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The Screen Will Not Fill the Void

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#### **Abstract**

The output is an artist's book consisting of images drawn by Donna Coleman with responding poetic texts by Garry Barker.

**Research process:** The research consisted of a series of online exchanges, whereby conversations between two artists were developed as poetic texts written by Garry Barker made in response to drawn images developed by Donna Coleman. The arising artefact consists of a 40-page artist's book, published online and in print.

**Research insights:** The object of the collaboration was to develop an understanding of how two individuals with very different world views could work together to produce a complex integrated art object.

**Dissemination:** this artist's book has been published and disseminated by Workshop Press.

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DONNA COLEMAN



The Screen Will Not Fill the Void



Donna Coleman

# The screen will not fill the void

A series of drawings with written reflections by  
Garry Barker

Workshop Press

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Cover image Donna Coleman: The screen will not fill the void II

Donna Coleman

The screen will not fill the void

A series of drawings with written reflections by  
Garry Barker



# The screen will not fill the void

## Introduction

Donna Coleman and Garry Barker are both artists that live in Leeds, a medium sized city in the North of England. Besides the fact that they live in the same city and are both artists, it could be argued that they have little in common except for the fact that they both use drawing to visualise their experiences.

Donna Coleman is an artist that often uses ballpoint pens. She works with what most of us use everyday to make notes about reminding ourselves to buy bread or to jog our memory about a meeting we might easily forget. You can buy a pack of twenty ballpoint pens for the same amount of money as a tube of paint, a fact that perhaps helps think of Donna's drawings as being approaches to making art that are available to everyone, just as the ballpoint pens are. But not everyone has the same vision; working in a gap between figuration and abstraction, her drawings transcend their medium, conjuring up images of disembodied heads floating in space, drifts of smoke fading into a haze of biro lines or dust devils, those short lived whirlwinds that we often find blown into shape near the bottom of tall buildings. A cloud of vibrating lines will come slowly into focus as a human and then as you stare at it, it may dissolve back into a swirl of marks. Sometimes she will leave gaps, returning attention back to the paper surface revealing all as an illusion, her drawings sitting in that space of uncertainty that many of us live in, reminding us that all is illusion and that our reality is one of vibratory patterns, nerve patterns on a screen, sometimes perceived by others and at other times invisible to all but the artist.

Garry Barker writes about drawing, every week composing his thoughts on the subject for his drawing blog; as well as writing fiction and making drawings himself.

This publication is designed to open out a space between images and text. A space for meditation and reflection on the parallel processes of drawing and writing, both of which have in W. B. Yates' words, being made from a mouthful of air. One is that mouthful you hold in yourself as you draw, waiting for that moment between marks where you can exhale and the other is that breath that waits for a full stop. Punctuation being exactly that, spaces within the text to breath in.





Donna Coleman: The screen will not fill the void II: 2020  
Ballpoint pen on paper

'The screen will not fill the void', is a title that gives this publication its name and it focuses on one of the main themes that emanates from Donna Coleman's work.

We spend more and more time looking at screens. Our personal lives are conducted via the mobile phone screen, our working lives see us sitting for hour after hour in front of computer screens and our evening entertainment often finds us staring at the TV screen. This unprecedented situation has found the human race inventing itself into a situation for which it is ill prepared. Evolution usually takes time, it took millions of years to evolve brains that could process the new world made available to us when as a species we began to stand upright and walk. The first TV screen came into my street during the 1950s, the first computer into my work place in the 1980s and the mobile phone became an ever-present thing in my pocket just after the new millennium. Rather than humans adapting their tools to enable them to survive a harsh environment, for the first time the tools we have made are forcing us to become something we are little prepared for. Whole areas of our brains are either falling into disuse or being forced to respond to situations that there is no precedent for. The physical and mental consequences are plain to see as we face growing obesity, fast rising levels of diabetes and above all an exponential growth in the numbers of those who have experienced serious psychological distress, major depression or suicidal thoughts.

Donna has, like all of us, had first hand experience of what it is like to live in a world dominated by the screen. But, perhaps because of her particular sensitivity to the nuances of person-to-person communication, she has realised that what this situation means, is that we have become outsiders in our own world. We have created a society where we are all born into a state of existential doubt. We seek affirmation through 'likes' and count the numbers to test out whether or not our very existence has touched the lives of anyone else. As Diana Ross put it, 'Where did our love go? Don't you want me no more?'

This situation can make us feel invisible, unwanted and in a very dark place. But it is in the dark place of our unconscious that the seed of creativity is born and as social media expands to extend its blanket over all our conscious lives, Donna has begun to open that inner eye, the one that provides perception beyond ordinary sight, the one that can provide illumination, as to the true nature of our situation.

We use a biro to make notes, to doodle; it is an informal tool, the quotidian version of the fountain pen. It is a tool of the everyday, a place and time that we need to inhabit if we are ever going to achieve any form of mindfulness when faced with anxiety for the future or worry about the past. We tend to think that most contemporary art is because it is new, about the aesthetics of the everyday; however one of the findings of comparative aesthetics is that a much greater emphasis is placed on the aesthetics of everyday life in many non-Western cultures, than there is in Western art. The art that surrounds us might be new, but its aesthetic sensibility can easily lie far in the past or be a conscious one step removal from life, as advocated by Kant's disinterested interest. Donna, is not disinterested, she uses her biro to awaken us from our deep sleep, to capture the ghosts of appearance that escape being mere nerve patterns on a screen.

Drawing is an old way of thinking. As the hand held applicator traces its way across the surface of a sheet of paper, it leaves a record of intention that is part physical and part mental. A biro slips and slides over the paper surface. It pushes down into the cellulose fibres that cushion its travel. These same fibres also offer capillary suction, sucking up into the paper's grain that stiff ink that runs from the tiny rolling steel ball at the biro's tip. As the biro moves it records the fine-tuned linkage between fingers and wrist and arm and elbow and shoulder. The perfectly attuned movements that begin in the head are also tracing out the rhythm of the heart of the maker. Each mark a seismocardiographic recording of low frequency waves generated by a beating heart and transmitted to the surface of the paper by the hand held pen. Here feeling merges with expression, intent with application, the limitations of material being both those of the biro and of the human body. As you stare at these drawings you are also looking at the traces of someone's life. If you were trained, like a cardiologist, to read the lines of energy that make up these images, you would see a gradually emerging presence of a preserved life force.

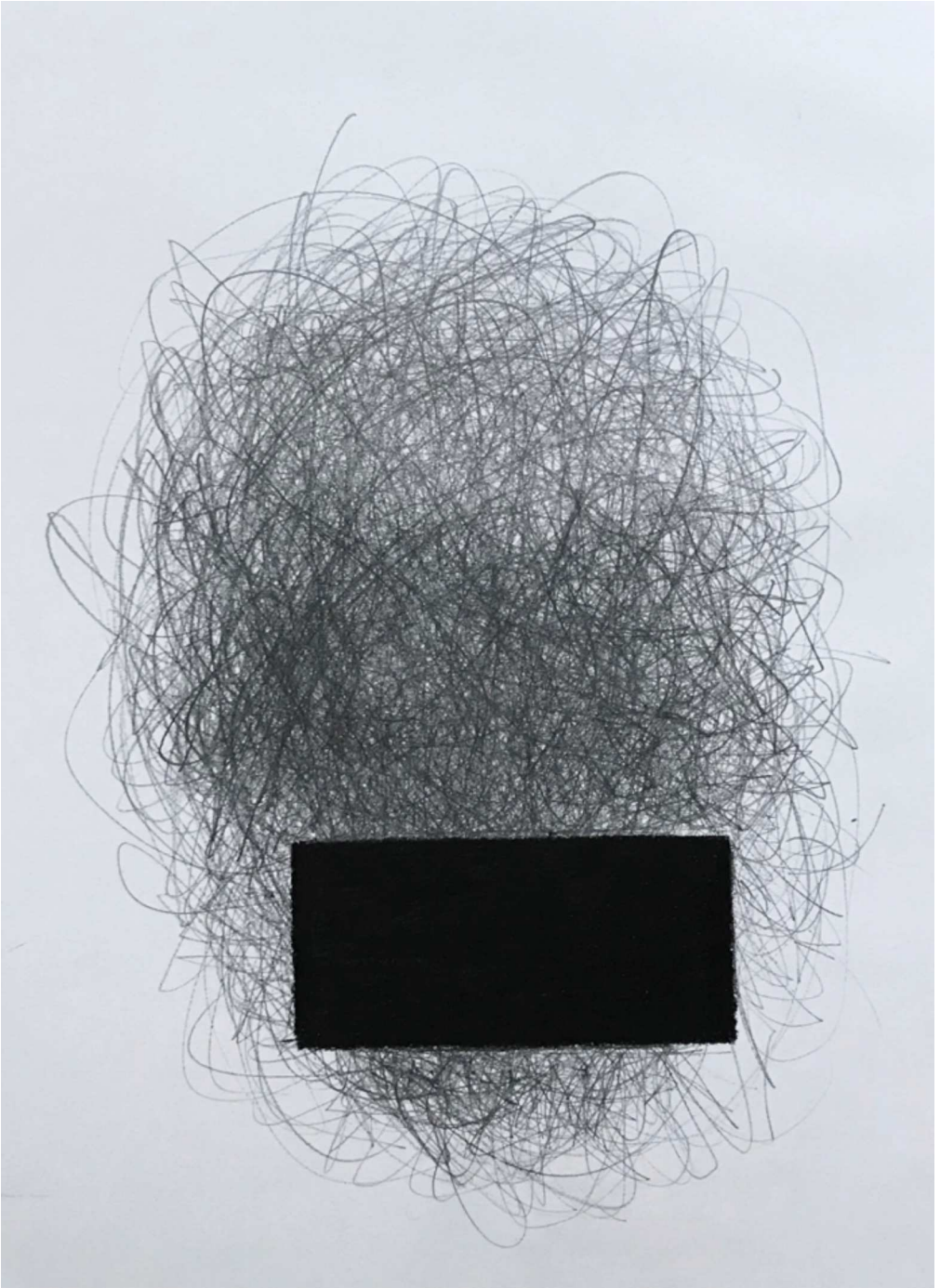
'Life' in drawing is vital to its success as an image and as it is by its very nature a construction, certain 'formal'

principles need to be used to generate this life force. In this case the energised line, a line repeated and repeated until it becomes a mass.

Hans Hoffman had this to say about the creative process; *"it lies not in imitating, but in paralleling nature; translating the impulse received from nature into the medium of expression, thus vitalising the medium. The picture should be alive, the statue should be alive and every work of art should be alive."*

Each of these drawings is alive, each one a parallel universe in which creatures like but unlike ourselves begin to emerge out of a welter of living lines, lines incised and incisive, that can cut to the quick. As drawings they might at first appear to be small, but this is an illusion, scale was never a matter of size, scale is a matter of relationships and just as your relationship with your mobile phone is much bigger than you would dare admit, Donna Coleman's relationship with her drawings is so intense, that as you look at them you can be sucked down into their existential space.

Looking at these drawings is an intrapersonal experience, you stand toe to toe, face to face with another reality, one that like you has experienced anxiety, has been burnt by exposure to social media and that has been made sad by the failure of a promised reality that never arrived. These are the non-portraits of negative theology, whereby to speak only in terms of what may not be said about something, is the only way to say something. Therefore, paradoxically, as negative space increases, we find that the only way for an artist to depict an image of ourselves as the new outsiders, is by an image's negation.



Donna Coleman: Screams in Silence 2020  
Graphite on paper

On Saturday the 6th of June 2020 a few weeks after the initial written response to Donna's drawing, 'The screen will not fill the void', Donna and Garry agreed that they would continue to develop conversations around her drawings and his writing. Later that day her drawing 'Screams in Silence' arrived as an e-mail attachment and a new conversation began.

It had been a difficult week, not just because of the on-going effects of the lockdown and corona virus, but because of the events following the death of George Floyd in the USA. Floyd had been held down by a police officer that knelt on his neck for several minutes and did nothing as he complained that he couldn't breathe and then as Floyd's body ceased struggling, the officer continued to push his neck down into the road until he was dead. Floyd was black, the four police officers that were arresting him were white, and nobody stepped in to interfere as his cries for help were heard, but someone videoed the event and the video went viral. The outrage was not about this one incident, it was a cry of rage and frustration by black people everywhere who had suffered indignity and racial violence for year after year after year, and who felt the impact of George Floyd's last words, "I cant breathe!" as if they were collectively suffocating under that police officer's weight.

Donna had made the drawing 'Screams of Silence' in the time before Floyd's death, however, a drawing initially done in response to her own individual struggle to face life in difficult times, suddenly seemed to take on another level of meaning.

All drawings begin with breathing; our breath unfolds out of the body as part of its rhythmic immersion into the day. All human beings are simple tubes, an outside that becomes an inside as the skin folds over into the mouth. Some of these skins are dark and some are light, but all are the same mix of red and white and grey and blue and yellow, when the outside of the tube becomes the inside.

The hand that grasps the pen will move with a rhythm that began with a breath, a breath that fed a heartbeat, a heartbeat that pushed red blood down an arm into a hand, a hand that moved as a mind saw a face in the paper before it. At first a drawing is a vibration, an energy field of marks, marks that record the tracing of a hand as it moves, like a private skater dancing over the white ice of smooth paper.

These lines made by a hand, are in their turn looking for something, searching for a head that can never come into focus, swirling through a space that never quite becomes a mass, energising the paper space, dancing with life, and trying to become a someone, but at that moment where a face might just begin to come into focus, the image is gagged, and suddenly held down. A solid black rectangle presses itself down into the swirl of life energy; the drawing is flattened and pushed back by a solid bar of reality. The thick black lines that are used to edge an undertaker's card are a sign of death; a formal statement that the person who presents this card deals with the events of death. A dark rectangle, can be a coffin or a gag or a slot through which to post a message into the next world.

Is this image about Donna or about the society that Donna lives in? Is her energy trapped beneath a black bar, or are we seeing an allegory for a time when people of colour rarely come into focus, a time when certain people are always seen as there but not there, able to exist but not given a proper existence. Or is this about the mental state of being kept isolated, of feeling alone and unloved, of attempting to arrive but never quite getting there?

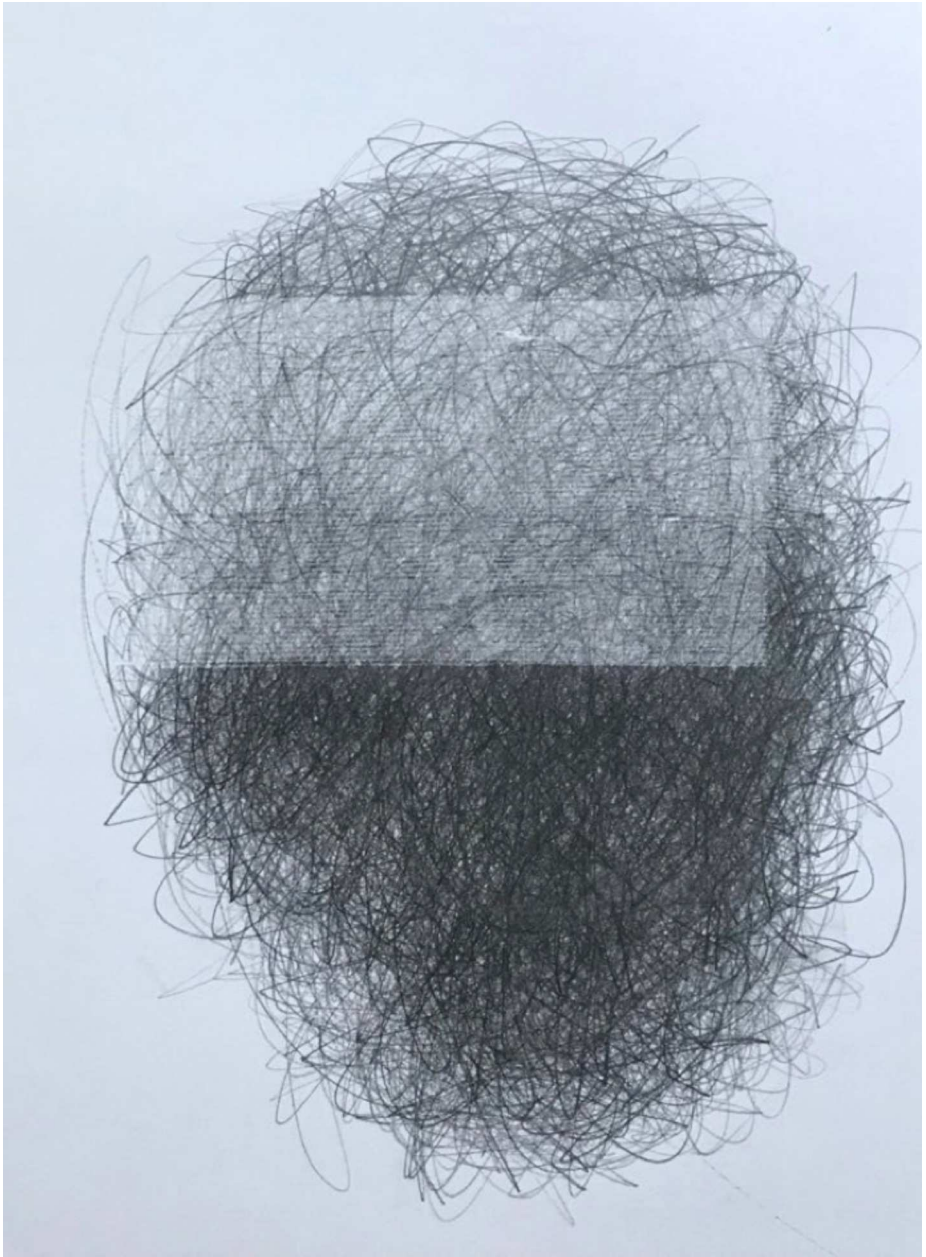
An individual can never be taken out of society, because that society is itself only a collective of individuals, individuals who can never be untangled from their environment, an environment that shapes them as they attempt to move through it, a space that as we they move through it, is in turn shaped by the eddies and ripples of the people's passing. As Donna moves through her life, she leaves behind a powerful current, one that flows into forms that we call drawings, drawings that momentarily freeze into images.

'Screams in Silence' is one such image, an image floating in a void, a void that we all step into as we step back from being sucked into the maelstrom of today's news, as our society tries to take on board the implications of George Floyd's death.

We can't breathe

In memory of George Perry Floyd Jr. (October 14, 1973 – May 25, 2020)





Donna Coleman: Mine Anxious Eyes 2020  
Graphite on paper

Graphite is a fascinating substance. As it leaves the tip of the pencil and transfers itself onto the rough surface of a sheet of paper, it is in one state and in another at the same time. It is this fluctuation that lies behind a reading of these drawings that takes us into the world of quantum mechanics, into an anxious world where identity is never fixed and one thing is always another. If you could walk ever closer to me at some point our noses would touch. But because our eyes are very limited in their ability to focus, all we would be able to see of each other would be the creased and pimpled surface of our relative skins, a surface that has often divided us. But what if our eyes were more like microscopes, what if we could enlarge the view? The skin would become like a landscape, holes would appear in what were smooth surfaces and giant hairs would protrude like spears. However, if our eyes were like electron microscopes, we would eventually begin to see that what seemed like a coherent whole, was actually a cloud of spinning electrons and other atomic particles, vibrating with their own rhythms and existing and disappearing in a subatomic flux.

These images of Donna's are both macro and micro, they are on a macro level portraits of their micro selves. Drawn using graphite, they are also portraits of graphite, a material that sheers away from itself and slides onto and into the much tougher paper that it comes into contact with. Its internal structure is such that you can pull its thin layers away, very easily. Hexagonal nets of carbon atoms are stacked in layers, half the atoms in one layer, directly above those in the layer below. This system leaves some atoms sitting directly above gaps in the adjoining layer, a situation ripe for splintering and layer separation. At a subatomic level these situations can be represented by using field theory and in diagrams of field theory lines can be doubled, acting either as representations of positrons moving forwards in time, or as electrons moving backwards in time. The interpretations are mathematically identical and this is also true of this drawing, it moves both backwards and forwards in time. As these lines vibrate, a pale ghost of a rectangle emerges, both a ghost from the past and an intimation of a future.

Everything has a history, in the past English Borrowdale graphite was used to line moulds for making cannonballs, this made them smoother and enabled them to be fired farther. These weapons were then used to kill at further and further distances. Power balances shift and today the graphite mines are mainly in China. At night in areas around the mines, the air sparkles, as

graphite powder from mining operations settles gently over the ground. If the moon is shining the landscape will twinkle and softly glow as the hexagonal structure of graphite reflects the moon's light, the tiny graphite particles, diamond like, glinting in the dark. Graphite dust has now settled on what was once rich farming country, the ghosts of dead farmers rising at night from the fields, looking uncannily like Donna's drawings.



X ray of graphitosis lung

They can't breathe

In memory of all those who have died digging for other people's profit



Donna Coleman: Cyber desensitisation 2020  
Ballpoint pen on paper

There is a particular blue that biro ink is dyed with and it sits on the violet side of blue. It is not quite a violet, still a blue but hovering in that colour space that suggests if the background was yellow, simultaneous contrast might tip the blue into violet. If you stare at this drawing long enough, a halo will gradually emerge around its edges, it will be a very pale softly glowing yellow/orange egg; an egg this is laid every time the drawing is looked at. Of course you don't normally notice, but it is there; Prussian blue coloured electro-magnetic waves impacting on your rods and cones, tiring out blue receptors and causing an opposite reaction. This optical egg will only last for a brief moment, it is sometimes hard to even realise it exists, but for a few seconds it will hover there, a something that exists that has no reality, a presence that hides behind this blue ballpoint drawing.

But there is another message here, one that flaps across this soft blue oval as if blown there by a strong wind, now is pasted across the egg's face as a sticking plaster. A duct tape over the mouth of a hostage, ensuring no scream will emerge, no matter what. A voice silenced, a gagged cry, a sound muffled; someone is being stopped from being human, they can't become themselves, their oval face will never be complete, a rectangle is torn out, a mouth missing and a story erased. This is the desensitisation of our new cyber reality. You think you have a voice but in fact you voice an algorithm. An invisible gag now shuts your face, as you sit in front of screens, as words are put into your head and your fingers do the talking. Nothing is real in this world, selfies constructed to create an illusion of another life, gradually become the pattern that directs what little life is left. Likes will lick you into shape and you will see and hear the pattern of your life as cut out by cyberspace.

On this blank blue ovoid screen a face begins construction, growing out of the glabella, the patch of skin that sits between the eyebrows and above the nose, a surface out of which an idea of a face takes shape. It is in that space above the glabella that in some cultures a third eye grows, an eye that is open to the mystic world and to paranormal events. Only those with a special sensitivity, a sign of which is their floating blue aura, can channel these hidden currents, and they will read these drawings as roadmaps or circuit diagrams for lost souls. If Donna had been alive in the nineteenth century she would have been seen as a mystic conjurer of ectoplasm and her drawings as Theosophical illustrations of out of body experiences. In the twenty-first century they could be visualisations of "near death" events, such as those during heart operations or car accidents; times when the experience of being outside our physical body occurs and when the idea of normal consciousness extends out beyond what were thought to be the body's boundaries.



Donna Coleman: Isolated Anxiety 2020  
Graphite on paper

This anxious cloud of unknowing frenetic darkness channels both life and death at the same time. It is a tree blown into a frenzy in a howling wind, its leaves shaking their collective hands at the invisible force that spins around its trunk. It is also at the same time something much darker, an echo of a threatening cloud, of an unfurling mushroom that grew from the site of a nuclear explosion; a ghost message from Hiroshima.

When sailors on ships were asked to report on the first nuclear tests, they looked at the impact through slits designed to give them a certain amount of protection from the blast. Afterwards their faces had sunburns in rectangles around their sore red eyes. In Japan, those who experienced the full force of these explosions would afterwards look in vain for their own eyes.

Black eyeless faces of shadow people were what was left of the populations of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, ghosts of the 340,000 people who died in the wake of these two bombs. These ghosts would then live alongside the lost generations who were to be slowly but surely poisoned by the radiation that lived on in the bones of the land where they grew up.

This grey phantom, a graphite cloud, conducts an electric charge that spins out through its centre, its lines of graphite conducting enough of a charge to ignite a spark, to light a fuse and trigger an explosion in the mind.

What was last is now first, the slave is the master; energy is now mass and the mountain is now dust. All is change and change is all, the first one now, will later be last, the spinning atom unfurls itself and opens as a flower in the dark, as an energy glowing in the night, caught and put to work in a sweatshop. It sheds its wings and cries in fear, never to fly again, only to live in a forever nostalgia; waiting, waiting for the time when men and stone become one and women and trees the other.

Waiting

and

waiting.





Donna Coleman: It creeps in 2020  
Ballpoint pen and graphite on paper

As one material finds itself it can become almost too sure of its place in the world. Sometimes it will need to make an accommodation with another that is not itself. When we heal we often need to go through a process of accommodation. Those stitches we had, that plaster we needed to put on to staunch the blood, they were vital to our survival and they clove to our bodies closely but now they are discarded as redundant. The mask is also like this. We put it on to face the world. Like makeup for the faceless, a mask covers our anonymity with anonymity. Those of us that always shun the limelight, now finding it easy to slip by unnoticed, our traceless lives even more traceless now that the only thing asked of us, is not to cough.

But some personalities creep in from nowhere. Mr Hyde hides in plain sight sometimes, switching on his psychosis at a moments notice, while the doctor wasn't looking. A grimace and its done, a grey shift clears the blue and what was is gone, the split person revealed as the true identity.

Graphite is dug out of mines, inks are the product of the petro-chemical industry; old and new technologies leave their traces side-by-side, vibrating in unison, knitting themselves into a knot that only an Alexandrian sword slice can untangle. Cleaving together and apart these slipped off faces, like the thin make-up of victims, or the erased masks of those who are always missing, not because they never wanted to be found, but because they were never asked to be here in the first place. Outsiders looking in are rarely brought in from the cold, they shiver in their nakedness, waiting, waiting for that time when they can enter.

At one moment I almost saw an eye, a pupil glimpsed out of the corner of my own eye. Was I looking for myself in this? Eye to eye, nose-to-nose, face-to-face, that mirror that always seems to sit in front of reality, will one day need to be broken, but not today, because today we have the naming of the elements.

Paper  
Ballpoint pen  
Ink  
Graphite  
Hand  
Mind  
Eyes  
Difference  
Other



Donna Coleman: Derealisation 2020  
Ballpoint pen on paper

Objects dissolve and people become insubstantial. If you are invisible you get trodden on and when trodden on some of us become angry, others remain done to. Anger can coil up inside itself, become hotter as it seeks an escape, a gas pushing at the walls of its glass container, the red hot atoms getting closer and closer together, as they vibrate faster and faster. Looking out from within, it's hard to see what's out there beyond the glass, anger mists the eyes, dissolving what's left of the reality out there, out there in no woman's land.

How many years of injustice do you have bottled up inside you?  
How many times have you been singled out as an object of hate?  
How many days has it taken to boil your blood? To raise your temperature enough to melt the glass.

Can a drawing blush? Can its cheeks glow red? Can it be shy and angry? Can it be flushed with desire as well as give cold comfort? All sounds are vibrations, but some vibrations are not sounds, some are feelings and others are simply waves, waves that when we swim amongst them, can both drown us and wash away our fears.

A love lust for a foot fetishist, a hot spot for Modernists, the bindi spot, the third eye – opens...

The mouth purses its lips and sounds:

Pot-tu... pott-u... pot-tu...

It rolls its tongue and tuts:

Tik-ka... ti-kka...tik-ka...

It breathes sharply and opens its lips:

Til-a-kam...tila-kam...ti-la-cam...

It engages the throat:

Sin-door...sind-oor...sin-door

The mouth an opening into vice as much as virtue.

This the third eye, a red point of awakening, an open mouth silent with rage, a rage with a pale green afterimage, a rage that makes new, that burns away old wounds, that leaves no regrets, as it finds a voice, a voice that like all mouths is red inside. Red inside are all the peoples that people this planet.

From a distance, the image shrinks, becomes a spot, a 'bindu', a point at which creation begins and begins and begins. A red dot, an itchy point between the eyes that as it is rubbed inflames and burns and ignites to clear away a time and replace it with a future world, where anger isn't needed, where difference is just difference and colour doesn't matter.

A world that is hard to see now, but which will one day come back into focus.



Donna Coleman: Untitled: (Bookface) 2020  
Ballpoint pen with tear on paper

Communication with others is fraught with problems. One minute you think you know someone and the next they operate like total strangers.

She said, 'I love you,' and then two hours later she screamed at me, 'Sometimes I want to scratch your face off'.

Red sits down into a warm white paper, its inky touch clothes itself in fibres; close up it runs smoothly in paper valleys, valleys smoothed out by a rollerball pressure, indentations made with love, incantations spoken silently, as the words never quite form, never getting as far as a shape, not even a single vowel, only the ever vigilant being aware of the 'V', the 'V' of invisibility, of vision and visage.

Yesterday he whispered sweet nothings into my ear, he was tender and loving, but today?

Today he bellowed at me, 'Sometimes I want to tear your face off!

A torn edge reads very differently to a peeled off surface.

Sometimes I want to rip your face off.

To rip

A face

To tear

A page

To shed

A tear

To read a red



Donna Coleman: Covid Anxiety 5 (Mask disorder) 2020  
Ballpoint pen and oilstick on paper

There is something about confidence, something hard to describe but when you get close to it you realise it's not something you know how to handle, it makes you anxious. Confident people don't seem to suffer anxiety. It's something they don't understand, they have been given the blessing of being able to grow into an environment that they fit into perfectly. Nurtured from birth in an atmosphere of acceptance and positive affirmation, the world they know is made for them. Sometimes you can put on a confident mask but it is always a confidence trick; you will yet again become your own victim, your naïveté about this simple state of affairs actually amazes others, they stare wide eyed at the ease with which you give up your ground. If only you could turn on compassion, accept a dose of vanity, behave irresponsibly for once, and feed on greed for just a little while, just long enough to feel the confidence that others do. If only you had that thick skin that protects the truly confident, that aura of inevitability that they accept as part of their heritage. But no, here is anxiety again; a double dose this time. Worry: thin and agitated; despair: thick and claggy. Dark clouds of agitation drift across a face-ache of worry-lines, as the 'what ifs' attack. What if I was asked to sing in the same choir as you? What if I love someone like you even at a distance? What if my air was mixed with yours? What if my mask slips and you see me for who I really am?

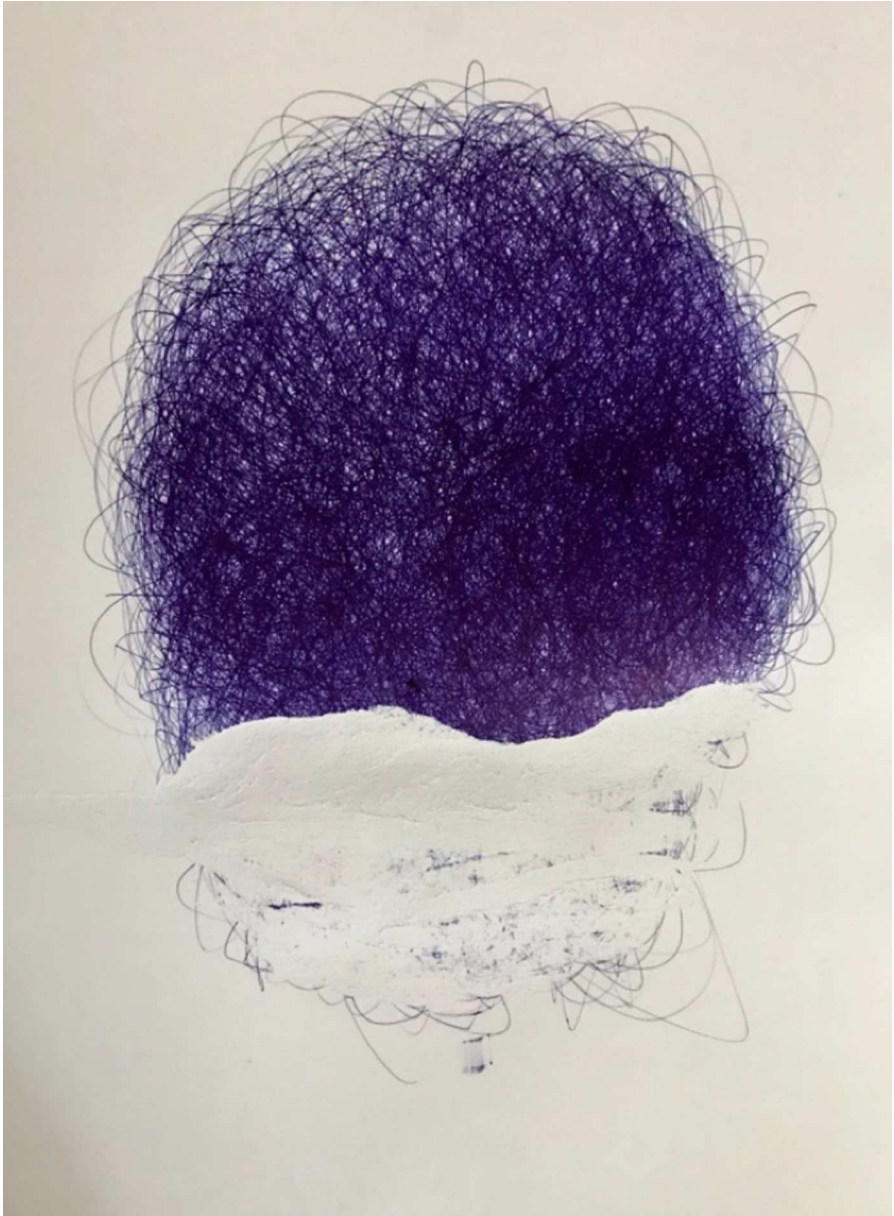
Oil sticks, it clots and stains. Dark red oil sticks produce thick, painterly red marks. Pour out some linseed oil into an old cup and dip the oil stick in. Now draw. Each mark is now softer, more luxurious, less anxious, more sensual. So is that all it takes; a little oiling, a certain polish that you get from massage oils, the ease of movement after a little love and attention?

Behind the mask the old red biro rolls on, twisting and turning, dancing to its own tune, humming the line of a well-worn song, red all over, not black and white and red all over, just red and more red. Light thin red, darker thick red; red necks, red faces, blushing and flushing, flushing out that sudden reddening of necks and chests and faces.

Ink flows, blood flows; flushed responses to anxiety and anger. Anger at those born again into confidence, anger at the arrogance of privilege, their red faces born of too much red meat, too much rich food, too much of a muchness.

Never was so much owed to so many by so few.





Donna Coleman: Covid Anxiety 6 (Safe) 2020  
Ballpoint pen on paper

Violet is safe, it is the chocolate wrapper that we know contains a sweet suggestion of yesteryear, a memory of the taste of cocoa and rising serotonin levels in the brain. That's what you need now, a violent violet, a rich heart stopping moment of excitement to make it through the day.

It's no matter that all things sweet are bad for you, once in the mind the suggestion is there. Like a forgotten lover, that never really left, a ghost of a taste that lingers, floating from its torn wrapper, assaulting your nose with cocoa aroma; that cooked cabbage mixed with human sweat and raw beef fat smell that you know you will never be able to forget.

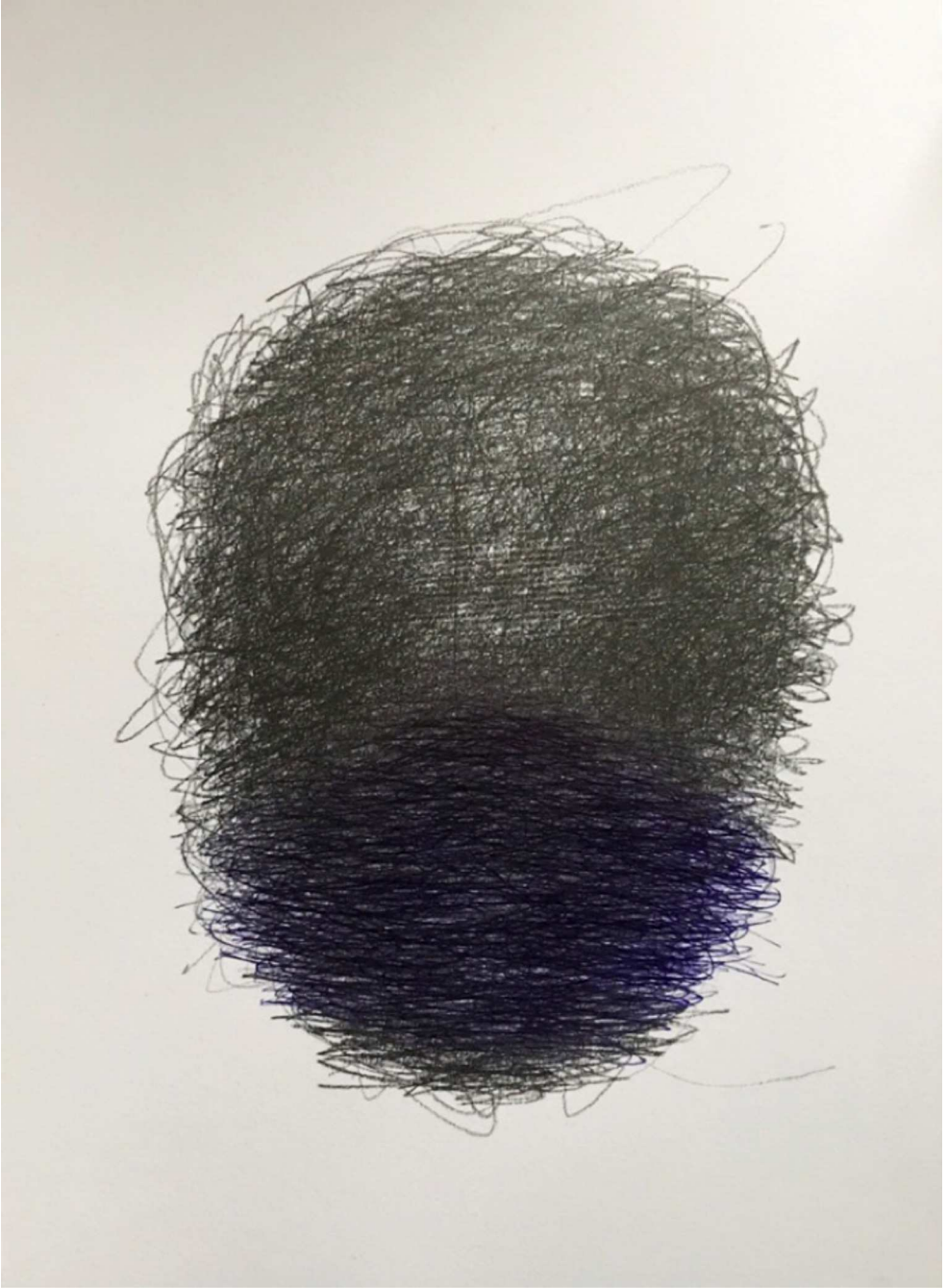
But sometimes it appears to be blue. Warm blues eased out of violets, waving as seas of strokes cross oceans of paper, until they have extended their energy into the frayed edges between the white and their own warm indigo.

Masks now torn away, we are revealed as overweight, over anxious, overblown and under the weather. We can't hide the tears any more, the salty taste of runny waters streaming through our eyes, through our nose and over our skin, little crystals working their magic, as they dry, fleck by fleck across our cheeks, writing our sorrow in lines of salt.

But beneath there is another layer, a second skin, the one beneath the one we call the epidermis. Our true skin, the one of nerves and sweat and hair and blood, the one that's made to save our souls from drowning in the acid waters of the world.

You need a thick skin to survive, you learn to be a rhinoceros, become beast like, grow horns and become weighty. Rub vile smelling unguents into your skin and wear your armour as your wedding gown. Remember it is your fault, you are the one they will blame for this, so don't think you can get away with some sort of lame excuse or apology for not wearing a mask.

You will only become safe if you brave it out. Stand firm and shout loud, be annoying, leave dirty marks on paper and never, ever apologise again.



Donna Coleman: Everything is different now 2020

A dark planet, majestic, sits floating in a white sky. It is arriving from the East, an augur of a fate as yet unfurled. It is all our futures, our times behind the mask, it reads as tarot lines, karmic strands that cross reference pasts with future times. It is the space of gravity, where the lines of linkage bend, unfolding now as stone forged flowers. This planet is a seed, a seed that will grow, that will send forth shoots already inching outward into light. But who will plant this planet? Who is kind enough to sow this seed? It will need watering and the companionship of fungal rootstock, and above all warmth.

You might wrap it in your scarf, put your coat around it, slip it into bed with you, or light a fire to feed its need, to see it through the winter months.

The sky is its sea; the sea is its soil. It grows in the sea of the sky. This star a seed, an imagination spring, a point from which a line emerges and as it does it spins a tale; a story of a winding thread and a ball of string that ties itself in knots. A weird tale of hidden lives and ghostly forms, of people hardly seen and seldom heard, who live their lives in shadow.

An allegory is being hammered into shape, one that forms our common themes and turns them round again, where black is white and white is black and masters slaves and slaves their masters. Where what was right is wrong, where wrongs are rights and truths are lies and lies eat truths and all our futures now are past.

Some planets have a wobble in their orbit, a cosmic off centredness. This at times brings them closer to their sun and at others it can take them far out into the cold reaches of space. It is this teetering between warmth and cold that energises the life of heavenly bodies, the wintertime huddles breed children for the warmth of summer; the movement between ice and fire creating the steam to drive its engines and the myths to shape its peoples. On reaching its zenith, it enters all our astrologies at the same time, shaping our readings, forming our futures, telling our stories as if we were all born on the same day, at the same hour, in the same place, with the same skin and the same hair and the same face.

The planet's dark centre glows with atomic radiance, waiting, waiting for the right time, for the moment when the clocks stop and we can take off all our masks and begin life again; but this time everything will be different.



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