokes, resigned to knowing nothing, to saying nothing again?

The problem is that I cannot stop, for the energy here shivers through me like an electric current that curves and bends around my limbs, folding my senses and pulling me inward. I follow it around the hospital, glancing over the traces of things now gone; finding a small handprint entombed in dust between the bars that cover a window, a torn piece of newspaper lying crumpled in the corner of one of the cells, an old brown shoe growing mouldy in the middle of the bathing area. What do these things mean? Who left them here? What were the movements that came before them? I know now that these questions will always remain unanswerable. Still I keep moving, but do so knowing that a work such as this can only ever be by an 'absence of work' and that this thing madness that I am writing about ceases to exist as soon as it becomes a representation, has already ceased to exist, has become a story, black-inked sketches scribbled haphazardly across a page.

What is at stake for me then? Why do I keep moving?

Perhaps it is because this absence or, in Foucault's terms, 'the empty void from where the work comes' (Foucault cited in Kaufman 1998: 231) is the very thing that captures me, insisting on a response, at the same time as it eludes me. A void where questions begin, and where they become a desire to think things differently. Perhaps this project is, therefore, not aimed at speaking the 'truth' of madness, but is an engagement with, and re-evaluation of 'the apparatus of capture itself' (Kaufman 1998: 232).

In the asylum, I turn to stare at my reflection in one of the windows; the bars knotted together, a grid overlaid on my image. Moving closer, I see how this grid segments and distinguishes each feature - the lips from the nose, the eyes from the cheeks - my face a series of images framed in their own squares. I open and close my mouth and probe at my chin with my fingers, performing a large fake smile. No matter how hard I try to stretch my muscles, each characteristic remains cordoned off by the insistent grid.

What would happen if a nineteenth-century doctor, one of those pioneers of psychiatry, were to catch me here? What disturbance in thought or feeling would he attribute to my gestures? And how would he confront my own doubts and speculations? With logic and

order and explanation? Diagnosing me from no more than the expressions on my face, the way I look at him, the shape of my head?

I am wary of my appearance, my gestures, even if there is no one left alive here to see.

The idea that the face and the body are transparent shells which can reveal the inner being or 'ghost' of a person has a long history (Sobieszek 2001: 17). It reaches its zenith in the late nineteenth century, with facial studies in three then-main disciplines, each of which hypothesised that 'a person's character, subjectivity or even soul' could be deciphered through examination, either of the static face (physiognomy) or the contours and physical make up of the skull (phrenology), or through an assessment of the 'expressions and emotions' (pathognomy) (Sobieszek 2001: 17). The last of these systems is the most useful for my theoretical and creative explorations.

Pathognomy - described as the study of faces set into motion by emotion, as a method for diagnosing the subject's internal state of mind (Browne 1985: 151) - began with G.B. Duchenne De Boulogne. Although Duchenne's portraits of facial expressions were not specifically geared toward an analysis of insanity, his research was profoundly influential, impacting on the work of Jean-Martin Charcot, to whom Duchenne was mentor. Duchenne's studies are significant for my work on representations of insanity, not only because of his participation in the 'obsessive process of dividing, subdividing' and 'classifying piece by piece' (Magli 1989: 91) of the emotions manifested on each area of the face, but also because of his pioneering use of photography as an 'apparatus of capture' to record and document the expressions of his subjects.

During the years following its invention, the belief in the 'objectivity' of the photograph meant it was eagerly adopted by Duchenne and others, who regarded it as ideal for rendering visually true the conclusions drawn from their analysis of the actions of faces and bodies (Sobieszek 2001: 60) (note 2). The confidence in the photograph's ability to replicate reality in all its exactness meant that by the end of the nineteenth century the photograph had been 'ascribed a productive position' within the disciplinary apparatuses of pathognomy, psychiatry and other human-scientific associated fields (Broekmann 1993).

This confidence is exemplified by Charcot and his analysis of photographs of hysteric and epileptic patients housed at La Salpetriere in Paris - images captured by Charcot himself or by his colleagues Paul Regnard and Albert Londe. Although Charcot's pathognomy extends from Duchenne's concentration on the face to an observation of the full body in motion, like his mentor he used the photograph to record the movements and expressions exhibited by his subjects; images which he then treated as data to be deciphered, decoded, scientifically compared and validated (Sobieszek 2001: 76). In a similar fashion to the photographs used by Duchenne, the images created by Charcot and his assistants can be viewed as objects specifically designed for measurement, scrutiny, analysis and the speculation of the medical gaze. The bodies frozen in Charcot's pictures were observed and diagnosed; their conditions flattened out - like the images themselves - into single, clear, objective truths.

Do these investigations of the face and body reach beyond the obscure and dated science of Duchenne, Charcot and their followers? How could those good doctors have ever imagined that they might actually glimpse the ghost beneath the skin of their photographic subject? That they might 'get inside' someone else, feel the quiet and noisy sensations, the calm and the nervous things that hid there in all their inexpressible wholeness? That they might dig deep under the flesh, attempting to pin down whatever circulates in that murky space, the place of no words, the pause between sentences? Isn't this placing scientific confidence in an act that is impossible to configure? How did these illusions, figments of imagination that pretended to be real, that posed themselves as distinctions between sane and insane, gain such momentum and such power?

According to Andreas Broekmann's analysis of the photographic practices adopted by human-scientific disciplines in the nineteenth century, the portraits developed by

Duchenne and Charcot might be read as facialising machines that contributed to a 'visual economy of individuals' in which the expressions manifested on faces and bodies were equated with certain models of subjectivity (Broekmann 1993). The concept of the facialising machine derives from Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's work on the 'abstract machine of faciality' (Deleuze & Guattari 1989: 167) which, as Benjamin Hoh notes, recognises that for a 'face to be significant as a face, its meaning must be produced' (Hoh 1996). For Deleuze and Guattari, facialisation can be understood as a '*white wall/black hole* system' where 'significance is never without a white wall upon which it inscribes its signs and redundancies' and 'subjectification is never without a black hole in which it lodges its consciousness, passion and redundancies' (Deleuze & Guattari 1989: 167).

This does not mean that the organic, corporeal experiences associated with the face - such as the sensation of skin stretching as one smiles - amount to the same thing as the 'wall of the signifier or the hole of subjectivity' (Deleuze & Guattari 1989: 167). Faciality, rather than bearing a relationship to 'literal anatomy', relates to a process of signifying (Hoh 1996). In other words, concrete faces 'cannot be assumed to come ready made' but, rather, are 'engendered by an *abstract machine of faciality (visageite)* which produces them at the same time it gives the signifier its white wall and subjectivity its black hole' (Deleuze & Guattari 1989: 169). The white wall of the signifier and the black holes of subjectivity are always present on/as the face, and there are already numerous possible arrangements in which they can be combined. The most immediate arrangement is a relation between the skin of the face (the white wall, the possibility of expression) and the eyes (the most recognisable 'black holes' on the face, indicators of depth and thus subjectivity). When a face or body is positioned for a portrait, the photographer can situate the camera at a certain angle and use various lighting techniques, either to 'make it reflect light' or, on the contrary, 'emphasize its shadows to the point of engulfing it "in pitiless darkness"' (Deleuze & Guattari 1989: 168). Rendered in such ways, the face can be visualised as making the black holes appear to distribute themselves on the white wall, or the white wall can appear to separate and move towards 'a black hole combining all black holes' (Deleuze & Guattari 1989: 168). The abstract machine, then, determines how faces can be constructed and represented through relations between the white wall and the black holes, inscribing signification onto them 'like a branding or tattooing operation' (Martin 1994: 282). As Deleuze and Guattari note:

The head, even the human head, is not necessarily a face. The face is produced only when the head ceases to be part of the body, when it ceases to be coded by the body, when it ceases to have a multidimensional, polyvocal corporeal code - when the body, head included, has been decoded and has to be overcoded by something we shall call the Face. This amounts to saying that the head, all the volume-cavity elements of the head, have to be facialized. ...But the operation does not end there: if the head and its elements are facialized, the entire body also can be facialized, comes to be facialized as part of an inevitable process. (Deleuze & Guattari 1989: 170)

Faciality can be understood as a method of organising the face - and the body - which is specific, but which may or may not be realised at a given time, in a given place. As Hoh says: 'it is not magical: it arrives at the intersection of existent semiotic systems and varies in particular combinations and emphasis' (Hoh 1996). This is because, for the potential influence of the abstract machine to be realised, it must be infiltrated into social arrangements, discursive structures and ways of living. It must smother those things that deny its force, envisioning a way for the lines of thinking that compose its structure to overcode and overshadow others, enabling their emergence as the 'dominant utterances' or 'established order' of a society (Deleuze and Parnet 1987: 129); a medical practice or a psychiatric method. As Deleuze and Parnet remind us:

The abstract machine of overcoding ensures the homogenisation of different segments, their convertibility, their translatability, it regulates the passage from one side to the other, and the prevailing force under which this takes place. (Deleuze & Parnet 1987:129)

For Charcot and Duchenne the photograph was a signifying tool that, when infiltrated into pathognomy and psychiatry, performed as representational device, and functioned as a medium assisting in the classification and facialisation of subjects. In Charcot's case, images of sane and insane faces and bodies, as well as the movements of individual parts of these faces and bodies, became signs that filtered not only through various schools of psychiatric thought, but also overflowed into broader cultural structures, influencing contemporary social perceptions of bodies, faces and movements as normal or abnormal.

The models of insanity that photography helped to circulate among the medical and social domains of course bore little or no relationship to the subjectivities of those portrayed. We know, for example, that the methods of composing the photographic images strayed across the border between 'scientific' and fictional. Duchenne not only used electric shocks to stimulate the muscles in the face, but his notes and research materials also reveal how various settings and compositions rely on the staging of specific scenes from *Macbeth* (Sobieszek 2001: 65). Looking at his photographs, it is also clear that Duchenne used other theatrical and staged scenarios, depicting his sitters in various religious and, at times, even slightly pornographic poses.

Although Charcot did not resort to electrical currents to cultivate emotional reactions in his patients, it is well known that he was interested in selecting 'highly traumatised subjects' and is quoted as viewing the population of more than five thousand patients at La Salpêtrière as a 'living pathological museum' (Sobieszek 2001: 76). Furthermore, Charcot has been recognised for falling 'prey to social norms' in that rather than photographing male hysterics he focused specifically on recording the 'passionate attitudes' of 'young women' (Olkowski 1999: 118). He created a spectacle not simply of hysterical bodies, but of the hysterical bodies of *women*, producing a 'theatre of hysterics' (Olkowski 1999: 118) that, as Mary Kelly notes, was nothing more than a "play dedicated to the production of unreason as a tangible event" (Kelly cited in Olkowski 1999: 118). Charcot is - and was - also renowned for parading the women depicted in his photographs at his Tuesday lessons and Friday lectures, the popularity of which has been attributed to the strong resonances they had of theatrical production rather than medical analysis, with footlights, spotlights, drawings, sculptures, stage props and costume all contributing to his *mise-en-scène* (Justice-Malloy 1995: 132).

The theatrical devices in Charcot's lectures have been identified as key traits of his photographic processes as well. Londe, for example, recalled that, during one session, Charcot told him to assemble a group of female hysterics in front of a camera to pose for their portraits, and then sounded a large gong that immediately caused them to assume 'wildly cataleptic poses' (Sobieszek 2001: 76). Later accounts would suggest that under the instructions of Charcot, hysterics engaged in a process of play-acting in front of the camera. As Sobieszek notes:

verbal suggestions may induce a female patient to hallucinate and perform like an actor who, beset by madness, imagines that the drama she plays is a reality not a fiction, assuming and speaking the roles of a peasant, an actress and a nun in quick successions. (Sobieszek 2001: 76) (note 3)

The photographs developed by Duchenne and Charcot are nothing but spectres and even though these spectres have been coded, their meanings have 'no real substance' (Thompson 1989: 9). How can we even begin to make sense of the mental states of the patients by staring at their images alone? What do they want? What do they feel when their faces seem to us so blank? If they smile for the camera, does this really mean they are happy? I might be able to scrutinise those same photographs, I might invent fictions about the scenes they contain, but I will always be denied the 'privilege of seeing' (Thompson 1989: 9), the opportunity of *really* knowing what the subjects of those psychiatric portraits were thinking at the moment their images were captured; I will always be denied the recognition and understanding of what *actually* took place as their portraits were taken. Again, Artaud's words seem more than fitting here:

The human face
Is an empty power, a
Field of death...

...after countless thousands of years
 that the human face has spoken and breathed
 one still has the impression
 that it hasn't even begun to
 say what it is and what it knows. (Artaud cited in Gardner 1987)

Is the only thing left to do, then, to embrace the nothingness I register walking in the asylum, to accept that a work on madness must also be a work of absence? My first instincts suggested I needed to look for ways of representing the subjectivities of the insane as 'imperceptible' and 'clandestine' (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 171). But exactly how would I represent the unrepresentable, inscribing in visual or textual language what eludes inscription? Not only that: how would I expect the viewer or reader to comprehend any such inscription which in effect denies itself? For me, Alphonso Lingis recognised precisely the problem here:

If you want to speak of them murmuring together, without subjecting them and yourself to the law...if you want to tell of them speaking to you as outsiders, nomads and outlaws, you must never pronounce this word. But how then will others understand what you say - others who, like yourself, speak imperial English, which they have learned and continue to learn from their imperial media? (Lingis 1994: 299).

I decided on a different approach, one which relied on my own experiences of walking through asylums, of my own in-sanity, that is, my recognition of those figures that I sensed were still in such places as *more* than photographs, the ghosts that existed as *more* than records. I needed to accept that I could not know what it meant to be a patient in an asylum, but that I could still create images that *imagine* a presence for those who all too often seem forgotten. In this way I might realise the "potential for absence to re-establish itself as presence" and even though this presence is necessarily fictional, I still recognise it as "an active participant in the realm of memory" (Kennedy cited in Walkling 2002: 16).

My theoretical investigations, particularly as they merged with the experiences during my many hours in disused psychiatric wards, led me to adopt, as both a photographic and a conceptual device, the figure of the ghost. The ghost can walk *through* walls, manifesting where it is most inconvenient for it to do so. Moreover, while it can be spoken of or constructed (and the terms of the latter are increasingly more negotiable due to the possibilities offered by new technologies) it is also, according to rational western thought, something that cannot be heard, seen, touched - its existence is intangible, absent, never quite real. When the ghost is rendered visible, as it is in the images I produced, the 'taken for granted realness of photography' is marked as being 'largely illusory' (Thompson 1989: 9) because the ghost in its perceivable form can only ever be a delusion or hallucination: a nothingness whose visual presence is conceivable only through trickery of façade. As Irene Bignardi says: 'a photo that represents a ghost is - almost certainly - a fake' (Bignardi 1989: 7).



Sarah-Mace Dennis 2003. *Tracing the Trail of the Dead: Asylum Bathing Area #1*. Lambda print 100cm x 150cm.

Isn't madness too, as experience, just such a ghost within a shell, something that can never be seen? And so, to put it in Bignardi's terms, a representation of madness is - almost certainly - a fake. It is an elusive experience that exists below the surface of the skin, which cannot be defined by the abstract codes carved into wrinkles, lines and expressions. The traces left behind by the photographs and the writings produced by the practitioners of physiognomy and psychiatry in the nineteenth century might be read as attempts at visually exposing the experiences that lie beneath the surface, but they are never anything more than fictional constructions of things that will never be known. Couldn't it be said that, in thinking they were able to determine the truth of what madness is, the men who created these photographs in fact provided us with images that were nothing but delusional fakes, and so evidence of *their own* madness? But there is something else that needs to be noticed about the problem of madness and photography whose terms those practitioners first confronted, because the ghost that is seen also ceases to exist as a ghost. No longer a spirit-like apparition that cannot be witnessed, it has transformed itself into a surface. Thus my own work, along with the work of Duchenne and Charcot, doesn't deal with 'real' ghosts but, rather, with images of shells *pretending* to be ghosts.

Not only did I need to accept the inevitably fictional status of my photographs, but the photographs themselves would need to carry signs that they were not dealing with 'real' ghosts but, rather, with images of shells pretending to be ghosts. These shells-that-act-as-ghosts have been placed in staged scenarios, situations that never occurred. The recognition of the performed, or simulated, nature of the work references the theatrical elements of Duchenne's and Charcot's photographs, but it also resonates with the forged nature of performance noticed by Martin Jolly about early twentieth century spirit photography. As Jolly says:

Spirit photographs are performative. Their power lies not in their relationship to a pro-filmic real elsewhere in time and space, but in their audience's relationship to them in the audience's own time and place. They solicit a tacit suspension of disbelief from the audience, while at the same time they brazenly inveigle a tacit belief in special effects. These special effects are traded from other genres, such as cinema or stagecraft... (Jolly 2002: 37)



Sarah-Mace Dennis 2003. *Tracing the Trail of the Dead: Asylum Cell*. Lambda print. 100cm x 150cm

What also contributes in my photographs to a sense of unreality or to the suspicion on the part of the viewer that there is something not quite right about the scenarios depicted, is that all the male figures are portrayed by the one actor and so too all the female figures. The repetition of the two faces serves several functions. In one respect they seek to provoke questions about the methods of classification adopted from physiognomy and pathognomy in the founding movements of psychiatry in order to cut the mad out of the map of the 'sane' topography of human subjectivity. The characters in the work shift roles and persona, visually echoing each other in a way that casts doubt upon the sane / insane, normal / abnormal dichotomies inscribed into psychiatric thought and discourse. In doing so they also pose a series of questions for the viewer: Where do you draw the line? How much can be known or understood simply from looking at a face? Can't the expressions of the face be manipulated and changed just by stretching and twisting its components? How do we really know what is 'true or false in any given visual statement?' (Hill 2000: 3).

The repetition of the faces also emphasises the artificial nature of the images, which deliberately present themselves as fakes bearing no relationship to truth or universal law. Like Duchenne and Charcot, I use the camera, but instead of images offered up to the scientific gaze I pose the photographs as questions about psychiatry's claims to account, universally and absolutely, for the real. The characters enacted, ghosted, repeated and overtly theatricalised draw attention to their own staging and disavow any reference to external reality. At the same time, by allowing the characters to slip comfortably into the culturally coded representational systems of psychiatry, I gesture toward a recognition that images of madness, whether in psychiatric texts, photographs or historical documents, are, like narrative discourses, constructed, conventionalised and, ultimately, fictional.

An interest in fiction led me to adopt fictocriticism as a way of dealing with ideas in the written aspect of the work. This is a useful approach, because in my exploration of madness, the line between fiction and criticism is always frayed. I walk through the dark spaces of the asylum, finding small creases of light on the walls, passing by objects that once belonged here, that once meant something. In my head I try to re-construct their meaning, imbuing it with abstract significance. I write about this space to try to understand it, but all I can ever understand is the empty void that I try to fill with abstract stories and words. My stories aren't *just* the photographs taken in the space, they are the space - the traces of everything that came before. In these rooms there are no facts.

Isn't it true that the doctors who once worked here wrote about their 'mad' patients in the same way that I write about these decrepit, abandoned rooms - the faces of the mad a tangled web of abstract lines psychiatry's stories tried to decode? A dangerous game of fiction, posing as fact! Are the lines between madness and insanity any more different than the lines between fiction and criticism crossed and re-crossed during the course of this work? Is it true that there is no line at all, just an imaginary code that Western civilization has created as a way of enforcing normality, self-conditioning and control?

The erasing and untangling of dominant lines of thinking has meant that interdisciplinary links between media have emerged in the methodology adopted by my practice. In the process of creating both the text and the images involved in this project, the boundaries between photograph, story and theory are almost impossible to define. The feeling of some sort of presence in the room or cell where I was taking a photograph would become stimulus for a section of creative writing, which in turn lead to a theoretical exploration of the concept of the ghost, and how this concept could be applied to the space of the asylum and theories about madness. What started as a story of a ghost then, became a theoretical concept used to talk about madness, a theoretical concept which was also interpreted through the media of photography in the images. The writing becomes the theory that becomes the fiction that becomes the photograph that tells a story of something that may or may not have happened at some time, some where. It could be said that the methodology used by my practice, and the methodology used by psychiatry, are closely aligned. The outcome differs in that the stories that I try to tell are different from the ones that psychiatry told. Mine only ever acknowledge fiction, while psychiatry only acknowledges fact.

There is another aspect that both the writing and the images have in relation to narrative traditions. The directions of my theoretical investigations have meant that, from the outset, I have been aware of the difficulty in reaching a closure in any project pursuing my own creative practice. That is, 'a fully resolved representation of the un-representable' is neither 'possible nor even desirable' (Ennis 2002: 3). The idea of fiction has been important because it allows me to develop representations of madness in a narrative space that offers multiple readings for the viewer and, as such, underlines the impossibility of a closed work.

Such fictions are, as I have suggested, already implicated in the beginnings of psychiatry, to the extent that it relied on the photographic methodologies of Duchenne and Charcot, making it part of a mystery theatre that evokes an 'unavoidable and inexhaustible *presence of nothingness*' (Hiebert 2001). Given these beginnings, psychiatry perhaps needs to acknowledge how it depends on, as much as it is a cure for, hallucinations and imaginings which always evade the truth; and needs to recognise that madness as appearance, as photograph, as language, can only be fiction presented as reality - can only be that which cannot be inscribed or articulated in the first place.



Sarah-Mace Dennis 2003. *Tracing the Trail of the Dead: Asylum Bathing Area #2*.
Lambda print. 100cm x 150cm

Notes

1) When the 'lining' that is language is 'unlined', when it is unpicked and unwrapped from those experiences that it encloses, there is, as Foucault reminds us:

...no longer anything but a silence, a look, slow motion gestures that unfold in the empty space beneath the masks... [T]his gentle shadow that makes things visible from beneath their surface and their mask and allows one to speak about them, isn't this from their birth, the proximity of death, of death that unlines the world like the peeling of fruit? (Foucault cited in Kaufman 1998: 232-3). Return to text

2) See, for example, John Welshman: '...the photographic became the crucial domain of conflict between the real and the reproduced' staging its 'signification through an implicit notion of the absolute: thus photography becomes the ghost in the machine of rational and universalist knowledge, the very flicker of the god form' (Welshman 1988: 134-135). Return to text

3) What much of the photography employed by early psychiatric practice amounts to is a 'representational, facial surface onto which bodies are inscribed' (Broekmann 1993), a fold over the real which existed outside the patient, and in which the wider population's perception of them emerged. We do not see, for example, what Patrizia Magli calls the 'non-time' of an actual person, 'lost in the uninterrupted fluctuation of lights and shadows' (Magli 1989: 90). Indeed, what we are instead confronted with is, in Magli's words: '...the time of a "measure" that stills things, develops a formal image and locks it into an absolute fixity, wherein it then interprets proportions, defines outlines, and attempts to establish essential traits... Thus we find, on the one hand, the uncertain conjectures rooted in everyday experience, not formalized by the powerful and fierce instrument of abstraction, and, on the other, a tendency to freeze the ineffable qualities of the face in a system of strictly coded equivalences' (Magli 1989: 89-90). Return to text

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