

MY NEW YEAR began with cataract surgery.

After the surgery, I had an unconstrained view of my face.

It was devastating.

Until the surgery I had tolerated my aging face behind the huge red eyeglasses. Those were my mask, my make-up, my public self. But for five weeks after that my sight line was unfettered. I would look at the mirror and ask myself who the hell this intruder was.

At six weeks I decided to bravely pursue the answers. I would turn my camera on myself as unflinchingly as I could. The selfies were demoralizing. I could learn no more about my face than had I just stared in a mirror. However, I began to be drawn to the images in which I hid my face behind my hand, or with a coy cloth covering my eyes. With those small obscurations, I could begin to emotionally adorn myself.

From my stash of personal symbols, I started to create a dialogue between my psyche and my countenance. In hiding my face, I was revealing to myself who I was within the confines of my ego. I allowed the small memories to reveal themselves to me; when necessary, I could hide them, disguise them. I was completely in control. I could be as deeply personal as I could tolerate, but still inform and amuse and gentle myself with my discoveries.

So what did I learn about my face? Nothing. But like the life I am leading, my face could be a joyful or not so joyful reflection of myself. It has been a terrific trip.

*Ruth Ross, July 2021*