



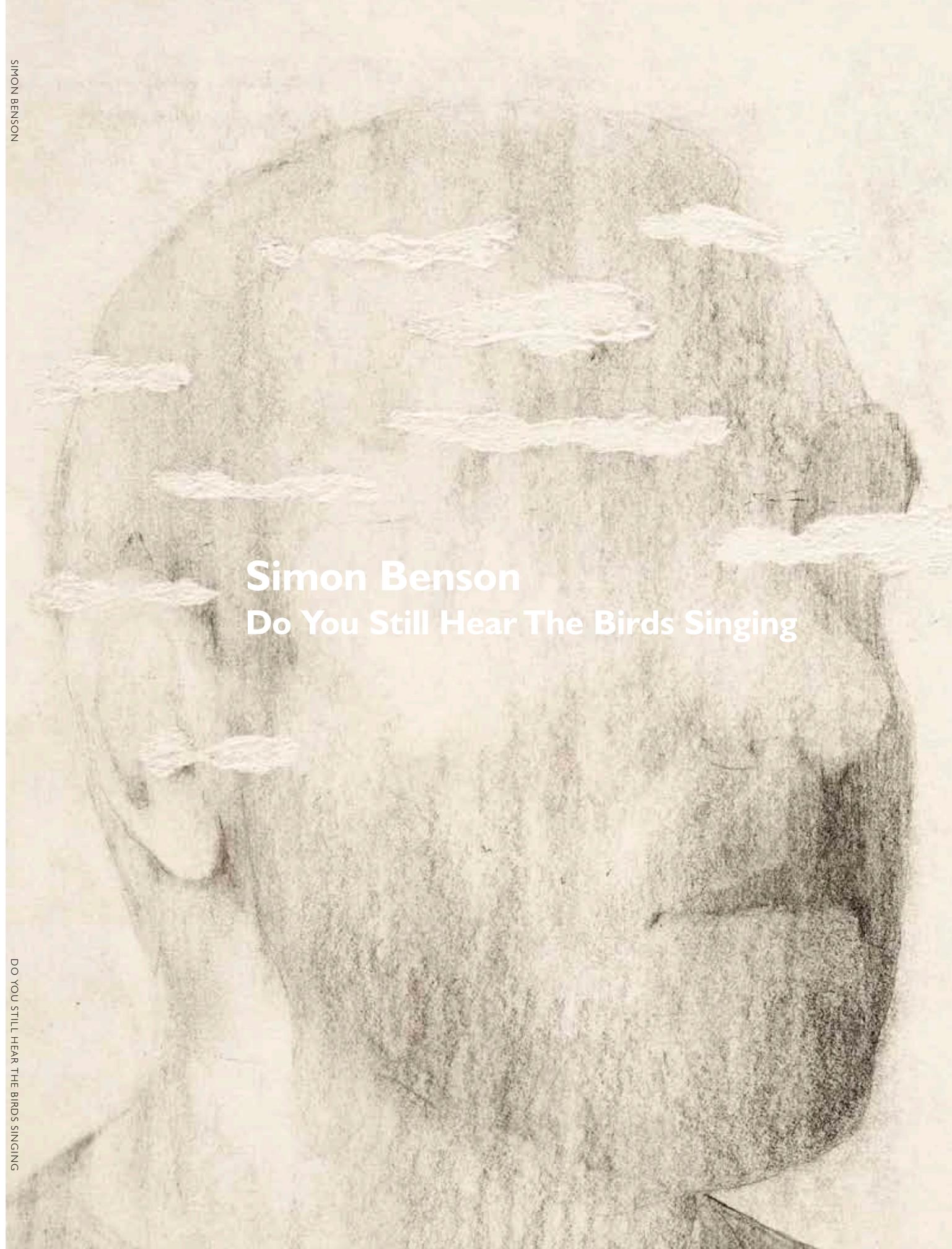
Unbound Series / Ongebonden reeks no. 7
PHOEBUS • Rotterdam

SIMON BENSON

DO YOU STILL HEAR THE BIRDS SINGING

Simon Benson

Do You Still Hear The Birds Singing

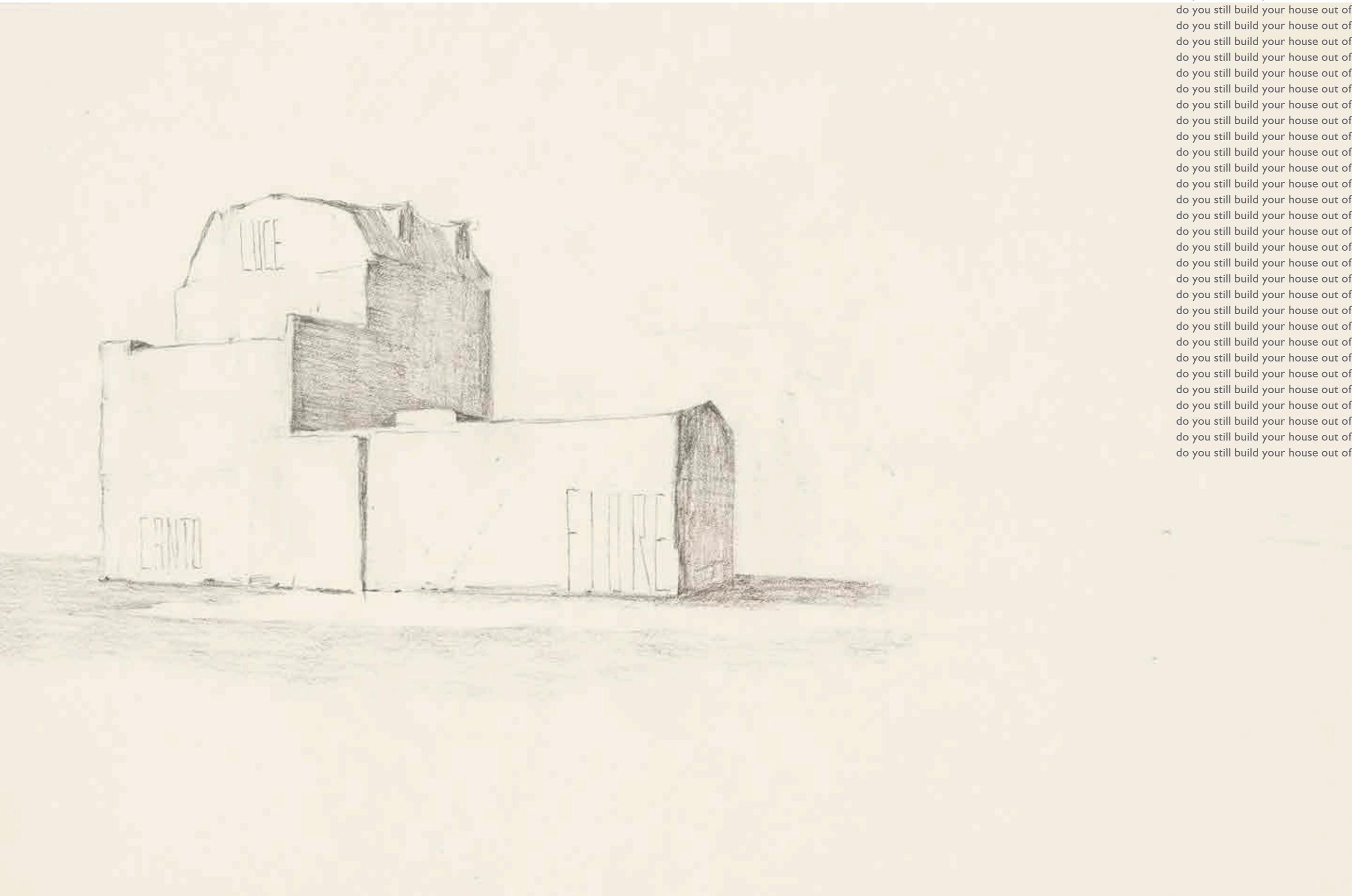




Simon Benson
Do You Still Hear The Birds Singing



is your body still a cage
do you (still) wear your clothes like shadows
do you still strap (black) (wings) to your back
do you (still) try to give form to the formless
do you still search for birthmarks (on) (your) (skin)
do you (still) draw of what you cannot speak
do you still hide vast unspoken clouds within a word
do you remember being born, do you remember being reborn
does your body change when you stand in the shadow of the wall of (O.L.O.T.F.)
is she still holding your hand out of sight
are you still holding her hand as if it was a protean gift
do you still grow in her proximity
are the pavements still wet from the rain
do they glow with orange reflected light
does her heavy flesh still fill your hands
can you still never completely remember what your hands have felt
do you still catch the last train home
does your feeble lighting still not push the darkness back beyond your windows
does your dead son still follow you around on the back of a pony
are things (still) (born) from your head
do you still feel (less) a part of one thing and (more) a part of another
are you still aware of the heart shaped shadow on the warm ochre surface of the wall
do you still wear your past life (like) (flesh) (and) (blood)
do you still find a heart shaped cloud in the exploding fireworks above the house
do you still try and still fail to empower a memory with a retrievable sense of touch
do you still try and still fail to empower a memory with a retrievable sense of smell
do you still compulsively touch the surface of things – to remember them in that act of touching
do you still walk on the cold hard long dead ghost images of animals
do you still see and resee
do flowers still cover your face
do you remember being struck by lightning
does the lightning still travel through your body
do you remember Miss. S.
do you still discover vessels
do you still have to tell (me) (something)
(have) (you) (still) (lost) (the) (power) (of) (flight)
is your song still stolen (from) (your) (lips)
does the gun inside your head still bark fire and lead
do you still write the things (on) (walls) that you cannot say
does your face still become drawn with hers as mine does with yours
do you feel the air grow cold around you
are you aware of all the things that are misnamed
do you see the way her body absorbs light
do you see the way her body pushes against confinement
do you still sing hunger songs
do you still sit in front of the reflecting, night blackened window
do you still project poems onto the sides of mountains
do your bright energised words still warm you
are you still looking for a voice in which to speak
is your mind still a cage



do you still build your house out of light
do you still build your house out of water
do you still build your house out of colour
do you still build your house out of cages
do you still build your house out of lead
do you still build your house out of clothes
do you still build your house out of guilt
do you still build your house out of pain
do you still build your house out of flesh
do you still build your house out of emptiness
do you still build your house out of paper
do you still build your house out of memories
do you still build your house out of inaction
do you still build your house out of scent
do you still build your house out of time
do you still build your house out of loss
do you still build your house out of song
do you still build your house out of hunger
do you still build your house out of books
do you still build your house out of expectation
do you still build your house out of bone
do you still build your house out of change
do you still build your house out of language
do you still build your house out of reason
do you still build your house out of desire
do you still build your house out of hair
do you still build your house out of shadows
do you still build your house out of seed
do you still build your house out of words
do you still build your house out of flowers

do you (still) always (want to) (need to) know the full story
do you (still) hold your heavy head between your hands
do you (still) rub your eyes until they (weep) until they (bleed)
do you still walk beside the river, do small details still strike you
do you still think that (this) is what you wanted
are you still fascinated by houses
do you see the swallows dipping their tail feathers in the poison
do you see the seeds exploding from their pods
do you still see the slow progression of sunlight across the floor
do you see the shadows of birds on the ground without seeing the birds themselves
(does) (the) (world) (still) (only) (come) (to) (you) (in) (fragments)
do your (dark) eyes still sparkle

There are times when I have seen too much.

Eyes full of seeing,

Banshee shrieking, screaming electric

Into my head, my cranial bone cage,

My soft matter.

Travelling the twisted length

Of my optical nerve, backwards.

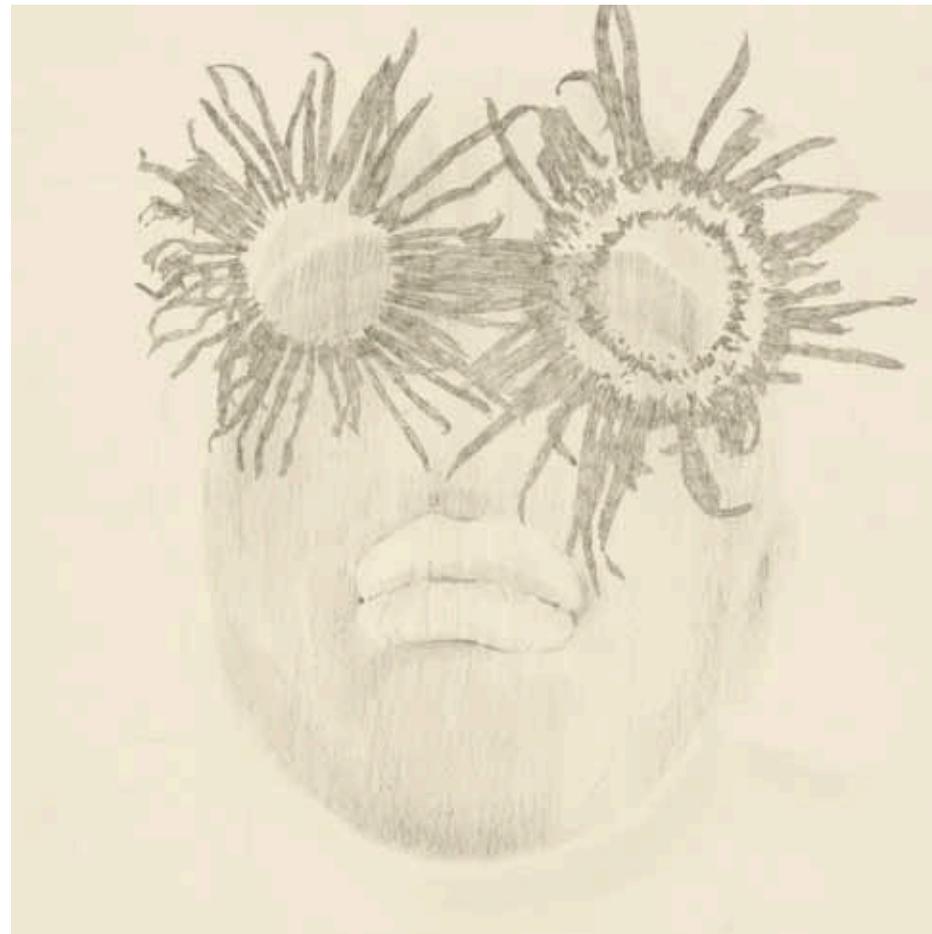
Pushing the congested images

before a pain-blue wave,

out again into the seeing world,

to become unseen once again.

Through a temporarily sheeted eye



are the walls still covered with language

are the walls still covered with small stones

do you still (go) (down) (deep)

are you still unable to stop it from happening

do the (tall) trees still whisper to you (about love) (about love)

The tall trees beside the railway tracks. Beside her house. Beside the Rhone on shadow puddled nights, when the Mistral blows down past the sleeping giant. Beside the dyke, perhaps, next week. Are they whispering (about love) are they whispering (about laughter) are they laughing at you, are they laughing at fools laughing at fools who imagine themselves to be something else.

do you still fall in love with an image or a token, a symbol, a metaphor

language destroyed (do you still remember the time when language lost its power, its meaning)

do you still look again and keep looking again (and) (again)

do you still hear things that can't be said and say things that should never be said aloud do you still re-say the

un-sayable, does the air still turn black with your words, does the gun in your head bark like a bloody big dog barking

do you still try to make something so (by) (talking) (about) (it)

do you still keep repeating something you want to be true

are you still beset by vacuums

do animals still try to eat you (at) (night)

do you still sleep on the surface of an ocean

are you still staying in a place where people are constantly passing by

do you still breathe her voice into your lungs and hold it there as if it was precious, do you feel her words in your throat wanting to be respoken

do you still consume her words do they feed you

do white (brilliant) thunder head clouds still start massing above the trees at the back of the house

does darkness still grow across the sky

does the wind begin to blow full of emotion

do the tall trees writhe and lament

is the air suddenly full of a snowfall of dead leaves and remnant blossom

does the air fill with bad words

does the house start to breathe (the) (cool) (winds) (in)

do you still sit beside someone you don't know and watch the world passing
do you feel a connection
do you cross rivers and does the train scream on the bridges
do you still create a wall of sound behind which you isolate yourself
are you aware of other's isolation

do you still make lists

Dry monk bread and dry monk cheese, bone filled milk. S. singing blue. The blue bright morning is clouding. I am about to trawl my memory, my emotion. Put myself in her hands. Metaphorically and physically, both. I've come to the end of a previous life. It ended in a black tirade and then, right there at the end, on a note of (unconvincing) optimism.

Inaction, breathlessness, fear of decision.

Show me the mountain, draw me the mountain, again and again and again, until I understand what a mountain is and means to me. Draw it, draw faces onto it. Whatever. In drawing it (start) (to) (climb) (it). Higher. Leaving low altitude fogs and bedlam behind, the procrastinations, the strangling vines, the treelines. Ascend to where the rock is exposed and bled out, where there are no shadows. Stop. For a while. Take a moment to talk to the dead. Look around, survey the detailed map which is now visibly drawn on the face of the earth. Make lists.

is language still your master

do fields of wheat still grow (on) (your) (belly)

do you still always have to look (inside)

do you (still) always have to touch

It is not. What you think. It never is. She is here. In front of me. Now. Upside down. The hanging (wo)man. Hanging. From her name. Her elbows. Adhere. To a flat plane. Her head. Is hanging. In turn. From the ends of her fingers. Her skin. Indents surprisingly. At those meeting places. She is old. Her mouth is thin. Her skin is thin. Her hair. Is thin, dry and brittle. Her eyes are thin. But. Gleaming, blade-like, compressed. Slits of ineluctable seeing. Piercing seeing. Through all. Everyone. She is. An old woman. (Still) fucking the world. The word. Doing. Undoing. Redoing.

We waited. And waited. Until it was our turn. We climbed up the outside of her tower. The winding iron staircase. Ringing under our tread. The height. Made. Me. Nervous. Until. We came to the top. To an open plateau. Two chairs. Four massive. Distorting. Mirrors. Showed us us. A place. There. Up there. Of introspection. And inspection. We were level there. With a sixth floor window. All eyes were looking. At us. The mirrors were looking. At us. All that space concentrated. There. The point of a needle. We came down through the inside of the tower. This time. Unseen. The metal. Singing again. Passing. White marble hands. I touched the touching. I had to. We left the tower. And walked back out into the immense hall. (chaos)

CAOS

do you still look at one thing as if it were something else

do the trees still laugh with their leaves (and) (do) (you) (still) (hear) (them)

does your mouth still painfully shape itself to your words

do you (still) swallow the hills and the fields and the trees and the river

does your mouth still lead you into hostile places

(do) (you) (still) (swallow)

do you still put your hand in that of another

do you still hear your unborn children crying to you

do you (still) attempt to deceive (the) (blind)

do you still feel the burden (of) (the) (word) upon you (heavily)

do you still plant (flowers) in inconceivable places

do you still bury books (in) (the) (soft) (dark) (soil)

do you still move between people (as) (if) between shorelines

does your wandering still cover the face of the earth

do flowers (still) grow in your wake

are your memories still wound like the inside of a shell (in) (a) (spiral)

do you still have the ability to transform yourself

do you still carry water between places

do you still imagine sucking form from stone (like) (it) (was) (honey)

do you still think of things as being un-numbered

do you remember when (I) (saw) (something) when (you) (saw) (something)

do you still put known heads onto unknown bodies

do the crows still dance on your roof

do they still avoid looking you in the eye

do you still believe in the ninth wave

do you still shine (darkly) in the (brightness)

do you still see the visible world as a screen

do you still see your home (in) (a) (dream)

do you still turn aside (do) (you) (still) (brood)

do you still turn your head around (rere) (regardant)

do you still (weave) and (unweave) your self-image

are you still crouched down by the barbed wire fence at the edge of the forest

are you still naked except for your shoes

are you still wearing that ridiculous wig

are you still smiling submissively

are shadows still creeping up your legs instead of across the ground

are you still wearing the blood red heart shaped ring

does one of your hands still protect the other

are you still holding the remnants of your former life in the protected hand

does the outline of a previous head still form an aureole around your present one

are you still carrying an image of yourself on your back

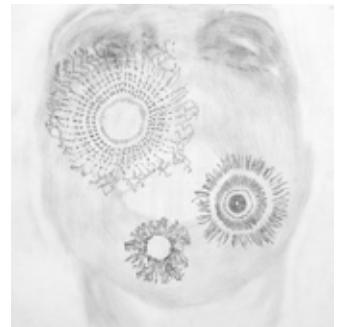
is every horizon you have ever seen still written onto the curved surface of your eye

do roots still grow from your limbs (do) (they) (still) (grow) (against) (your) (eyes) (your) (lips)

do your thoughts still (sometimes) manifest themselves as birds (in) (the) (air) (above) (your) (head)

(do) (you) (feel) (the) (approaching) (knife), the severer

that day to come, birds will be silent, planes will fall from the sky, roots will lose their grip, train wheels will be muffled, the apple tree will only bear black fruit, the cypress trees will become real flames after all, the colours of flowers will leak back into the soil, the sun will forget its warmth, paint will peel away from its painted surface, eighteen thousand images will fade and clear in their little windows.



do you remember how her words pressed softly against your eyelid when she bent close to your face and whispered to you

do you still see one thing and say something else

do you still see one thing and hear something else

does your breath form into bright clouds (against the dark trees) in the cold air behind you

do you still return (again) and (again) to the ocean and wait for her wave

do you (still) think that if we looked through the same eye we would see the same things

is the weight of what you have forgotten greater than that of what you have remembered

do you still feel an overwhelming physical need to touch some people

does your life (still) seem to be a trap

are you (still) looking for a (way to) a (means of) escape

do you still fear paralysis

do you still feel that your breath is stolen from your lungs (at night)

does the incubus still come and sit on your chest (at night)

can you still sense the creeping, overpowering organism surrounding you

(does the swan still fly along the valley, do you still hear its beating wings)

are you still afraid of becoming what you are not

did you forget to take the small boy by the hand

do you still allow him to be bullied, insulted

do you still fear dust

do you still see and hear the birds: the wood pigeons, the ravens, the rooks, the wrens, the robins, the collared doves, the sparrows, the swifts, the swallows, the gulls, the puffins, the kingfishers, the martins, the woodpeckers, the owls, the cuckoos, the doves, the magpies, the jackdaws, the jays, the wagtails, the blackbirds, the starlings, the song-thrushes, the tits, the linnets, the finches, the yellowhammers, the thrushes, the crows

do you still hear the trains passing on the horizon, the Golden Arrow

do you still hear the sound of the front door knocker, the creaking stairs and floor boards, the sound the front door makes opening and closing and the back door when you pull it open, when it briefly sticks, then releases and reverberates in your hand for a few seconds

can you still hear the house breathing

do the birds still come and gather around you when you sit still for a time

can you still feel (even now) the hold your roots have in this dark soil

do your roots also claim the chalk for themselves

do you remember the lost trees of the resurrection

do you still think that you can be touched by all things in the same way you feel you can touch all things

does the snake still come out of your mouth and bite your face and spit in your eye

do your children still hold up mirrors to your eyes

do you still see some things that your eyes are incapable of coping with

what do you see in the mirror

can you still not remember how that blood got on your hand

do you still lose love like blood from a wound, do you still haemorrhage love

when you leave your studio and her song starts playing in your head and you look down the road going into town

do you still see the sun hanging just above the houses, three times its usual size and bleeding red light across the sky

do you see the shadows creeping into the edges of the darkness like small animals as you walk along the street

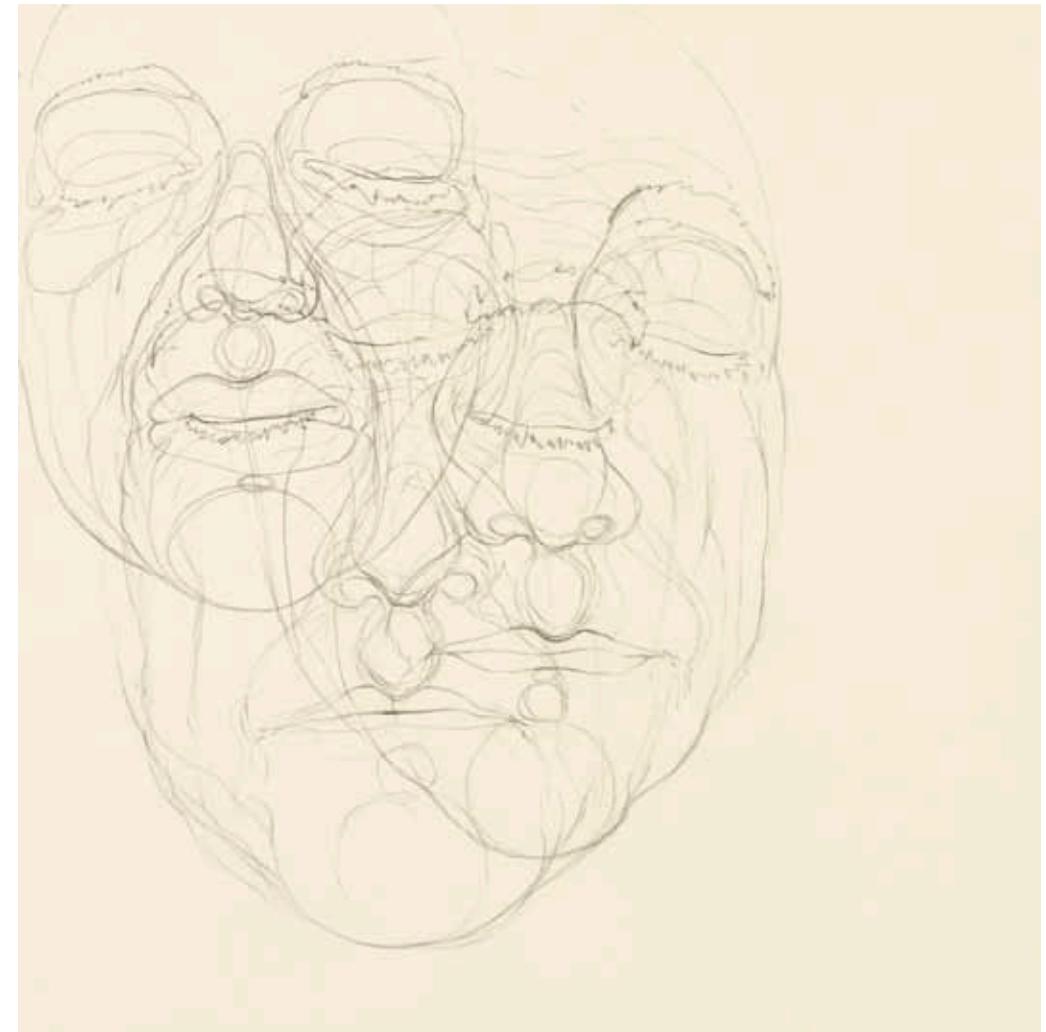
do you see the landscape drawn in form by a herd of animals running over it

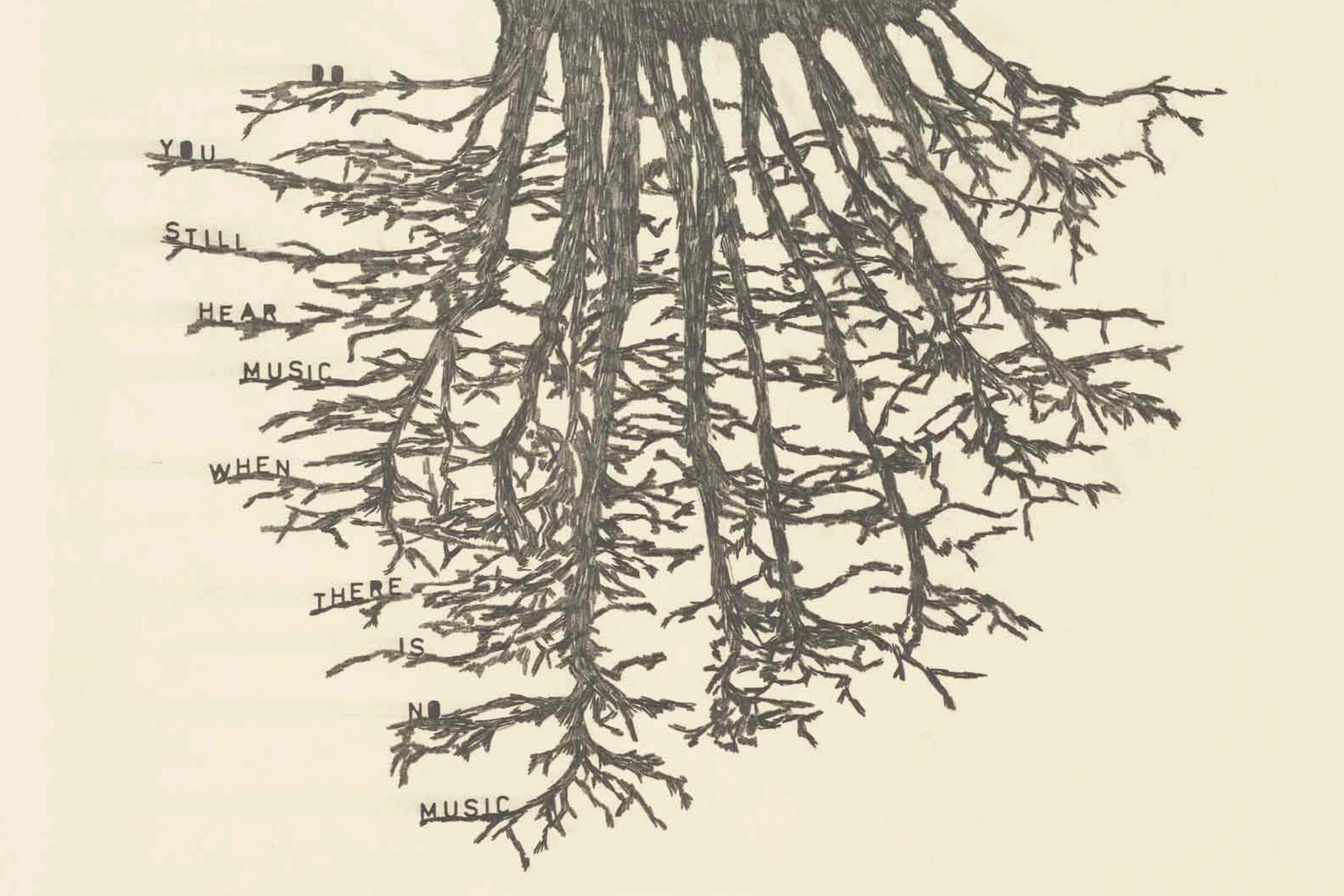
do you still go down into yourself when you don't find what you need in the passing world

can I (still) smell you on my skin

how many times (do you think) has she said my name

do you still want to make something that will exist in the world without saying anything about the world





YOU

STILL

HEAR

MUSIC

WHEN

THERE

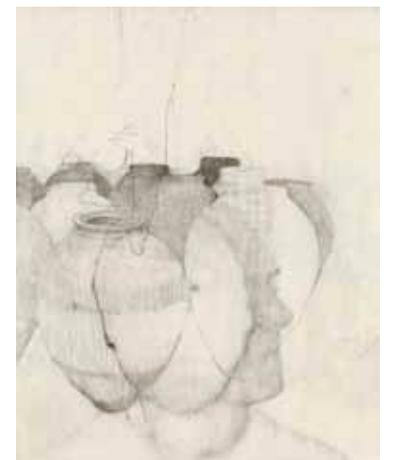
IS

NO

MUSIC



do you still half wake up when the animal sits on your chest, does it keep its obscenely distended eye averted
 and is it gone before you know, before you are fully awake, but can you feel the weight of it long afterwards
 do you still feel you can best speak with your hands
 do you still try to say goodbye
 (are) (we) (the) (ocean) you and me (K.) (are) (we) (the) (ocean) the slow moving ocean
 (are) (we) (the) (melancholy) (depths) from which language and seeing emerged
do you still write poems on her face do you then still tear them off again
 do you still try to walk away
 does your world still start to crumble (then)
 are (you) still a prisoner
 do you still cherish the things you know
 are you still fascinated by materials
do you still feel you have to keep your shadow safe
 do you still have one face to reflect the world and one face to repel it
 are you still in danger of sinking into the earth
 are you still in danger of catching fire (and) (burning) (until) (you) (are) (a) (blackened) (stump)
 are you unsure about the difference between what you saw and what you thought you saw
 are you still in danger of dissolving
 do you still see things that you don't know the name of
 do you still look behind the mirror
 do you still see her appearing (being born out of) the sea
 do you still try to plant seed (in) (my) (face)
 do you still enter and re-enter the building
 do shadows still hang like objects from the front of the building (at) (night)
 do you still hang half a photograph (on) (your) (wall)
 do your eyes still describe objects in their movements
 do you still change form
 do you still sing your sad songs
 are you still unaware of the world (beyond what you see)
 will you (still) meet me down by the river
 do you still fall asleep on the smooth warm rock
 do you still have a different voice in which to speak to different people
 do you speak (a) (language) (of) (flowers)
 do you still run out of things to say to me
 do you still want to be loved
 do you still feel the force, necessary, to keep (things) at bay
 are you aware of power (as) (a) (sign)
 do you still ask answers and expect questions in return
 do you still hold anger (in) (your) (bare-bone) (hands)
 do you still let things come unto you
do you still feel you become what you are thinking about
 do you still see (with) (your) (voice) and speak (with) (your) (eyes)
 do you still wake up with (J.) singing in your head
 do you still feed on (missing) words
 do you still say what you will
 do you still find meaning in things (reasons for staying)
 do you still light up (at) (a) (word)
 do you still light up (at) (a) (touch)
 do you still want his wings
 do you still wait in the darkness
 do you still immerse yourself in song
 do you still need a part of someone else in order to live
 does he still carry things for you does he still carry you
 do you still try to grow wings
 how do you sleep



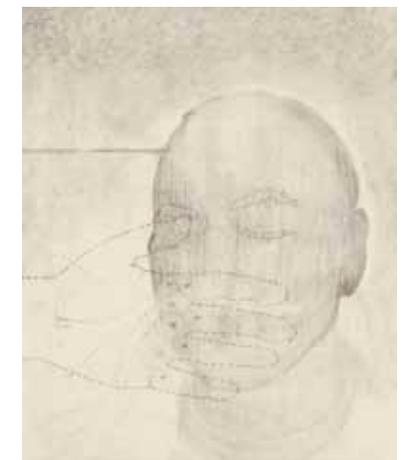


do you still walk on the hillside (between the trees)
would you still count her last few breaths
do you remember the train journeys, the rattling, jarring progression from green to grey
do you remember the hard rails, screeching fields of points, former crash sites
do you remember her sitting opposite you, her arms crossed across her chest
do you remember her dark hair, her ghost skin
are you still unable not to hear the voices downstairs
do you still wake up with a song in your head
do you remember when (sadness) became a part of your life
can you (still) surround yourself with light
does the sky move (quickly) above your head, does it pass
do you still fall out of the sky
are you still waiting, waiting

*Waiting. Waiting. Waiting becomes waiting, becomes time. Waiting becomes time, becomes dying. Waiting is time dying, is time being stretched beyond living. Waiting unending. Suspended. Waiting as punishment. Waiting waiting. Waiting beneath the dirty windows. Painted with light-filtering scum. Waiting beside the Angel of the North. Waiting sleeping. Waiting waiting. Waiting for the machine. To be taken up. (Wrists and ankles bound). Waiting in space, above the land. Waiting in space above the clouds. Waiting with Beatrice. Waiting in the full light of the sun. Above snow capped mountain ranges and rivers drawn in fine lines. Above an invisible human world. Waiting in expectation. For the warm air and the new light. Waiting with Dürer, Goethe, Joyce, Blake. Waiting for a door to open. And that first breath. Waiting for the New Jerusalem. Waiting for (Meraviglia). Waiting for (Ebbrezza). **Waiting for (Estasi).***

does the (peachlike) sun still hang above your head
is the load you carry still a heavy one
do you still sometimes wonder whether time has stopped
do you still see the world reduced to words
do you still see trees as trees from the history of art
do you still see lips full of blood
do you still see her feet leaving dew-stain shadows on the flagstones
is the air between us filled with words
do you still feel her thin fingers penetrating your flesh
do you still paint yourself with found colours
do you still feed your eyes (feed your mind)
do you remember the day you died
do you remember time slowing to avoid conclusion (in your poisoning kitchen)
do you recall the moment when the momentum, the (once) unstoppable force of your life, arrested
can you still hear the harsh German television voices
do you remember the bee hovering beside your arm, its wing beat breath panting against your skin
do you remember the thief thrush standing on the dried-up grass with a grape in its beak
are you still waiting to wake up from your little sleep
are you still waiting for the sun to come out from behind the cloud
does your shadow still sink into the soft dark earth (when you stand still for too long)
do you still measure distance in song(s)
do you still need to be touched

*Your hand is a dark thing, a black cloud, a menacing entity. Seen from the side it is a gravity fed beam levelled at the bridge of my nose, a bad dream. Your pulse reverberates through your fingers and into the bones of my face. Drumming away my seeing. Your hand is a sign, your hand is a weapon emanating from your brow, you wield it with anger and impatience. Your eyes are made two slits by a searing light. I dreamed you were the light and you were the shadow and your hand was the instrument. And you inflicted the unseeing, the unfeeling, the burning, the isolating, darkening weight on me. I wanted to be captured, to yield, but you told me that I had to keep walking, keep running. Carrying the weight, the rock, the mountain. My own eyes sewn shut, my own mouth starved of food and words, flames tasting my feet and hands. Your hand is pulling my face into the soft earth. Your hand is a being. An eye watches from the palm. Watching my face coming slowly towards it, with pain scratched on one nail and light on the other. **Your hand punishes, your hand loves. Your hand is stitched to my face.***



do birds still fly through your eyes
do you still talk to yourself (and) (no one) (can) (hear)
do you still see auras around objects
is the snow still blue
do the street lights still arc across the front of your car, do they form a chain
do you still see your face reflected on the surface of old photos

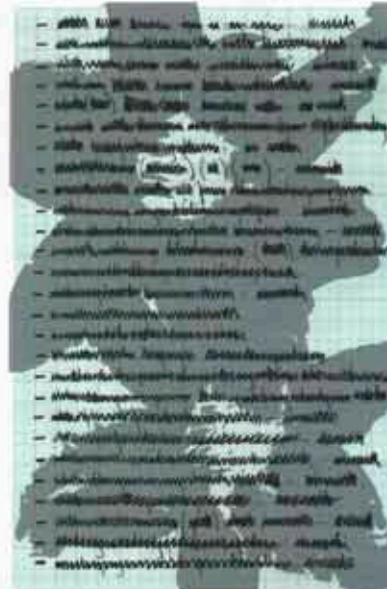
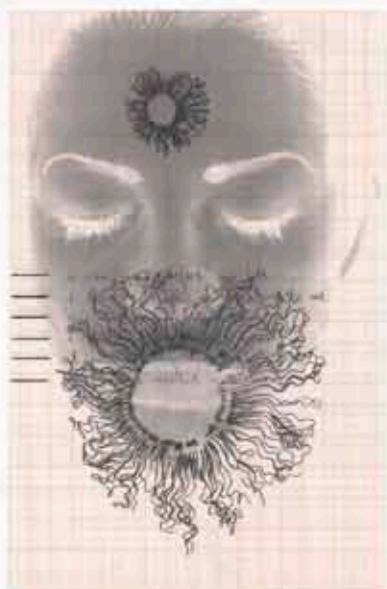
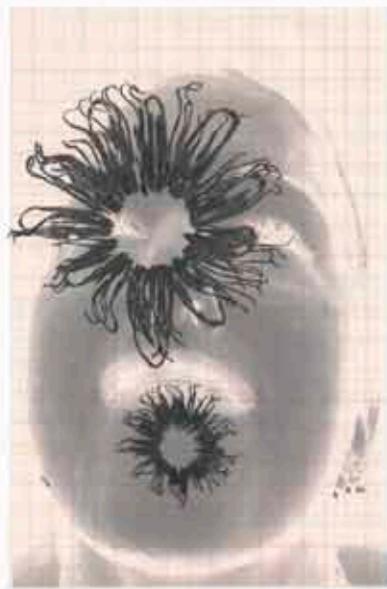
*Light in the form of hard-edged crystals
interrupts the room at the foot of the bed.
The bed itself is a raft pushed up on an icy wave
rolling across the bare-board floor
and now wedged frozen between the crystalline intrusion and the screened window.
The walls are striped and shadows are soaked into their fabrics.
Two bottles (waiting filling) (waiting emptying) are on the ledge before the window.
A lesser wave, of dream-written paper, breaks against them.
He is half propped up on a pillow against the iron bedstead.
He is halfway between worlds though, un-dead, un-alive.
Wrapped in a cold sheet, arms pinned to his sides, his head cocked at a watching angle.
A blanket, curled to form the letter S, supports his shoulders.
A black fungal rain falls in the room, falls on his spirit back, onto the memory of a position.*

are your ears still coloured bright red
do they still sing for you and do you still hide your face (in) (your) (hands)
do you still run from being seen
are you still pulled along by your curiosity
do you still remain unmoving while everyone around you is moving
do you still find yourself in a place where there are thousands of animals
do they part when you move through them
do you still see (even) when you have closed your eyes
does a realisation of the way things are, suddenly, come upon you
do you still say things you don't know that you are saying
are the mountains still pressed up against your house
can you still feel the touch of her lips on your face
does the angel (still) take you back to all the places where you once felt safe
is the wall still covered in messages
do you still look for meaning in series of numbers
do you still know what is going to happen
do you still sit and cry as the past becomes real to you again
do your words still warm the air

I hear you (you are speaking to me) I am lying beneath an open window in my brother's old room. Your slightly lisping voice scratches my inner ear. Your words enter me. But I can't hold on to them and they flow out the window into the superheated air above the valley, hanging for an indecisive moment above Tubbenden Lane before streaming over the roof of the house on their way back to you, to Heptonstall, ahead of me. When I get there some days later, will you speak to me (again), dressed in Yorkshire earth, wearing the moors like wool to fend off the sometimes harsh winds.

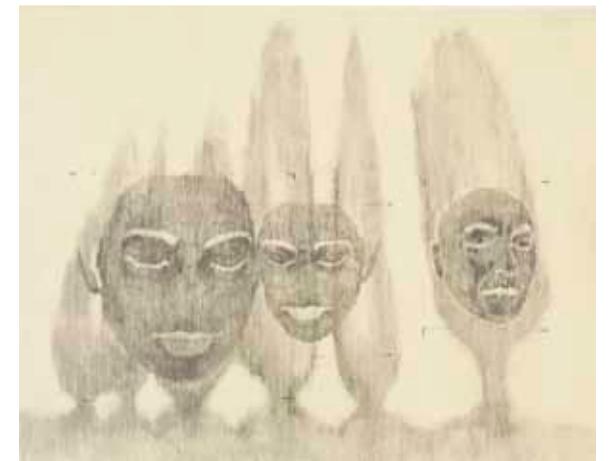
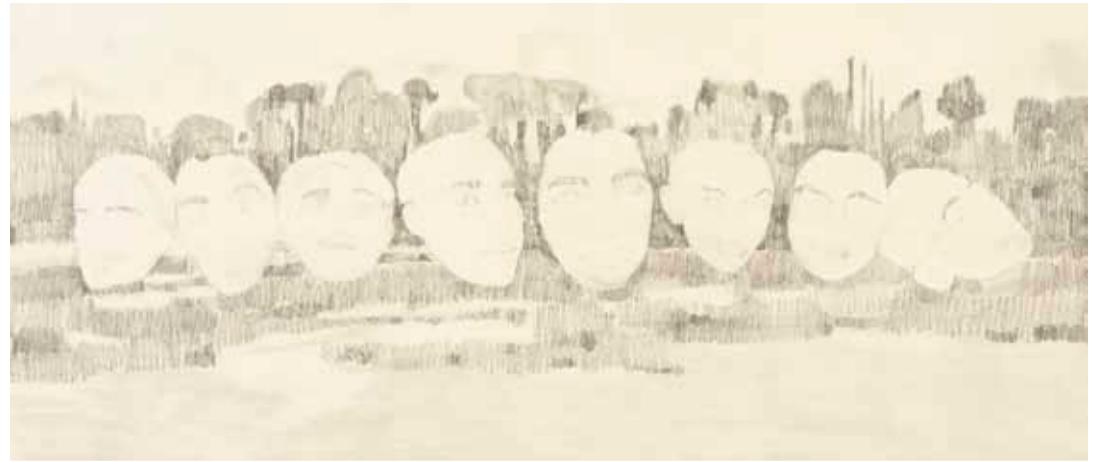
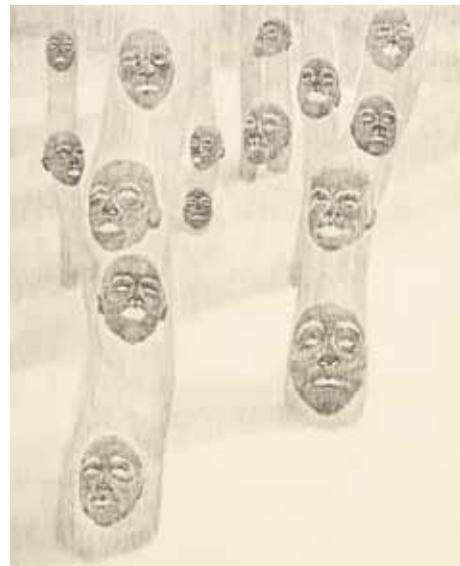
do you still tend to (walk) (away)
is your body (still) a hiding place
to know (and) be known
is the printed world your world
does it still feel good to withdraw, to (I) (S) (O) (L) (A) (T) (E) yourself
do you still look at me with wide open disbelieving eyes and do you still keep your purple lips firmly closed as I touch them nine times
do you still stand in the open window and watch the storm (and) (feel) (the) (air) (become) (cold)
can you smell the rain
does she come and stand beside you and do you want to touch her
do you still sometimes wonder whether time has stopped
do words still fill the air between us





do you still think that your reality is different to that of other people
do you still see trees written on with words
does a space retain a memory of your form when you leave
are there still holes in your body into which emptiness leaks
do you still have your internal organs displayed on a screen beside you
do you still look at them as if they belonged to someone else
does the fear of dogs still attach itself to your feet
do the crows (still) come and dance on your tin roof, do they (still) jump around like rain
do you want some things to be over quickly
do you realise you will never see these young trees mature
are you still repeatedly struck by the shortness of life
does this realisation make it difficult for you to breathe
do you still long for an animal's incapacity to sense time
do you remember seeing the tiny numbers (9.25) woven in her hair just behind her left ear
does your heart still leak fluid through your clothes
are you still standing, there, with the house held in your hands
do you see people becoming part of the landscape they are in if they keep still for too long
does the shape of a person's body still seem to you to conform to their chosen life
does time still pass more quickly in the presence of some people, more than in that of others
are you sometimes aware of the (avalanche)
does the psychopath still appear in your dreams
do you still imagine you can see the physical shape of someone's voice
does it still surprise you that your memories of certain events belong to you and not someone else
do you (still) think that (you have seen it all, now)
do you still feel you can reach up and touch the sky
do you still think that some things and people that are no more, maybe, never existed at all
are there things (in your mind) that you did not know were there
do you still think of people being alive when you are with them and dead when you are not
do you still think that some people need protecting from what you know
do you sometimes feel you leave an impression on the air
are you still compelled to read the texts people have written on their clothes
do the foxes still come up to the house
does the crow still come flying up the hill, up over the roof of the house, swearing, coarsely, as it passes
is the shadow of the apple tree reaching out towards the house
do the aeroplanes still fly far above his roof writing in thin white lines the code of his unravelling DNA
are the birds still so agitated, never landing for more than a second or two
are his breaths becoming countable
do you still fall and fall again and again
are you carrying the stone, again
do you still see everything as if it was nothing
can you still hear the girl singing about love, somewhere, to someone you do not know
are you still turned over on your back, your soft belly exposed, your eyes full of above
do you still weep for a deconstructed life
how big, do you think, is your inner space
do you still live and think in two separate worlds

I have come back to the ocean (again). Grey leaden light overwhelms two bays which are disputing which one should show me the nature of the shore. The nature of what touches what and what contains what. They meet in a massive cross which spans the horizon and the sky above my head and the ground beneath my feet. A text is written across the sand about the bones of my face. It is all held together by fragile stuff. It is a world which could easily fall apart (would it be replaced immediately by another?). Between the cracks I can just about see your face. I don't know your face. I don't know what you look like. I know your voice (your) (words). But your face. Does it resemble, in any way, the faces I have drawn onto the trees in Ostia? (I am) there too. Do you cry flowers, do you speak flowers. Are you sometimes blinded or muted by flowers or by other faces. Is your face sometimes projected against the side of a mountain or against my face. Does it sometimes rise up out of the tree line on the horizon speaking warnings. Warnings about (knowing) and (wanting) (to) (know) in white words against a dark sky. Is the face and are the faces I have been drawing and drawing on – time and time again – your face (your) (faces) our face?





do you project your words against the mountain, do you let them sink into the ocean
you found my voice, you recognized it (as) (your) (own) you spoke to me (in) (it)
are our faces still projected against the tall trees in Ostia
do you remember the first time you heard the sound of her voice, and the last time
do you sometimes see as if seeing is hunger and do you sometimes close your eyes (the bones of your face become the shore and your unseeing sight the ocean)
can you remember the time when seeing was like seed
do you (still) see everything as if it was for the very first time
you ask me about my breath but I am breathless
(you) said something you said you said something (you) said something you said said something (to) (me) but (I) (but) I
couldn't (but) I couldn't (I) couldn't hear what (what) (it) (was) I couldn't hear what (it) was
are you (still) always and irrevocably alone (in your seeing field)
do you still (sometimes) find it difficult to look people in the eye
are you still blinded by flowers, do they still stop you from speaking
do you still want to know
no no you don't no you don't want to want to know
I saw you I saw you I saw you I saw you listening
do you still have one face to attract the world and one to repel it
do you still have to tell me (something) (anything)
are you still compelled to make lists of irrelevant things
do you still say things that others don't understand
do you still carry your past life with you as if it was made of flesh and blood
do you still fall asleep as one person and wake up as another
do you still (always) have to look inside
do you still feel (less) a part of one thing and (more) a part of another
do you (still) think you can see things that cannot be seen
do you still see beyond seeing
do you still think that this is your face (your faces)
do you remember the low sky, the dark continental cloud which moored itself to the earth through the smoke spewing
tall Brussels's factory chimneys
do you still see the angel dust irradiated spray made by the black tarmac drumming wheels of the car in front of your
hurtling car, do you still pass through it again and again into the low hung midwinter sunshine
do you see the women still standing beside the road beneath the trees
do you see the burnt black woods regreening
do you still see the wind-whipped sea and the pale ochre beach with its thin wind-dried layer disturbed by our
footsteps which were already blurring, disappearing by the time we walked back (again)
do you still remember the stone shaped like a thumb which you picked up and put into your pocket, do you remember
that specific shell, the lost dog, the dead fish lying parallel to the sea in the sand, the red plastic recorder, the toy axe,
the cold wind
do you still see her hands covered in arabesques
do you still walk down through the narrow woods past the climbing tree, the faces tree, the speaker tree, the light tree
does the sun still burn away half the sea from your eyes
does the sun project your shadow all the way across the road and onto the facade of a house
do you still want to stop between the trees and stand in the sun facing the wasteland and did you hear voices and see
dogs in the distance
do you still see the red dust filled illuminated air beneath the trees on the dirt road by the stables in Ostia
do you still follow the road up into the mountains, do you feel the air grow cold around you, do you look back from
whence you came and feel the distance as if it was a heavy weight
are you still drawn to del Canale Della Lingua
do you still try to recreate a body by describing it in words
do you still write down the names of colours you see in certain situations
do you (still) drink from the yellow cup
do you still sometimes see with time slowing eyes
do you still think you can build a house to contain a thought
are you still afraid of heights
do stairs still obsess you

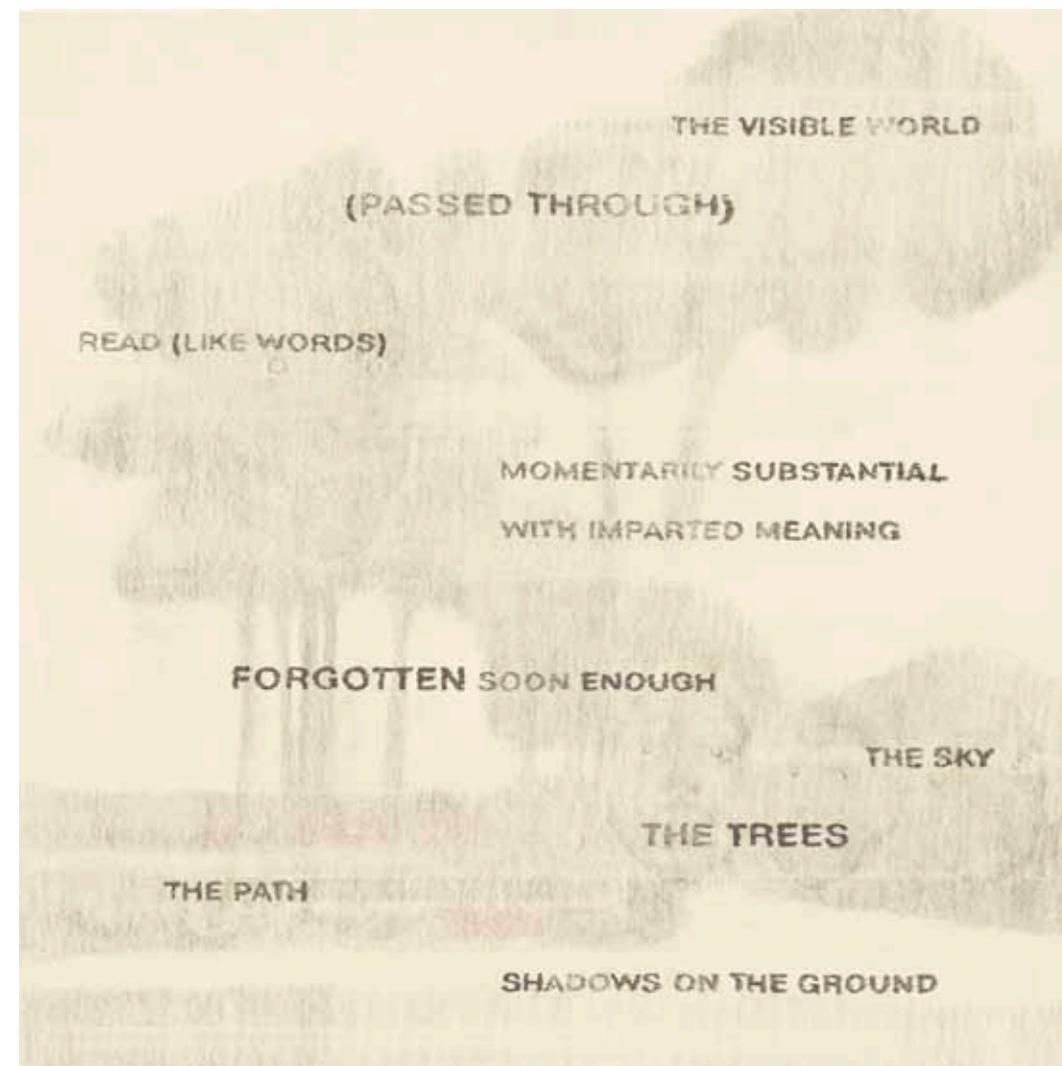




do you still paint yourself black, move in a furtive diagonal way, are you aware of every movement within hundreds of metres, fly away at the first sign of human presence, swear, go up onto the roof and scratch it with your claws, eat dead things' eyes, lift your bloodied beak up to the sky as if it was a sign
do you see his head rise up from behind the barmaids flowered back, resting a while on the gentle slope, while behind him a face on a screen is seemingly spewing whispering words into his ear
do you still create worlds in which to live, do you draw things into existence, free thoughts from wood, write landscapes
do they still not believe you, do they still not (want) to believe you
do you remember the last happy period of your life
do the flames still reach up into the sky and do the empty shells of houses fall down around you
do you still stalk the dead writer
do you still not have a proper job
are you still happy when you read out loud
are you still concerned about how words sound as well as what they mean
did you never really grow up (before you died)
are you still inclined to become lost in the wonder of words

Standing on a path, in a wood, in a valley. At the foot of a hill which slopes gently up away from my feet. The nearest trees are flat black back-lit forms. They grow sparsely on the slope but at the top of the hill they congeal into a dark wall. Dead fallen wood is scattered all over the ground, cross-hatching the light dusty soil. Words are written on the ground in front of me. They move up the hill in a vertical space between trees. I read them up the hill. I read them down the hill.

when you discover one thing about someone do you still need to keep on discovering things about them
do you remember when forms were not described by their physical shape but by the shadows they cast
do you still swim out into the middle of the lake, where you can't hear the voices on the shore, any more
are you still fascinated by the bellies of horses, do you take photos of them
do you (still) want her to take you by the hand down to the river and part the reeds with the back of her hand and lead you into the stream, where she will lay you down in the tendril filled current until you can't hear what she is saying and your eyes fill with water
do you still lie down on the bed and keeping as still as possible, breathe slowly in shallow almost movementless breaths, the darkness pressing against your skin like earth and do you hear no more songs singing about love any more
do you remember the rows and rows of houses backed up against the tracks so you can see right into their upper windows, see all the flowered wallpapers, backdrops to lives lived in a presentation case, a natural history
do you (still) have a life behind this one and one behind that, one for each person you meet, and a number you keep just for yourself (buried lives)
do you still see the landscape you are passing through as being created for you
do you still see clouds moving like water, moving like the ocean (sliding) (to) (or) (from) (the) (horizon)
can you feel the boy inside you, does he still need protection, can you still hold him, can you speak to him
do you still not want to go down to the black house, knock on the black door, go into the black room, lie down on the black bed, do you still not want to go to sleep in the black house
do you (still) breathe with her breath, wear her skin, see through her eyes, hear her slow inner muffled throbbing voice, become wet with her wetness, endure her heaviness, pull shadows across your skin
do you always come back to your place beside the tracks where you hear the tall trees whispering to you when the trains are not crashing by on iron wheels on iron paths
do you still ask for more light



T U T E
S O U V I E N S
D U J O U R
T U T E
S O U V I E N S

JE ME
S O U V I E N S
JE ME
S O U V I E N S



are you still afraid (of) (being) (left) (alive) (and) (alone)
do you still use language as a weapon
do you (still) not (sing) along with others
does the wind still reinforce your sense of foreboding
are you (still) waiting for the storm to arrive
are you still refusing to speak to God
do you (still) feel that your childhood was stolen from you
do you remember (one) (day) fashioning your self image
do you still create fears (foreign to you) to appear normal
do you still depersonalise your feelings in order to record them
do you still not want to have to choose between things but have both
do you still feel your mind will split open when you think of too much at once
does your skin still map your concerns
do others still think you exaggerate (now)
can you still see the colour of electricity
do you remember the feel of borrowed clothes on your skin
do you still have that dark scar (under) (your) (eye)
are photographs of you still misleading
do you still release words painfully
do you still write your name on objects (in black heavy pen)
are you still one person within the shell of another
do you still paint your lips bright red across your solemn face
do you still find English winters difficult to endure
(do your teeth still chatter) [in your Heptonstall grave]

can you still feel the power force of language (between your dust dry lips)

She spoke to me. She said a word. When I heard the word I saw a colour.

When she said more words, telling me a story, stunning fields of colours surged through my eyes.

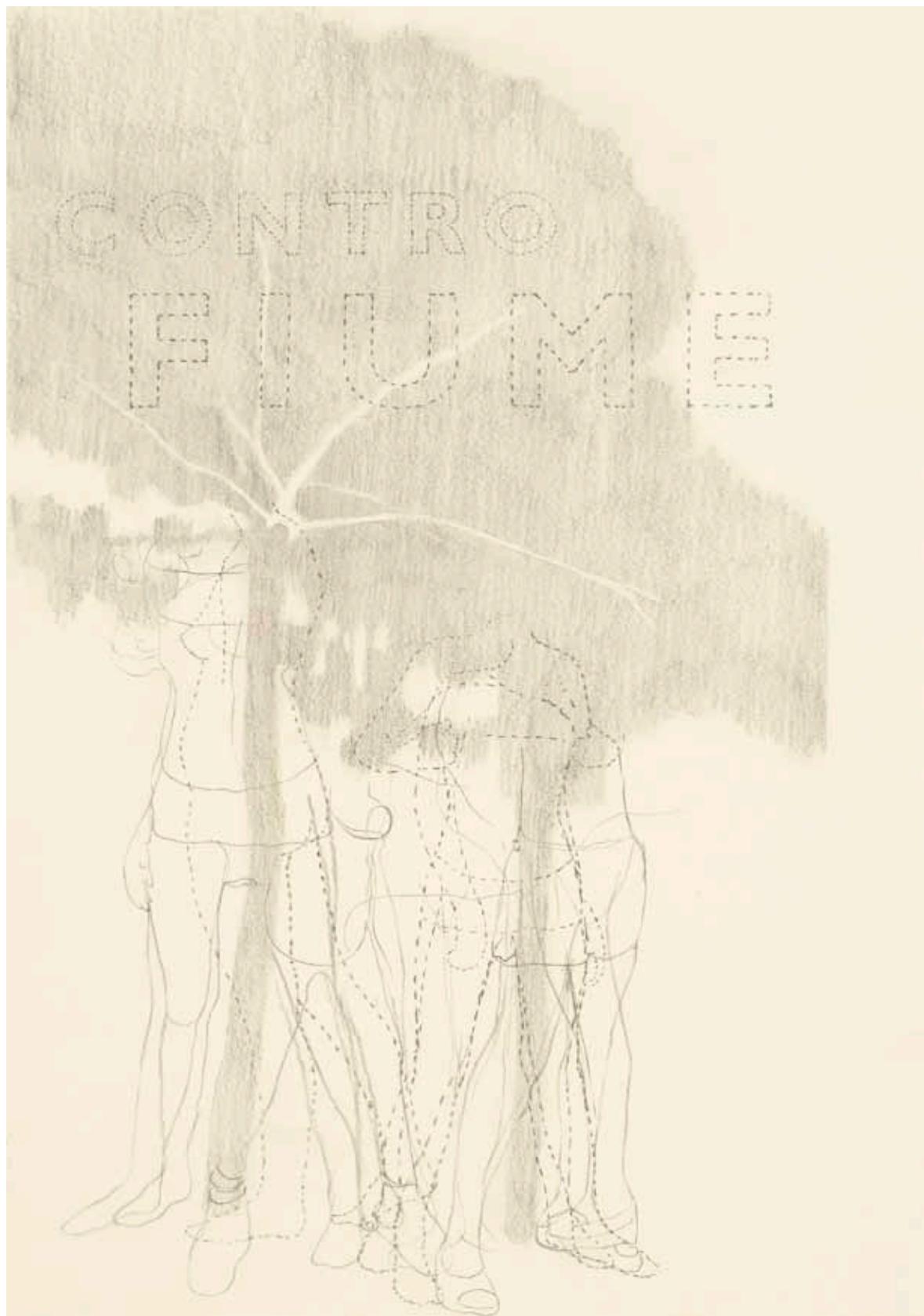
I tasted light. I felt silence. I heard warmth. I smelled song.

do you still write with a disguising pen
is your inner voice still unkind to you
are you still looking for your voice
do you still read extensively (in your English grave)

can you still taste stories on your tongue

in a brief moment, experience magnified. the soft pressure of a spoken word against your skin. the warmth of a vacated place. senses expanding, hypertuning, to receive any and every sensation and particulate essence, colourless ungiven gifts

do you still sit with the red covered thesaurus in your lap
do you still burn his words
are you still yearning for rebirth, have you yet to be reborn
do you still realise that one voice can become another
can you still feel the unstoppable force (of writing)
do you still draw as much from literature as from life
does your spirit (still) expand and contract
do you still feel the heavy touch of winter
are you still a (w) (o) (u) (n) (d)
how many times can you use fire as a weapon
do all the portraits on the walls still change to resemble him
do new clothes still transform you
how many times do you think you can be reborn
do you still think you can cope with this London winter
do you still appear at doors frightened and pathetic
do you still maintain you did not want to die
do you still not have a telephone
did your momentum stop
did your words become dry
does there still seem no way out of your dilemma



do you still give shelter to seven small figures beneath your clothes
 do you still wear a yellow or golden dress beneath your coat
 are you still holding a sign in your hands on which there is no text
 are you still standing on a brown and green mound, against a reddish purple background
 is there a circle of blue sky above your head
 are you still dressed in dark earth green
 is there still a small grey bird perched on your left hand
 do you still hold something in your right hand that you appear to want to give to someone
 do your breasts still protrude through two holes in your dress
 is your face still bright blood red
 are there still nine deep blue birds sitting on the roof of your house
 do you still sit on the ground in a white circle
 does water still flow from between your legs
 are your actions still written in the air above your head
 are you still wearing a simple white shift
 do you still part it over an area of your stomach with your hands
 do you see two birds seizing each others tails
 are you aware of things taking place upon a green field against a pinkish purple background
 do you still hold a small bowl in your left hand
 are you still being led to the fire
 is the sun still shining against a dark brown sky
 do you still sit within a green plain before a bluish green background with two jars beside you
 are you still holding another jar in one hand and your hair in the other
does the sky still bend down close and kiss you

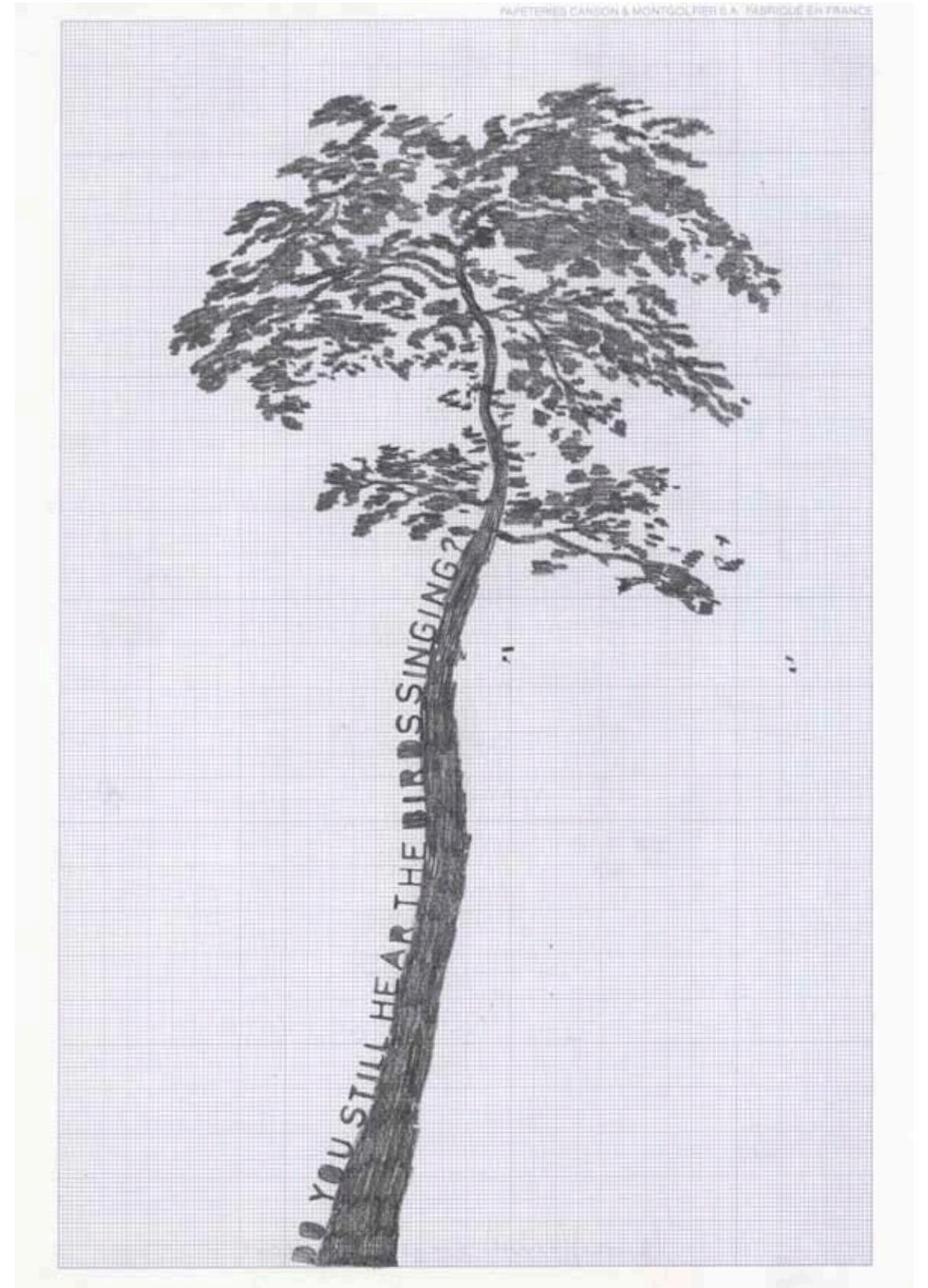
Earth become the colour of parchment, as dry as unfleshed bone exposed to the wind... thin lines are drawn across its surface... the shadows of lines writing the unremembered name of a place... it is rubbed by a purple sea into which stream mirrored rivers flowing from lakes the colour of lead across great bleached plains where black roads stripe sometimes black sometimes slate grey fields... trees of muted orange and stone pink bearing blue fruit stand on lilac trunks alone or in woods... flame-like trees grow out of the roofs of rust coloured houses on which obsessional texts have been scrawled in white chalk... soot black trees grip the soil with white clawlike roots holding the meaning of things in place... beyond light blue and umber hills blood-red mountains rise into a grey-green sky scratched with pale ochre and violet lines... there is a small clay vessel on the horizon which contains the rest of the unseen world, redeemed from the subjugation of time and compacted into a handful of dust.

does she still make you a potion
 do you still write songs for her which become lost to you
 does your seed still fall into the sea (and) (does) (the) (sea) (still) (give) (birth) (to) (your) (offspring)
 do you cross fields of ice, seas of ice, blue almost vertical wall waves
 do you remember seeing someone losing the power of speech
 did you see her standing in front of the taped-up window
 do you watch her lips slowly forming words
do you still look for places where you can become invisible
 can you still not draw
 can you still not keep your mind focused on one thing
 does it slide into a thousand different thoughts
 do you still always have to count the number of things
 do you still appear stark in chemical light
 do you (still) cry against her milk white throat
 is her hair still full of your (whispered) (words)
 do you still build houses on the palm of your hand
 do you still paint things white
 have you ever held your children in the palm of your hand
can you still fly
 do you still do things the dead do
 do you feel her pain (as if it was an object you turn in your hands)
 do you avoid contact with some people at all costs





do you still look for missing colours
do you still feed the animal
do you still dream things into existence
do you still see colour leak from one thing into another
(are) (you) (still) (drawn) (unto) (the) (shadows)
do you still speak in a voice that others cannot hear
are you still aware of things (which) (do) (not) (have) (a) (name)
are you still blinded by the act of (speaking) (the) (truth)
do you still leave as much behind as you meet
do you still bury memories in soft dark earth
are you still inclined to see what cannot be seen
do you (still) believe that some things can be (undone)
do you (still) believe that some things can be (redone)
do you still (sit) (beneath) (the) (tree)
do you still lightly touch others in secret
do your words still consist of light
does (awareness) still come to you with pain
do you still become tired by the effort of (not) touching
do you still sometimes feel your invasiveness
do you still (wonder) about the nature of touching
do you (still) feel the weight (of) (his) (body) against yours
do you still catch people in your staring eye
when autumn comes, do you still feel the darkening pull
do you still take his hands and put them under your clothes
do you still tend to pay with flesh
do I still want so much you cannot give
does the flood still recede around you
do you still see the deep world reflected in puddles
do you still see the world (in) (human) (form)
do you still like wearing someone else's skin
do you (still) want to speak (with) (someone) (else's) (voice)
do you still have the capacity to not see yourself
(do you still fall asleep in one world) (and wake up in another)
(do you still think) (that in time) (even this will pass)
do you still look at one thing and see another
do you (still) hear music (when) (there) (is) (no) (music)
do you still see the air on fire (reflected) (in) (someone's) (eye)
do you also walk with me through those streets separated only by time (as) (I) (walk) (with) (you)
do your words (still) turn around in your mouth (and) (are) (spoken) (misunderstood)
do you still say things other people cannot hear
do you still remember the day the sun did not rise
do you still remember the smell of the warm sun (on) (your) (skin)
do you still nurture (primavera) flowers (in) (black) (velvet) (fields)
do you (still) hear the tall trees whispering (to) (you)
does the light still burn (brightly) in your eye
does the past (still) feel like wet warm clay (in) (your) (hands)
do you (still) hear the birds singing



Do You Still Hear The Birds Singing

29-06-2001 - 08-02-2005

It started one morning when someone asked me if I had heard the birds singing earlier. I hadn't, but they had. Due to certain circumstances, this person found themselves in another, heightened, state of awareness. Colours were brighter, things smelled and tasted better, pain was all the more sharper and birds sung brilliantly.

Months later, I was working in my studio and had to think back to that time. I wrote on the piece of paper I was about to draw on: do you (still) hear the birds singing?

There followed a stream of other questions which related to this person's former enhanced state and as to whether this was still so. The list of questions continued to grow. However, they were no longer directed at this one person. Many were directed at myself and at people I have been, but they could just as easily be asked of a stranger, observed somewhere, or of someone in a book or a film.

In this publication, I have begun to answer some of the questions. I have done this using other texts of mine, taken mostly from notebooks written over a number of years and with images of my drawings and other works.

Hoor je nog de vogels fluiten

29-06-2001 - 08-02-2005

Het begon op een ochtend, toen iemand mij vroeg of ik vogels had horen fluiten. Ik had dat niet, de ander had dat wel. Door omstandigheden was deze persoon in een andere, verhoogde staat van bewustzijn. Kleuren waren feller, de dingen roken en smaakten beter, pijn was snerpnd en vogels zongen schitterend.

Maanden later werkte ik in mijn atelier en moest ik aan dat moment terugdenken. Op een papiertje, waarop ik net wilde gaan tekenen, schreef ik: hoor je (nog) vogels fluiten? Er volgde een reeks van andere vragen die betrekking hadden op de vroegere gemoedstoestand van die persoon, en of deze nog steeds zo zou zijn. De lijst vragen bleef groeien.

Maar ze waren niet langer aan deze ene persoon gesteld. Vele waren aan mijzelf gericht en aan de mensen die ik ben geweest, maar ze zouden evengoed gesteld kunnen worden aan een willekeurig iemand die ik ooit heb gezien, of aan een personage uit een boek of film.

In deze uitgave ben ik begonnen enkele vragen te beantwoorden. Dat deed ik met andere teksten van mijzelf, voor het merendeel uit notitieboekjes, waarin ik een aantal jaren heb geschreven, en met afbeeldingen van mijn tekeningen en ander werk.



list of illustrations

- title page Crow (Blasted). 2001. pencil / paper. 20 x 20 cm
- 2 Mondo Nuovo. 2004. pencil / paper. 35 x 43 cm
- 4-5 House of the Senses. 1997. pencil / paper. 24 x 35. private collection
- 6 Can You Remember The Time When Seeing Was Like Seed. 2002. pencil / paper. 35 x 35 cm
- 7 Sonno Sogno. 1998. wall painting. N.B.K.S. Breda
- 8 CAOS 3. 2003. low melting point alloy. 6.5 x 25 x 3.5 cm
- 9 a I Look At One Thing As If It Was Something Else. 2002. pencil / paper. 35 x 35 cm
- b Do You Still Plant (Flowers) In Inconceivable Places. 2002. pencil / paper. 35 x 35 cm
- c Do You Remember When (I) (Saw) (Something) When (You) (Saw) (Something). 2002. pencil / paper. 35 x 35 cm
- 11 Do You Remember When Her Words Pressed Softly Against Your Eyelid. 2003. pencil / paper. 35 x 35 cm
- 12-13 Do You Still Hear Music When There Is No Music. 2001. pencil / paper. 30 x 40 cm
- 14 a Torn Poem Face. 2001. pencil / paper. 35 x 35 cm. private collection
- b Ombra and Estasi from *Universal Anatomy*. 1996. private collection
- 15 The Burdened from *Purgatorio (Der Tanz)*. 1999. pencil / paper. 43 x 35 cm. private collection
- 16 a Woodpecker. 2001. pencil / paper. 11 x 18 cm. private collection
- b Ecstasy from The Word Made Flesh. 1999. mdf. 6 x 33 x 4 cm
- 17 a Untitled from *Purgatorio (Der Tanz)*. 1999. pencil / paper. 35 x 35 cm
- b Untitled from *Purgatorio (Der Tanz)*. 1999. pencil / paper. 35 x 35 cm
- c Untitled from *Purgatorio (Der Tanz)*. 1999. pencil / paper. 35 x 35 cm. private collection
- 19 Thought Through My Eyes. 2001. pencil / paper. 100 x 70 cm
- 20 Is This Your Face, Your Faces, Our Face. 9x from series. 2003. pencil / c. print / paper. 30 x 21 cm
- 22 a Do You Still Have One Face To Attract The World And One To Repel It. 2003. pencil / paper. 40 x 40 cm. private collection
- b Do You Still (Always) Have To Look Inside. 2003. pencil / paper. 35 x 35 cm
- c We Are The Ocean (You) (And) (Me) The Slow Moving Ocean. 2003. pencil / paper. 35 x 35 cm
- d Do You (Still) Think You Can See Things That Cannot Be Seen. 2003. pencil / paper. 43 x 35 cm
- 23 a Do You Project Your Words Against The Mountain, Do You Let Them Sink Into The Ocean. 2003. pencil / paper. 30 x 30 cm
- b Do You Still Look For Places In Which To Become Invisible. 2003. pencil / paper. 35 x 35 cm
- c Does Your Breath Form Into Bright Clouds In The Cold Air Behind You. 2003. pencil / paper. 30 x 70 cm
- d (You) (You) And (Me) In Ostia. 2002. pencil / paper. 35 x 43 cm
- 24 Sometimes I See As If Seeing Is Hunger And Sometimes I Close My Eyes. 2002. pencil / paper. 25 x 20 cm
- 25 Kingfisher 2. 2001. pencil / paper. 20 x 27 cm. private collection
- 26 Crow (Flying). 2001. pencil / paper. 20 x 20 cm. private collection
- 27 The Visible World. 2004. pencil / paper. 35 x 35 cm
- 28-29 Tu Te Souviens _ Je Me Souviens. 2004. pencil / paper. 43 x 72 cm
- 30 Vita Nuova. 2005. mdf. 13 x 28 x 4 cm
- 32 Contro Fiume. 2005. pencil / paper. 42 x 30 cm
- 33 (Segmented) Crow. 2001. pencil / paper. 30 x 30 cm
- 34 Kingfisher 3. 2001. pencil / paper. 15 x 10 cm
- 35 Do You Still Hear The Birds Singing. 2001. pencil / paper. 29.7 x 21 cm. private collection
- 36-37 Do You Still Look Again And Keep Looking Again (And) (Again). 2003. pencil / paper. 35 x 43 cm
- 39 Sparrow. 2001. pencil / paper. 8 x 11 cm. private collection
- 40 / cover Seeing Eye Bird and Blind Torn Poem Face. 2001. pencil / paper. 16 x 12 - 25 x 20 cm. private collection

selection of exhibitions

2005 - Do You Still Hear The Birds Singing, Art Rotterdam, Galerie Phoebus (solo). Scription, Tilburg (solo).

2004 - Transition, Stichting ZET, De Veenvloer, Amsterdam. Gastateliers, de Krabbedans, Eindhoven. 2003 - Sehnsucht. Gastatelier presentatie. Meulenstein Art Centre (solo). Sometimes I See As If Seeing Was Hunger And Sometimes I Close My Eyes, Galerie Phoebus, Rotterdam (solo). Wishful Tekening, Peninsula, Eindhoven. Tekenen Des Tijds, KWI4, Den Bosch. Mixed Frequencies, Gaslab, Eindhoven (solo). 2001 - Peninsula, Eindhoven. Lof Der Zotheid, Art Rotterdam, Galerie Phoebus. Lof Der Zotheid (revisited), KunstRai / Art Amsterdam, Galerie Phoebus. (Human)(Nature), Galerie Phoebus (Hieronymous Bosch, Tuin Der Lusten)(solo). Erasmus Galerij, Rotterdam (solo). 2000 - Der Tanz, Galerie Phoebus, Rotterdam (solo). Traumplatz 7, Kamer 203, Hotel, Nijmegen (solo). Z.T (de uitnodiging), Galerie Phoebus, Teekengenootschap Pictura, Dordrecht. 1999 - Art Amsterdam / KunstRai 99, Galerie Phoebus. Teylers Museum, Haarlem. Artists Village, MU/De Witte Dame, Eindhoven. 1998 - L'Espace Habité, Galerie Phoebus, Rotterdam (solo). Galerie De Lege Ruimte, Ghent (B). @rt Words - @rt Works, Bruges (B). Fama Crésit Eúndo, Bogardenkapel, Bruges (B). Cairn Gallery, Nailsworth, England (UK). Small Sculpture Show, Peninsula, Eindhoven. 1997 - Out of Drawers, Galerie Nouvelles Images, Den Haag. L'Homme Sucré, Stedelijk Museum Schiedam. Asylum Artibus, Museum Kempenland, Eindhoven. Galerie Phoebus, Rotterdam. 1996 - Travaux Publics [Public Works], Peninsula / Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven. Punkt und Linie zu Fläche, Galerie Phoebus, Rotterdam. 44c, Peninsula, Eindhoven. 1995 - An Anthropomorphic Landscape, Archipel, Apeldoorn (solo). Inner Room, Galerie Phoebus, Rotterdam (solo). Drink Me, Artis, Den Bosch. Peninsula, Eindhoven. 1994 - Zeitgenössische Niederländische Kunstler, Haus der Kunst, Munich (D). Lokaal 01, Antwerp (B) (solo). Galerie Studiolo, Heusden. Noordbrabants Museum, Den Bosch. 1993 - Galerie Phoebus, Rotterdam (solo). 1992 - Galerie Phoebus, Rotterdam (solo). De Krabbedans, Eindhoven (solo). N.B.K.S. Breda. KunstRai Amsterdam, Galerie Phoebus (solo). Peninsula, Eindhoven (solo). De Tekeningen, H.C.A.K. Den Haag. 1991 - Teylers Museum, Haarlem. Stedelijk Museum, Schiedam. Stichting Lyr, Amsterdam. Gemeente aankopen, Het Apollohuis, Eindhoven. 1990 - Galerie Phoebus, Rotterdam (solo). 1989 - Galerie Studiolo, Heusden (solo). Lokaal 01, Breda (solo)

www.simonbenson.nl - www.phoebus.nl

colofon / colophon

tekst, beeld, grafische vormgeving / texts, images and graphic design: Simon Benson
 redactioneel overleg en advies / editorial consultation and advice: Mirjam de Winter, galerie Phoebus
 fotografie / photography: Peter Cox, Simon Benson
 drukwerk / printing: Lecturis bv
 uitgave / publication: PHOEBUS• Rotterdam. 2005. No. 7 in de serie / in the series,
Unbound Series / Ongebonden reeks
 oplage / edition: 600
 © Simon Benson, Peter Cox, PHOEBUS• Rotterdam

met dank aan / with thanks to: gemeente Eindhoven, My Own Private Company bv en / and provincie Noord-Brabant, voor hun financiële bijdrage / for their financial support

ISBN 90-75593-14-7



