

Bright lights and cats with no mouths

The art of John Balance collected



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Layout and cover design by Liam Thomas
Rear cover photograph by Peter Christopherson

With thanks to Val Denham, Jeremy Reed, Xavier Laradji and Claus Laufenburg.

A percentage of the profits from this book will be donated to the Terrence Higgins Trust.

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Jhonn is Unbalanced

“You probably don’t remember me?”

How could I forget?

I remember a pretty young boy in a black leather jacket and a *Psychic TV* T-shirt with a crucified wolf on a cross upon it, a punk skinhead.

“You’re my favourite artist; you and Austin Osman Spare, and maybe Brion Gysin.” I was flattered.

He always seemed a little lost in the darkness of various subterranean venues. A ghost boy, an outsider – outsiders make Outsider Art. He did both art and music – he was the protagonist of the band *Coil*, fulfilling the roles of vocalist, musician and song writer. Jhonn was the shimmering soul of *Coil*; the instigator of impossible nuances.

He would always send me his latest records; he was keen to show me his strange output, his objects of substance – real things.

His artworks, drawings, paintings remind me of André Masson. This preferred school of Surrealism, taking a pen for a walk, the automatic subconscious manifestations of fractured worlds and entities locked in the rectangle of two dimensions.

“My name is Geff, you probably don’t remember me? I was at Gen’s house.”

His solidified spider whispers bleed gold ectoplasm onto the paper. We like *L’Age d’Or*.

Even his adopted name had been mangled: ‘Jhonn’, a new form of spelling.

He never showed me his drawings; I didn’t even know that he did them.

“Do you do art?”, I’d once asked him long ago, he’d blushed and said, “A bit, but I’m rubbish compared to you.”

We both loved a band called *The Virgin Prunes*; I would observe him over my pint in a plastic glass, in a world of his own, at most of their London gigs.

He had a gentleness about him, not effeminate as such, just a soft shyness; you had to like him.

When drawing, his lines came close to the practice of poets. The minimum of conscious determination – a quick fearless succession of marks played out like a child in a trance – avoiding re-working. Believing totally in the illogical fluid calligraphy of his subconscious, made solid and preserved in time.

In my bare room, cold and empty without furniture, and with cardboard boxes unpacked, the telephone sounded very loud. Beep beep! Beep beep!

“Hello?”

“It’s me!”, he exclaimed, “Geff, Geff Rushton!”

I was surprised; I hadn’t heard from him in years.

“Oh! Geff ? I hear that you are called Jhonn Balance now?”

He laughed, “Yeah, I didn’t want to be Geff anymore; I wanted to be more balanced, like you, sort of yin and yang.”

“But I’m unbalanced!”, I said, “maybe you should be called Jhonn Unbalanced?”

The friendly banter of acquaintances, making up for missing years. I could sense sadness between the exchanges. He sounded like he’d been drinking; I could detect a certain melancholy seeping down the line. He wanted to commission me to do a *Coil* album cover. Embarrassed boys sometimes need an excuse to talk to someone in their lonely moments. Yellow and black, like a wasp, these are the colours that I would have used if it had ever happened. I told him that yellow and black were in my mind.

“Yes”, he said all excited, “and Val, please make it really fucking weird!”

The conversation got darker as he continued to drink. He sounded like that lost boy again.

“Telephone calls and emails are all very well, but I never get those beautiful letters anymore. Will you write me a letter with your drawings on?”

I did so as soon as he’d said goodbye. How could I refuse?

This book is about Jhonn’s artworks, his mysterious visions. Did he intend them for anyone but himself ? We will never know, but I believe that Jhonn was an important cultural figure and that his visual works are just as artistically valid as his music. These crazy wonderworks deserve an audience at last: I commend his work to you.

“You probably don’t remember me?”

Yes, I do.

Val Denham
Yorkshire, August 2014.

“What would an ocean be without a monster lurking in the dark? It would be like sleep without dreams.”

– Werner Herzog



Oil paint on black paper.



Cefalu DEMON after A.C. Otte
22-12-88 AVERY

"Cefalu Demon after A.C."; acrylic paint on card, 22.12.88.



Acrylic paint on black paper.



Acrylic paint on black paper.



Acrylic paint on black paper.



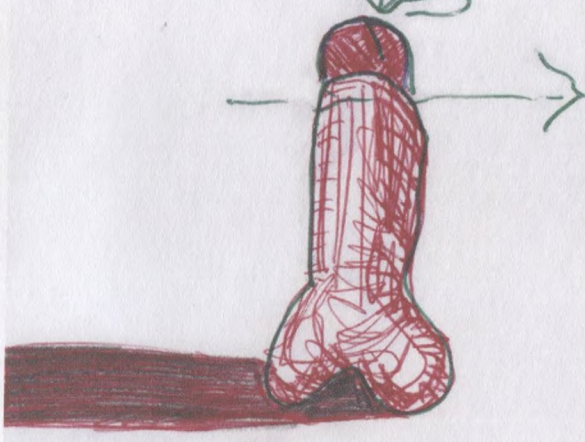
Acrylic paint on black paper.



Acrylic paint on card.



pages
of
the
sexually
insane.



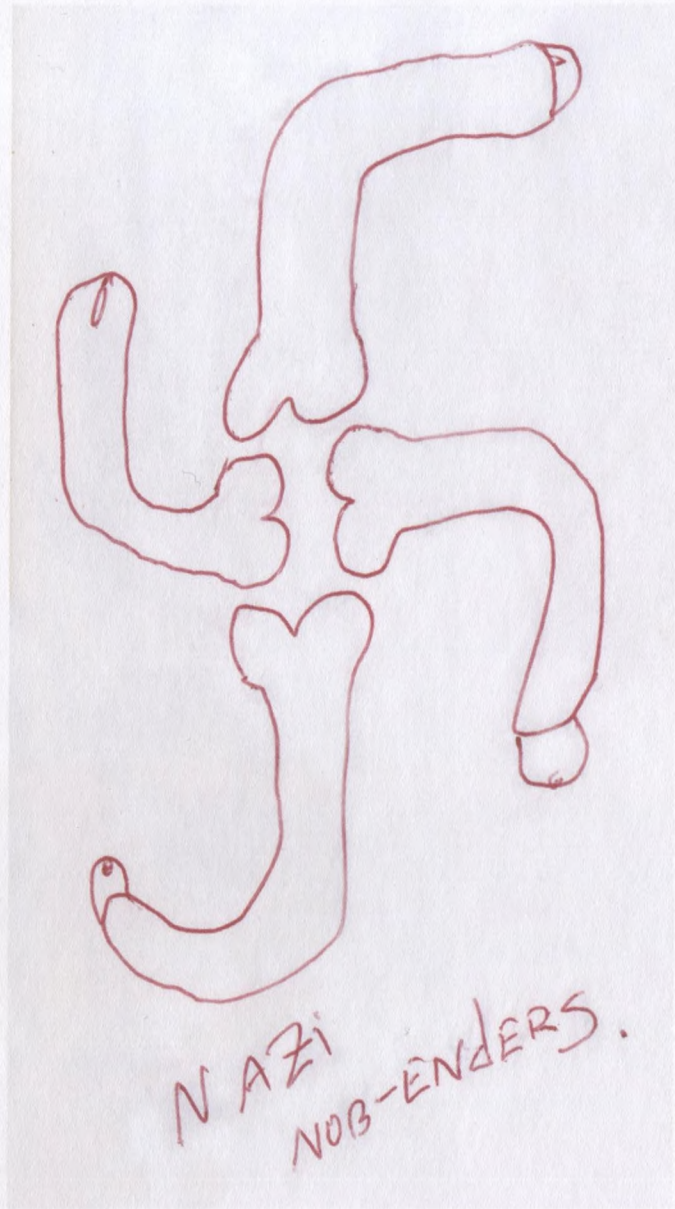
"Pages of the Sexually Insane", ballpoint pen and pencil on notepaper.



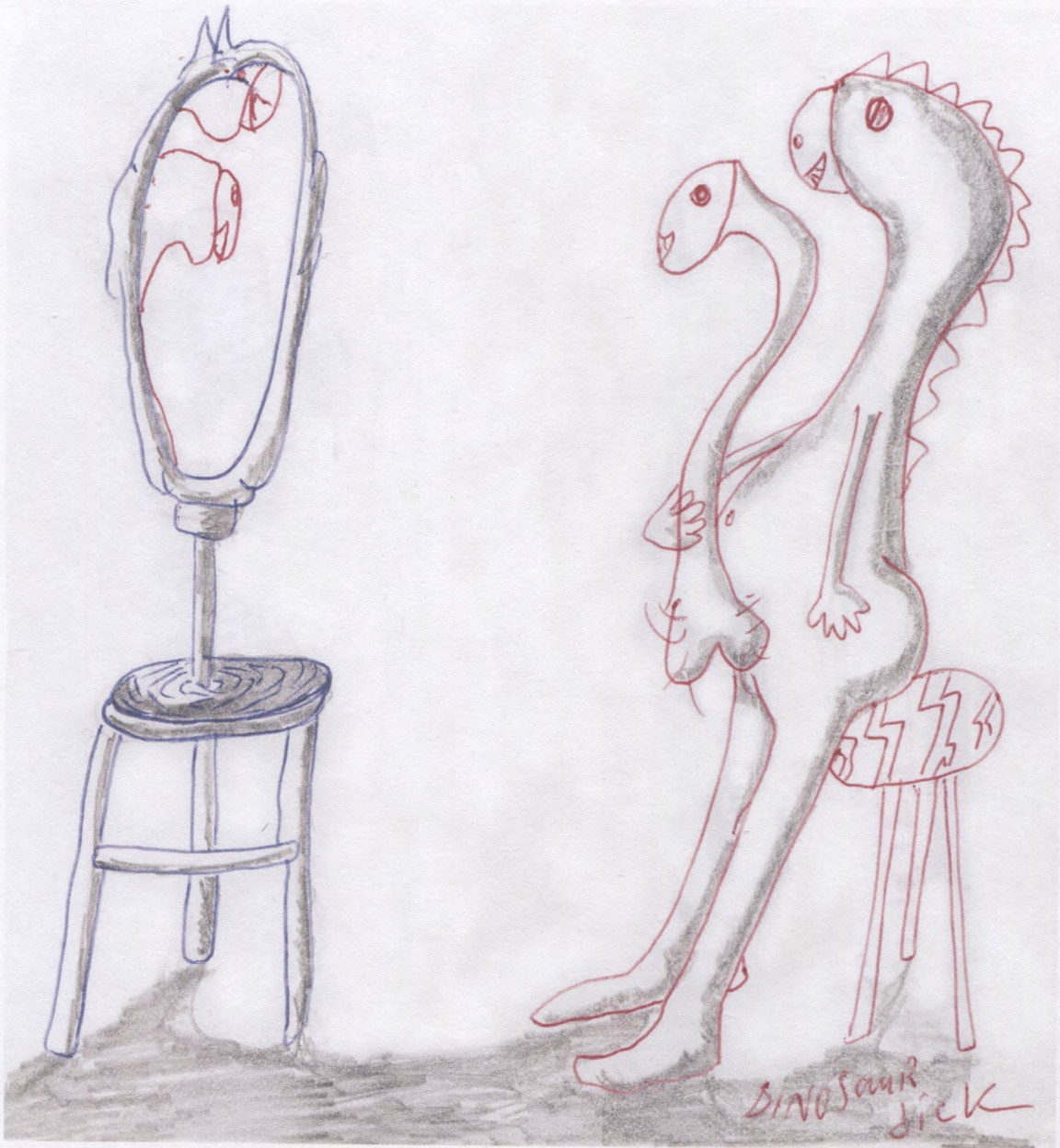
"A Lady in Writing", ballpoint pen and pencil on notepaper.



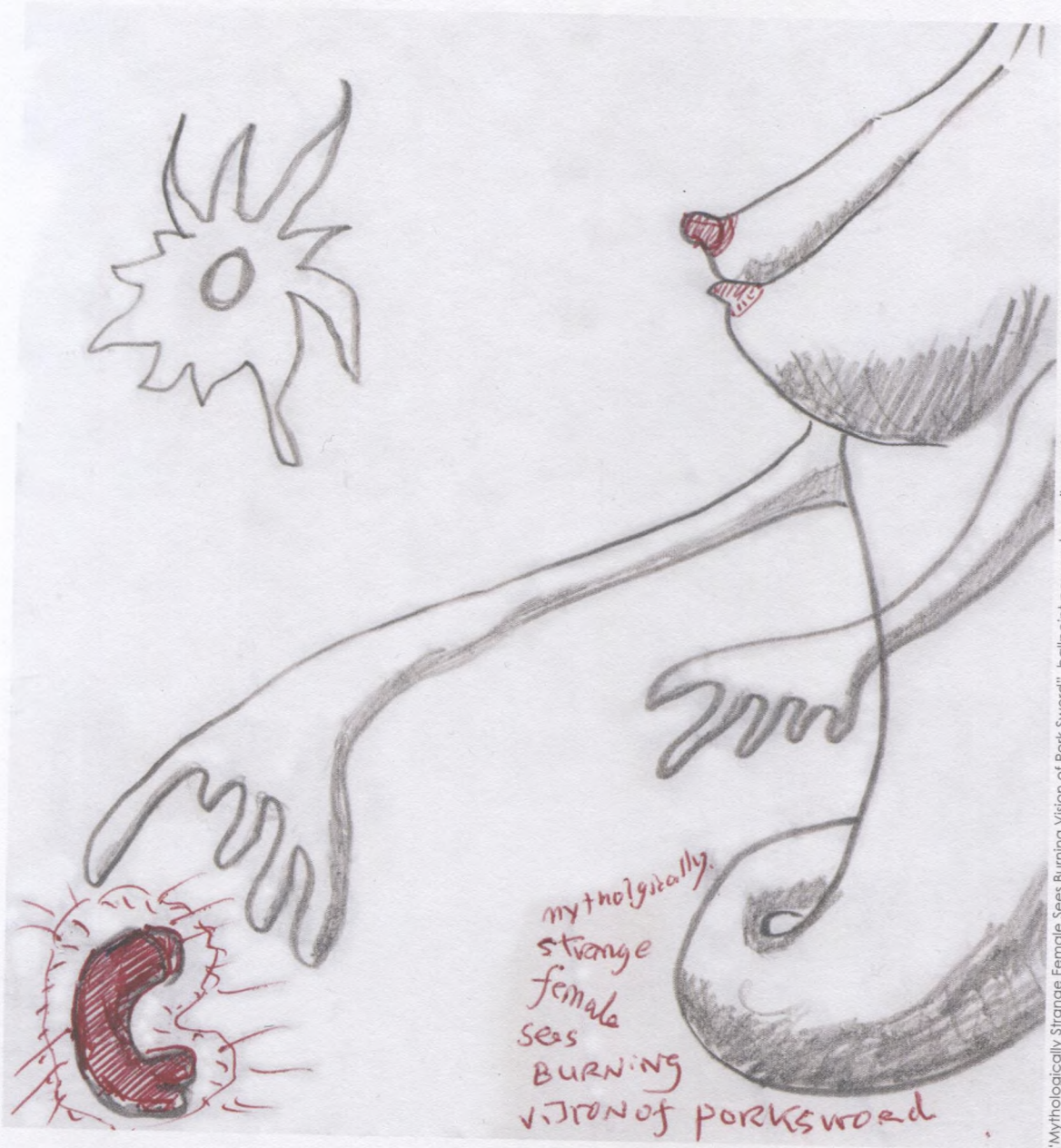
"Happy Pee-ness", ballpoint pen and pencil on notepaper.



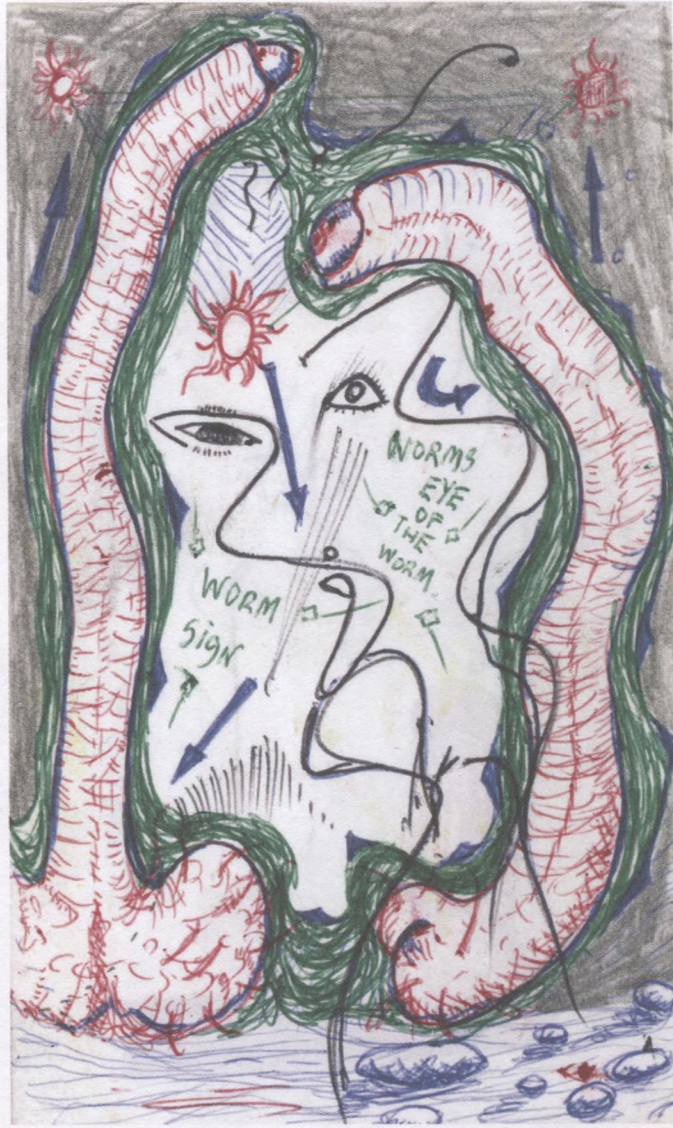
"Nazi Nob-Enders", ballpoint pen on notepaper.



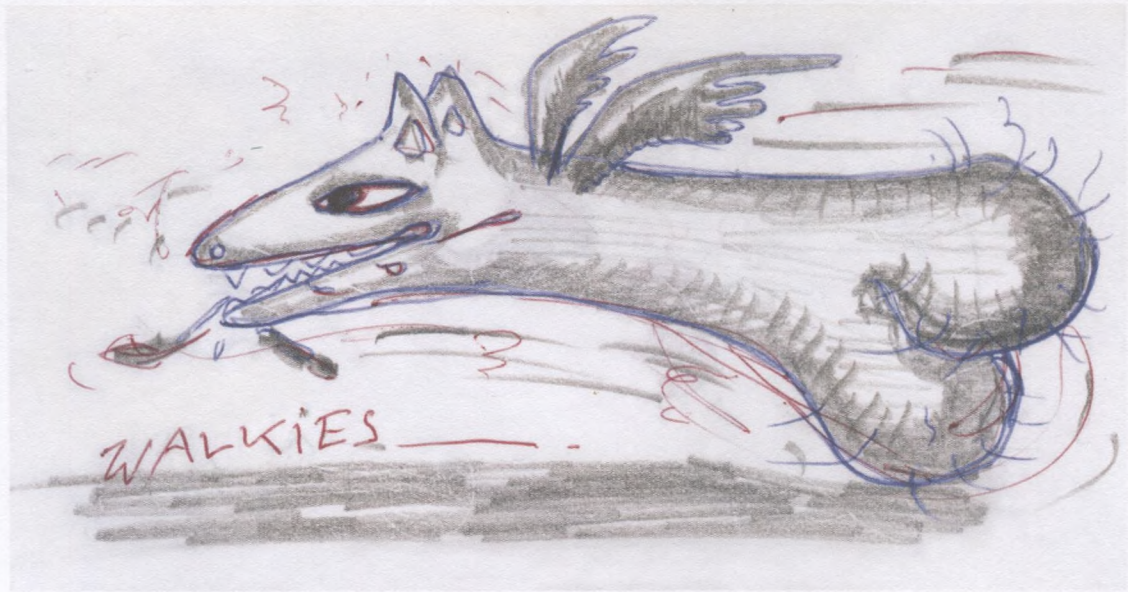
"Dinosaur Dick", ballpoint pen and pencil on notepaper.



"Mythologically Strange Female Sees Burning Vision of Pork Sword", ballpoint pen and pencil on notepaper.



"Worm Sign", ballpoint pen and pencil on notepaper.



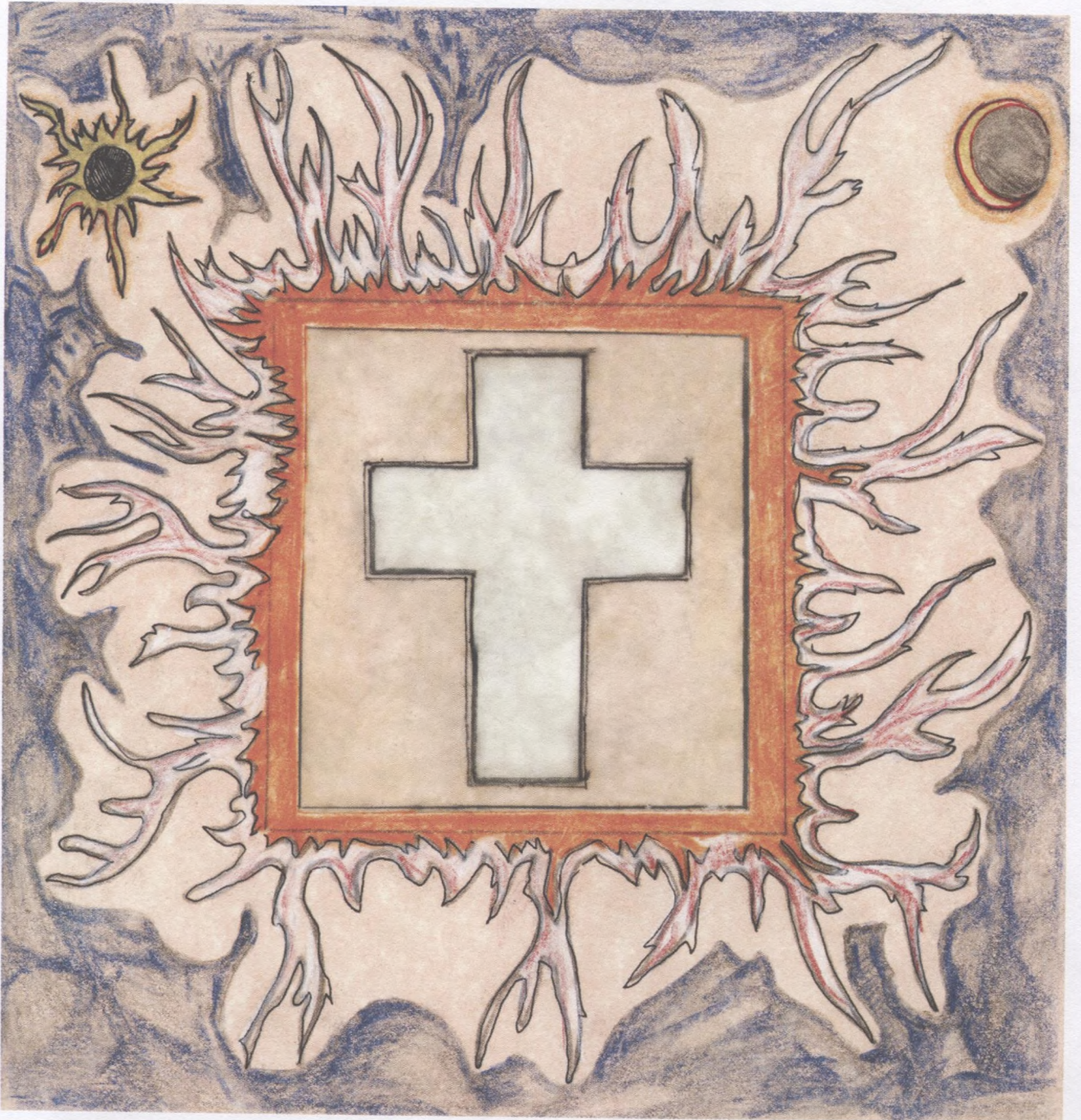
"Walkies", ballpoint pen and pencil on notepaper.



"Deadfish" or "Worms of No Quality", ballpoint pen on notepaper.



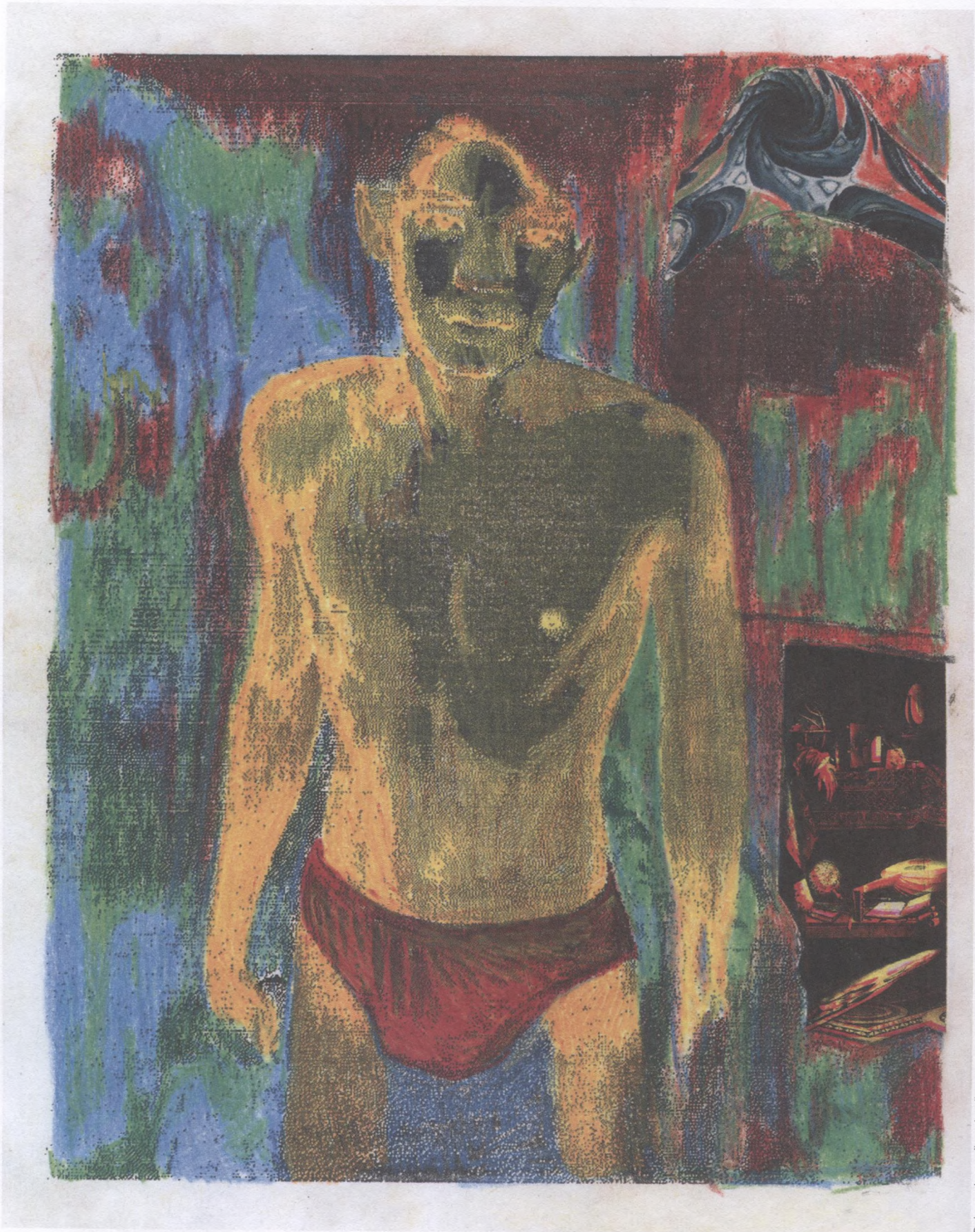
"A Hammock Near a River in a Strange Country, Maybe Sweden, Maybe Not", ballpoint pen on notepaper.



Coloured pencil and ink on paper with translucent cross, 18.3.88.

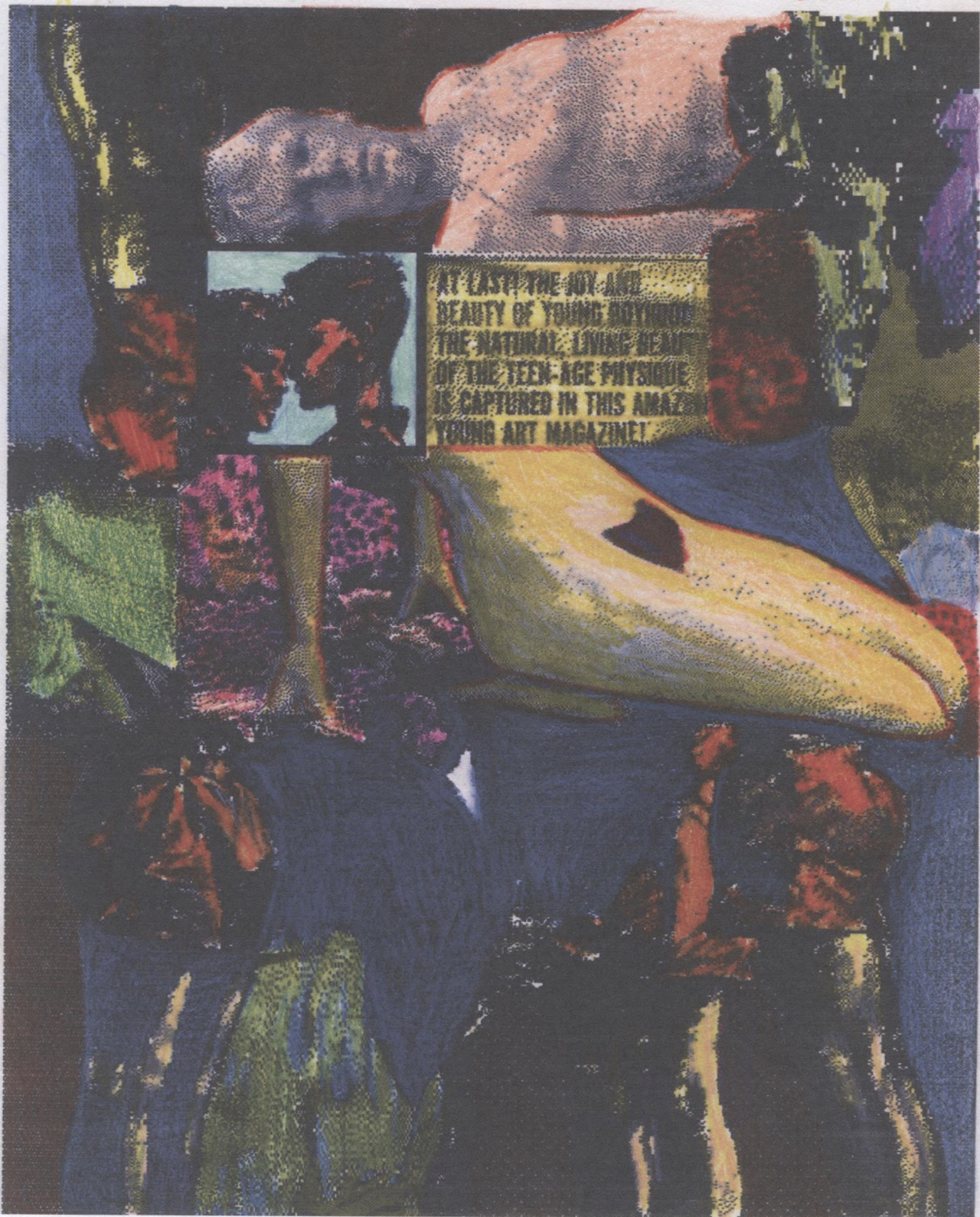


John Belance .88.
+
Peter Christopherson.



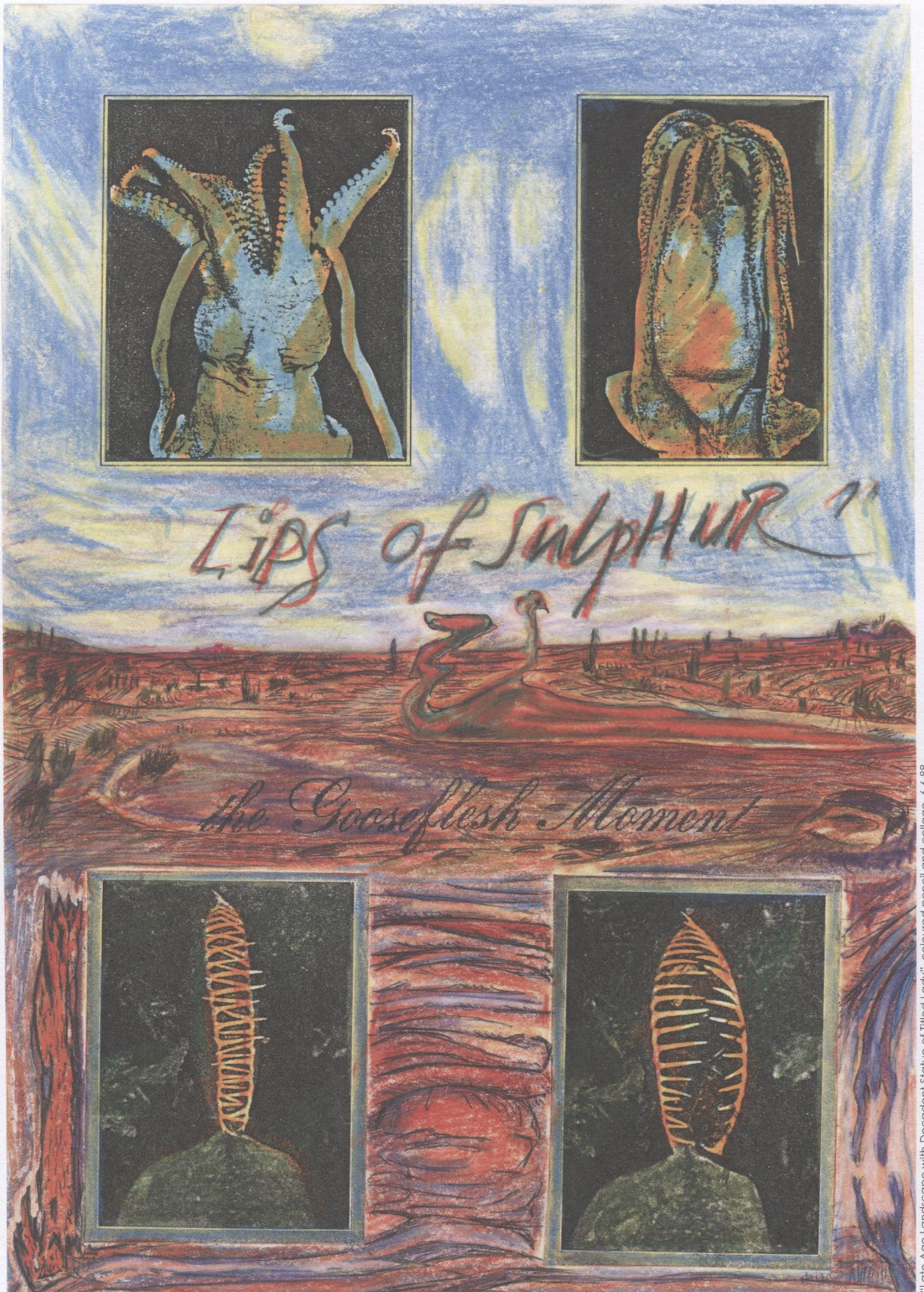
Coloured pencil and collage.

"At last! The Joy and Beauty of Young Boyhood"



AT LAST! THE JOY AND
BEAUTY OF YOUNG BOYHOOD
THE NATURAL, LIVING HEAD
OF THE TEEN-AGE PHYSIQUE
IS CAPTURED IN THIS AMAZING
YOUNG ART MAGAZINE!

"At Last! The Joy and Beauty of Young Boyhood", coloured pencil and collage.



"Late Age Landscape with Decadent Statue of Titled Lady", coloured pencil and collage, 6.6.88.



Collage, 19.11.88.



"After Braque", coloured pencil on paper, 8.8.86.

After BRAQUE 1932 drawing - mythological scene



After Braque
15 min 8888 or



oA
8.8.88 21

Coloured pencil on paper, 8.8.88.



after Braque 5A
15mins

"After Braque", coloured pencil 8.8.88 ev.



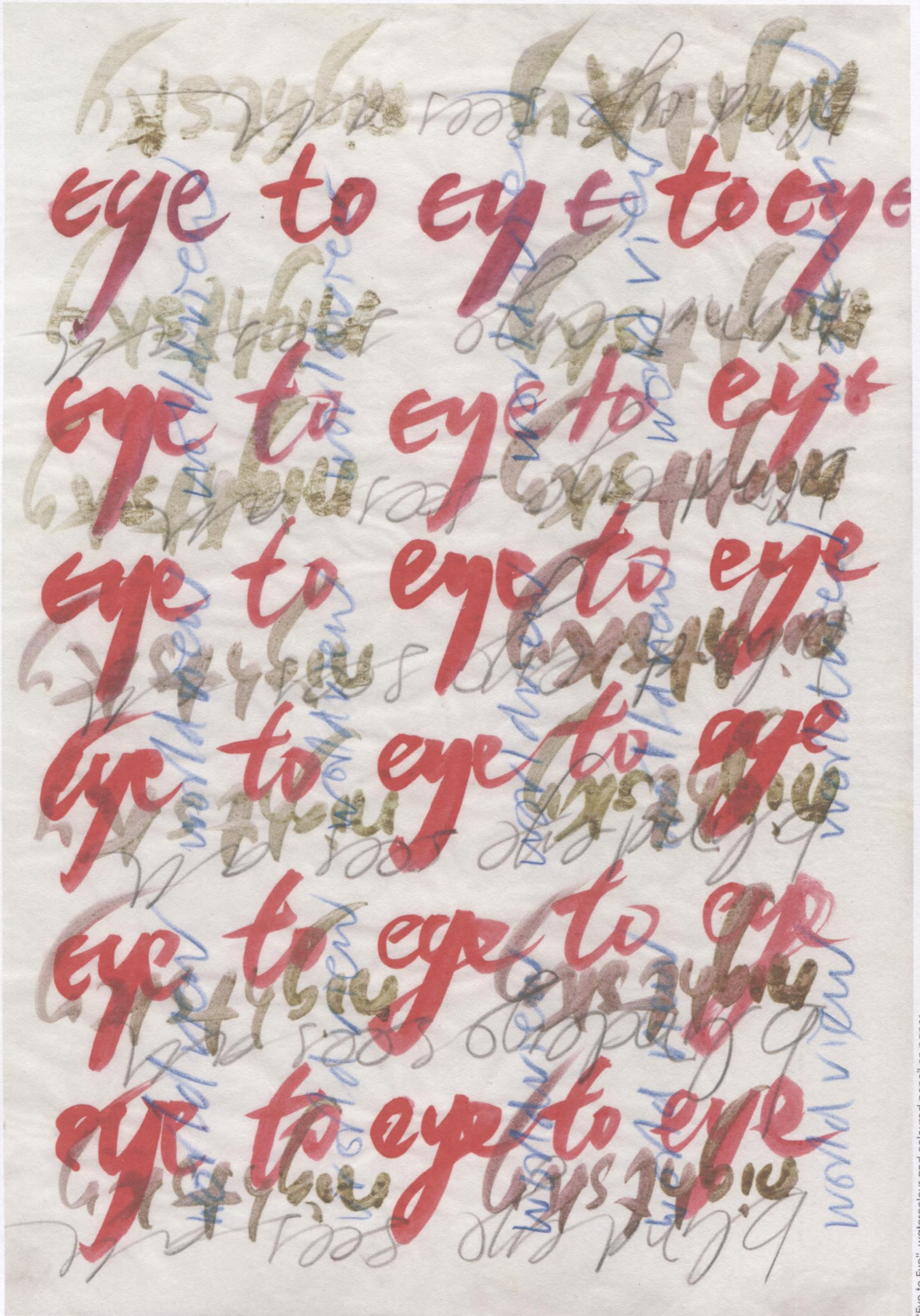
Pastel and coloured pencil on paper



Pastel and coloured pencil on paper.



Pastel and coloured pencil on paper.



"Eye to Eye", watercolour and coloured pencil on paper.



Pastel and coloured pencil on paper

yes yes yes yes yes

yes yes yes yes yes

yes yes yes yes yes



Pencil and pastel on paper.



time and tide
lunar lunar lunar lunar

time and tide
lunar lunar lunar

time and tide
lunar lunar lunar

time and tide
lunar lunar lunar



9A
23/10/88



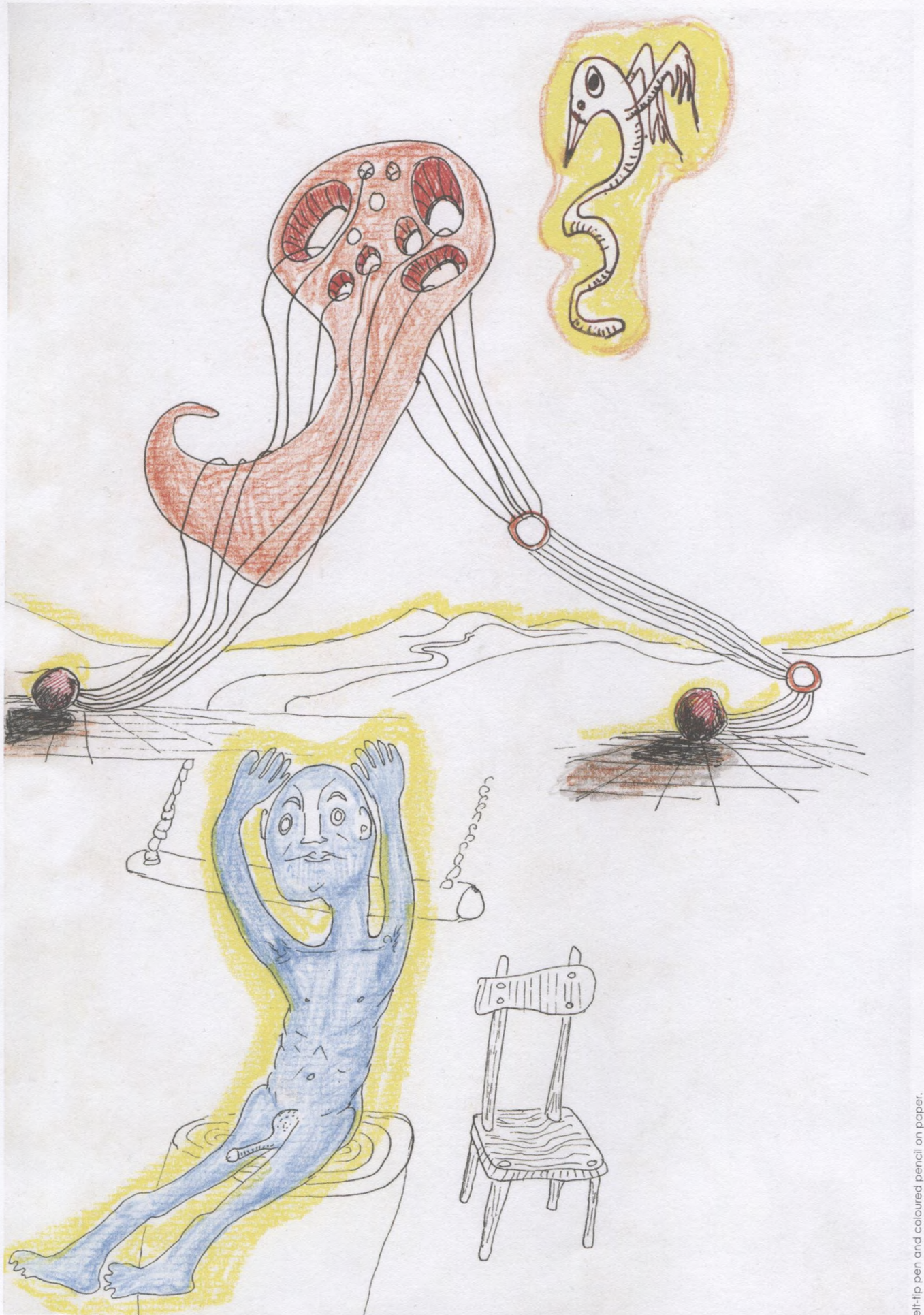
Pencil, pastel and coloured pencil on paper.





Crayon and felt-tip pen on paper.

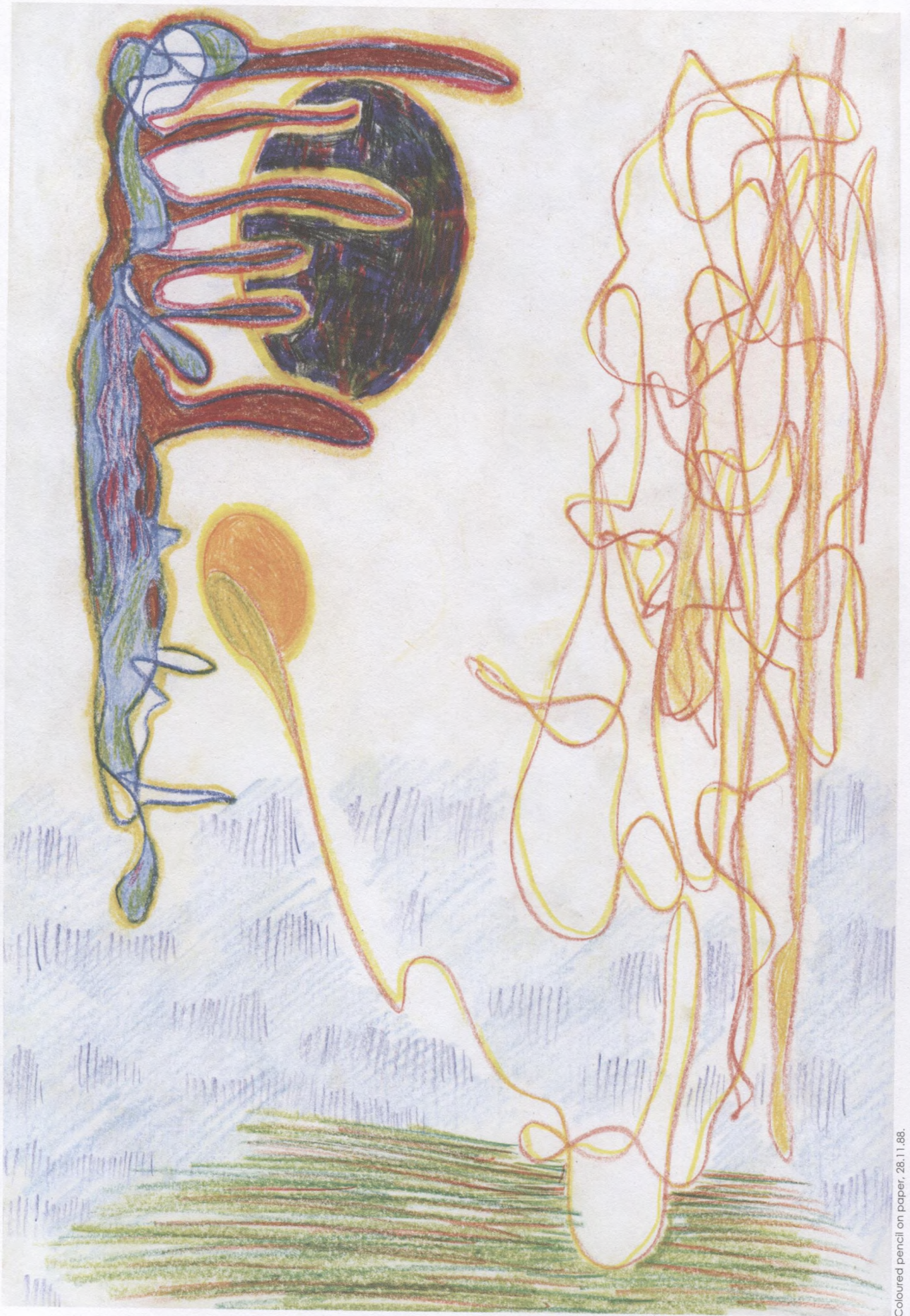






Coloured pencil and crayon on paper.









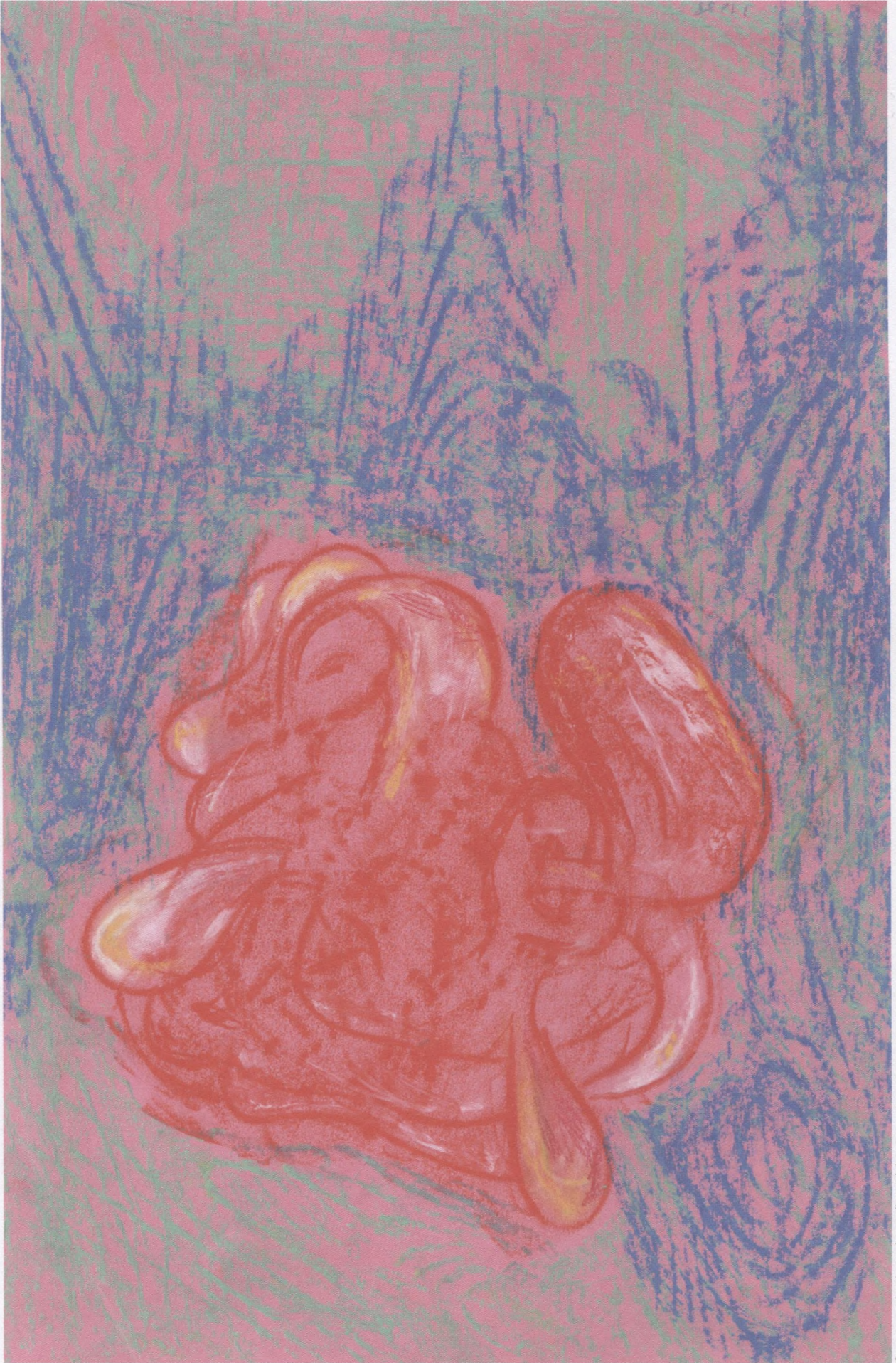
AVERY
8.1968

"Curtains", felt-tip pen and coloured pencil, 8.6.88.



6.6.88

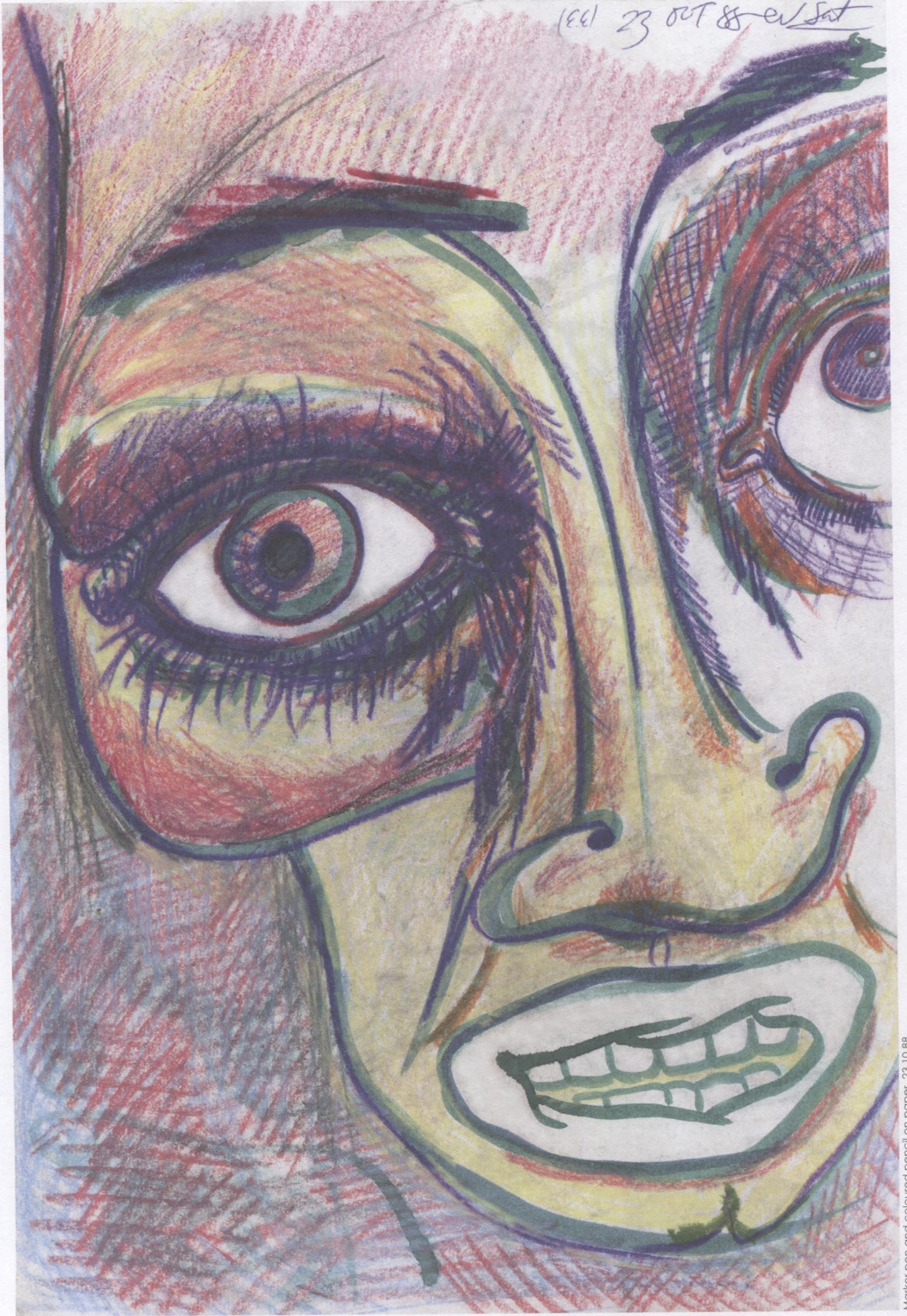




Crayon and coloured pencil on pink paper.





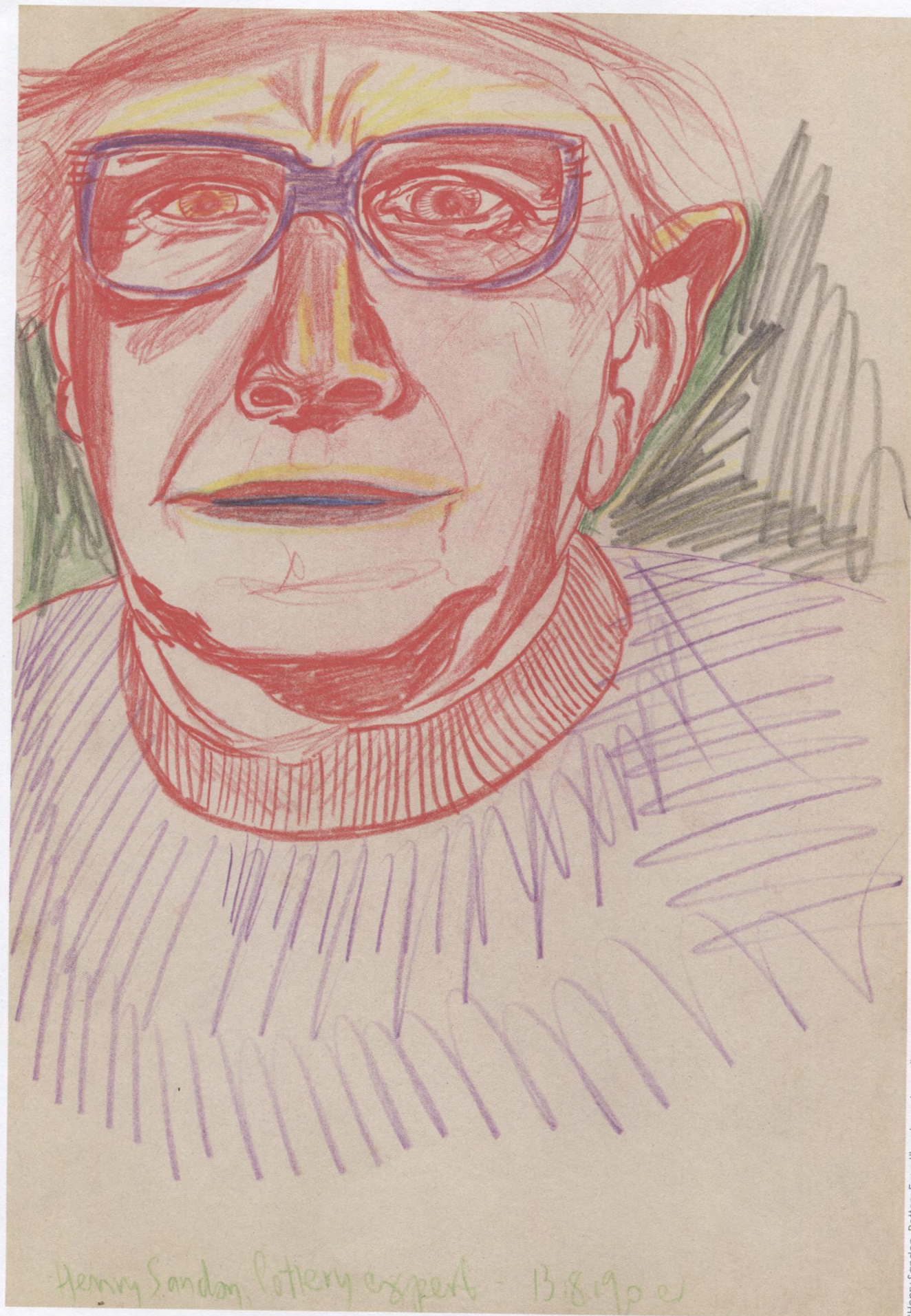




"He Tells You Different Like", coloured pencil on paper.



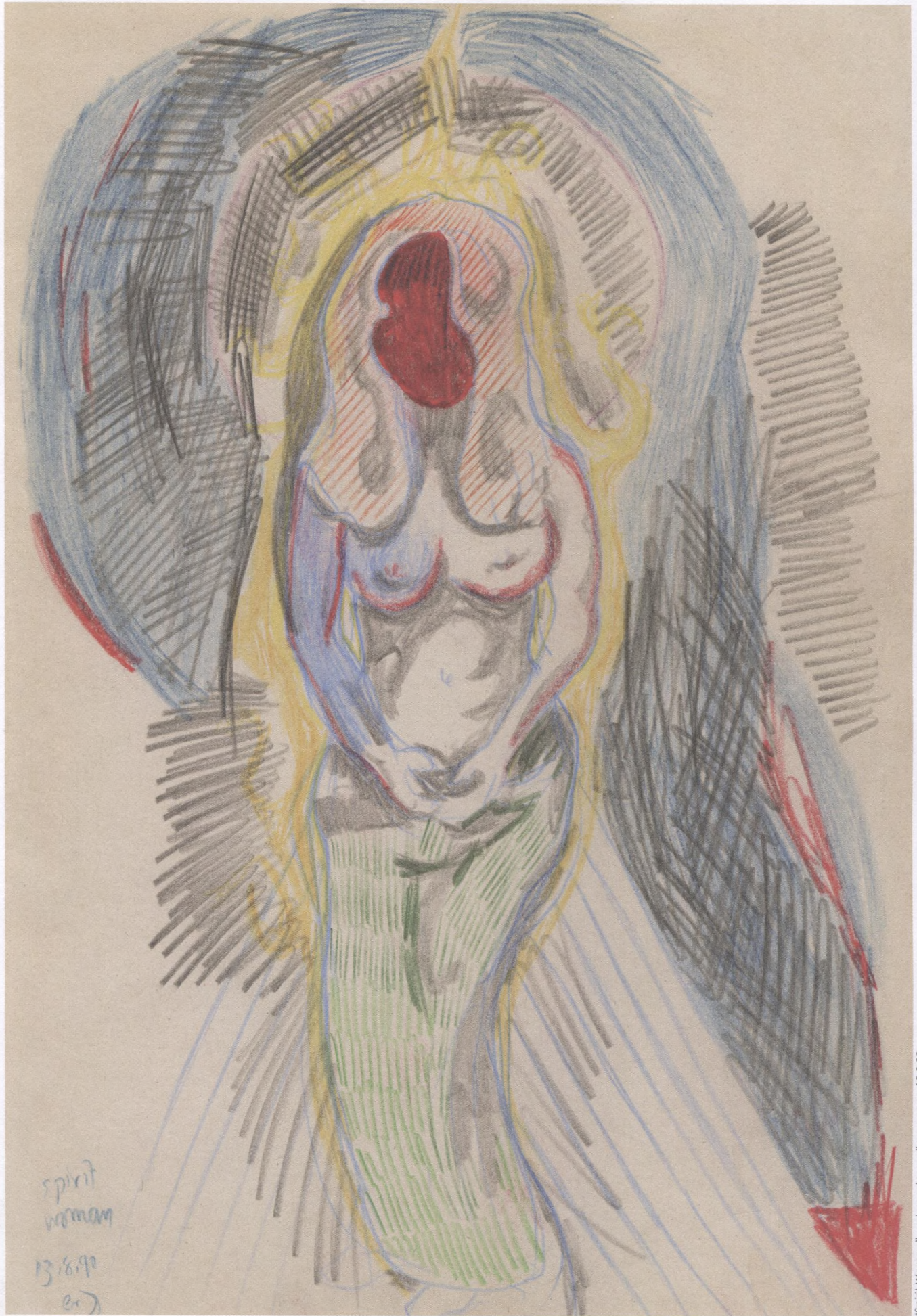
Pencil and coloured pencil on paper, 29.2.91.



Henry Sandon, Pottery expert - 13.8.1902

"Henry Sandon, Pottery Expert", coloured pencil on paper, 13.8.90.





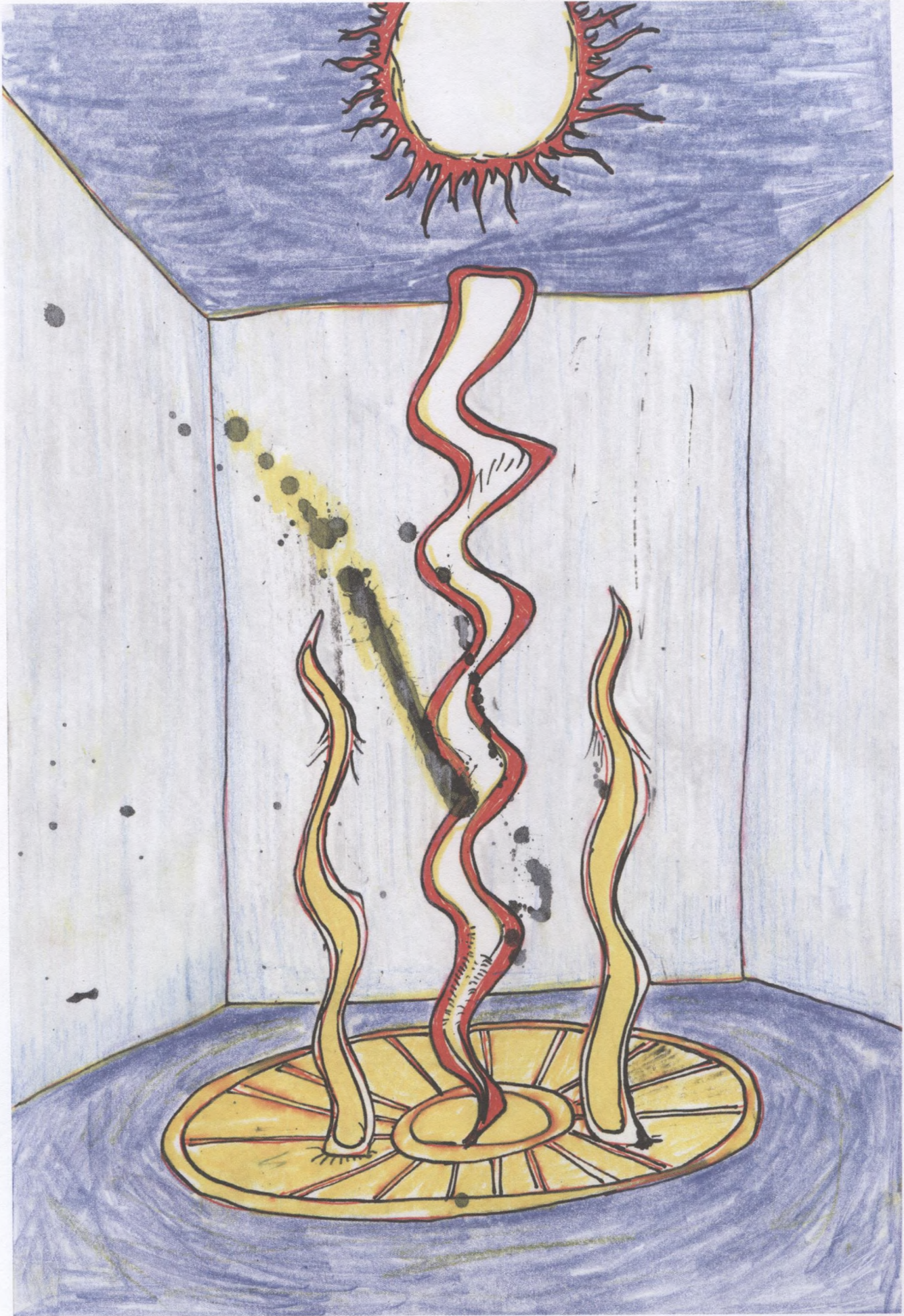
spirit
woman
13.8.90
er)

"Spirit Woman", coloured pencil on paper, 13.8.90.





Pastel on paper, 8.8.88.



"Red Solar Flame Emblem", felt-tip pen and coloured pencil on paper, 27.2.88.



"Large Face #2", coloured pencil on paper, 24.7.88.



Ink and coloured pencil on paper.



"He Just Appeared from Nowhere....!" or "Astral Kalihari", coloured pencil and ink, 18.3.88.

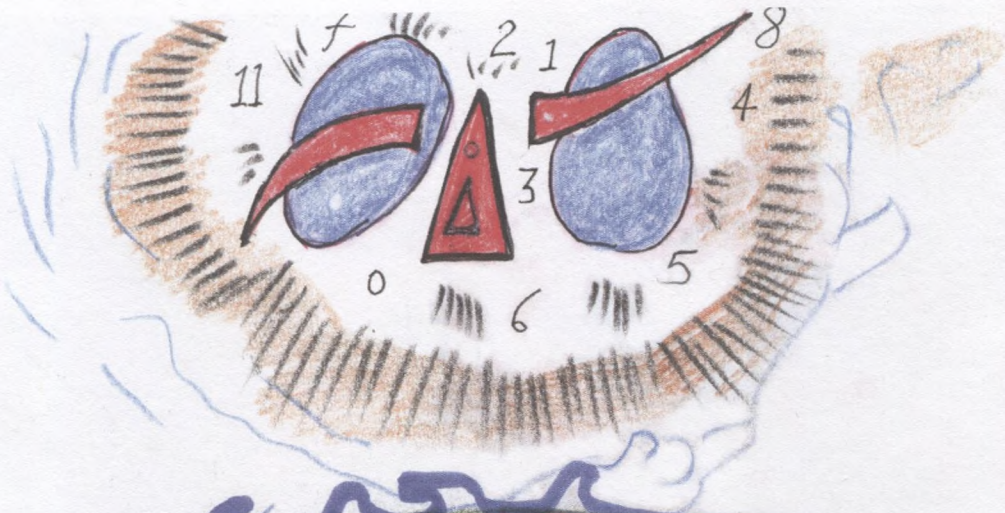


"Portrait of a
"Sexual Demon"
17th. 88wq John B. Baker
EE.

"Portrait of a Sexual Demon", coloured pencil and ink on paper, 17.3.88.



"Bad Priest - Highest Caste", acrylic paint and coloured pencil on paper, 24.7.88.



23 Oct 88







Coloured pencil on paper.



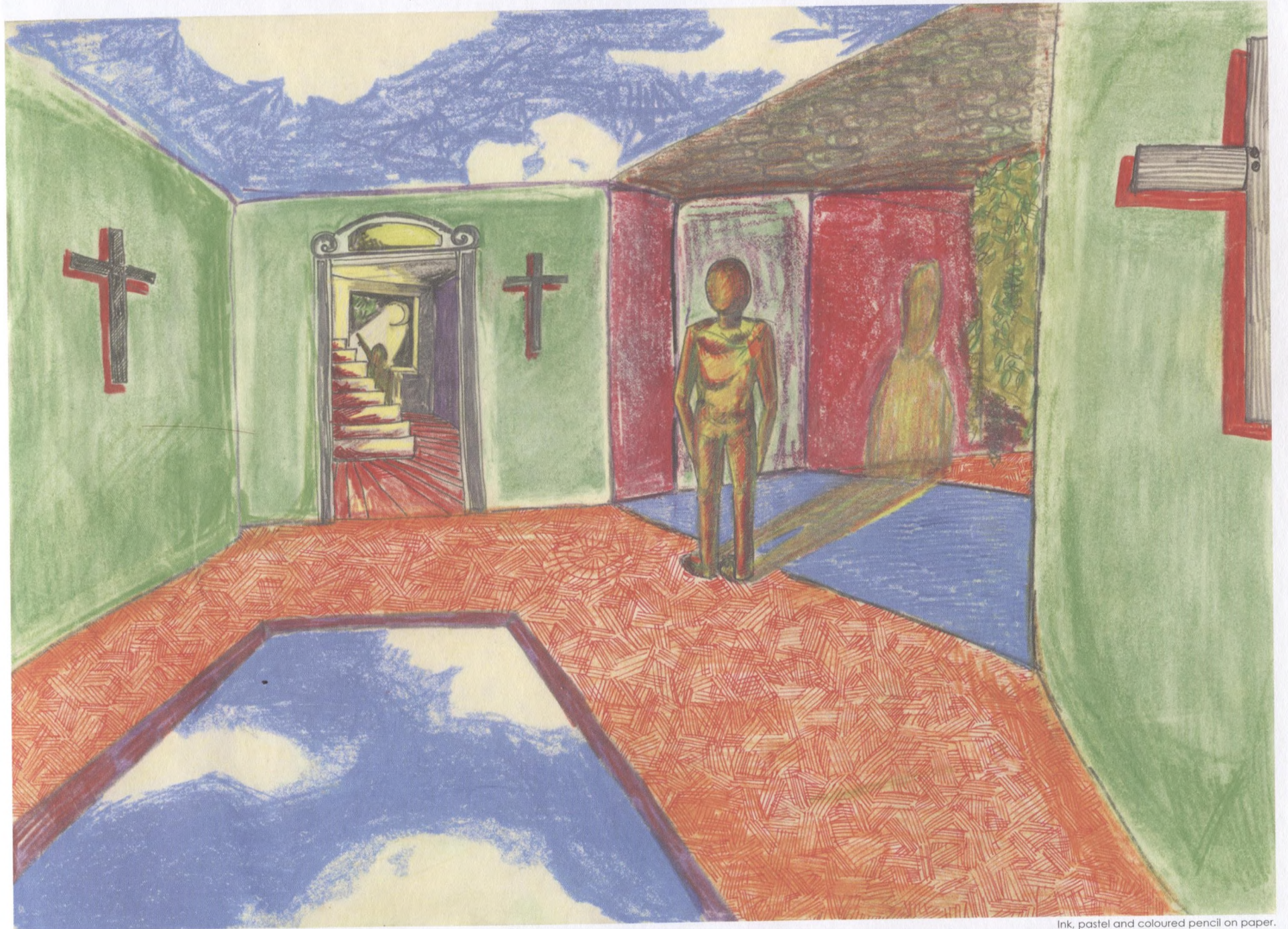
"Profane Illumination", coloured pencil, ink and watercolour on paper.



3.10.90



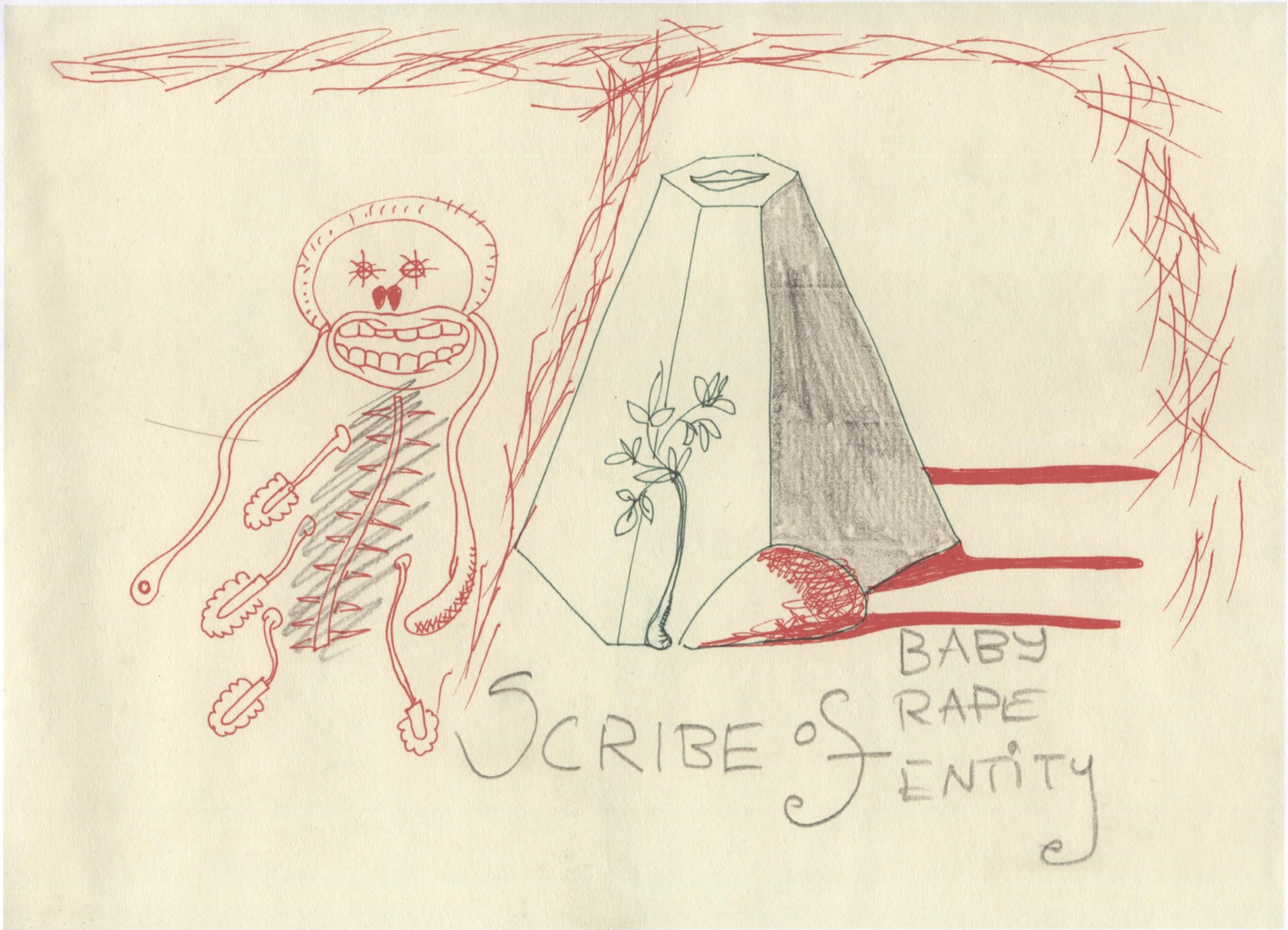
"Hyperborean Forest 2", pencil on paper, 1.12.88.



Ink, pastel and coloured pencil on paper.



dingo 18.9.90 ev
quakly.



"Scribe of Baby Rape Entity", ink and pencil on paper.



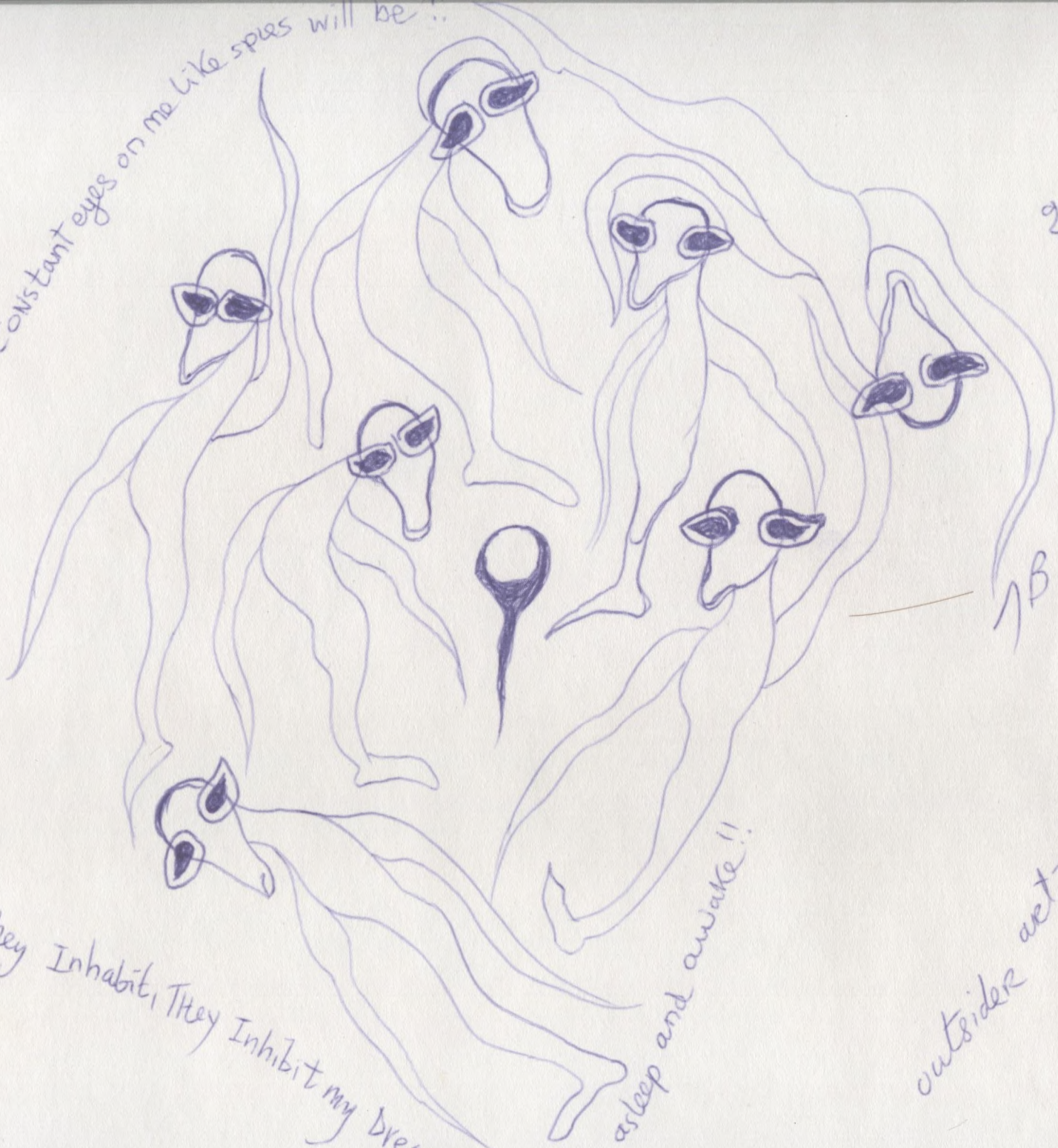


Dead moon

13.8.90 vD

"Dead Moon": coloured pencil on paper, 13.8.90.

constant eyes on me like spies will be ..



2ed

12

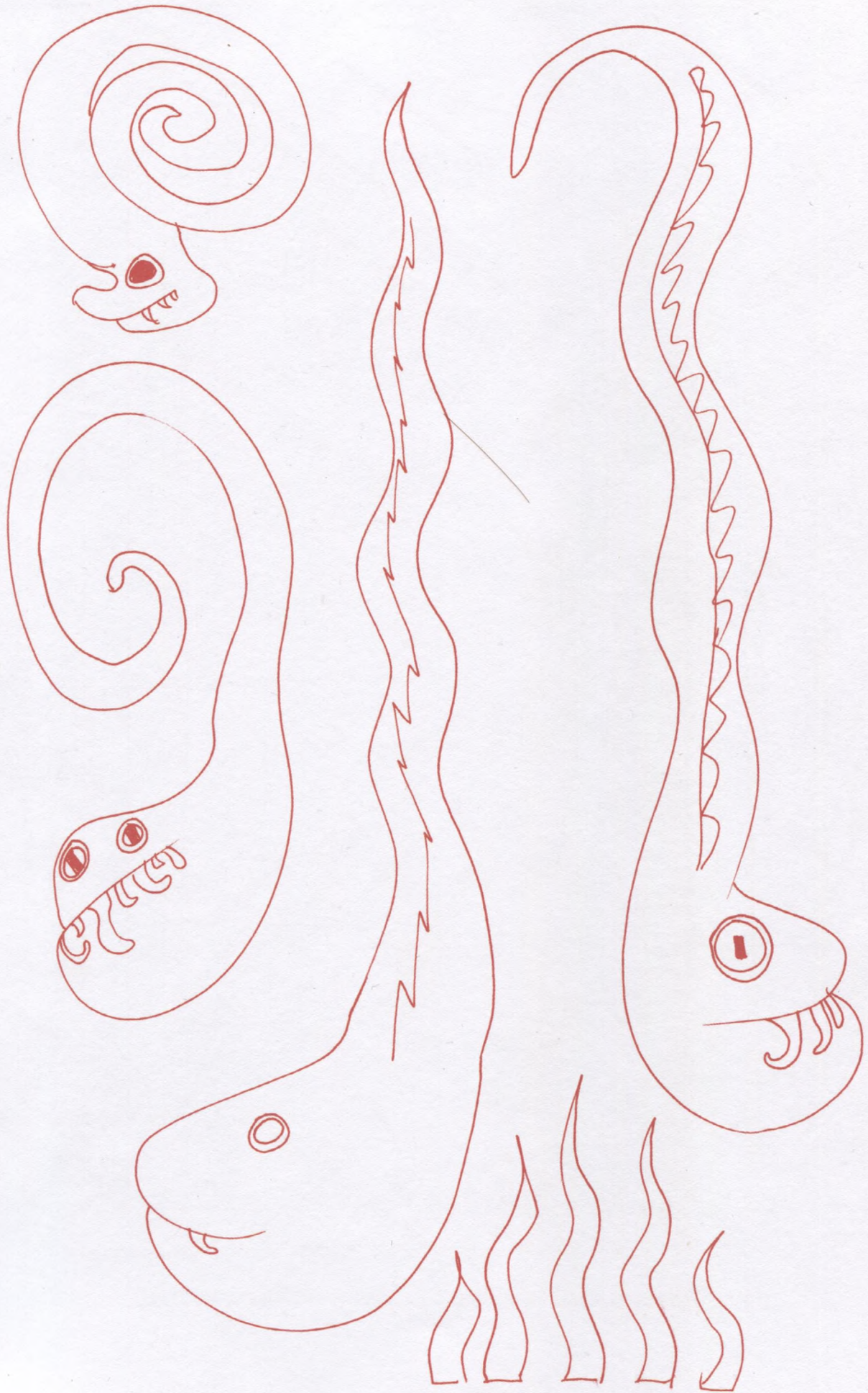
30

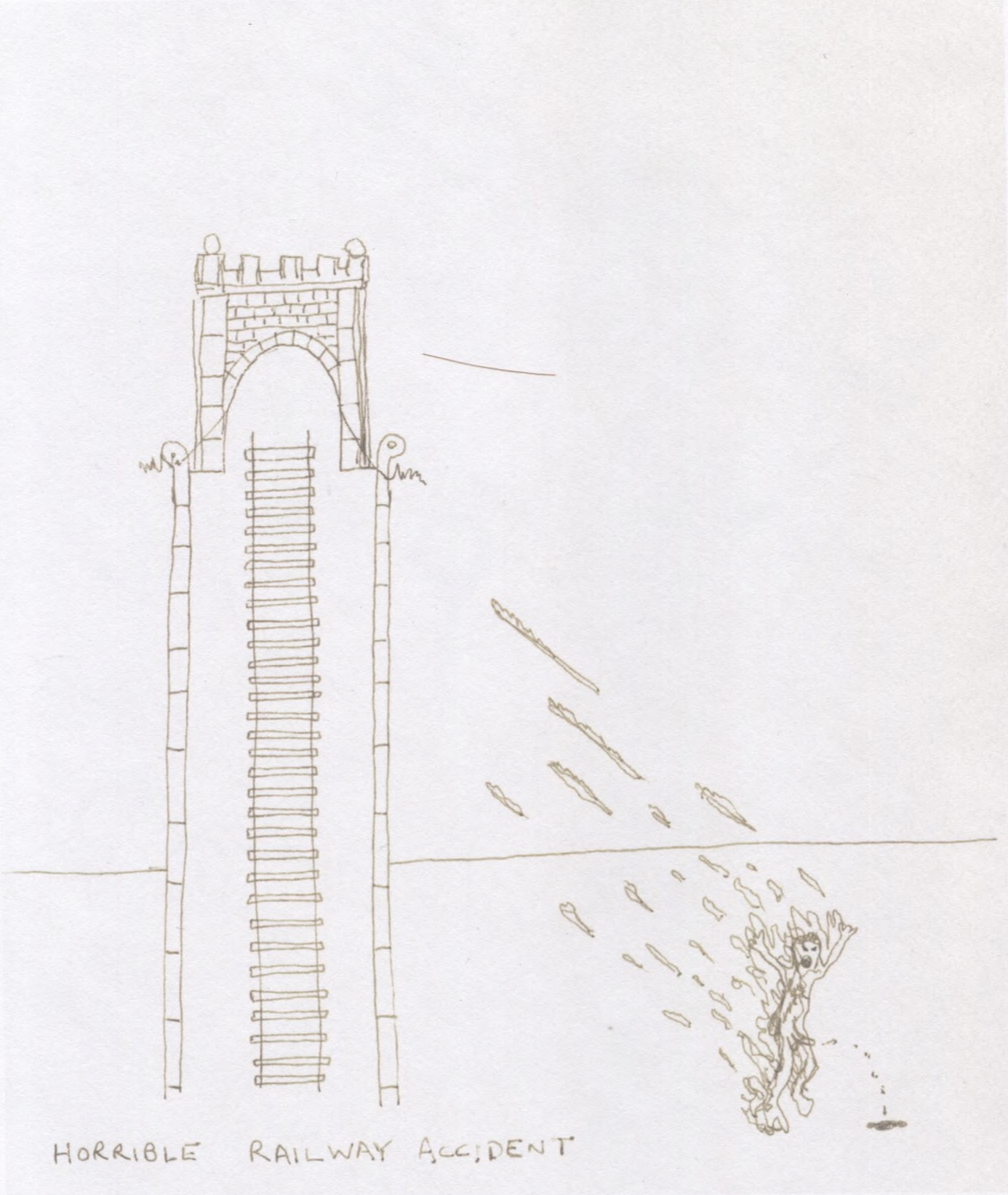
7B

they Inhabit, They Inhibit my dreams

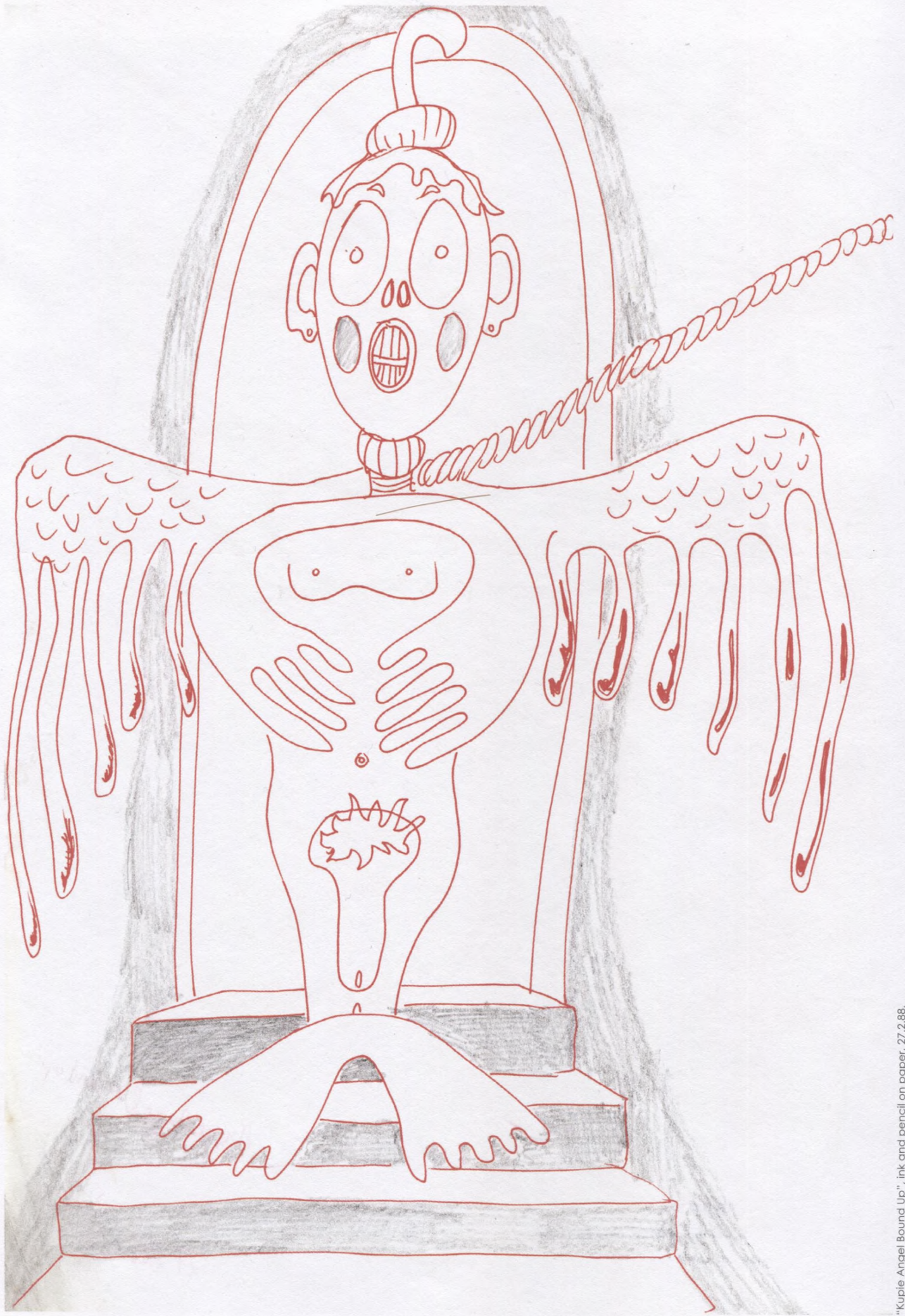
asleep and awake!!

outsider act - next pas!





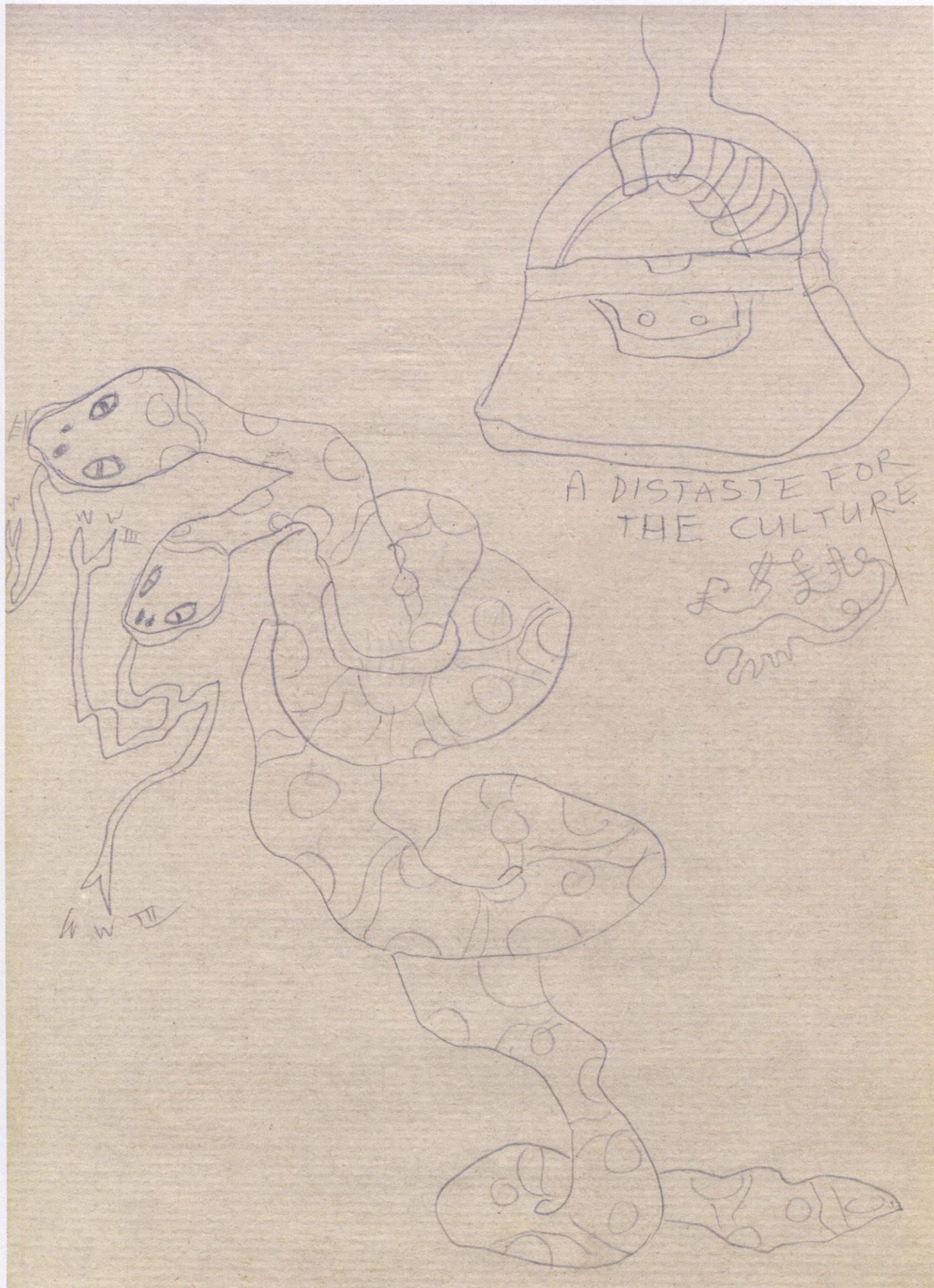
HORRIBLE RAILWAY ACCIDENT





231088 cv
w/pen ink dng/pen
as brush





"A Distaste for the Culture", pencil on brown paper.

8.6.88



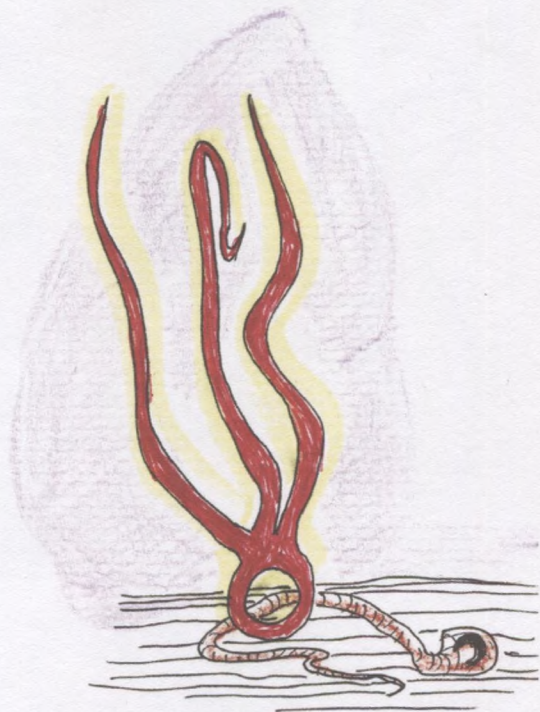
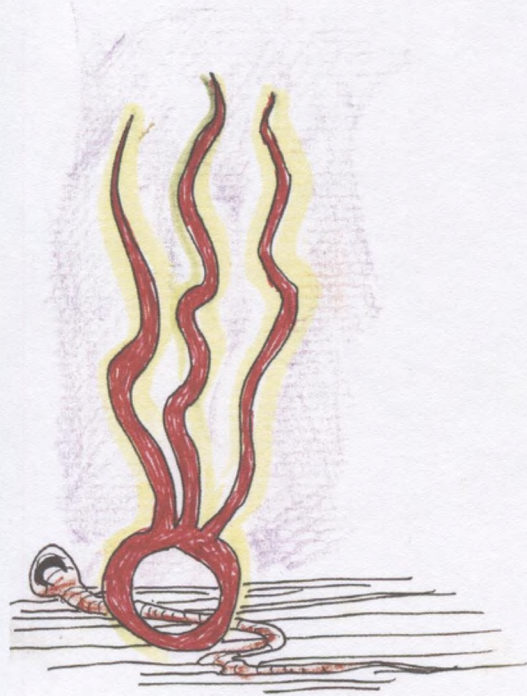
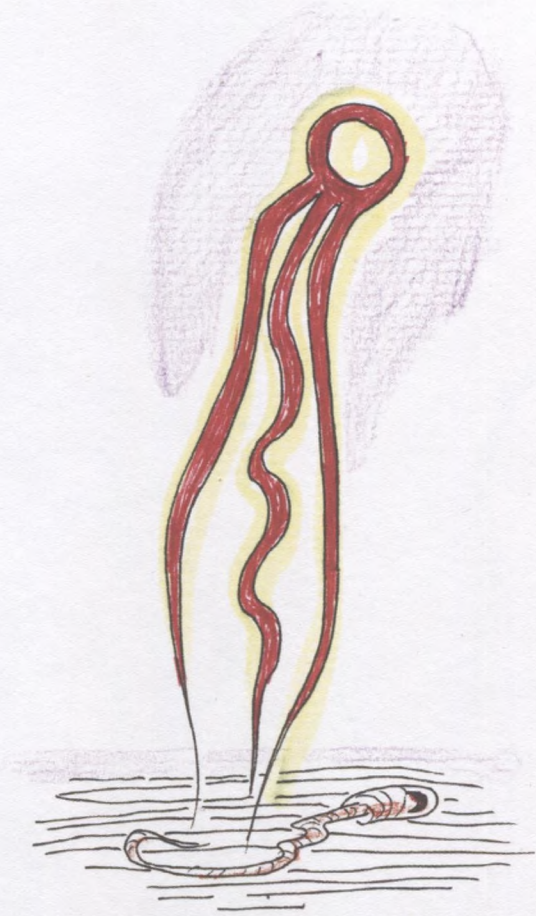
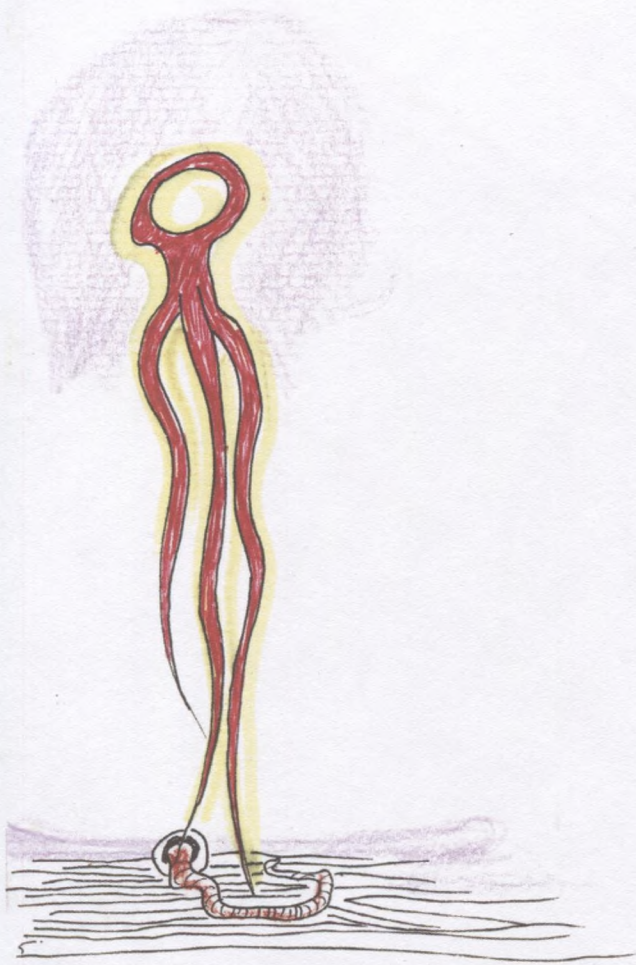


ghosts
30th
dec 4
John
Balance
FOR
SLEAZY-



children. 30.4.87. 23.

"Children", coloured pencil on paper, 30.4.87.

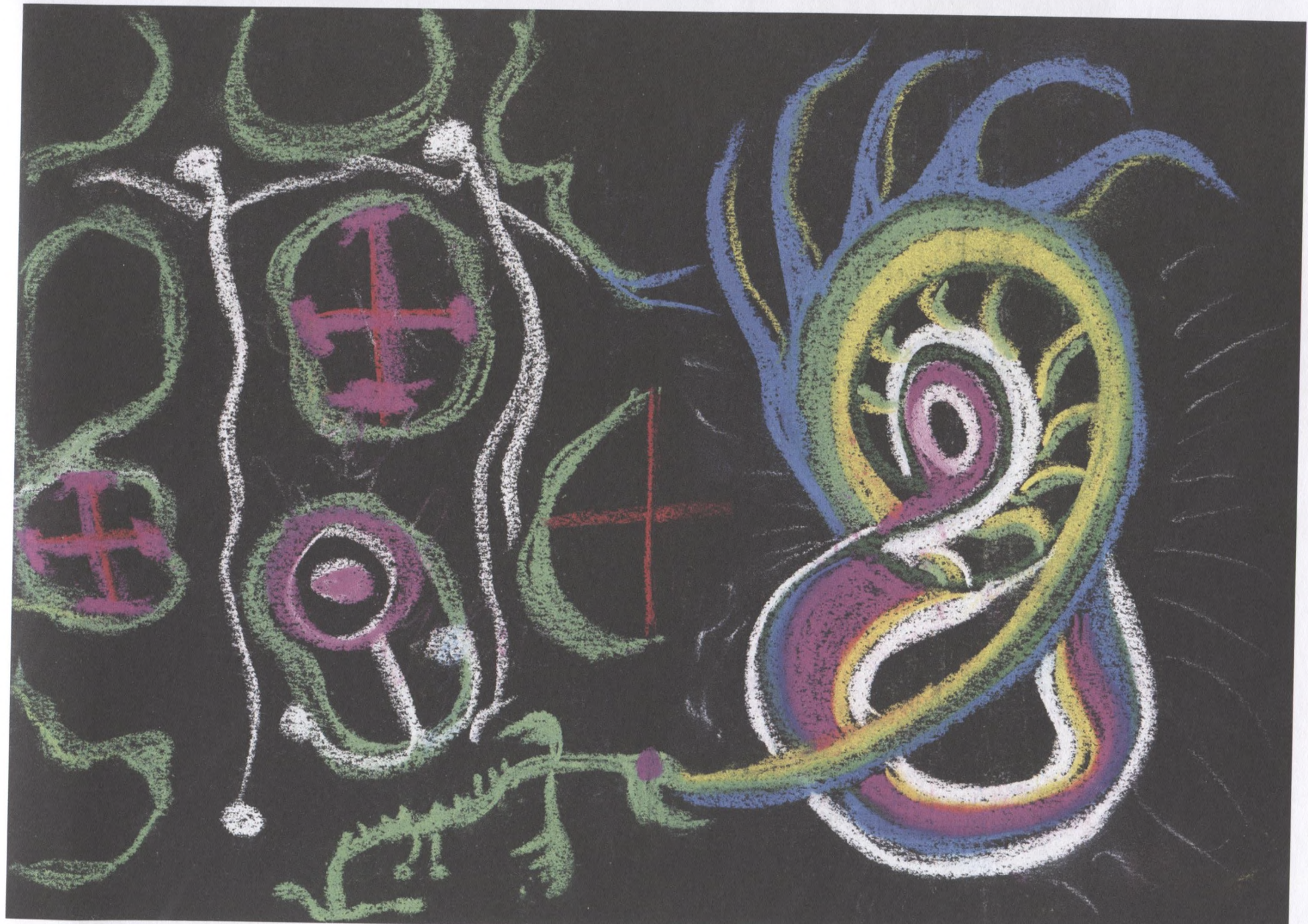




28195
JB



Coloured pencil and chalk on black paper.



Chalk on black paper. A collaboration with Gavin Semple.

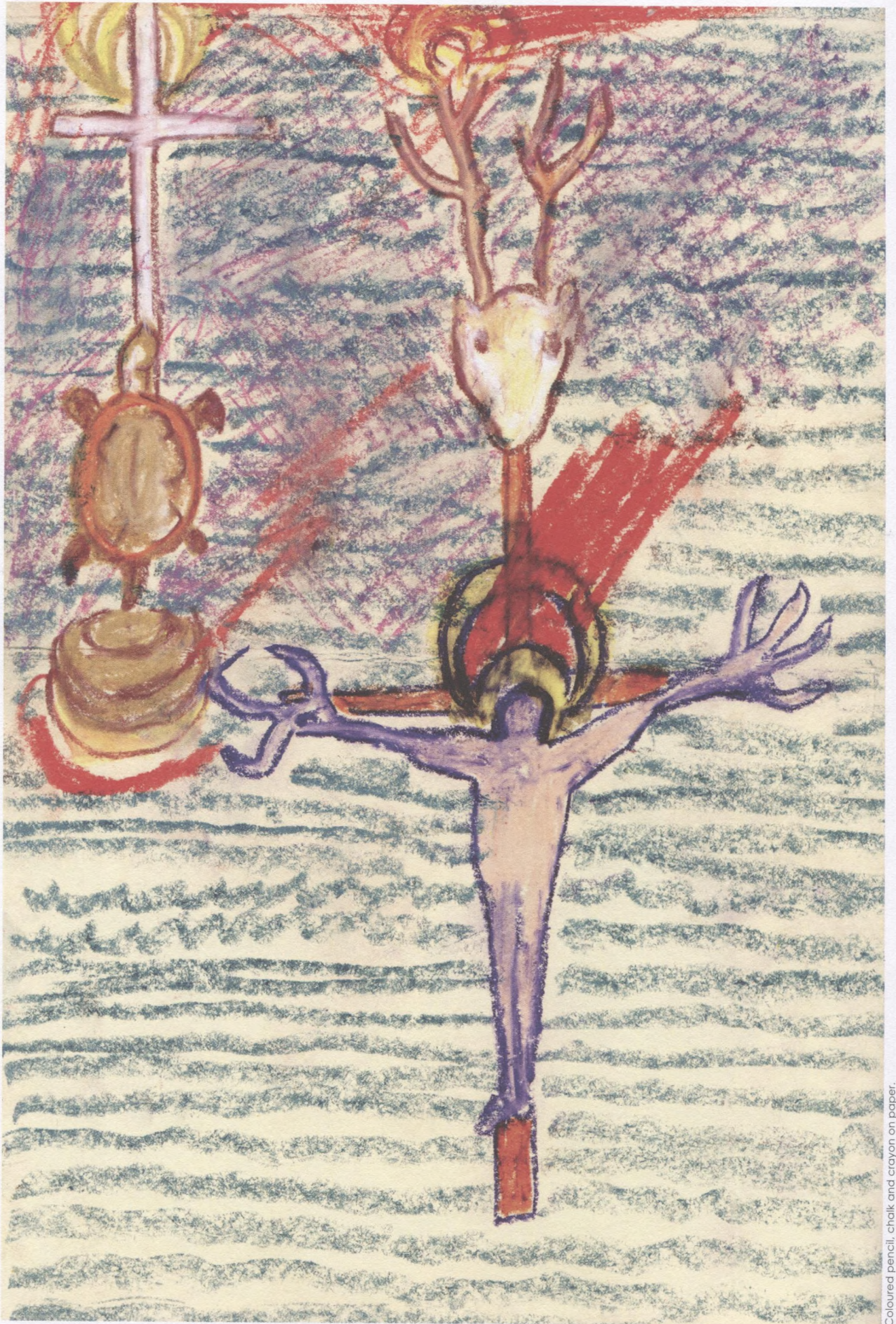


Chalk on black paper. A collaboration with Gavin Semple.



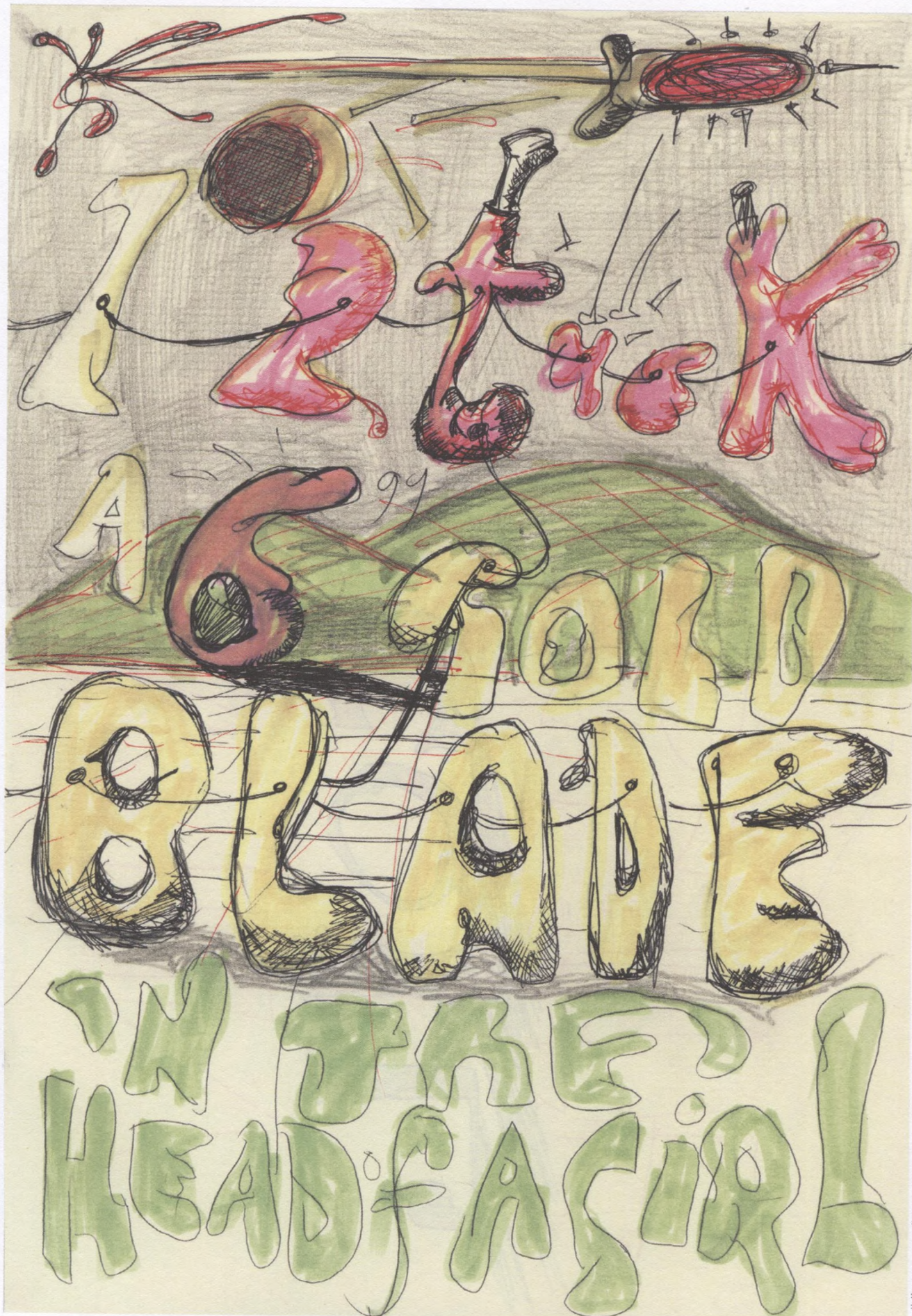
Chalk on black paper. A collaboration with Gavin Semple.





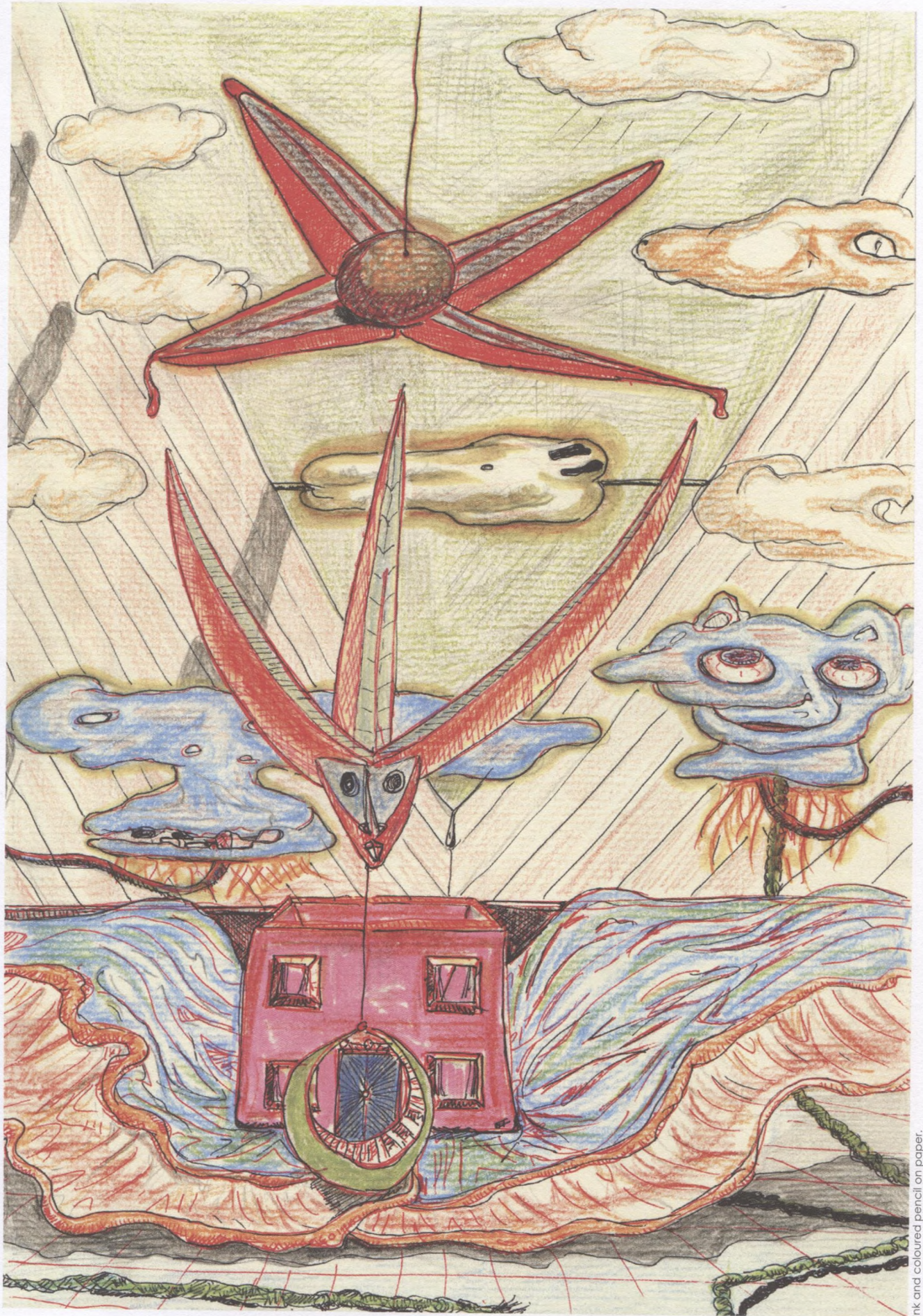
Coloured pencil, chalk and crayon on paper.







"Schism", coloured pencil and ink on paper, 7.3.86.

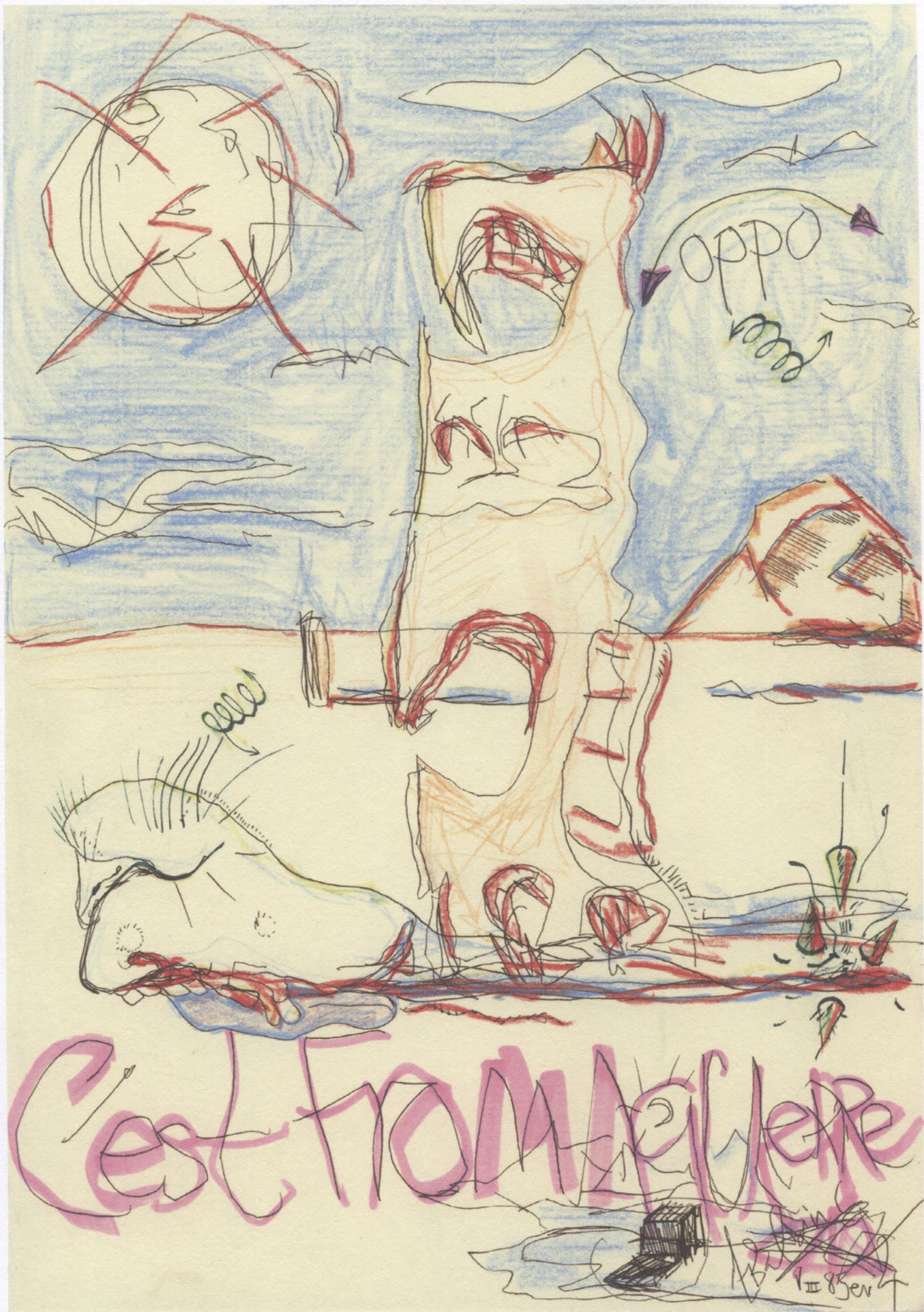


Ink and coloured pencil on paper.



Felt-tip pen and coloured pencil on paper, 23.4.86.





Coloured pencil and felt-tip pen on paper, 5.3.88.



J. Balance
Coloured pencil and ink on paper, 17.4.86.



"Gul", coloured pencil on paper, 1.12.88.



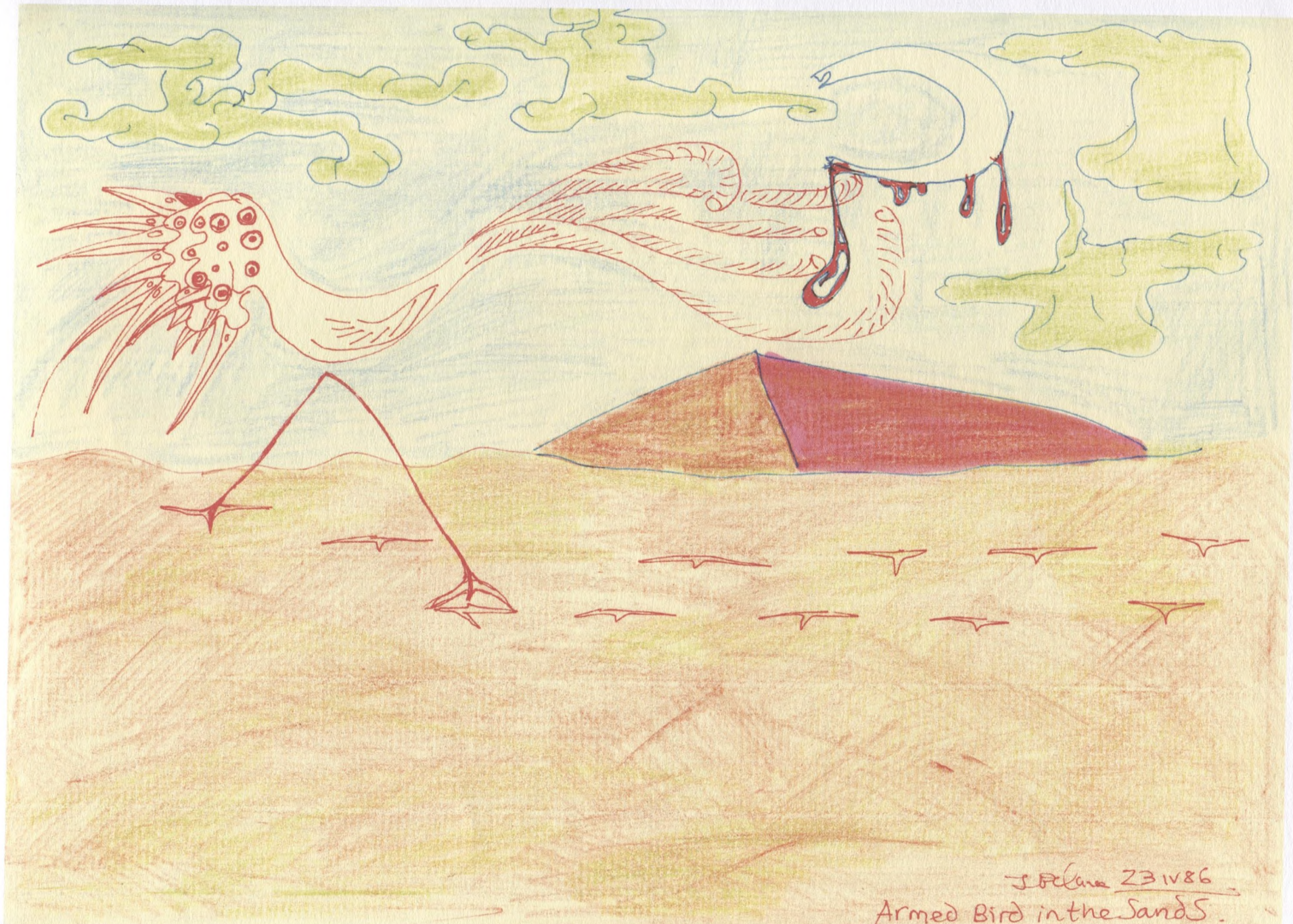
'open season'

J. K. S.
8/15/86

"Open Season", ink and coloured pencil on paper, 8.4.86.



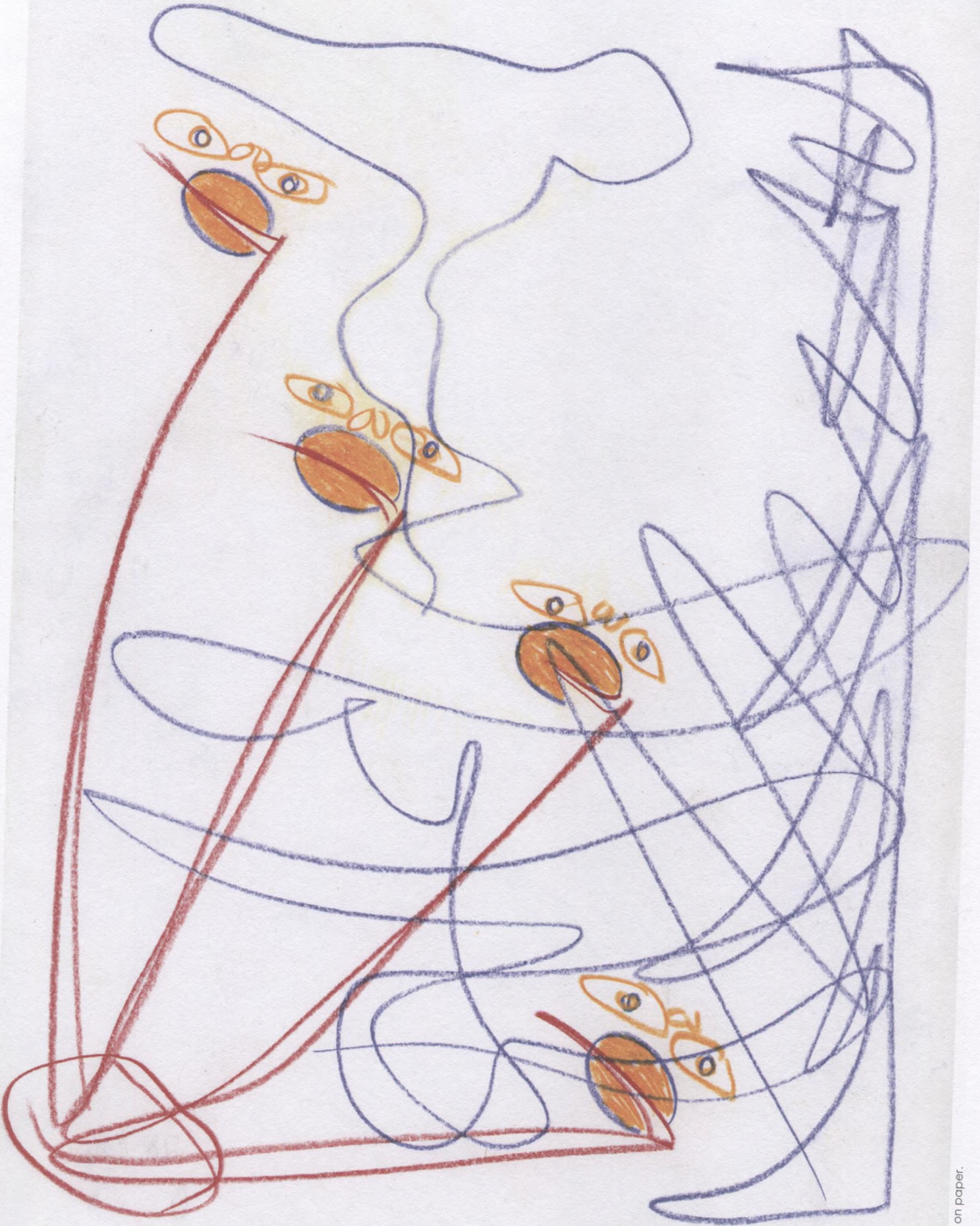
"Sick Fuck", felt-tip pen and coloured pencil on coloured paper, 16.11.88.



J. Polansky 23.4.86
Armed Bird in the Sands.

"Armed Bird in the Sands", ink and coloured pencil on paper, 23.4.86.





Coloured pencil on paper.

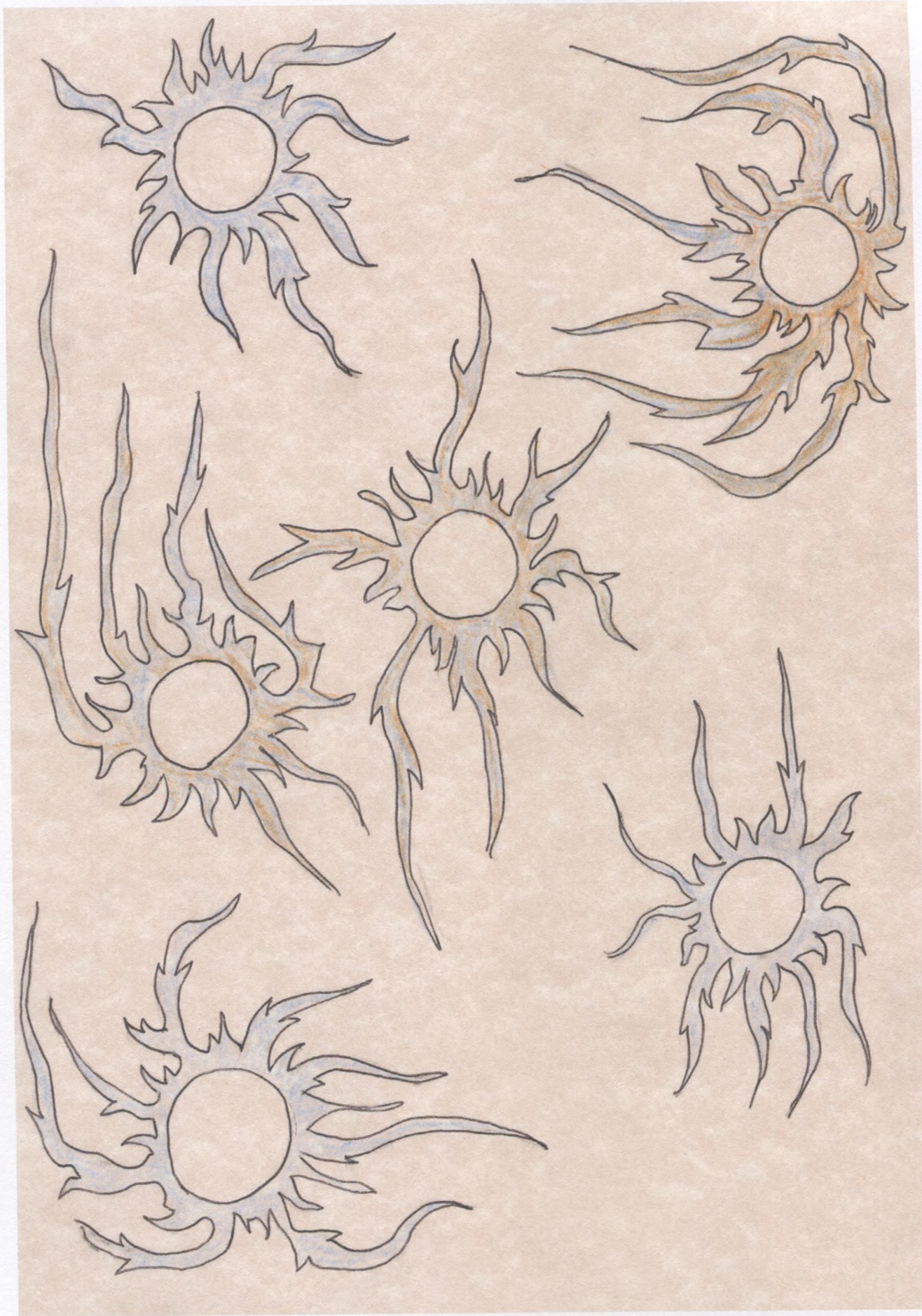


"Penis Dog", felt-tip pen and ink on paper.



penis toy r
doodles

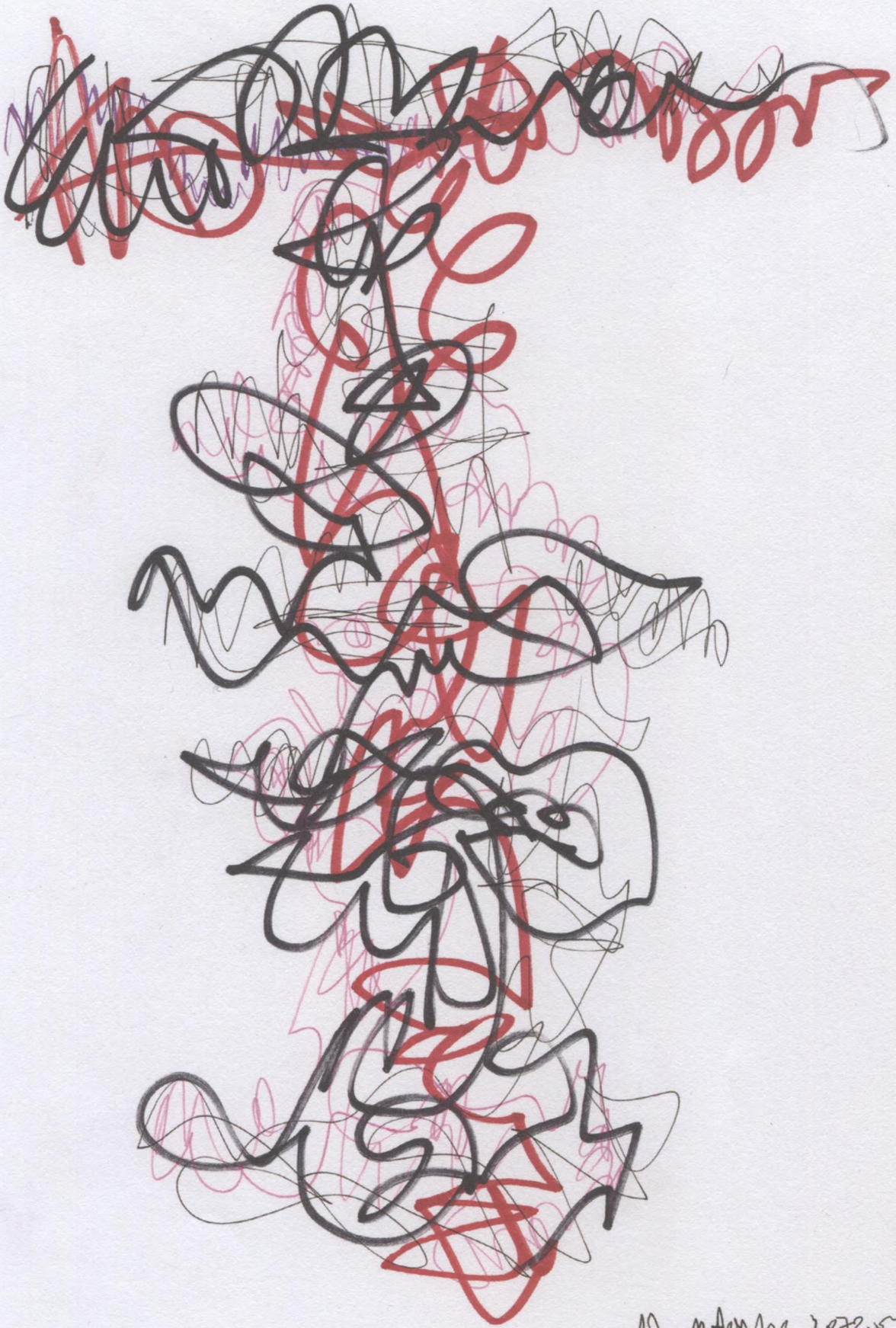
"Doodles", felt-tip pen and ink on paper.



"Blue and Rusty Blue Suns", ink and coloured pencil on paper, 16.11.88.



A ee
28/11/88



Shirley 2020

Handwritten text in cursive script, partially obscured by large red scribbles. The text is written in black ink on a light-colored background. The words are difficult to decipher due to the overlapping red lines, but some legible fragments include "Linn...", "Linn...", "Linn...", "Linn...", "Linn...", "Linn...", "Linn...", "Linn...", "Linn...", "Linn...".

Handwritten signature or name in cursive script, located in the bottom right corner of the page.



中 心 有
生 世 身
年 花 年

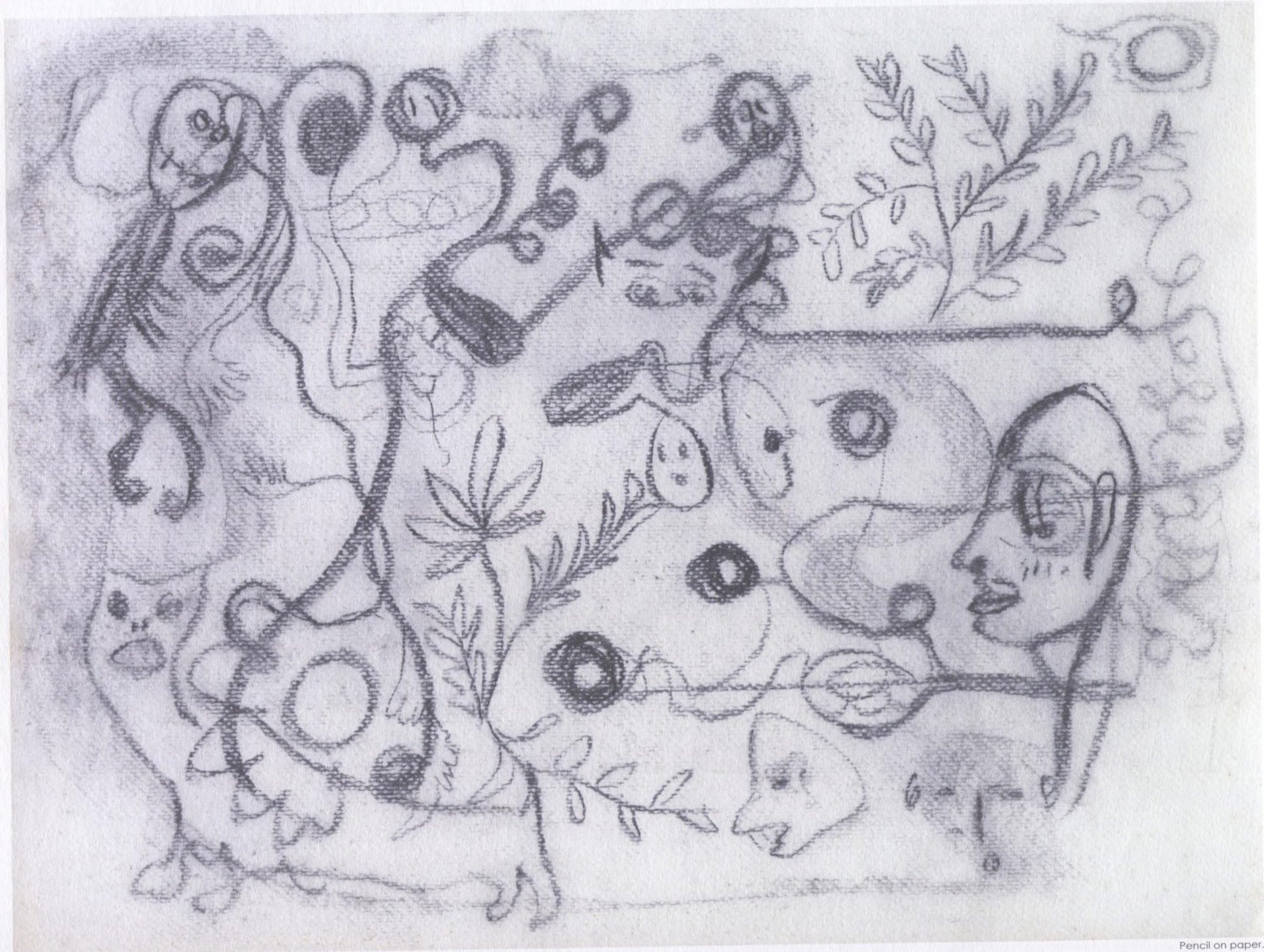
Invoke
or
Evoke

invoke
or
evoke



chinese brons. 271088
BRANT
0A

"Chinese Brons", watercolour on paper, 23.10.88.



Pencil on paper.

Handwritten text in Odia script, first line.

500

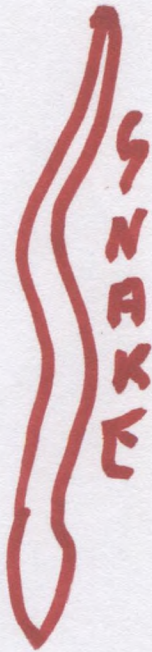
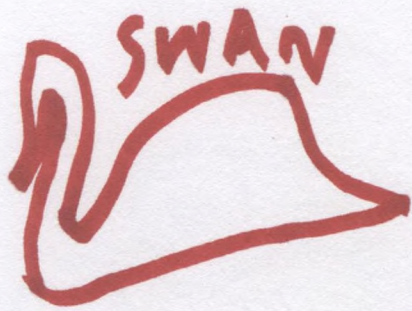
Handwritten text in Odia script, second line.

Handwritten text in Odia script, third line.

Handwritten text in Odia script, fourth line.

Handwritten text in Odia script, fifth line.





John Balance 26.7.90



28.3.01

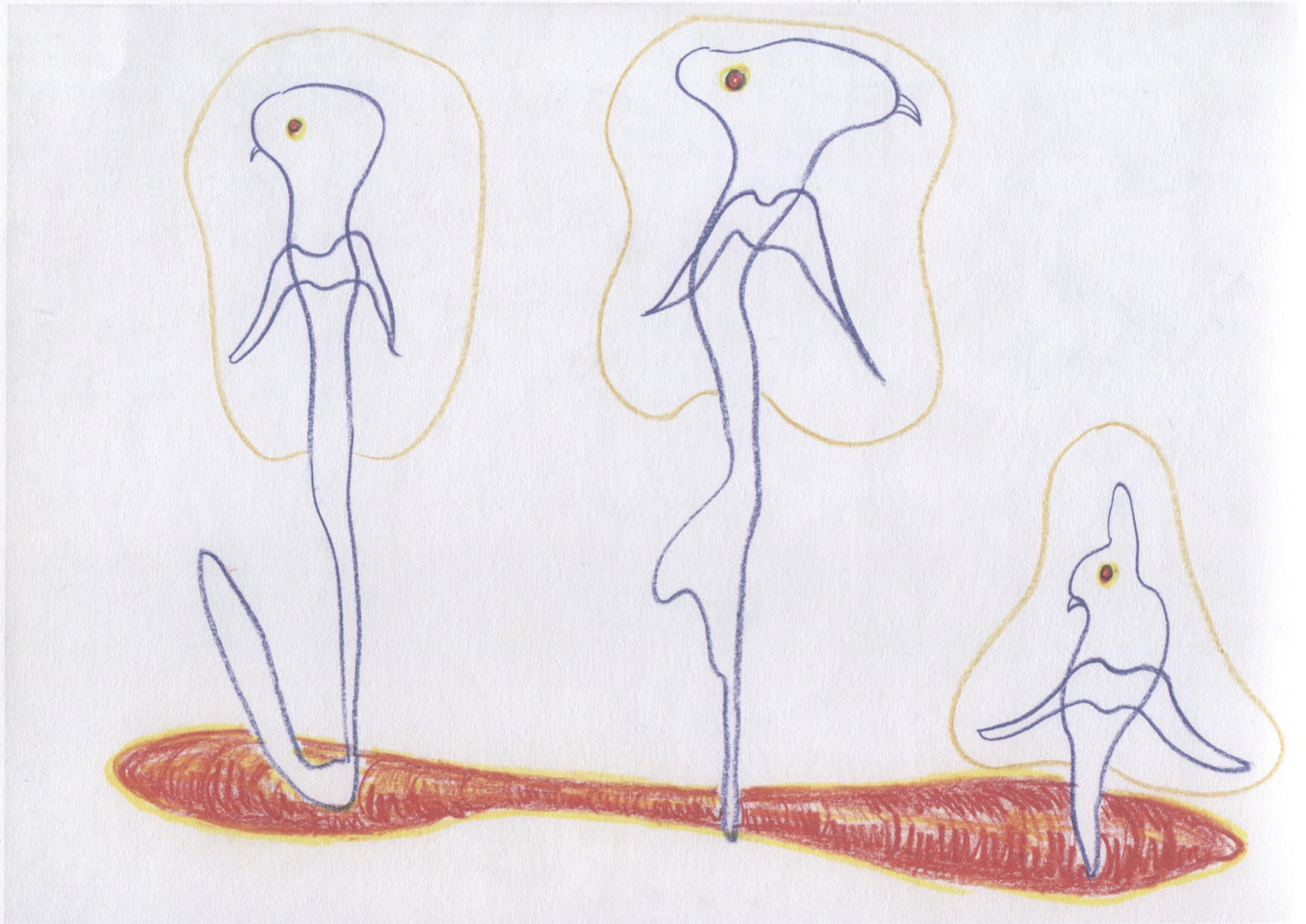


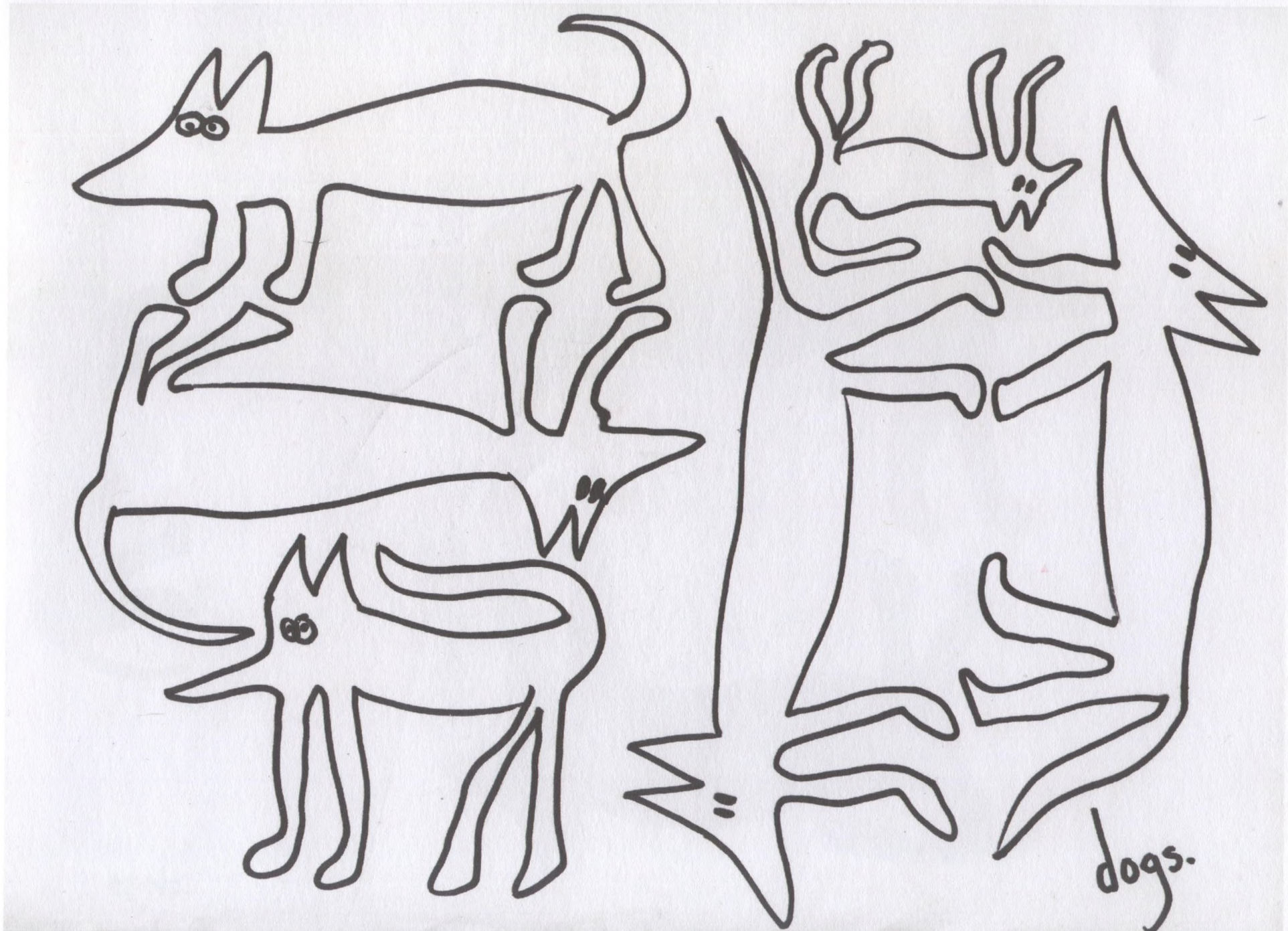
*drawn in darkness
w/ pornography as
illumination +*

CANTY
SEE

Family
Matters
Barry D. Stalane

"Family Matters", felt-tip pen on paper, 30.12.94.





dogs.

"Dogs", felt-tip pen on paper.

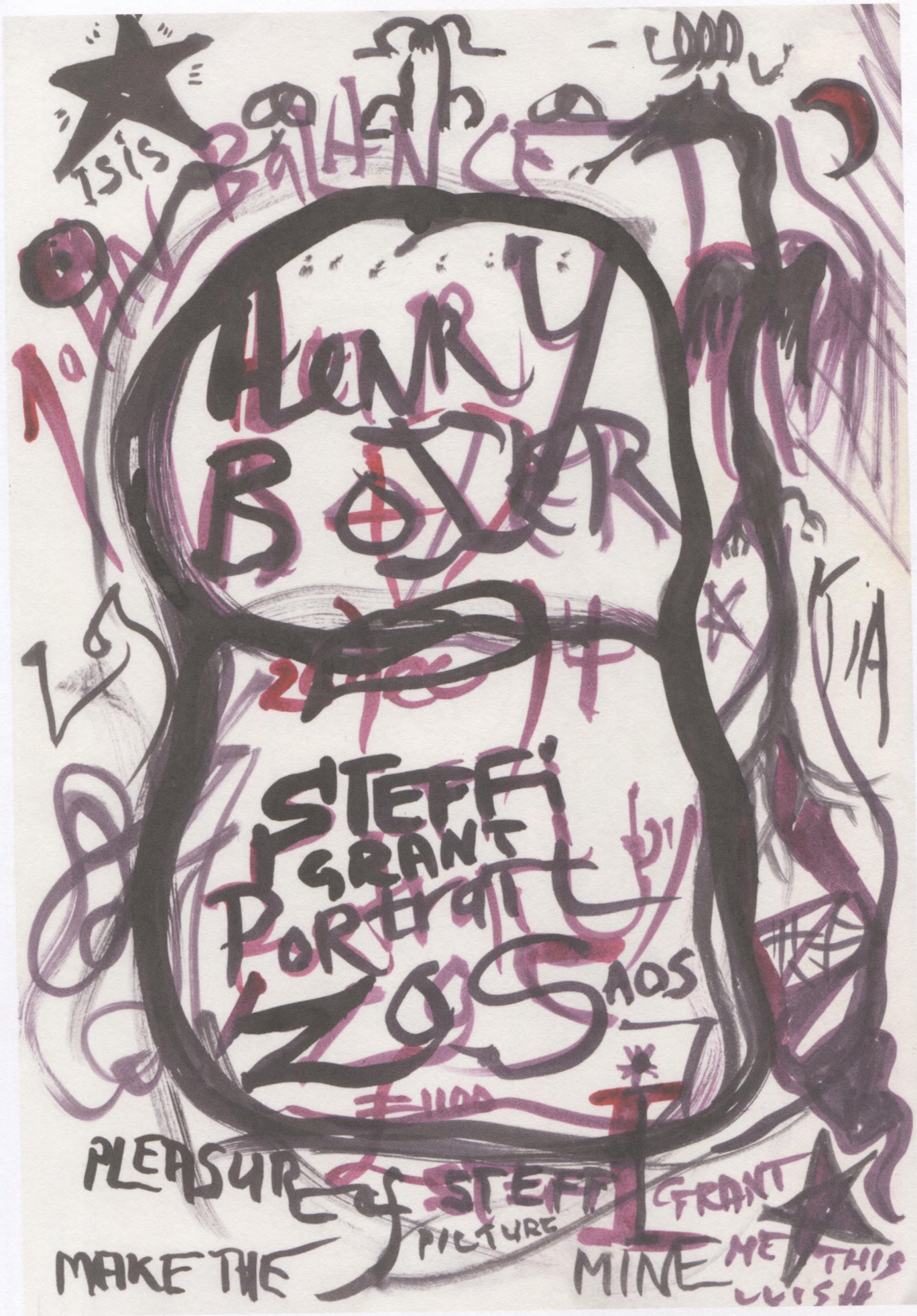


dogs

"Dogs", felt-tip pen on paper.



31.2.94 B



Acrylic paint on paper.



dogs

"Dogs", felt-tip pen on paper.



Ballpoint pen on paper, 5.87.



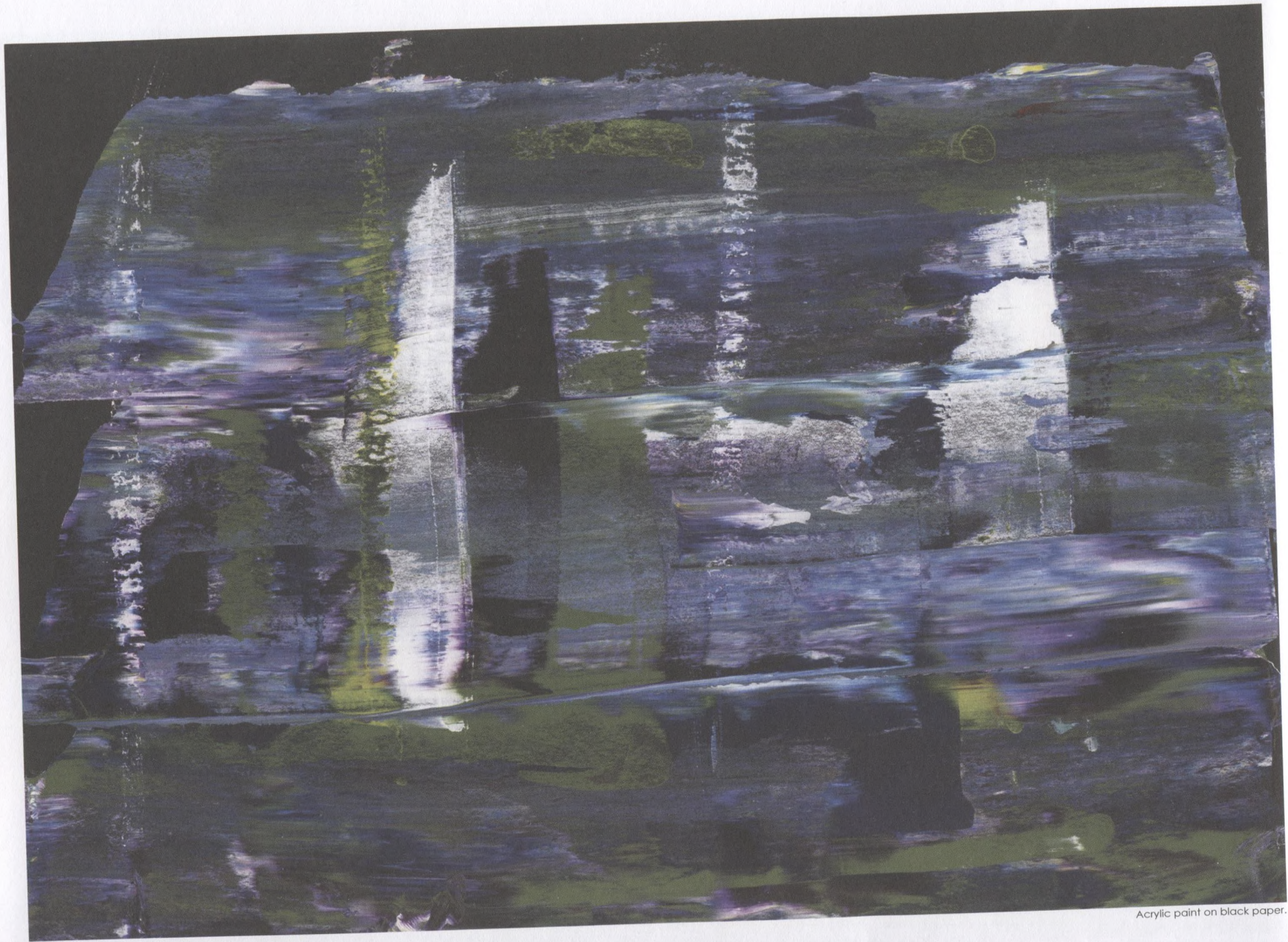
Acrylic paint on black paper.



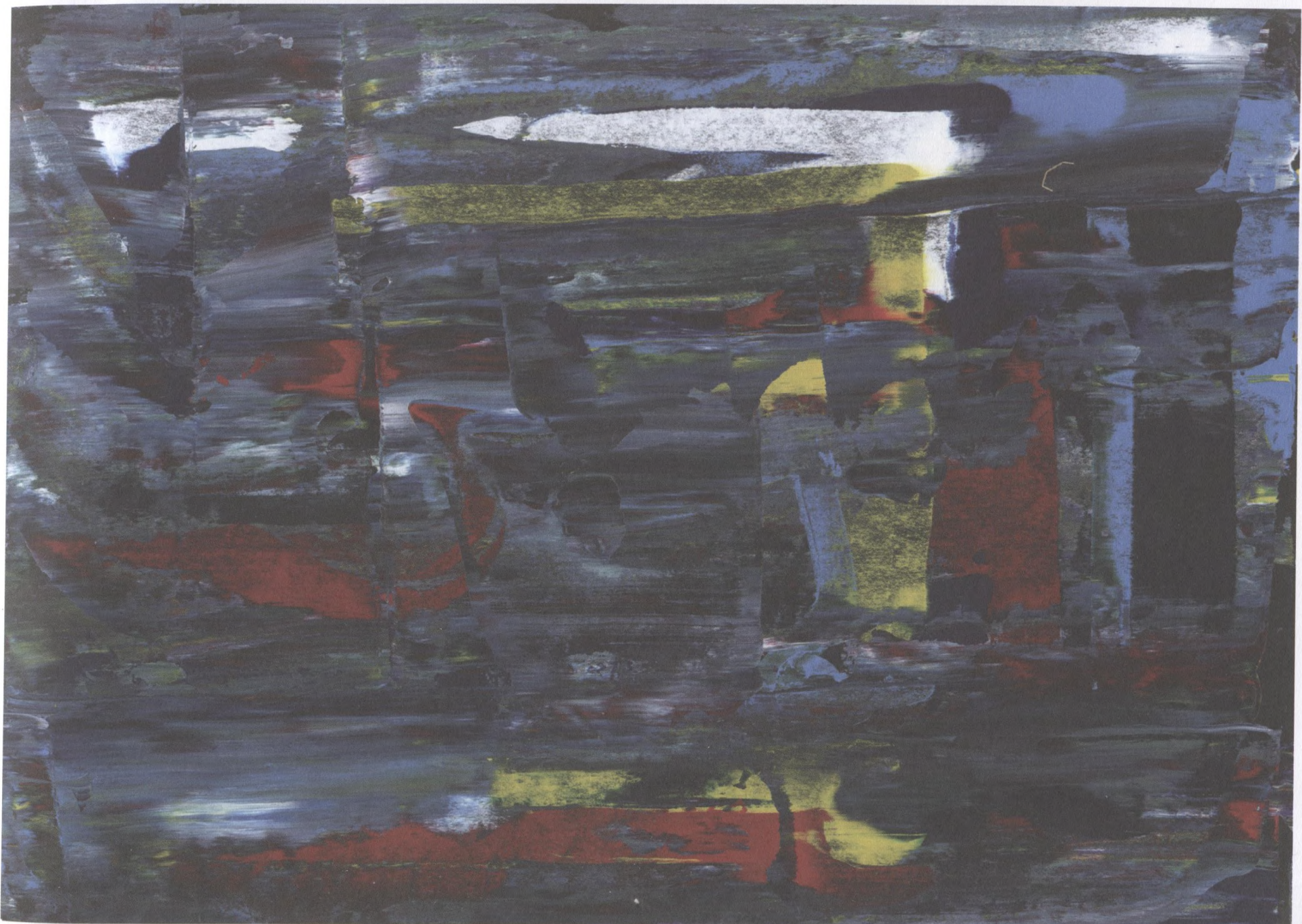
Acrylic paint on black paper.



Acrylic paint on black paper.



Acrylic paint on black paper.



Acrylic paint on black paper.



239L
A

Acrylic paint on black paper.



Coloured pencil on black paper.



Coloured pencil on black paper, 22.8.88.



Coloured pencil on black paper.

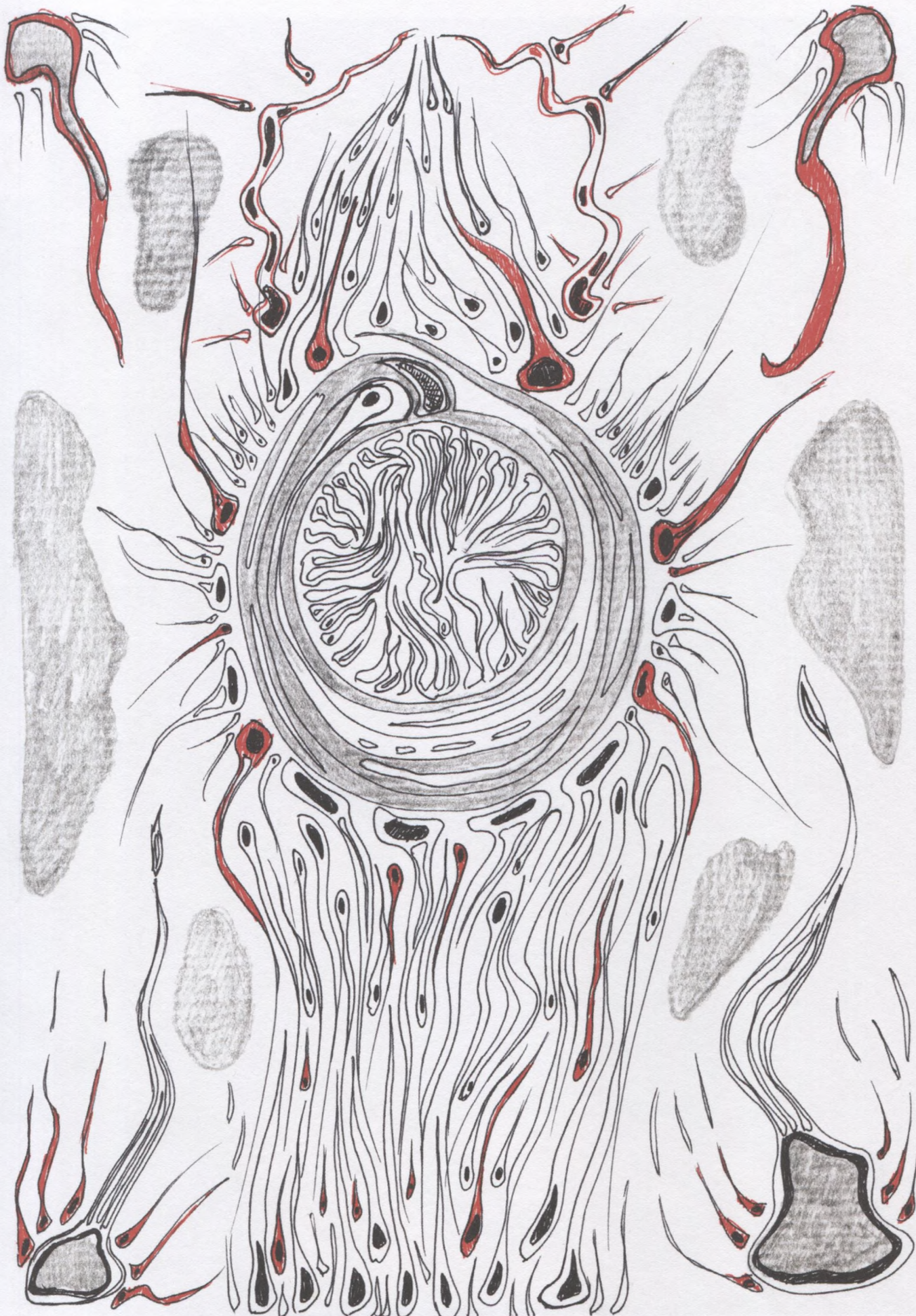


a small
demon 4-6-91

"A Small Demon" Crayon and chalk on black paper, 14.6.91.



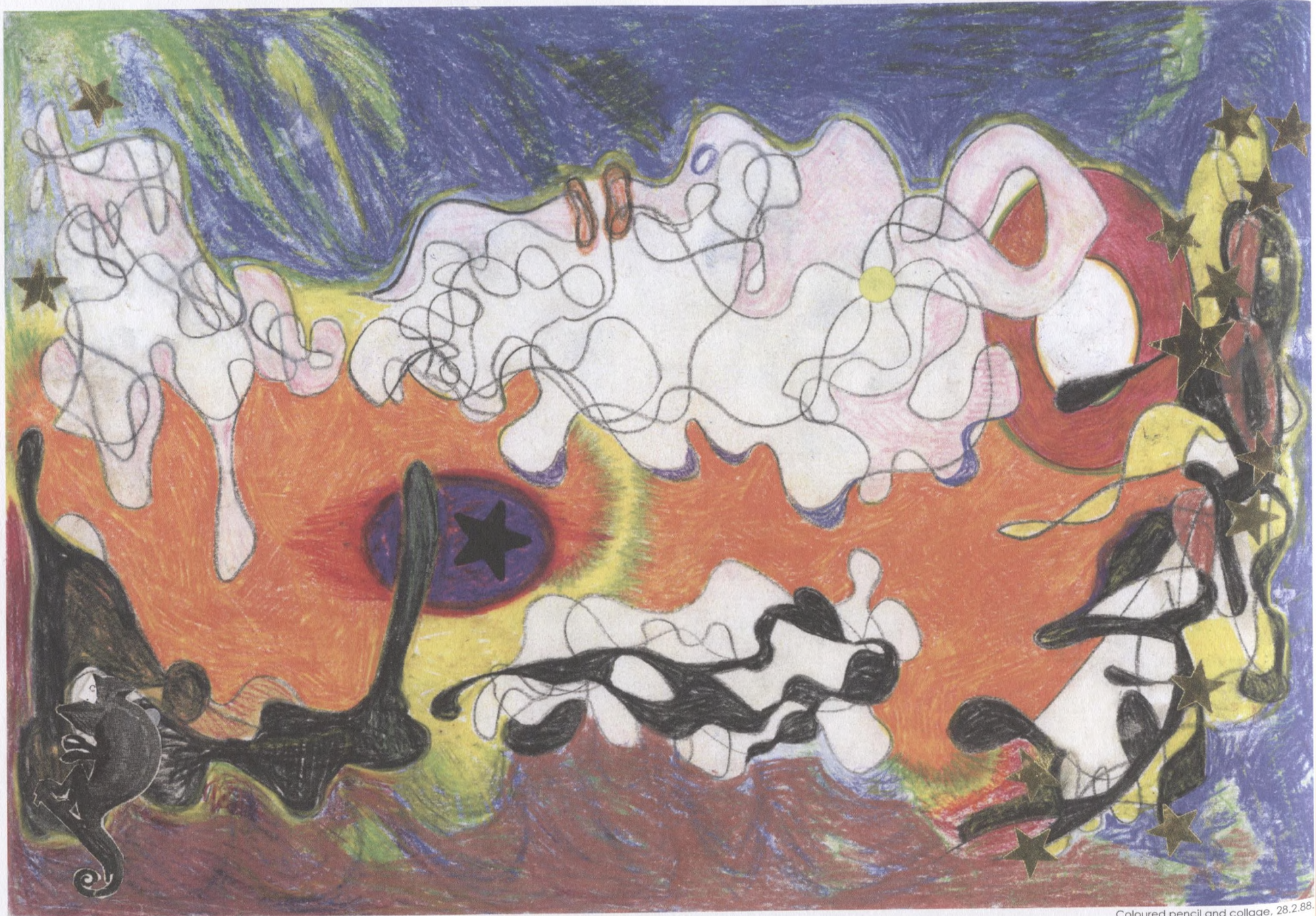
"Wood Fury": ink and coloured pencil on paper, 27.2,88 and 6.6,88.



"Miro Study", ink and coloured pencil on paper, 27.2.88.



"Handyman", ink and coloured pencil on paper, 27.2.88.



RED
EKTO PLASMIC
ARM EXT.

THE HOUSE ROTON
CON

A
SWALLOWS
FLIGHT

PATH

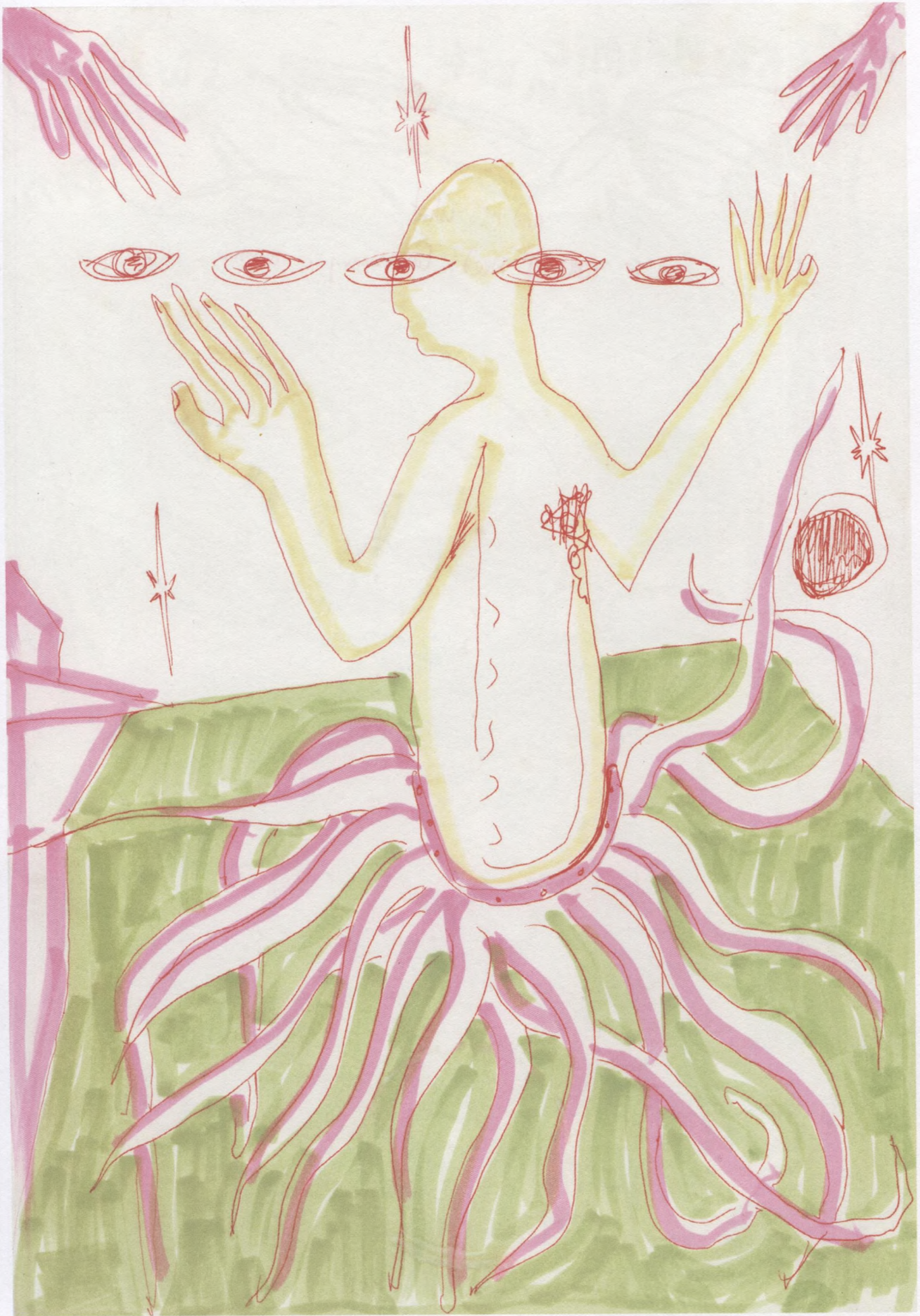
LATER ON THE FACE IS
NOW
RUINED BY
addition
of
stuff
on its
surface.

ROLOS
ON
ROLL at
Tom Balance
5 AM
12 28 87
VERSION
of
yours

a HORRIBLE

I LIKE
PICT IT
NOW
TURN

NEVER DO



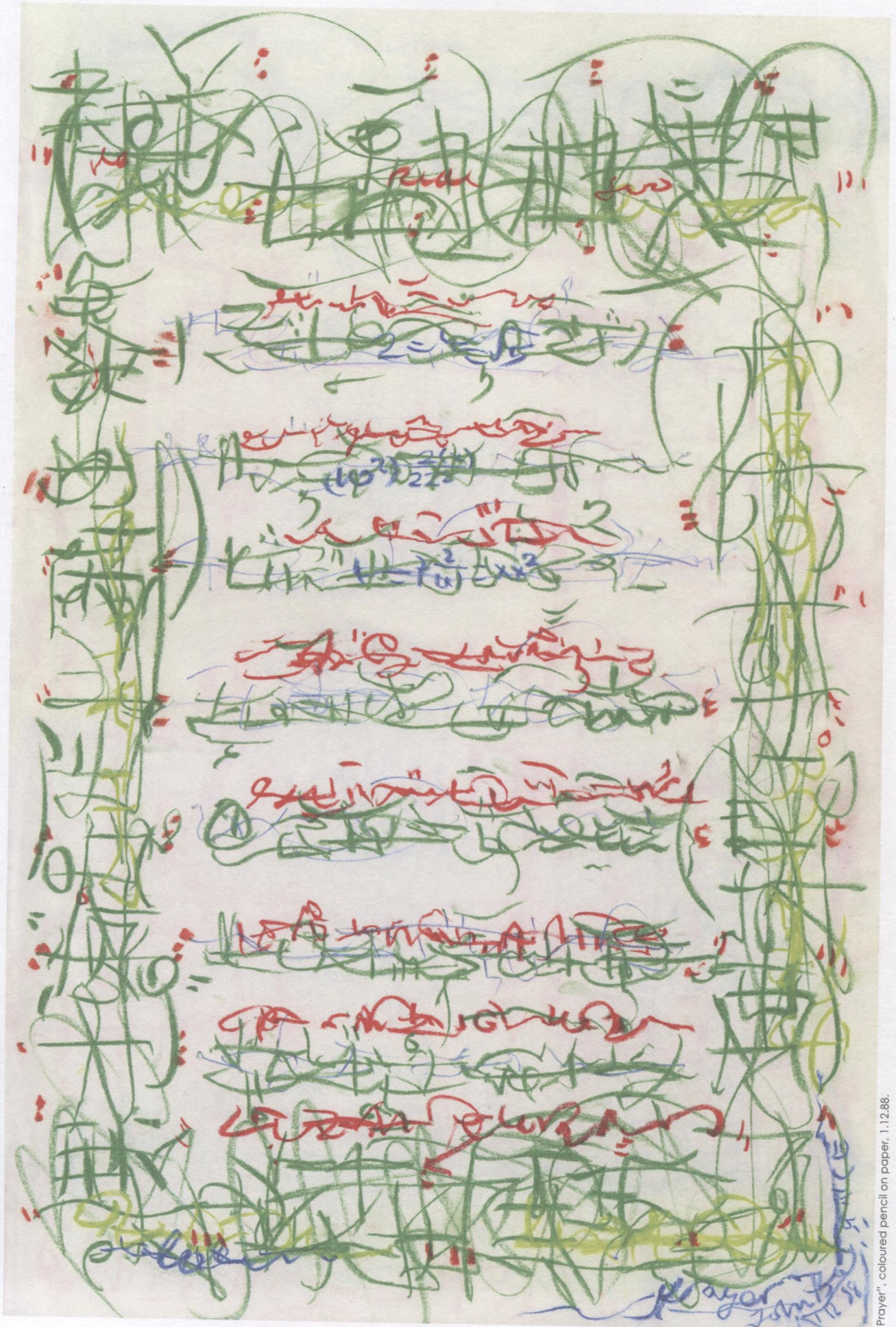
Ink and marker pen on paper.



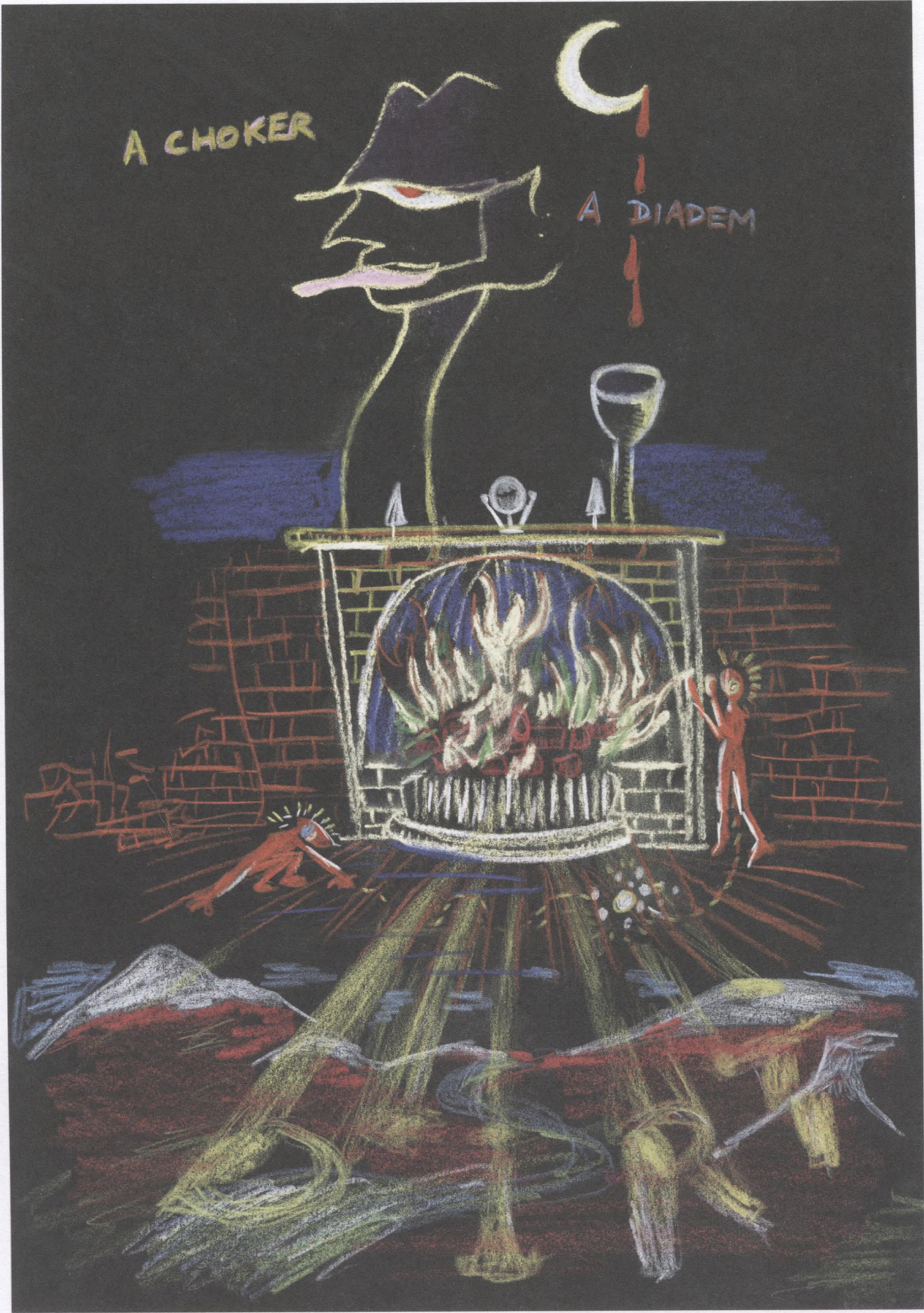
"Mero", ink and coloured pencil on paper, 7.2.88.



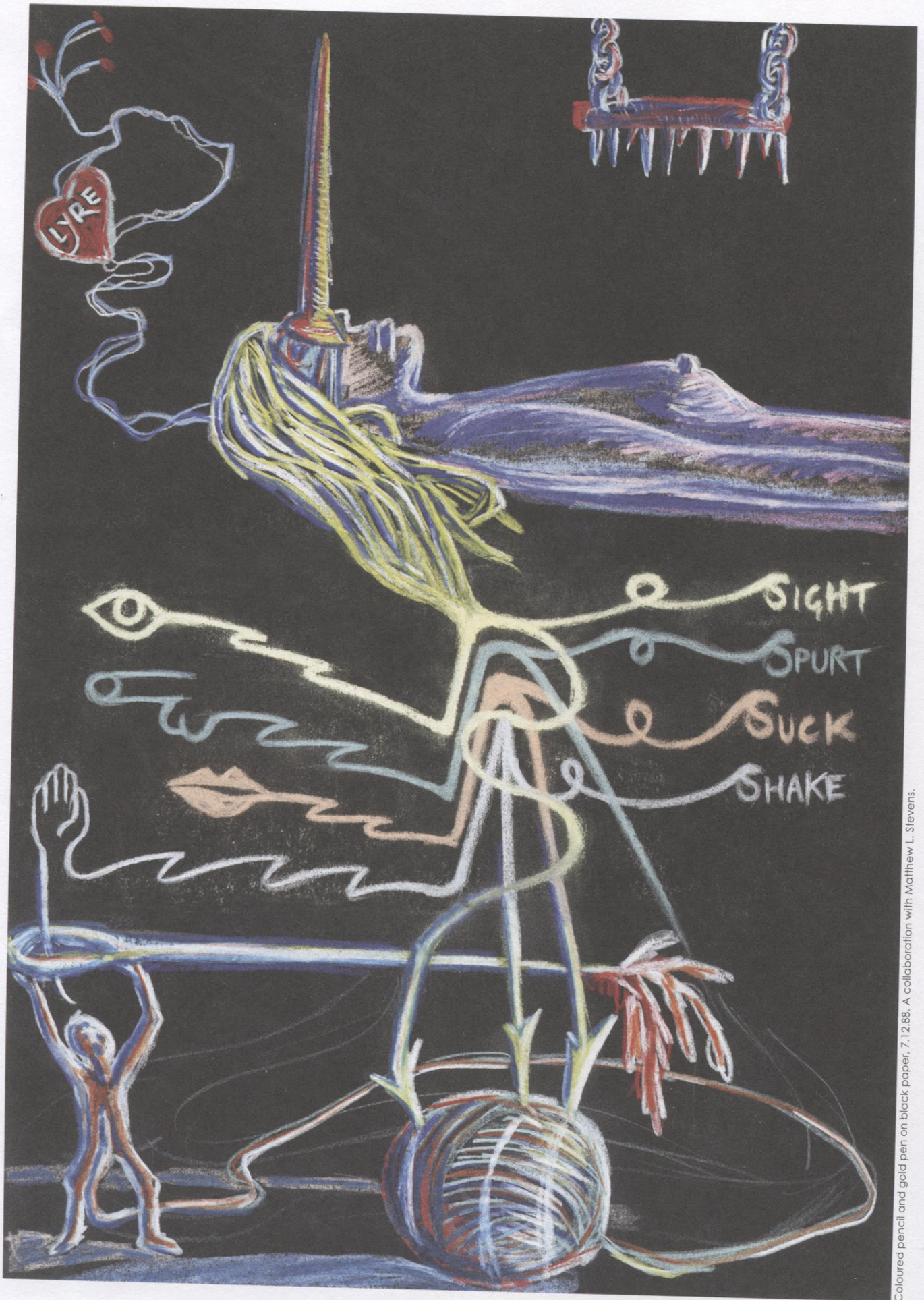
"Hyperborean Forest", pencil and crayon on paper, 1.12.88.



"Prayer", coloured pencil on paper, 1.12.88.



Coloured pencil and gold pen on black paper. 7.12.88. A collaboration with Sleazy and Matthew L. Stevens.



Coloured pencil and gold pen on black paper, 7.12.88. A collaboration with Matthew L. Stevens.



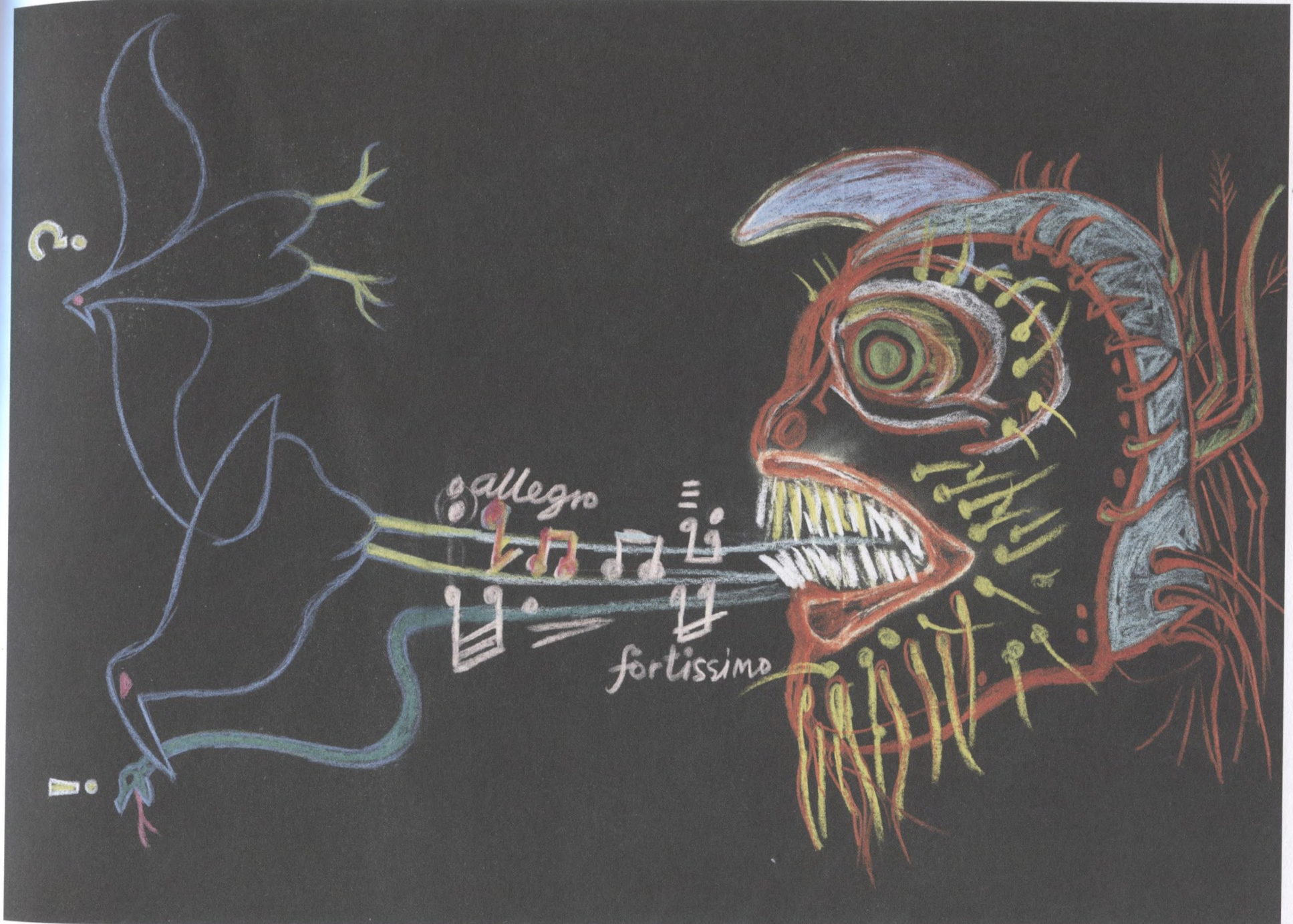
Coloured pencil and gold pen on black paper, 7.12.88. A collaboration with Matthew L. Stevens.



Coloured pencil and gold pen on black paper, 7.12.88. A collaboration with Matthew L. Stevens.



Coloured pencil and gold pen on black paper, 24.8.88. A collaboration with Matthew L. Stevens.



Coloured pencil and gold pen on black paper, 7.12.88. A collaboration with Matthew L. Stevens.



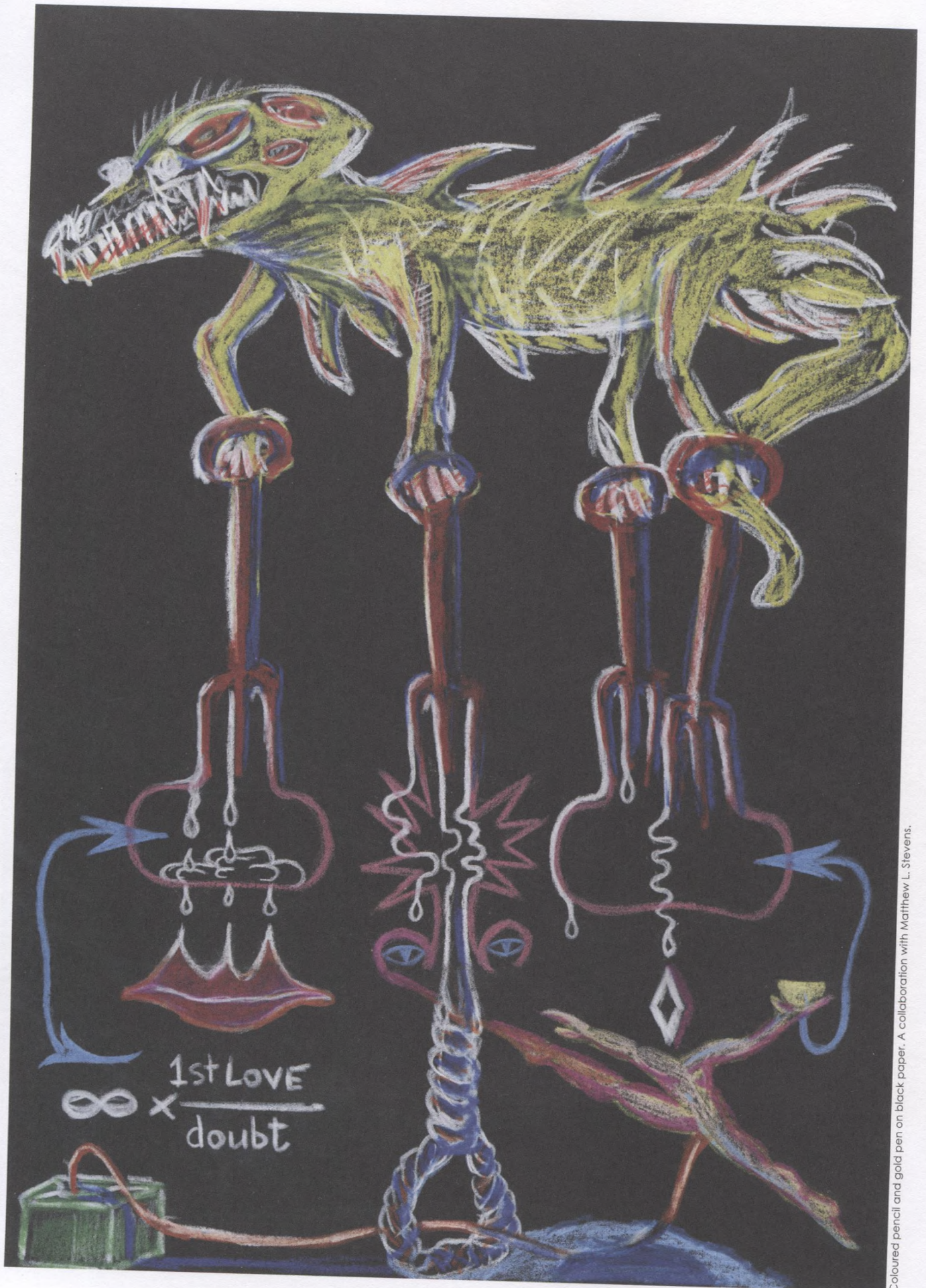
Coloured pencil and gold pen on black paper. A collaboration with Matthew L. Stevens.



Coloured pencil and gold pen on black paper. A collaboration with Matthew L. Stevens.



Coloured pencil and gold pen on black paper, 7.12.88. A collaboration with Matthew L. Stevens.



Coloured pencil and gold pen on black paper. A collaboration with Matthew L. Stevens.



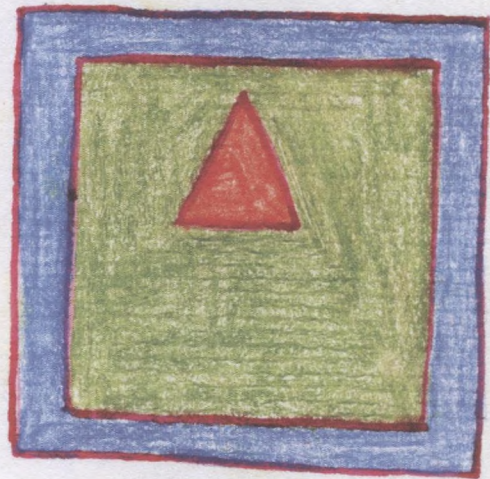
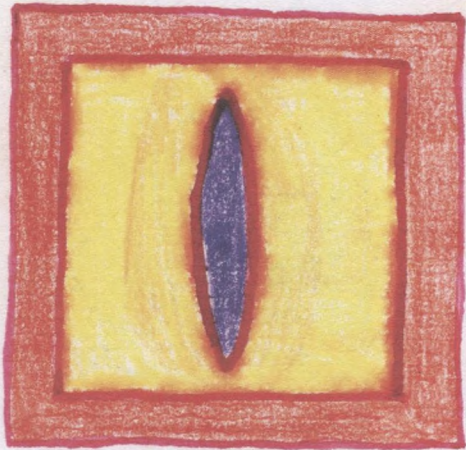
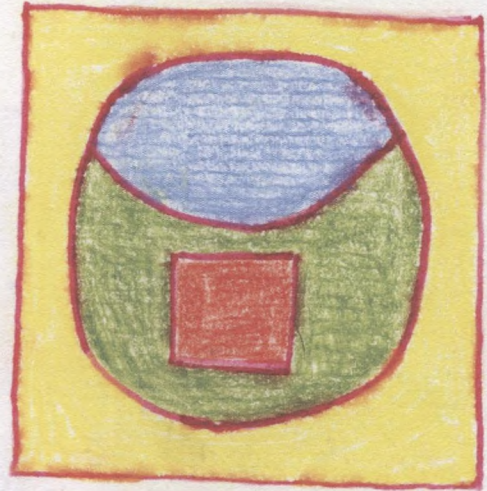
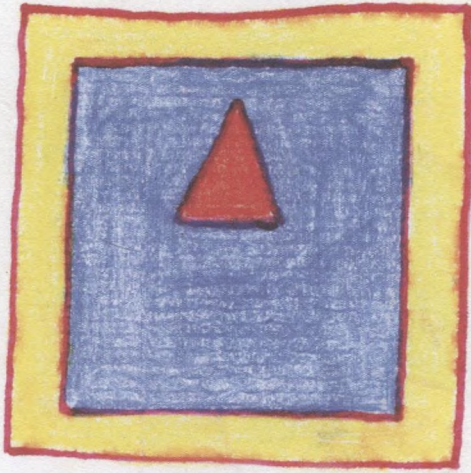
Coloured pencil and gold pen on black paper, 7.12.88. A collaboration with Matthew L. Stevens.



Coloured pencil and gold pen on black paper, 7.12.88. A collaboration with Matthew L. Stevens.

Sometimes all there's
left to do is
admit your first
dream to your-
self - all o-
-er again as
if it were that
first winter a
gain . . .

1192





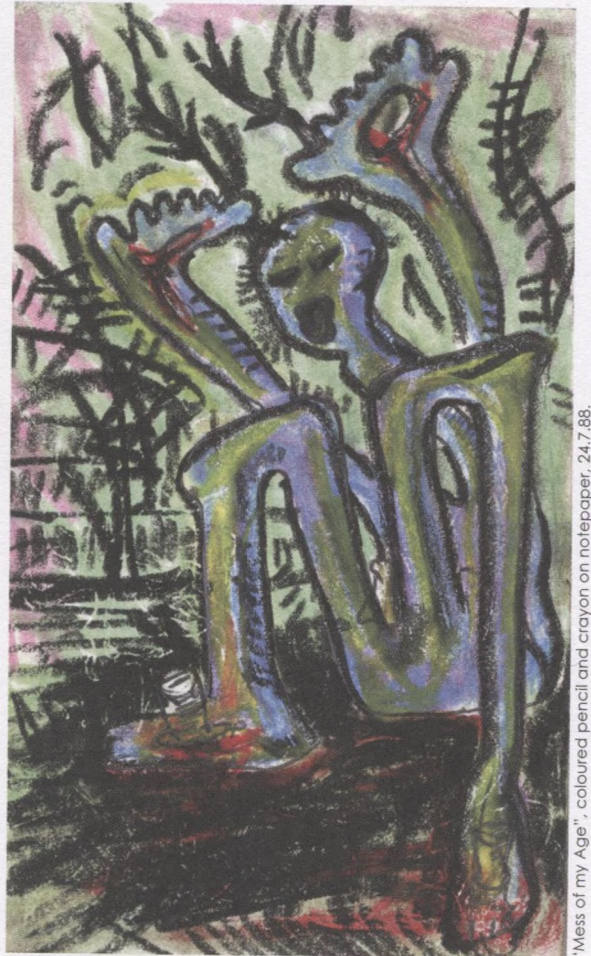
"Girl in Foyer", coloured pencil and crayon on notepaper, 24.7.88.



"Baleric Smiley Crab", ink and crayon on notepaper, 24.7.88.



"Weightaround", ink and crayon on notepaper, 24.7.88.



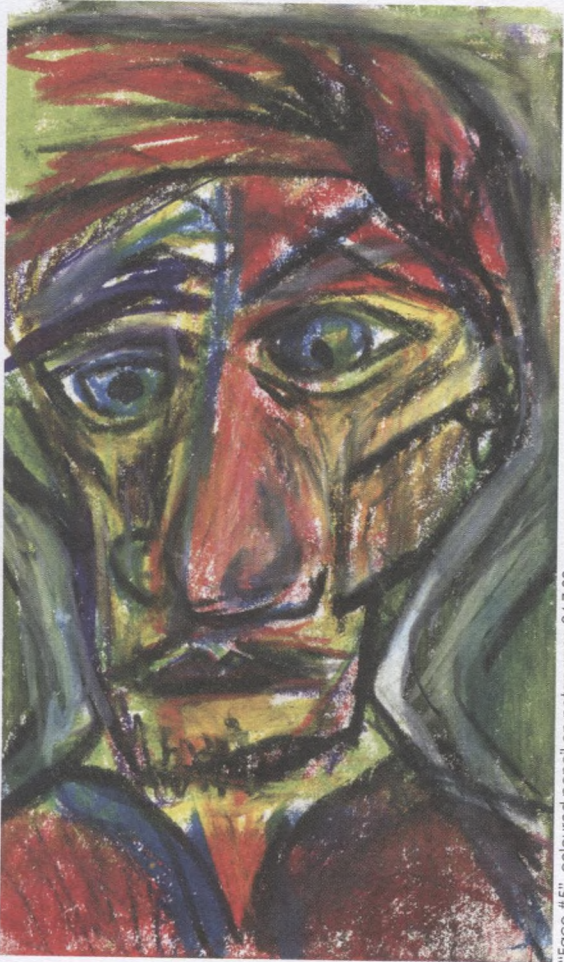
"Mess of my Age", coloured pencil and crayon on notepaper, 24.7.88.



"Bad Mood"; ink, coloured pencil and crayon on notepaper, 24.7.88.



"Head #3"; ink and crayon on notepaper, 24.7.88.



"Face #5"; coloured pencil on notepaper, 24.7.88.



"One in the Eye for Snakeman while Training"; coloured pencil on notepaper, 24.7.88.



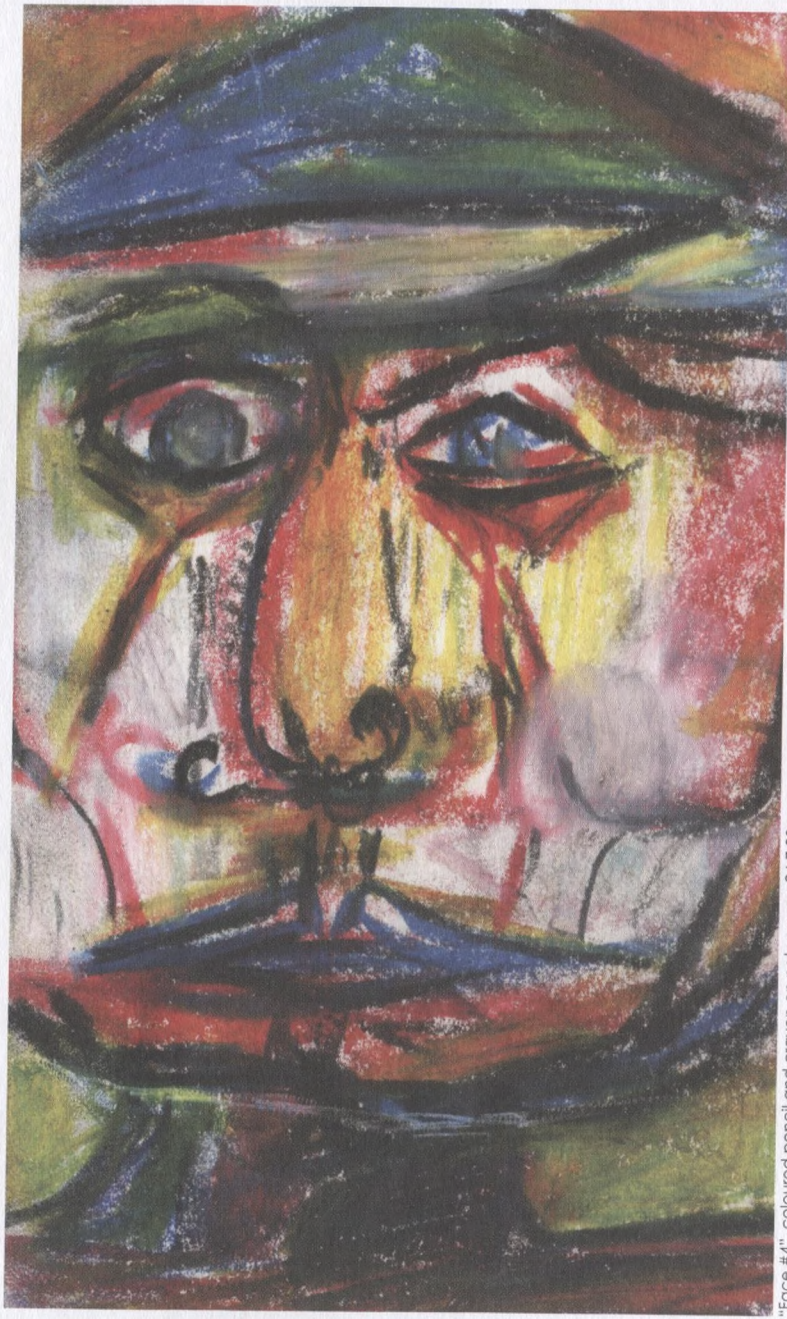
"Face #1", crayon on notepaper.



"Face #2", crayon on notepaper, 24.7.88.



"Hoi En Toti", pen, coloured pencil and crayon on notepaper, 24,7,88.



"Face #4", coloured pencil and crayon on notepaper, 24,7,88.



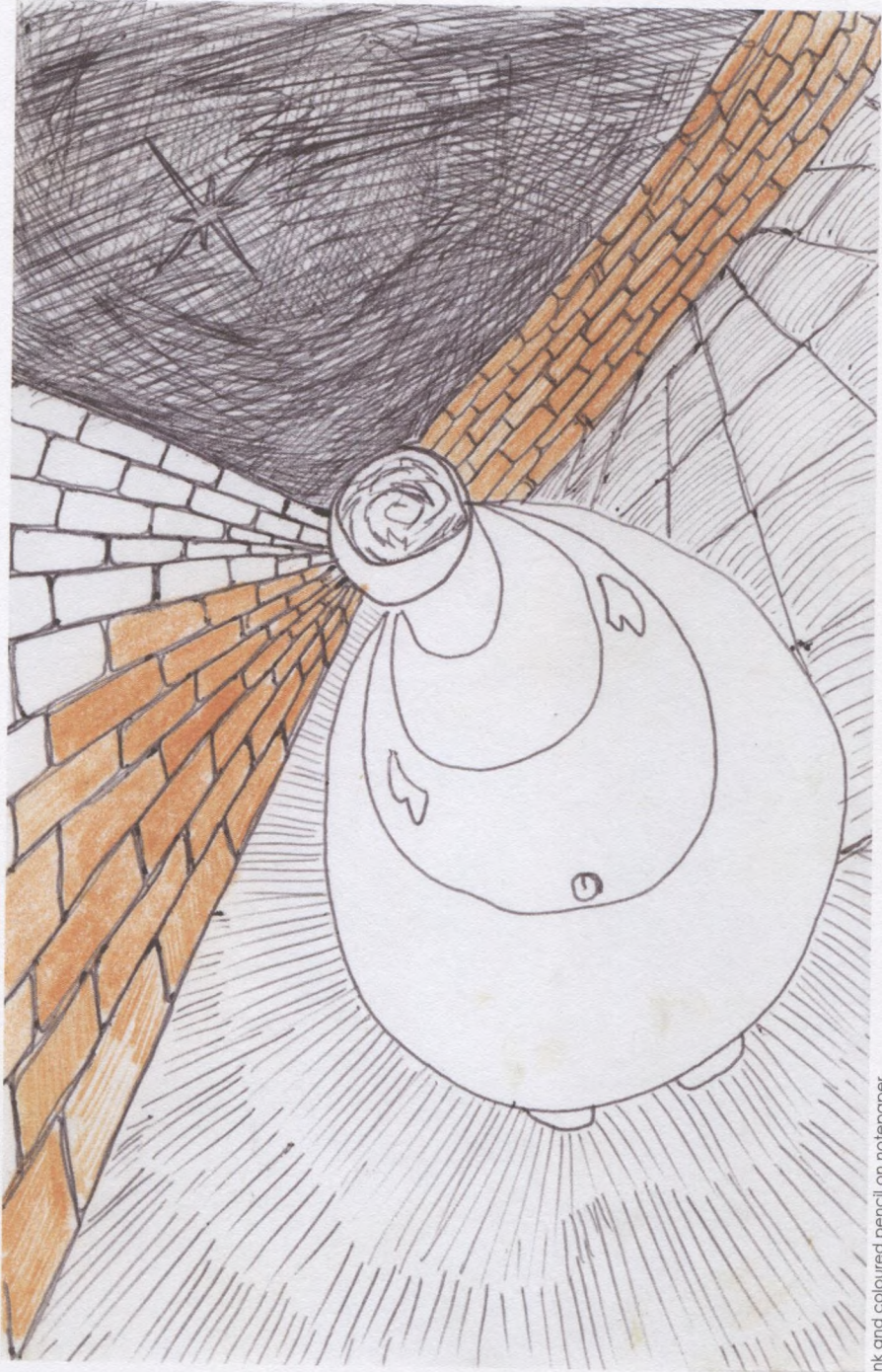
"Anti Pope", pencil and marker pen on lined notepaper.



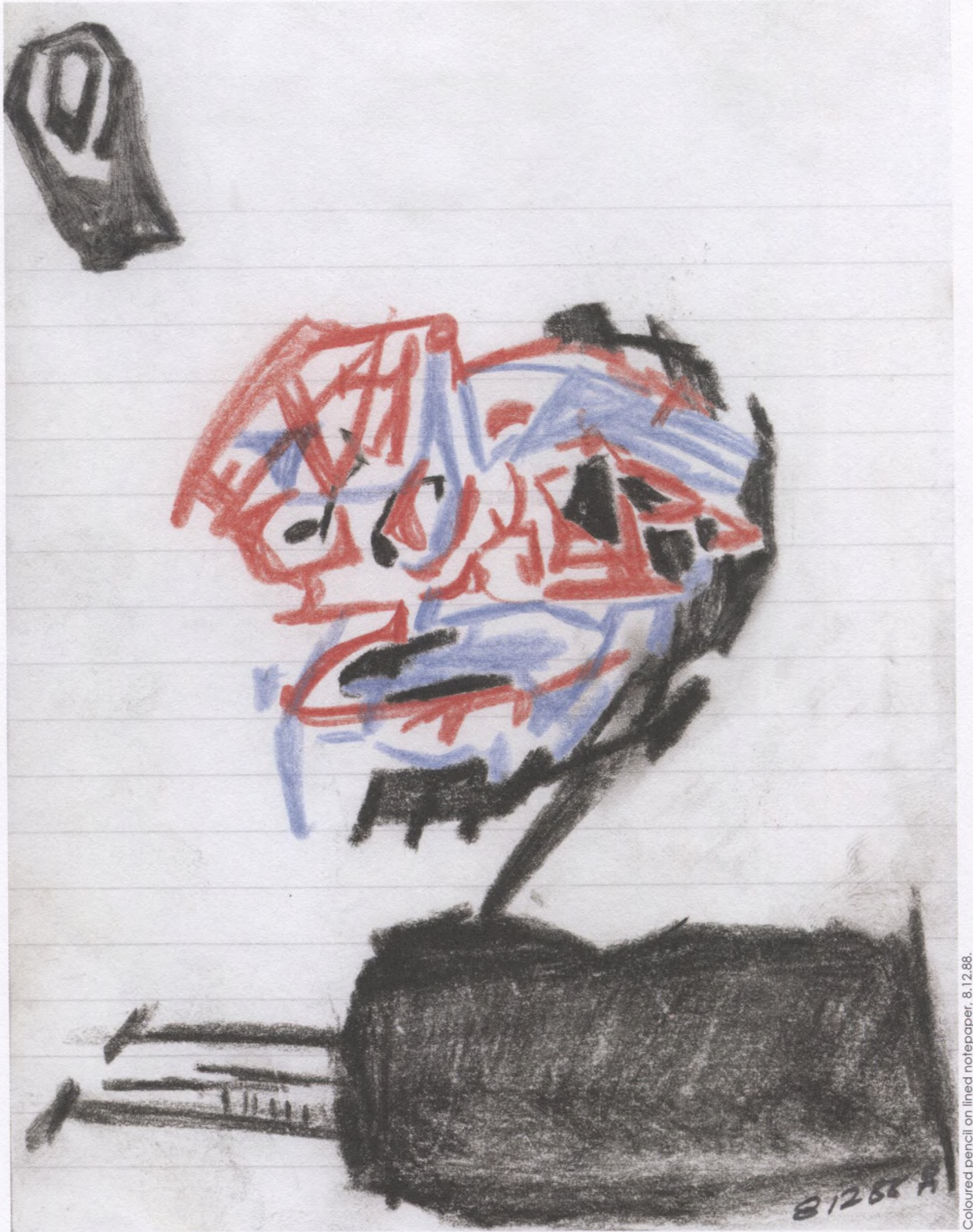
"He Sleeps in Blood", coloured pencil and ink on lined notepaper, 2.10.88.



Ink and felt-tip pen on notepaper.



Ink and coloured pencil on notepaper.



B/255 H

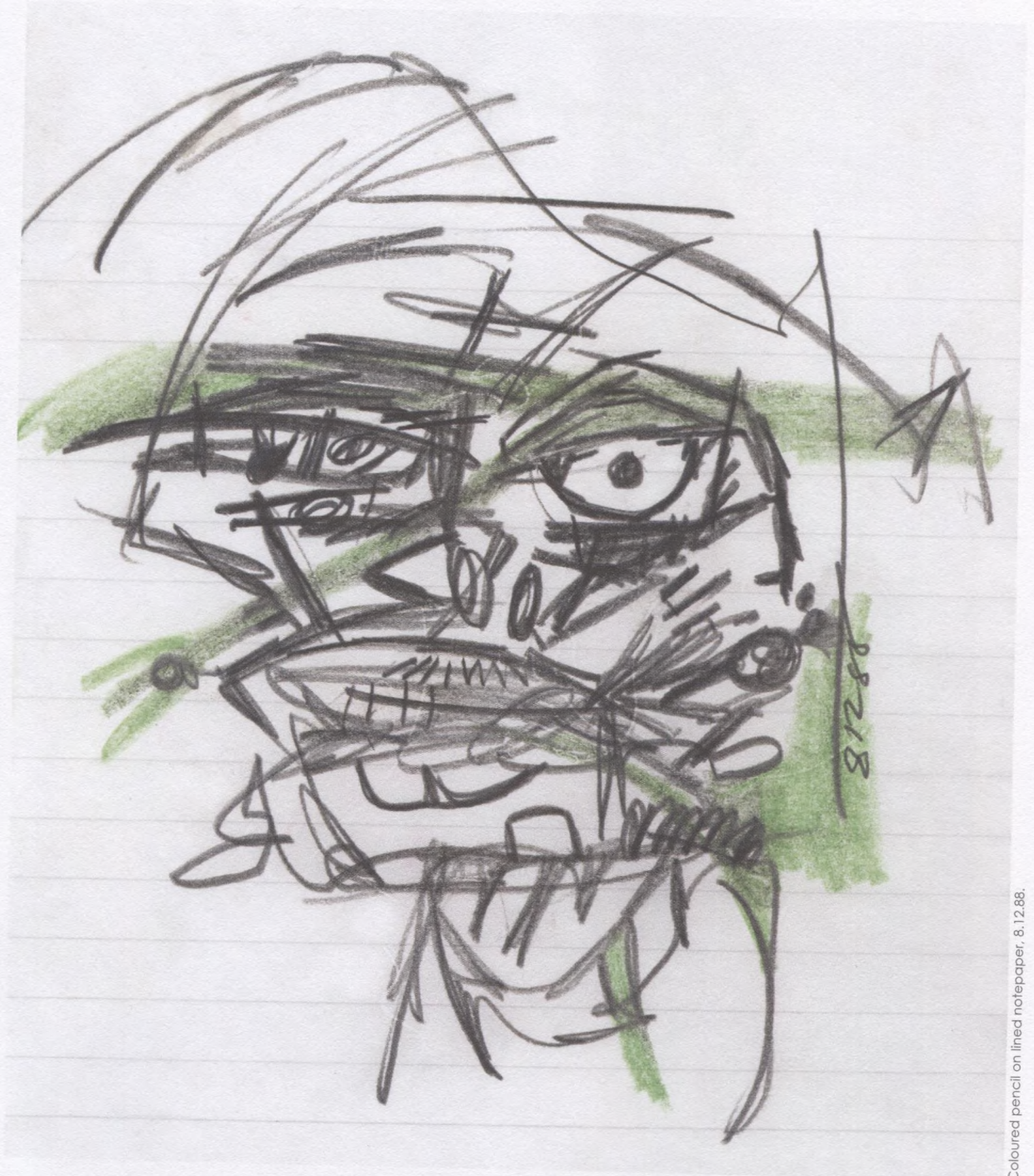
Coloured pencil on lined notepaper, 8.12.88.



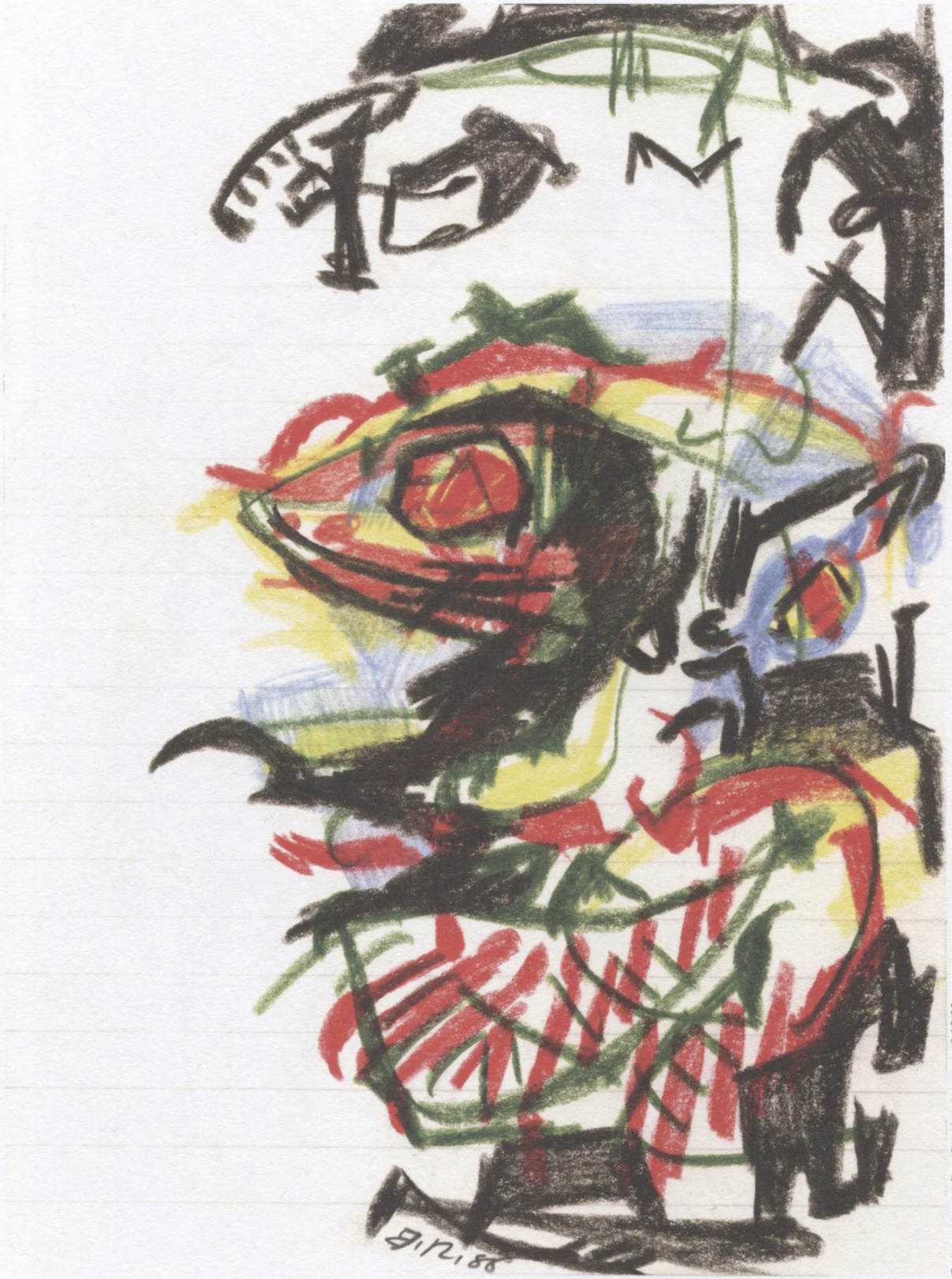
Coloured pencil on lined notepaper, 8.12.88.



Coloured pencil on lined notepaper. 8.12.88.



Coloured pencil on lined notepaper, 8.12.88.



Coloured pencil on lined notepaper, 8.12.88.



Coloured pencil on lined notepaper.



"Salesman in Shop", coloured pencil on lined notepaper.



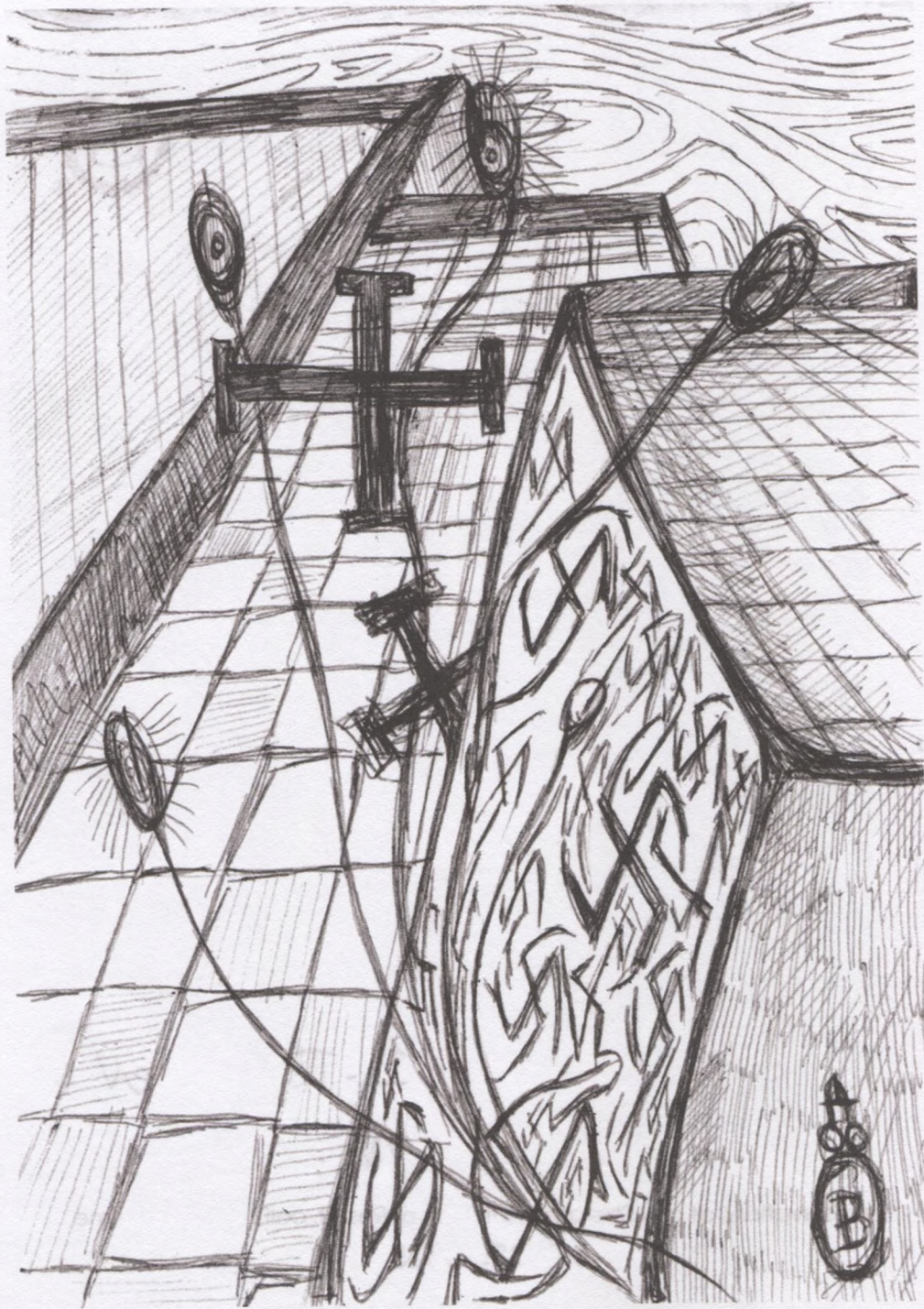
Coloured pencil on card.



"The Tower", coloured pencil on notepaper.



Ballpoint pen and felt-tip pen on notepaper.



Pencil and ink on notepaper, 1.4.86.

1986



"Dingo Pig", coloured pencil and crayon on paper, 24.7.88.



"Chemikal Angel", ink and marker pen on notepaper, 17.4.86.



Watercolour on paper.



Watercolour on paper.







Watercolour on paper.



Watercolour on paper.

CHRIST CHRIST CHRIST CHRIST
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Acrylic paint on paper.



Balant
1. 4. 88

Ballpoint pen and coloured pencil on paper, 1.4.88.



"Oak Bank", acrylic paint on card, 03.99.



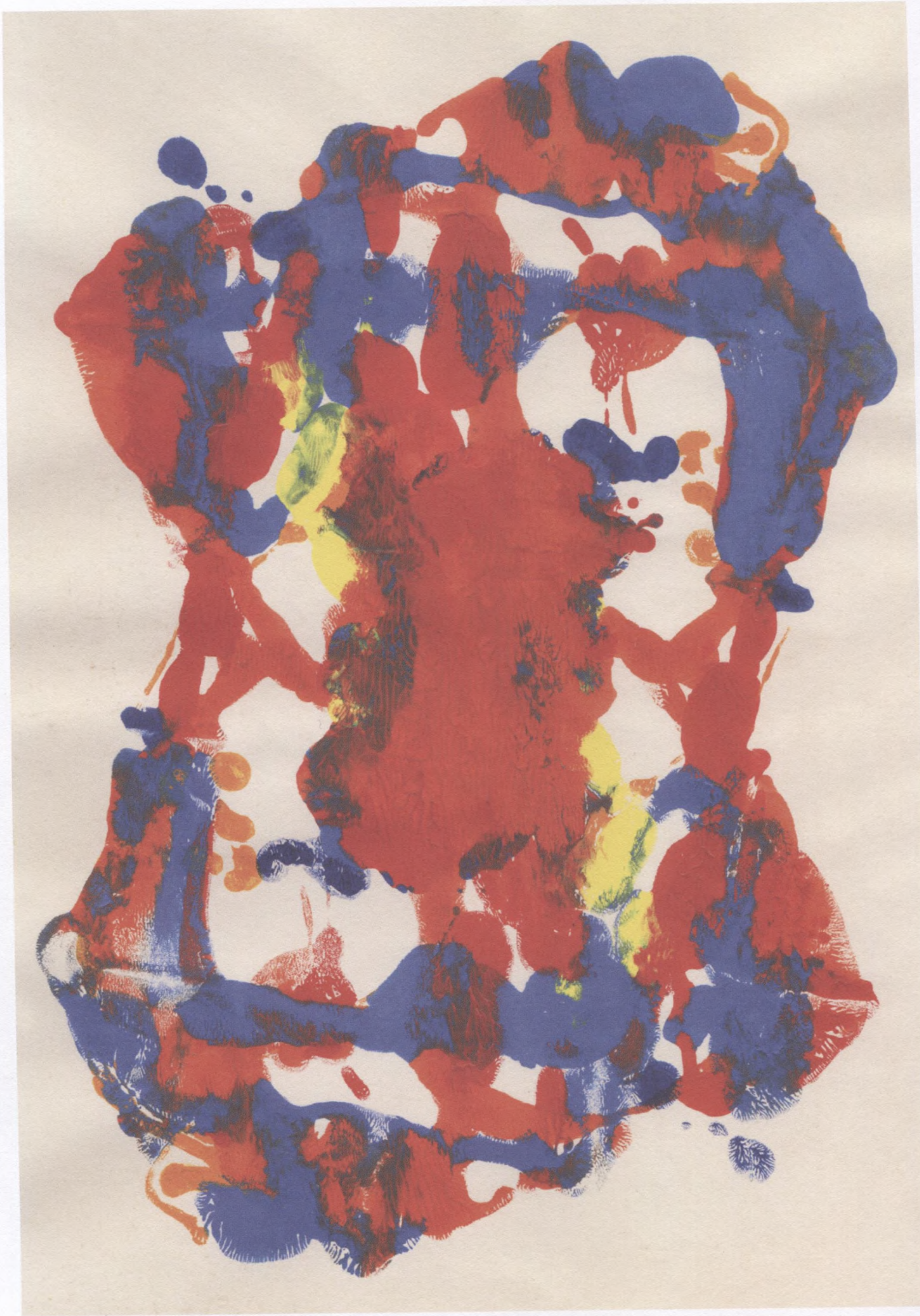
"Was Stenbock", acrylic on paper, 19.5.99.



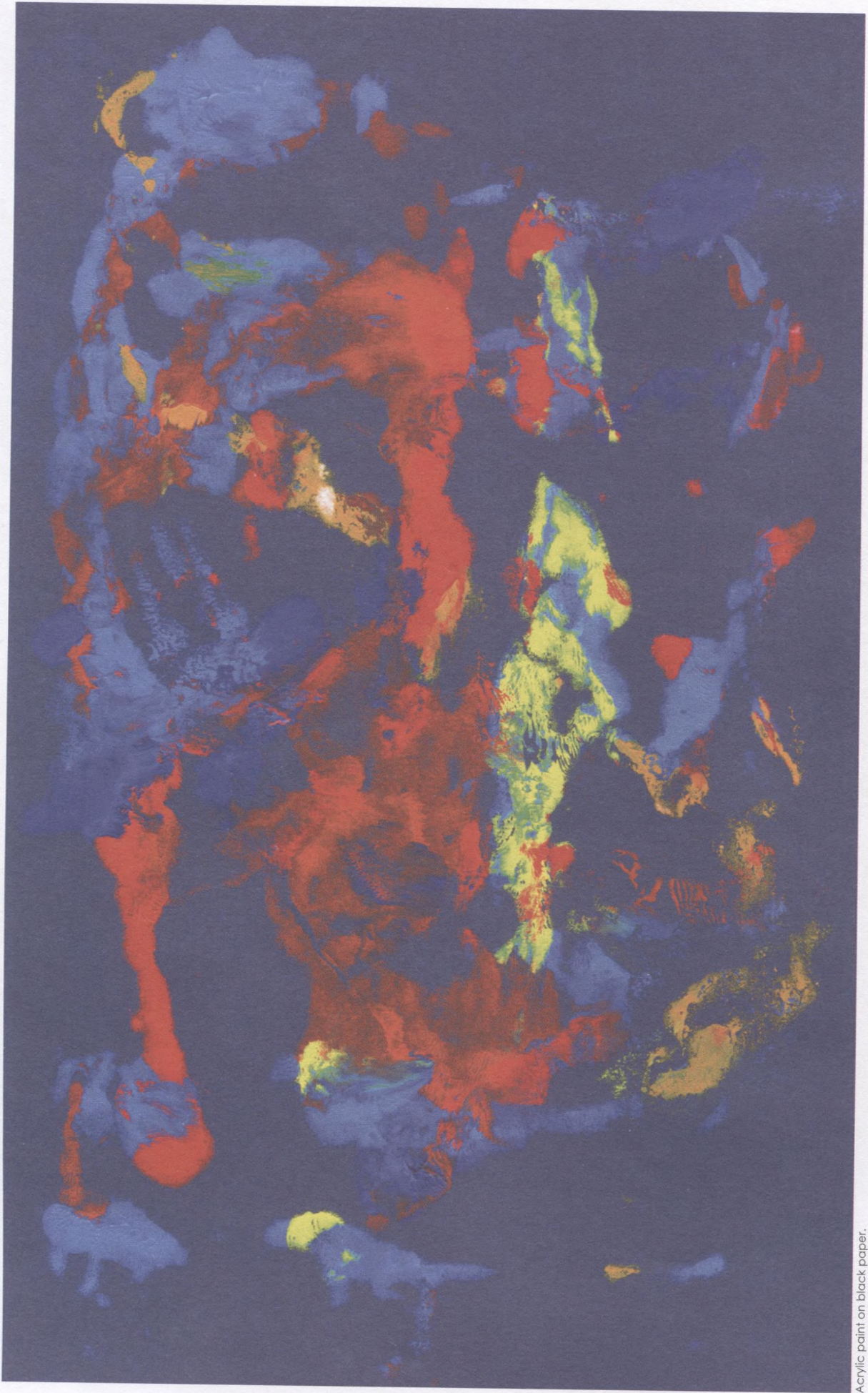
"Ghost King in Purple Kingdom", "Looking for Subjects (Hidden with Spy)", or "Parked Red Ferraris", acrylic paint on paper, 14.5.00.



Acrylic paint on card.



Acrylic paint on paper.



Acrylic paint on black paper.

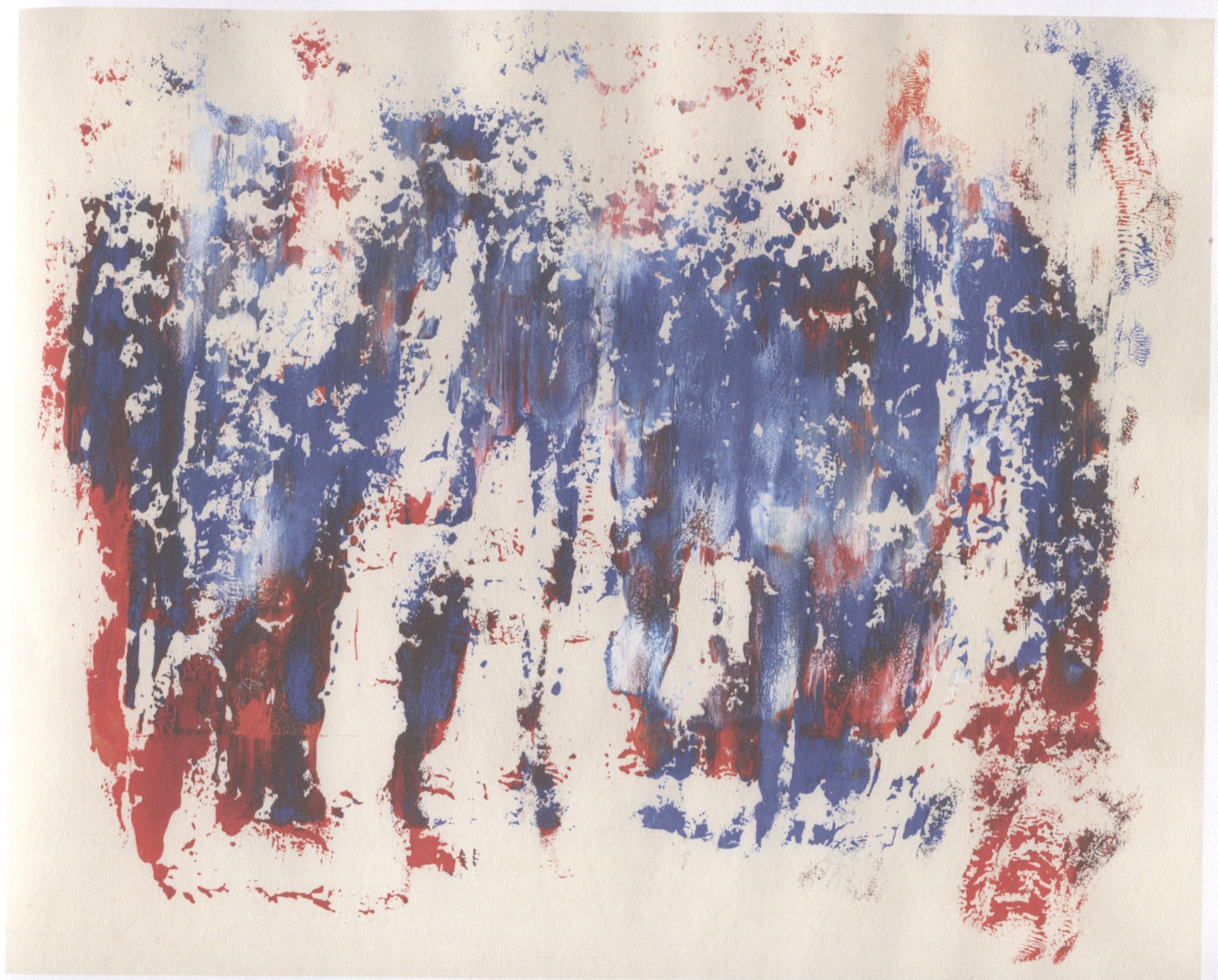


"Red Animals", acrylic paint on paper, 14.5.00.



"Visor", acrylic on paper, 19.5.00.





Acrylic paint on paper.



Acrylic paint on paper.



to the garden

Christine's house

Acrylic paint on paper.



Acrylic paint on paper.



Acrylic paint on paper.



Acrylic paint on black paper.



Acrylic paint on card.



"Slezky's Red Landscape: Presents Past", acrylic paint on paper, 4.12.99.



Acrylic paint on paper.



Acrylic paint on paper.



Acrylic paint on paper.



Acrylic paint on paper.



Language & language can't you know.

[Dense, overlapping handwritten text in red and brown ink, including phrases like 'Noise or Signal', 'Language & language', and 'Shubal Patel']

"Noise or Signal"

(Disabled landscape w/ language) #1.

Shubal Patel
21st May 1990

"Noise or Signal (Disabled Landscape with Language) #1", watercolour and felt-tip pen on paper, 21.5.94.



Watercolour on paper, 1.5.94.



a picture for drew. 1. May 94

John Baldessari

"A Picture for Drew", watercolour on paper, 1.5.94.



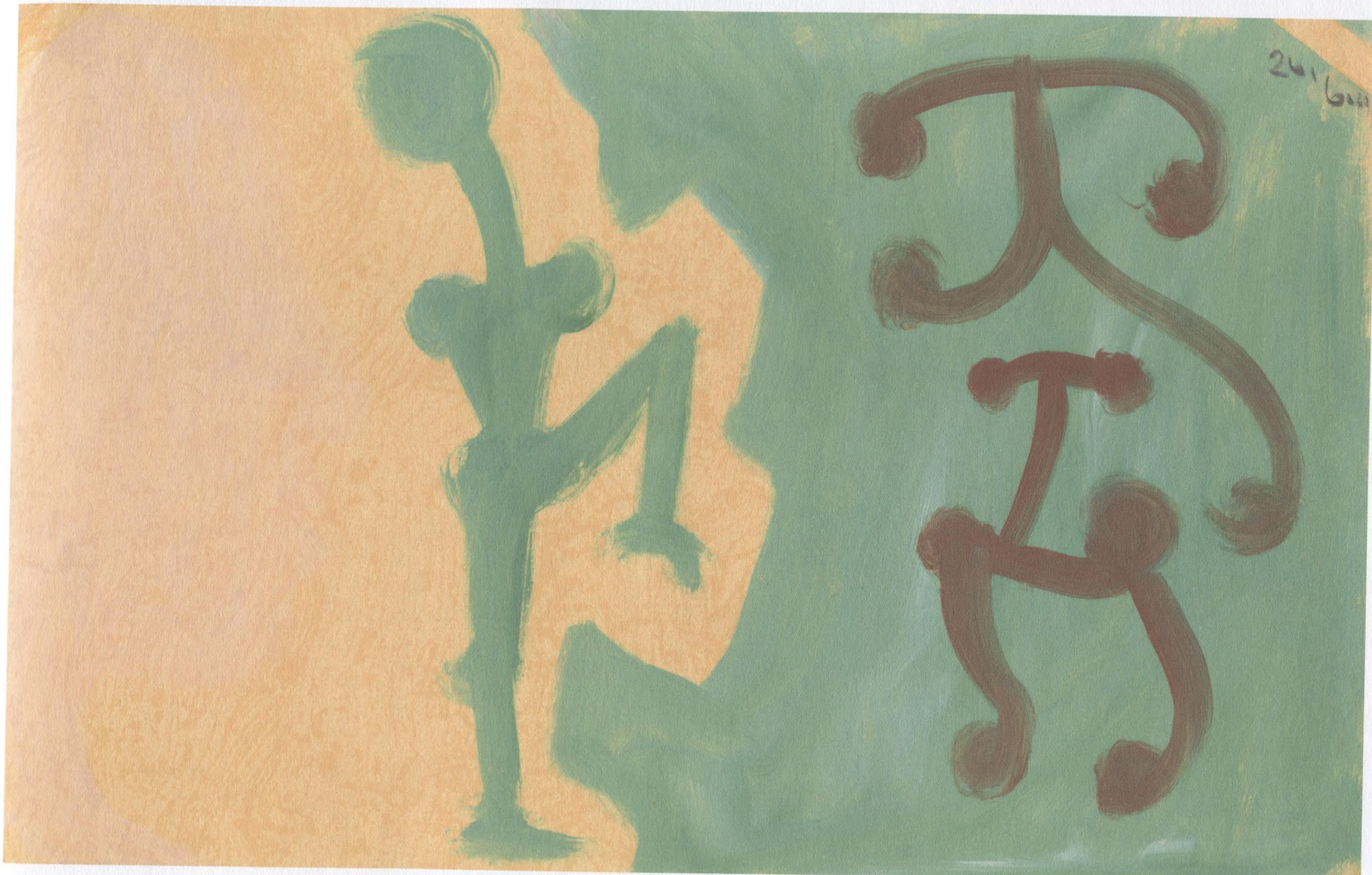
Pastel, crayon and ink on paper.



Coloured pencil, pastel and chalk on paper.



Pastel, crayon and chalk on paper.



26.6.89

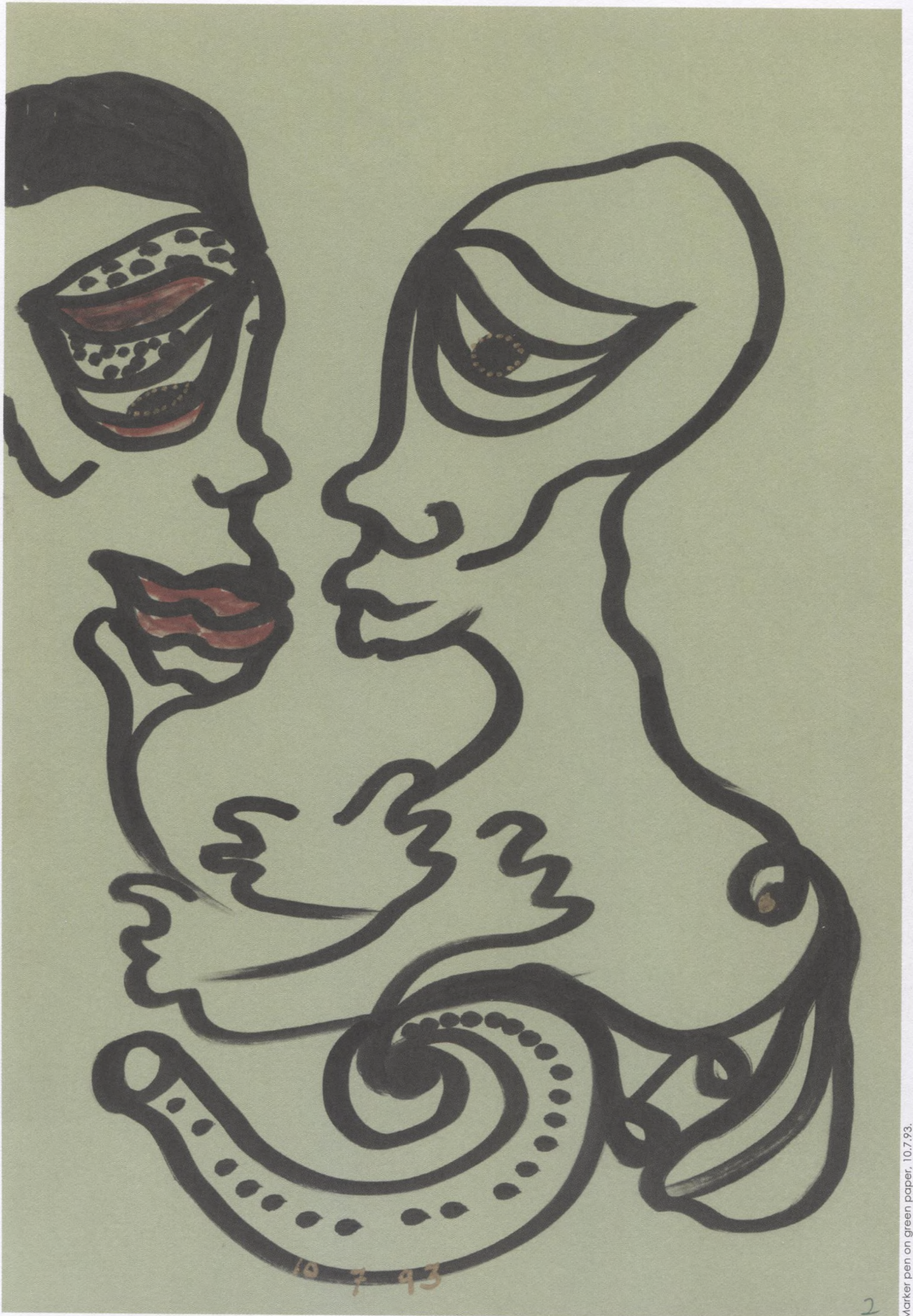
Acrylic paint on wallpaper, 26.6.89.



Marker pen on green paper, 10.7.93.

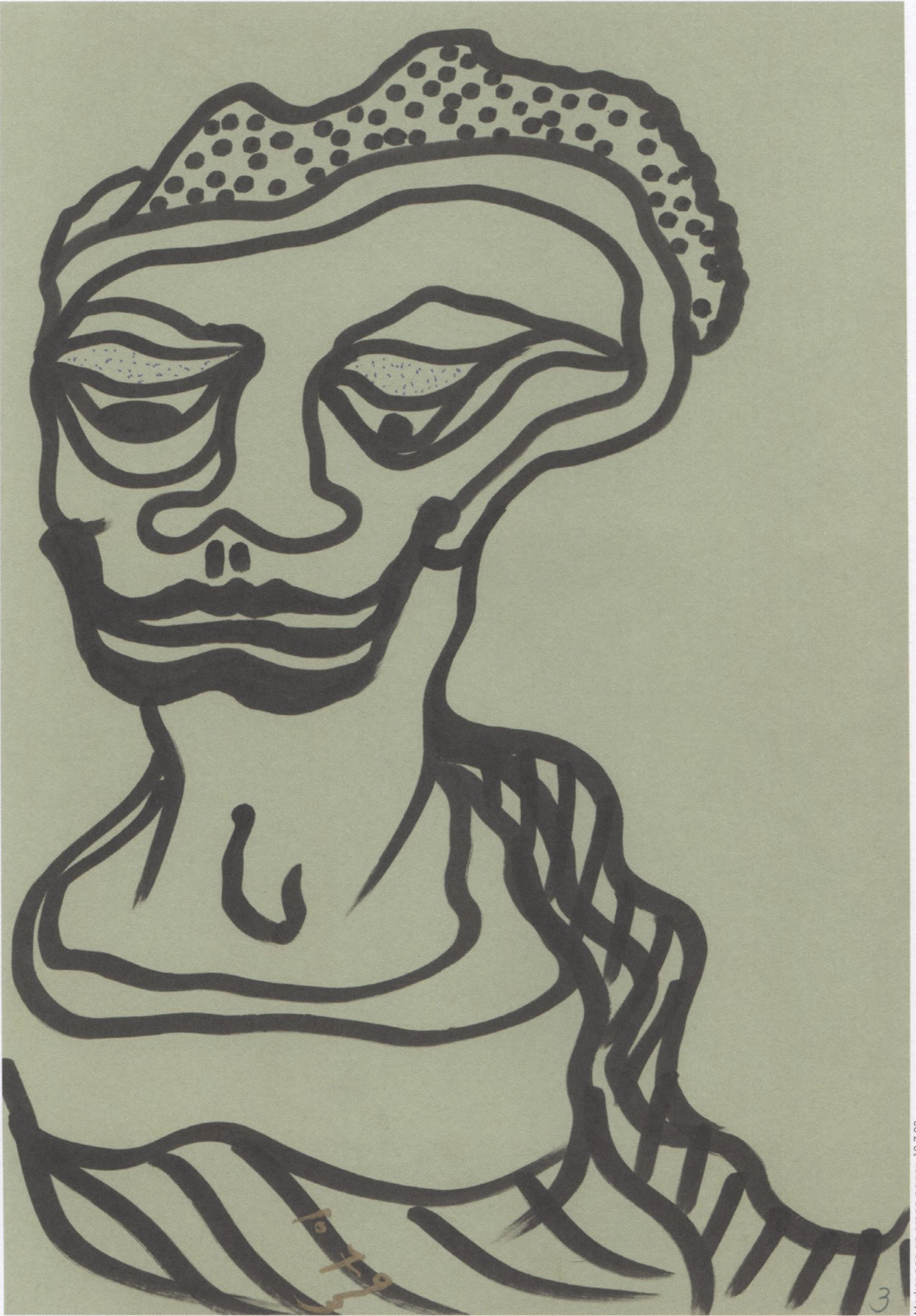


Felt-tip pen on brown paper, 7.11.97.





Felt-tip pen on brown paper, 7.11.97.



Marker pen on green paper, 10.7.93.



Felt-tip pen on brown paper, 7.11.97.



"3 Eyed Tree Becomes a 'Parasite Nightmare' while Looking in a Dressing Room Mirror", ink and coloured pencil on paper, 27.2.88, colour added 6.6.88.



"Venti", pencil, crayon and chalk on paper, 1.12.88.



Coloured pencil and crayon on paper.



Coloured pencil and crayon on paper.



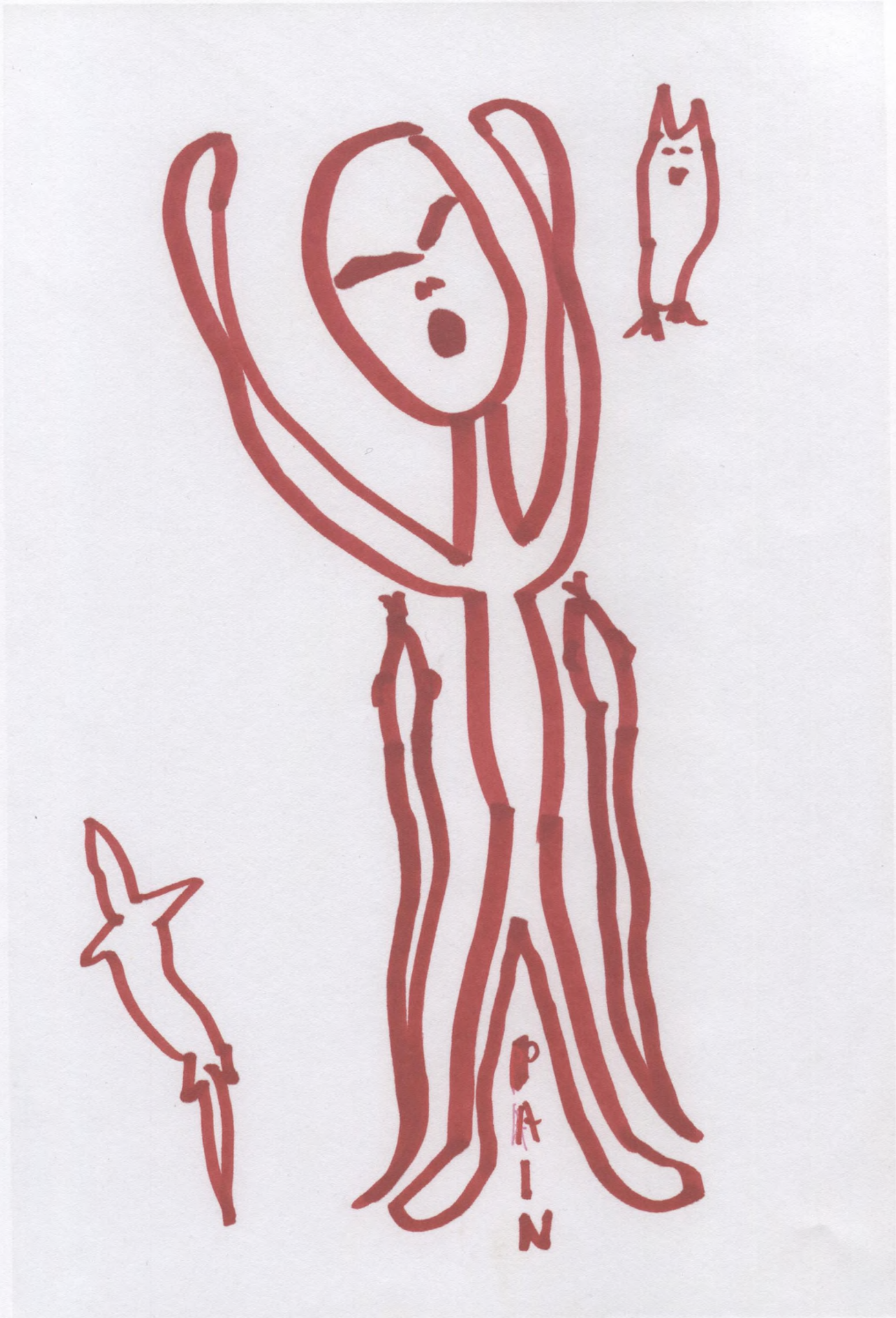




Coloured pencil on paper, 22.12.88.



"Horse", ink and crayon on paper, 18.10.88.



"Pain", felt-tip pen on paper.



"THE isenheim Alteration" John Balance . 18. III . 88 ev p . Reversible Faith ^{w/} RunG Way-up . + is ok .

SLEEP

IS

IMPORTANT

UNLESS

YOU

ARE

DEAD

Black Sun

When I focus inwardly on John Balance – reconstructing him visually as I knew him – it is his quiet shyness that comes up, that sense of inner self-preoccupation that often goes with filtering out a lot of reality as an uncomfortable intrusion on the privacy of imaginative space.

Coil was only one aspect of Balance – music, he complained, didn't occupy that much of his time – and for the first seventeen years of *Coil's* existence Balance resolutely refused to do live performance, cultivating the same sort of reclusive mystique as some of his major cult influences: the artist and occult practitioner Austin Osman Spare, the minimalist composer Leon Dudley Sorabji – whose piano solo *The Perfumed Garden* was an integral part of Balance's musical architecture – and of course the queer maverick visionary Ralph Chubb, whose self-published illustrated books were prominent in Balance's library.

Unstoppably creative, Balance saw hallucinogenic state-altering drugs as an important part of his pioneering quest. He wrote and painted naively in obsessive surges, partly I suspect as liberating therapy, but more to give some sort of organised expression to the distressing visual phenomena that were natural to him. That he regularly dipped in and out of turbulent mental states exacerbated by heavy drinking was all part of his individual chemistry. He wasn't in any way pathologically psychotic or schizophrenic, but an intrepid voyager into parallel dimensions that didn't always fit the accepted scientific view of reality.

Balance's idiosyncratically personalised art reflects an amalgam of eclectic influences: Jean Cocteau, Edvard Munch, Austin Osman Spare, Ralph Chubb; but most notably Dali and the surrealists: Picasso, Brion Gysin. It is the startling originality of subject matter imposed on adopted form that allows the viewer to access not only aspects of his sexuality, but shapes thrown by his paranoia, his insight into occult practice, figures real and imagined, as well as the violent celebration of colour as textural resource. If the work is in part derivative, then there is a constant sense of Balance journeying toward discovering his own signature in the process.

Done with an inner conviction that was self-rewarding, Balance's paintings – never intended for public exhibition or monetary gain, rarely shown to friends and more often sealed into jungle-green stash boxes stored in the basements at Oak Bank – talk to us of the rich inner world he partially explored through his lyrics. I am always aware of the lines "angels take poisons/in rotting pavilions", essentially signs along the way of his expansive consciousness. The extraordinary *Portrait of a Sexual Demon* in which an invisible entity displaying only hands masturbates a cock that ejaculates at both ends is just one instance of inspired vision reinventing sexual potential.

Pages of the Sexually Insane, Horrible Railway Accident, Scribe of Baby Rape Entity, these works all find Balance as the student of his own distress, but also as a dealer of agonised human crisis, in which deviance is supported by a corresponding acute isolation

This sort of disturbed existential alienation Balance felt even in company or relationships, and was only ever briefly dispelled by creativity, drugs or sex. Creativity doesn't heal mental anxiety; it simply gives it visible form through the medium of personal expression. In that way Balance was constantly thrown back on himself, so that what was insufferable inwardly also became so outwardly.

If Balance partly interpreted reality through attempting to decode astrological, alchemical and cabalistic ideas, then his work isn't in any way exclusively locked into those systems, but shareable through the fact that everything exists in imagination. His paintings as I say were aspects of someone who also loved plants, trees, flowers – particularly blue agapanthus – and domestic pursuits like cooking, baking cakes and making wild berry jam. He was a friend who demanded nothing but the easy sharing of thoughts and the quiet comfort zone of being together in a private space. Balance was inherently melancholic rather than depressive, and when he did go right down it was usually his heavy drinking that submerged him in a state of emotional damage, dating far back to a deeply traumatised childhood. Red wine, vodka and psychedelics as a toxic menu slammed him into confrontation with the jumpy road bumps of a past to which he was never reconciled.

We both shared a contagious enthusiasm for the 1920s drug-cocktailed poet, publisher and reckless bisexual playboy Harry Crosby, one of the wealthy Paris expatriates who founded the Black Sun Press and who had black suns tattooed on the soles of his feet. Crosby committed suicide in 1929 in a friend's borrowed apartment in New York, shooting his capriciously infatuated lover Josephine Bigelow through the head with a .25 calibre Belgian automatic pistol before doing the same to himself two hours later as a presumed suicide pact. Crosby was a committed sun-worshipper, filtering his inspirational source through the belief in solar cults, including worship of the Egyptian sun god Ra. Crosby's inner momentum was torched like rocket fuel, his accelerated lifestyle too fast to end in anything but total burn-out. On my last visit to Oak Bank about five weeks before Balance died I'd discovered an uncollected Crosby prose-poem 'Hail Death' in a 1928 edition of *Transition*, and read it out to Balance as something that clearly resonated with his own irreversible collision course with catastrophe. Crosby's propulsive impulse to shatter the frontier between life and death ends in this poem on lines that triggered real excitement on Balance's part: "Let their maggot fingers swarm over the red cloth, while we, having set fire to the powderhouse of our souls, explode (suns within suns and cataracts of gold) into the frenzied fury of the Sun, into the madness of the Sun, into the hot gold arms and hot gold eyes of the Goddess of the sun."

That night there was a sea fog blowing in off the Bristol Channel in blue spooky arabesques, and we settled down to talk, glad of its insulating haze. It was a last time for me, but Balance's legacy continues with his music, his writings, and now a selection of his paintings that show us something of the rich autonomous disturbing inner world that he not only occupied, but valued over and above reality.

Jeremy Reed