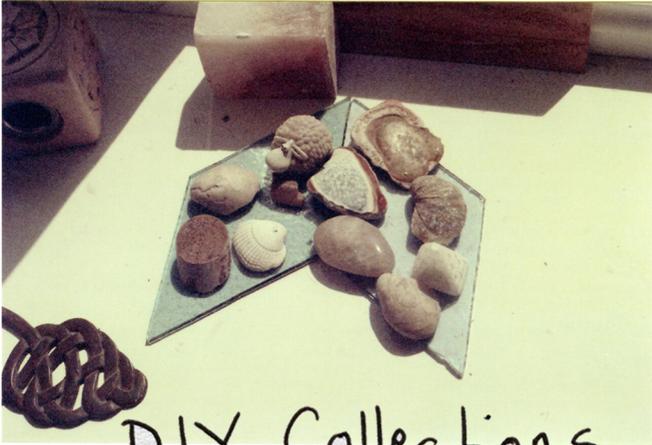


CVAN WM, DASH & MOTHERS WHO MAKE COVENTRY PRESENT: DIY COLLECTIONS

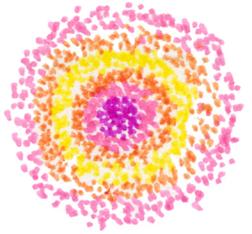


Saturday 29th November 2025,
2 - 4pm
Coventry University's Delia Derbyshire
Building
Cox St, Coventry CV1 5PH

[Reserve tickets →](#)

DIY Collections

ARCHIVE

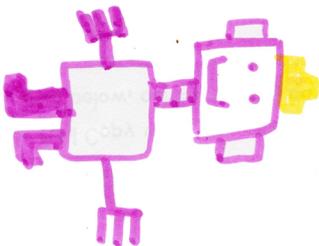


DASH
disabled-led
arts org

CVAN
West Midlands
Coventry Biennial
2025



Thank you
Coventry
University



Handwritten signature and date: 29-11-25

DIY Collections: Archive

DIY Collections: Archive



By Adele Mary Reed
Published March 2026

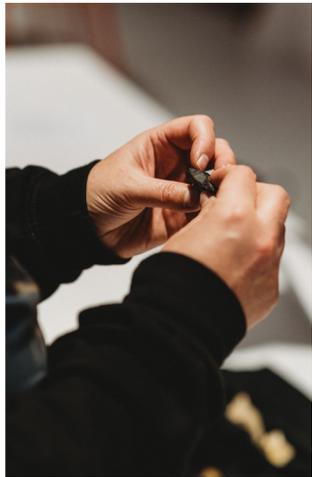
Commissioned by CVAN West Midlands and DASH
Part of an event for Coventry Biennial of Contemporary Art 2025

Contents

6. Introduction to DIY Collections: Archive
8. Words by Heather Peak and Colette Griffin
10. Adele Mary Reed intro on the day
12. Bella speaking about Japan
14. Janet Tryner on Small Stone Age Tools
16. Remi on Fossils
18. Michelle Le Blanc and Colin Odell - Playing With Food
20. Erik talking about: How to decide what to take with you when moving to a new country?
22. Rachel Doughty on Rust and Patina in Everyday Objects
24. Paul Chokran sharing his Illustration Practice
26. Martina Irwin sharing the Coventry Tree Sanctuary
28. Hannah Moreton talking about Screws, Washers and Pulling Things Apart
30. Daniel Reed on Coventry Grotesque
33. Image credits

DIY Collections: Archive

On a Saturday afternoon late November 2025 a collection of people of all ages gathered at Delia Derbyshire, the arts building of Coventry University. The space was alive with prospective students for open day and our event, tucked into the commodious Hyper Studio, saw a group of folk about to embark on a communal learning journey of a different kind. These weren't lectures and they weren't part of a syllabus; they were broad and varied DIY Collections shared from the unique perspectives of the individual experts behind them.



The speakers: Bella, Janet Tryner, Remi, Michelle Le Blanc and Colin Odell, Erik, Rachel Doughty, Paul Chokran, Martina Irwin, Hannah Moreton and Daniel Reed, used five minutes to present a topic close to them, a curious obsession or preoccupation. This created a joyous and authentically multigenerational, multiplicitous moment full of warmth, mutual generosity, sharing and listening.



Thanks go to CVAN West Midlands, DASH and Coventry Biennial of Contemporary Art for programming and commissioning this event and for approaching Mothers Who Make Coventry to be involved in its curation. Thank you to Lucy Mountfield from DASH for introducing the event, the live BSL interpreters for being with us, Kate Rossin for baking beautiful cakes to accompany post-presentation conversations, Sinéad Patching for photo-documenting and Paul Chokran for offering his energetic illustrations to this publication. Thank you also to Coventry University for hosting us in a great space and providing a professional tech set-up giving justice to the fantastic presentations.

- Adele Mary Reed, December, 2025



Collections are in their own way ^{a resistance, an} ~~akin to this~~, often quiet interventions which heighten our sense of identity, they reflect to us something important about the world, give us our very own platform, and bring us closer to others by sharing something unique to us - like today!

We hope this event creates a space for folks of all ages to share a new viewpoint, a subject matter that gives their lives shape and makes them individuals. They are the only people in the city, in the country, even in the world, looking at these subjects in this particular way. Perhaps they're part of larger communities with a shared enthusiasm, a way to feel belonging or a way to fight for something they believe strongly in.

Heather Peak of DASH reflects

Obsessions and collecting are extraordinary lenses for understanding both the world and the minds that move through it.

When someone dedicates themselves to a particular interest or thing, they're not just accumulating objects—they're building systems of meaning.

Collecting requires categorizing, comparing, researching, and noticing fine distinctions. It engages pattern recognition, memory and narrative-building. For me, my brain delights in the turning of chaos into order in, what can be, an overwhelming world. A collection is a personal taxonomy: what counts, what doesn't, what is rare, what is beautiful.

What a glorious frame for a day of gathering to be with collectors and obsessives, the way attention, desire, and identity intertwine to make meaning from fragments of the world. To connect through our special interests created community for an afternoon and we saw values, aesthetics, histories, and communities take shape. All beautifully collected and curated together in this zine by Adele Mary Reed.

- Heather Peak, Artistic Director and CEO of DASH, February, 2026

Colette Griffin of CVAN West Midlands writes...

DIY Collections was the final event in a series delivered collaboratively by Contemporary Visual Arts Network West Midlands and DASH for **Coventry Biennial: Obsessions Possession**. I'm the Director of CVAN WM, a sector support organisation hosted by DASH, and I started in the role in late summer 2024. Heather Peak, Director at DASH, and I are both interested in exploring our partnership by developing activity together, especially where it spans both our organisational aims. Creative 'public' programming isn't at the core of what CVAN WM does, instead, our focus is on supporting and connecting artists, arts workers, and organisations through paid opportunities, critical programming, and partnership working, while driving policy change to ensure a sustainable and vibrant sector. However, following a four-year break in funding and activity, CVAN WM was keen to deliver more public-facing events and to become more visible again. **DIY Collections** was a public programme event framed as both a professional development opportunity and a networking space (or perhaps the other way round?).

Event lead Adele, is a brilliant artist working locally and beyond, championing creative practice through her own work and through **Mothers Who Make Coventry**, which plays an important role in the region's arts ecology. We discussed how to create an event that was fun, inclusive, and aligned with the Biennial's themes. Mobilising her impressive networks, Adele brought together a group of creatives aged 7+ to explore, platform, and share the joy (and sometimes the complexity) of their own various obsessions, collections, and archives.

The result was beautiful. We chatted, handled fossils, tried pickled plums and oak leaf wine, ate cake, and asked questions. The locally based BSL interpreters supporting the event loved it so much they stayed beyond the presentations and they, too, tried the acorn wine. I find it difficult to fully enjoy or immerse myself in activity that I've been involved in delivering, but **DIY Collections** was different. It was easy to marvel at the knowledge, collections and confidence of the brilliant presenters; and to leave knowing that this format could **and should** live on. It felt like a powerful vehicle for inclusive sharing, and a genuine alternative to sometimes intimidating crits or often dry networking events.

I look forward to attending a future **DIY Collections** (perhaps even presenting myself)! It's an important tool for platforming artists, strengthening existing regional networks, and building new relationships. This kind of connection is vital for support and resilience, but most importantly, it's fun. And this fantastic zine captures that spirit and energy perfectly.

- Colette Griffin, Director of Contemporary Visual Arts Network West Midlands, January, 2026

for DIY Collections

(Slide 1) Hello everyone! It's so lovely to welcome you all here today. Thank you to CVAN West Midlands and DASH for inviting me to be involved in this event and to introduce the speakers. Funnily enough, I've had a collection of dreams about this introduction itself. I've dreamt that I forgot to write it, forgot to bring it, couldn't find it on the day, you could say I've been a collection of nerves and excitement! I'm beyond relieved to say I've got it here with me, and I'm calm and... collected!

When I was 9 years old I started keeping diaries. At that point, they were mostly very repetitive: wake up, went school, school, home, dinner, bed. I wrote that list of events everyday. **(Click to Slides 3,4)** Interspersed were nuggets of information about girl bands and lists of what I wanted to be when I grew up. **(Slide 5)**

~~When~~ I fell into a rhythm, and it was a rhythm that grew with intensity as the years went on. **(Slide 6)** By the age of seventeen I was writing about 3,000 words a night. You could say it had become a complete obsession but it also developed my writing skills, it tended to my mental and emotional health, maybe it even made me believe I could be a poet.



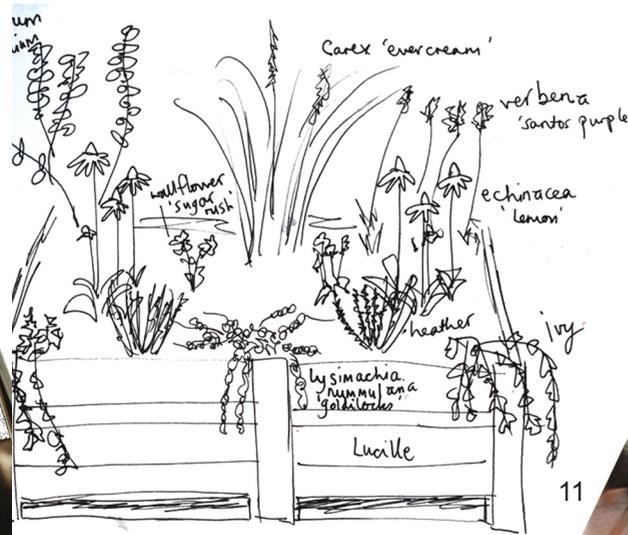
Adele Mary Reed Introduction



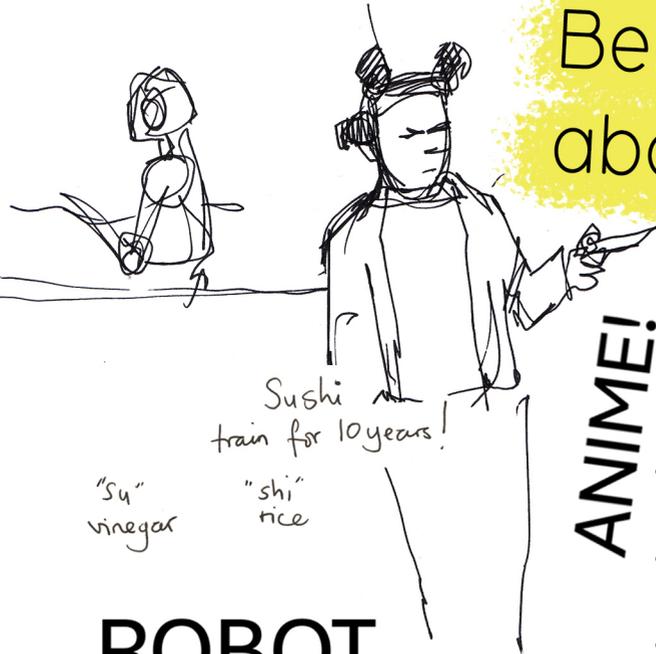
2024 **(Slide 11)**. The allotment space we now have has hand-made planters sitting on-top of rubble from house demolitions. **(Slide 12)** This rubble has given us an unexpected joy alongside growing plants. Here are some images of a collection of the rubble put together by my daughter Kitty and another child Anya one morning at the site. **(Slide 13)** There is something utterly beautiful about this display, both the simplicity and complexity of it but also the aesthetics and the patterns. Each piece with its own story, its own origin and history. **(Slide 14)** Former teacups, bathroom tiles, vases, fixtures, door knobs, packaging. A new eco-system forms with every collection made and every gathering held at the allotment.



Mothers Who Make a Garden



Bella speaking about Japan



ANIME!

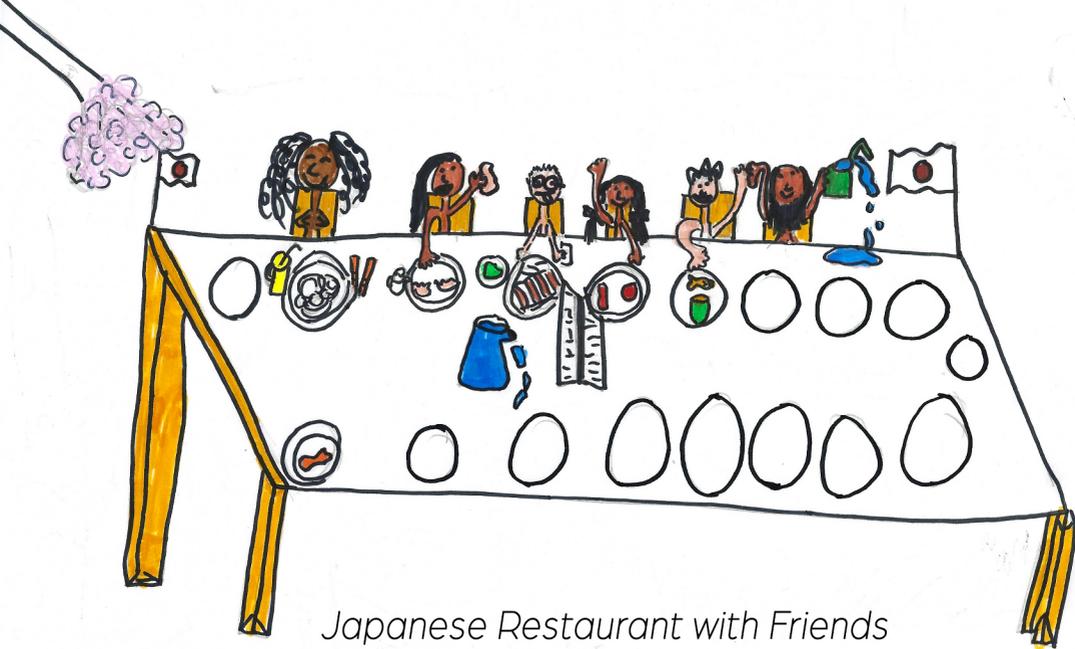
- Anime is a popular style of animation from Japan.
- It can be drawn by hand or made using computers.
- There are some well known children's anime such as Pokémon and Dragon Ball Z.
- Modern anime began in 1956, when Japan's first modern animation studio opened.
- Pokémon is the most successful anime series of all time.

ROBOT CAFÉS!!!

- In Japan there are lots of robot cafés.
- At *Dawn Café* in Tokyo each of the robots is controlled by a human – or pilot.
- Using a phone or tablet humans can control their robot from anywhere in the world.
- This means that disabled people can do this job!
- Dawn Café stands out because other robot Cafés use AI and computers.

THEATRE!!

- Japan has traditional theatre like *Noh* where they perform with lots of masks.
- And *Kabuki* which includes really detailed face painting!
- They also have *Bunraku* puppet theatre. Which started more than 300 years ago.
- The puppeteers often build the bodies and make the costumes themselves.



Japanese Restaurant with Friends
Illustration by Bella



JAPANESE ART!!

- Japanese calligraphy is also called *Shodo*. Its is a special art form in Japan.
- Japanese wood block prints are also known as *Ukiyo-e*.
- *The Great Wave off Kanagawa* is a really famous print by the artist *Hokusai*
- Another well known Japanese artist is Yayoi Kusama who is obsessed with dots!
- And she had an exhibition in London (UK) a few years ago.

SUSHI!!

- In Japan sushi is a popular dish, but you don't have to go to a restaurant to try out sushi you can make your own at home!
- Sushi chefs have to train for over 10 years to become a sushi master!
- Sushi is made from vinegared rice and raw fish.
- The word sushi comes from the Japanese words "su" (Vinegar) and "shi" (rice).



Janet Tryner on Small Stone Age Tools

sharp edge and finger tool
 flint tool - thin and sharp
 Multi-tools

Some left-handed
 Some right-handed

Scrapers are my thing

everything found on the ground



Making HOLES



stone tools - flint

dolomite with direct

Neanderthal drive
 Scotland

Remi on Fossils



from the Isle of Wight

Spino-saurus saved up money!

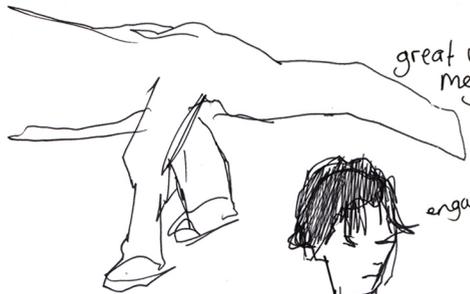
great white sharks 19ft
megalodon (large tooth 276)!

dinosaur tooth from the Sahara

Ammonites

engagement ring!

"My Spinosaurus tooth was the first fossil I bought myself. It was found in the Sahara. Biggest carnivorous dinosaur - bigger than T-Rex. Has straight teeth rather than curved ones like other carnivorous dinosaurs. Could run at 15mph and also swim."

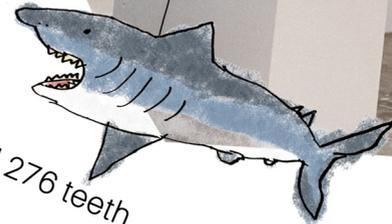


"This fossil was given to me by my Uncle Jon's sister... It comes from the Isle of Wight, it is a spine bone from a brachiosaur - Ornithopsis. It was between 49ft and 60ft long with chisel like teeth."

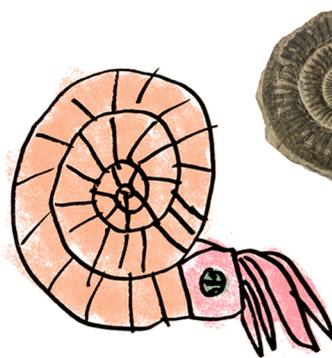


Illustrations by Remi

"Megalodon tooth... They had 276 teeth..."



They could replace 40,000 teeth in a lifetime!"



"Ammonites are cephalopods"

Michelle Le Blanc and Colin Odell - Playing With Food

"So the most common thing that C asks when he's doing the washing up: Are we keeping this jar, bottle, or container?"

Our obsession is about DIY food. We love growing and foraging for food and then preserving it. Lake View Park and Coundon Wedge. Who doesn't love free food? We've had a great year for fruit - all the trees have been very generous.



COLIN + MITCH
 CHAMPAGNE EXPLOSION
 Foraging!
 Lake view park
 DIY Food!
 Coundon Wedge

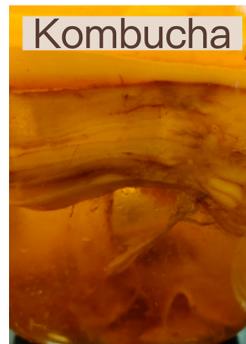
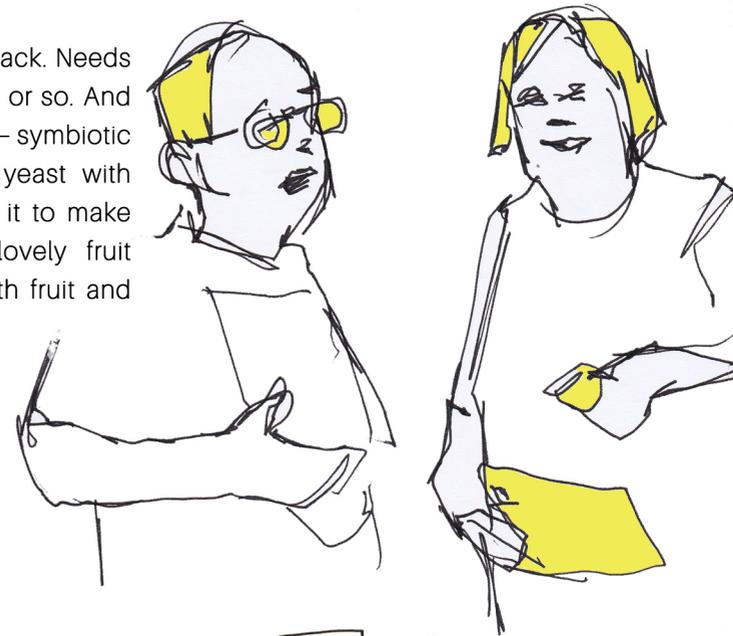
pickle, ferment, turn to booze, preserves

We pickle, ferment, sugar or turn them into booze! Why is it fun? Because the finished results are delicious... and there's sometimes the risk of an explosion!

Making pickles and preserves can be akin to looking after real life tamagotchis, those electronic virtual pets that need attention all the time."

Sourdough - incredibly demanding

"Kombucha - pretty laid back. Needs sugary tea every fortnight or so. And it will grow a SCOBY baby - symbiotic culture of bacteria and yeast with every feed. You can use it to make more kombucha or a lovely fruit leather if you blend it with fruit and dehydrate."



Kimchi



Kombucha baby scoby
 Umeboshi = hangover cure
 A big 'hello' in the morning from our allotment
 Wine!
 12 bottles of chateau chapel fields
 Kimchi
 Miso - 'Japan has a national mould' looks scary but delicious
 22 kilos of apples

Umeboshi



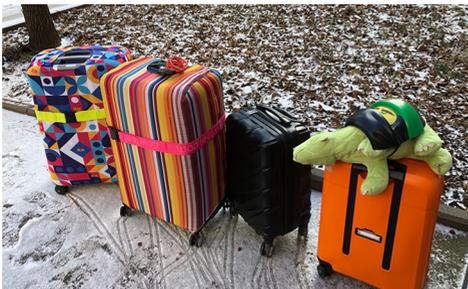
"Umeboshi are salted plums from Japan. They are often eaten at breakfast and are reputedly a hangover cure. The salty, sourness means you get a big HELLO in the morning."

Erik talking about: How to decide what to take with you when moving to a new country?



"Do you remember the chaos of packing for a trip? The moment when all your books, your cars, and your favourite toys all shout "Pick me! Pick me! Pick me!" at the same time? Now imagine trying to pack all your belongings into one tiny suitcase.

My name is Erik, and that's exactly what happened to me when I moved from Russia to the UK two years ago."



Moving from Russia to UK
What pieces of home to bring?

"While packing you plan for everything to go smoothly. But we all need to be ready for a challenge.

One of those challenges during our trip here was this amazing Ninjago mask. Cool, right?

I found it once in the charity shop. It was a whole new costume. Such a treasure! The mask was so big and fragile so I had to carry it on me the whole trip. Maybe you've packed something weird too?"



Bumpy - green toy had to come!
Duplo Magic Wand Star Wars lego

"A big part of my collection is books of course. Today I brought two of them, my most favourite. The night book and The Mechanical Father Christmas. They both are originally from Germany and Sweden respectively translated into Russian.



The night book has no words but it tells a story about a small town -- something like Coventry. And The Mechanical Father Christmas, which we read last time in September. I really do love it very much. And I am looking forward to reading it one more time before Xmas. Maybe even myself because I've started learning to read in Russian.



Back in 2020, I had with no clue where I would be standing in a few years....!"



Rachel Doughty on Rust and Patina in Everyday Objects

Father's tools -
carpenter

Axes
Scissors

Rat trap from
Wales
Bottle tops

brush the metal off
best fiver I ever spent

touch +
look
COLOURS
encrusted



RUSTY KEYS



Finding
things



dress-making pins rusted
into fabric





Paul Chokran sharing his Illustration Practice



get into town + sketch
NO RULES
no good or bad
Blues & Oranges

PAUL CHOKRAN SKETCHBOOKS
PLEASE LOOK AT ☺



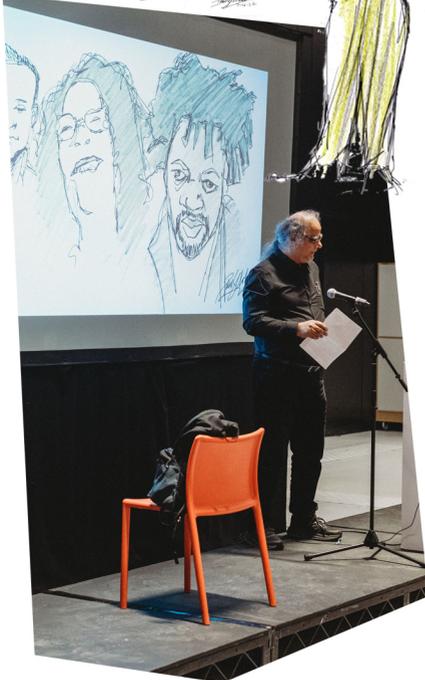
I'll start by showing you what I carry around with me



- Backpack** A4 sketchbooks A5 sketchbook pencil case – blue, orange Biccies
- Small bag** A5 sketchbook pencil case biccies
- Gel pens x 3** shirt pocket
- Camera**



"Sketching is meant to be something you enjoy, something that you want to do, Fun! There are no rules when sketching, no good or bad, you are doing it for yourself. If you don't want anyone to see your work, that's fine, you don't have to. I'm the opposite, I'm quite happy to show people my work, and maybe start a conversation or something."



"I'm a member of Sketch Coventry, a local Urban Sketchers group. We meet once a month and sketch around the City Centre. Later in the day we meet up, share our work, swap ideas and inspire each other. It's always good to see how other artists interpret similar scenes. I particularly enjoy drawing buildings, looking for patterns in the architecture, how it all fits together. Very relaxing. The other subjects I really enjoy drawing are performers of all sorts, musicians, singers, poets, actors. I often go to open mics where performers are allowed 2 songs, roughly 6 minutes to sketch. Great when it's a solo act, a bit tougher when it's a four piece band! So I've learnt to draw fast!"

Martina Irwin sharing The Coventry Tree Sanctuary

Creating a STORM

broke world record!

925 tree hugging
Clifford Bridge Rd

— first to be planted in UK!
Sycamore Gap sapling

damaged + vandalized trees

"The Tree Sanctuary originated with a group of friends who came together to protect the trees in Spon End. The Sanctuary is home to vandalised, damaged and donated trees and saplings grown from trees of the felled."



6 allotment plot —
group of 10 tree campaigners

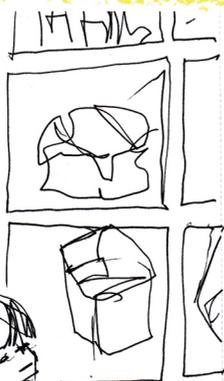
wild life haven



"It is also a place for those who campaign to protect and plant trees, offering creative workshop space made from reclaimed materials. A short video showed the variety of trees and the wildlife that now call it home. The 'Tree Amigos' at the Sanctuary have planted the first sapling grown from the felled iconic Sycamore Gap tree awarded by the National Trust. More news stories and images can be found via Google: 'Tree Sanctuary Coventry' / 'Tree Amigos Coventry.'"



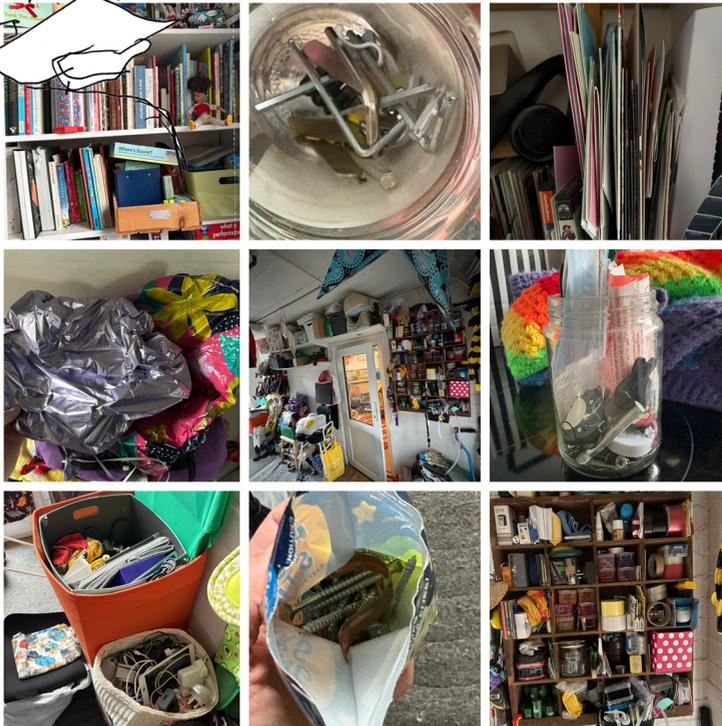
Hannah Moreton talking about
Screws, Washers, and Pulling Things
Apart



every day fixes -
you never know

Screws + Washers + Keeping fixings

tiny pencils
Hello kitty + kawaii
grandparent items



PILES OF STUFF
baggage

accumulating
things
to dispose

AVOIDING LANDFILL

grouping together objects
climate change

'Not being in
control of tomorrow'



impish figures!
goulish +
fantastical

Daniel Reed on Coventry Grotesque

We're the gallery of grotesques

Behind the mask, undressed

The dark side of amused

We call out folly of the fool

Mary Courtney



2020 in lockdown —
look for elephant bollards
in 2021 teamed up with Mary ...

mischievous
subversive

"It's appropriate that I begin with these lines from my collaborator Mary Courtney – because Coventry Grotesque is a collaboration – one that's brought together Mary's deep inquisitiveness and endless creativity with my background as an archivist and historian."

reinterpretations over centuries

"On our approach to 'collecting' grotesques, I'd like to quote Tove Jansson that has some relevance here...

Gathering is peculiar, because you see nothing but what you're looking for. If you're picking raspberries, you see only what's red, and if you're looking for bones you see only the white. No matter where you go, the only thing you see is bones.

And sure enough, in our peculiar approach to gathering, we now see the grotesque everywhere we go."



"A grotesque lens really can transform your experience of the city... Once we've got an idea of what is grotesque – we might then ask what was their purpose? This reaches back into the social and religious contexts of their original creation. Available theories are as varied as grotesques themselves. Were they a sort of physical language, 'preaching in stone' to an illiterate populace? Were they the private jokes of stonemasons, cocking-a-snook at unknowing patrons and priests? Or perhaps they represent pre-Christian figures folded into the fabric of the new religion?"



Unnoticed figures!



Image credits

Page

- Cover Illustrations by Paul Chokran and audience members, photograph by Adele Mary Reed
- 5. Illustration by Paul Chokran
- 6. Illustrations by Paul Chokran, photographs by Sinéad Patching
- 7. Photograph by Sinéad Patching
- 8-9. Background photographs by Sinéad Patching
- 10. Illustration by Paul Chokran, photograph by Sinéad Patching
- 11. Photographs and illustration by Adele Mary Reed, photograph bottom right by Sinéad Patching
- 12. Illustration by Paul Chokran, photograph by Sinéad Patching
- 13. Illustration by Bella, image of painting The Great Wave off Kanagawa by Hokusai in the public domain
- 14. Illustration by Paul Chokran, photograph by Janet Tryner
- 15. Photographs by Sinéad Patching
- 16. Illustration by Paul Chokran, photographs by Sinéad Patching
- 17. Photograph by Sinéad Patching, illustrations by Remi
- 18. Photograph by Sinéad Patching
- 19. Illustration by Paul Chokran, photographs by Michelle Le Blanc and Colin Odell
- 20. Photograph by Sinéad Patching, illustration by Paul Chokran, luggage photograph by Erik
- 21. Photographs by Erik top right and middle, photograph bottom right by Sinéad Patching
- 22. Photographs by Sinéad Patching and Rachel Doughty
- 23. Photographs by Rachel Doughty, illustration by Paul Chokran
- 24. Illustration by Paul Chokran, photographs by Sinéad Patching
- 25. Illustrations by Paul Chokran, photograph by Sinéad Patching
- 26. Illustration by Paul Chokran, photograph by Sinéad Patching
- 27. Photographs by Martina Irwin
- 28. Illustration by Paul Chokran, photographs by Hannah Moreton
- 29. Photographs by Sinéad Patching
- 30. Photograph by Sinéad Patching
- 31. Illustration by Paul Chokran, photographs by Daniel Reed / Coventry Grotesque
- 32. Photographs by Sinéad Patching
- Back cover Illustration by Paul Chokran

DIY Collections: Archive

Created by Adele Mary Reed
between November 2025 - March 2026
adelemreed.co.uk

Printed by Mixam in March 2026
Inside: 100gsm Recycled Uncoated
Cover: 250gsm Recycled Uncoated
Staple-bound

Commissioned by CVAN West Midlands and DASH
cvanwestmidlands.co.uk
dasharts.org

Limited edition of 100

DIY Collections was an event held at Delia Derbyshire, Coventry
University, 29th November 2025
Part of Coventry Biennial of Contemporary Art 2025: Obsessions,
Possessions



Supported using public funding by
**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**



**CVAN
West Midlands**



**COVENTRY
BIENNIAL**

