

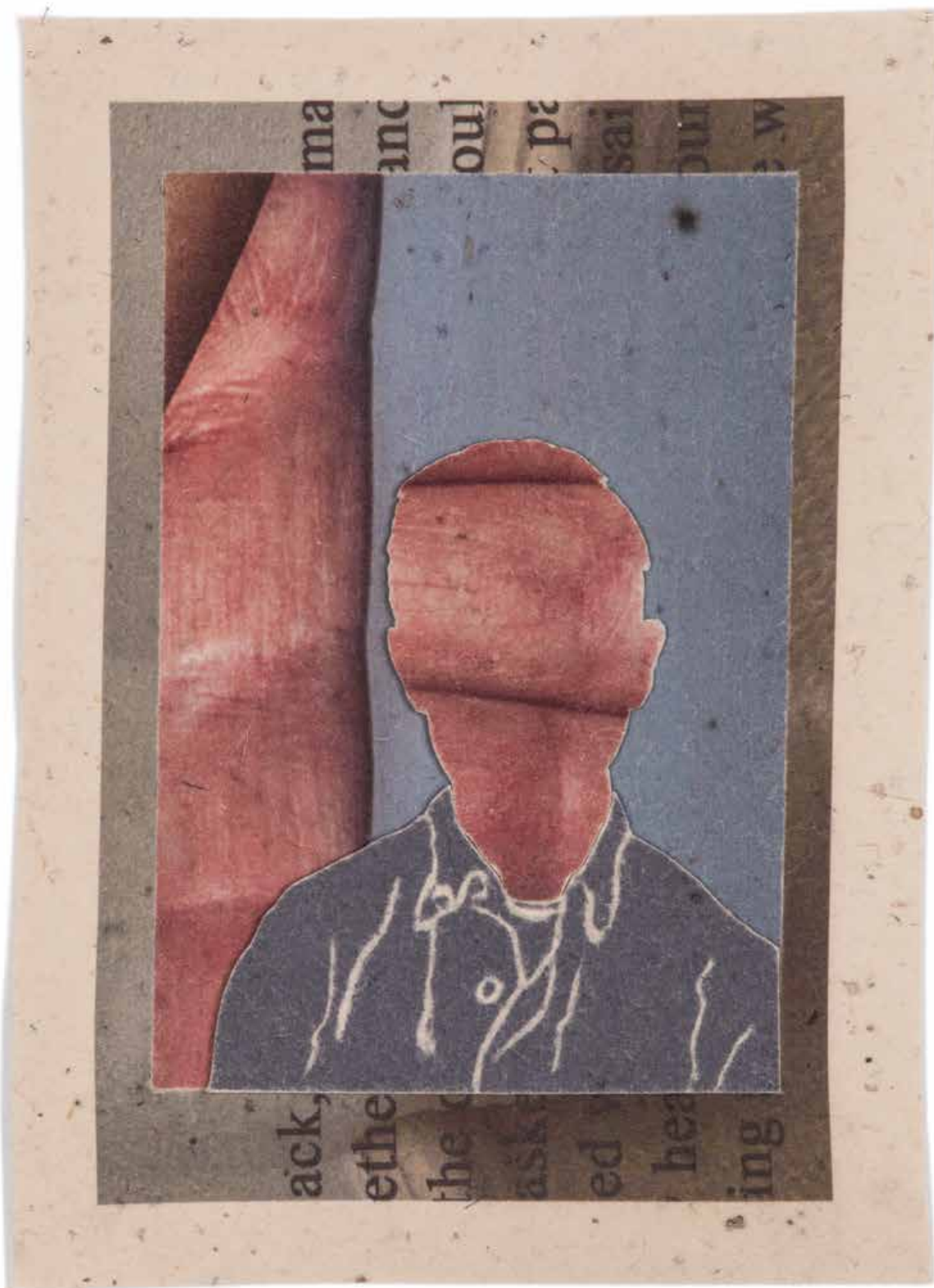
LYNN CRISWELL



P O R T R A I T S

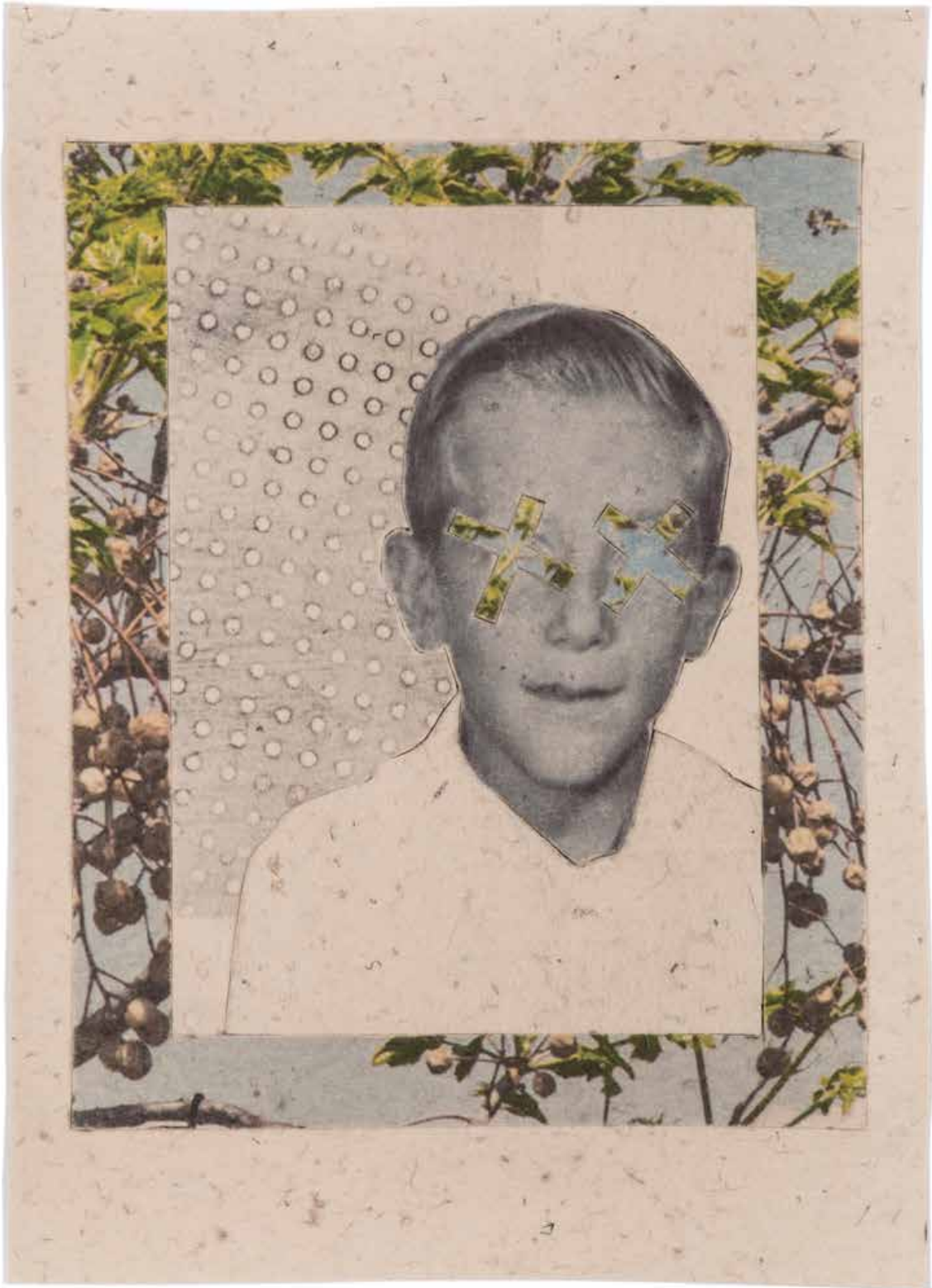


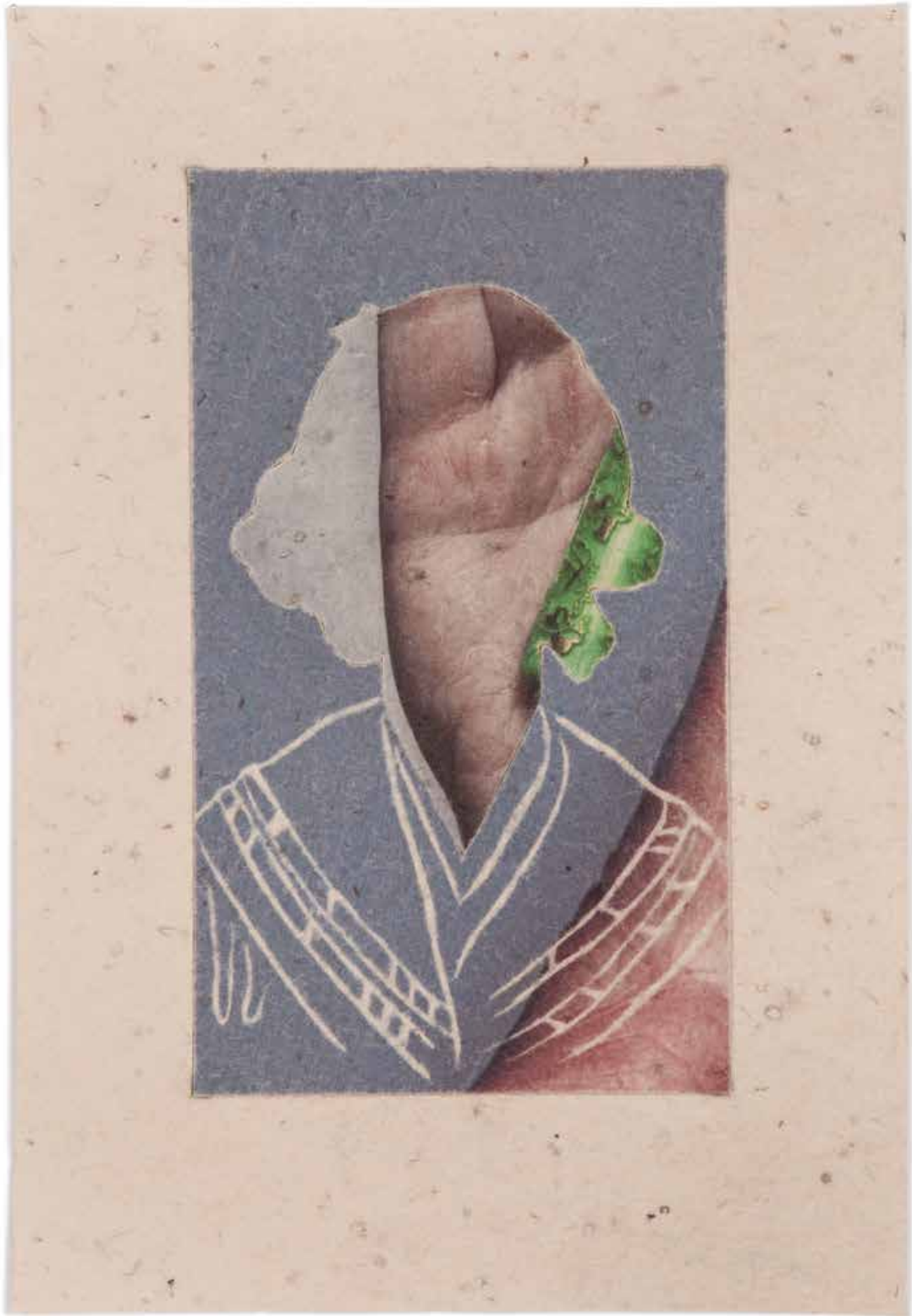
Using ubiquitous primary school class portraits from 1965,
I trace the shoulders, heads, hairstyles and clothing of
my classmates. By outlining, defining and redefining their
appearance at the age of eleven, I'm perhaps reestablishing or
attempting to reestablish relationships.

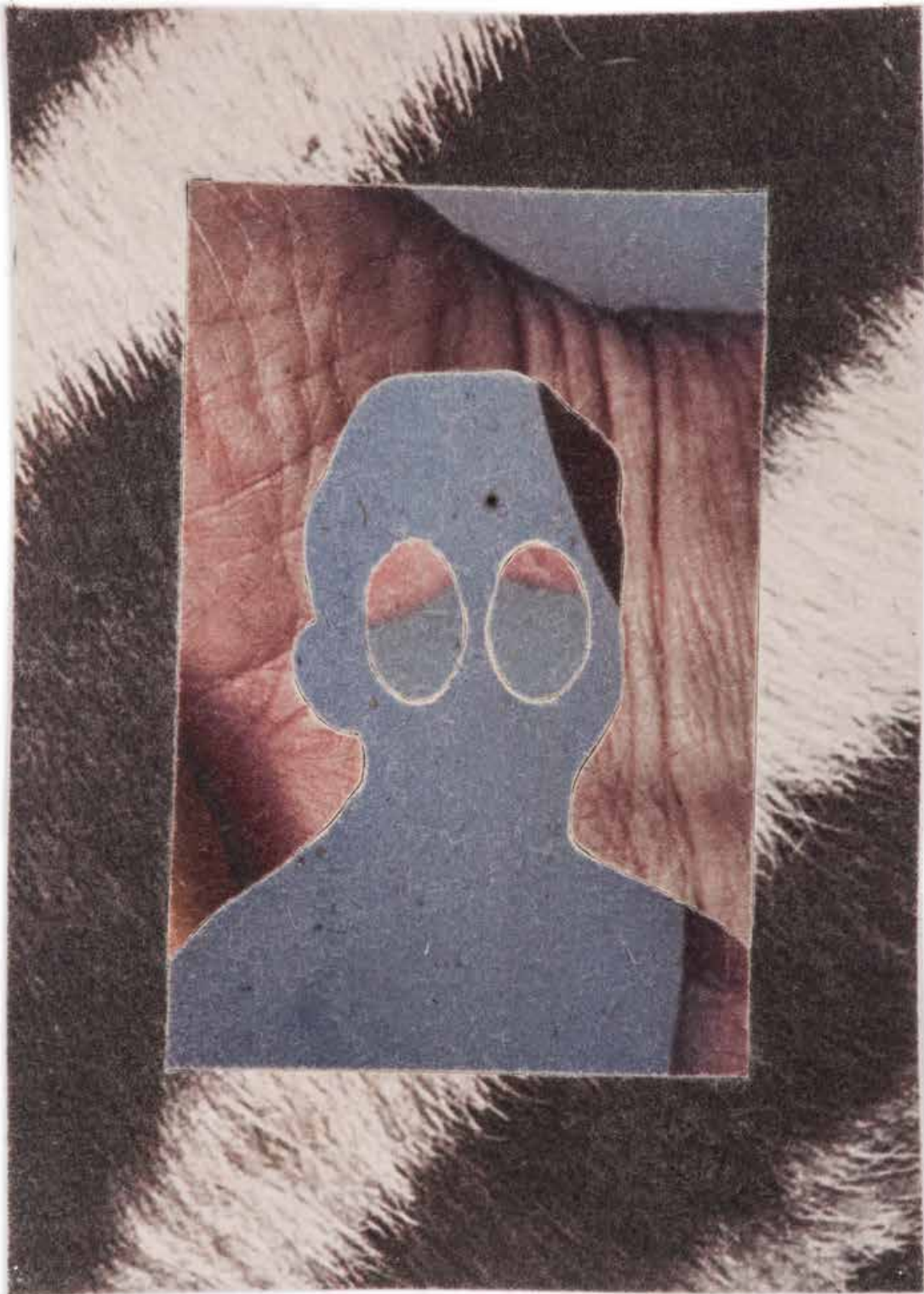


LYNN CRISWELL

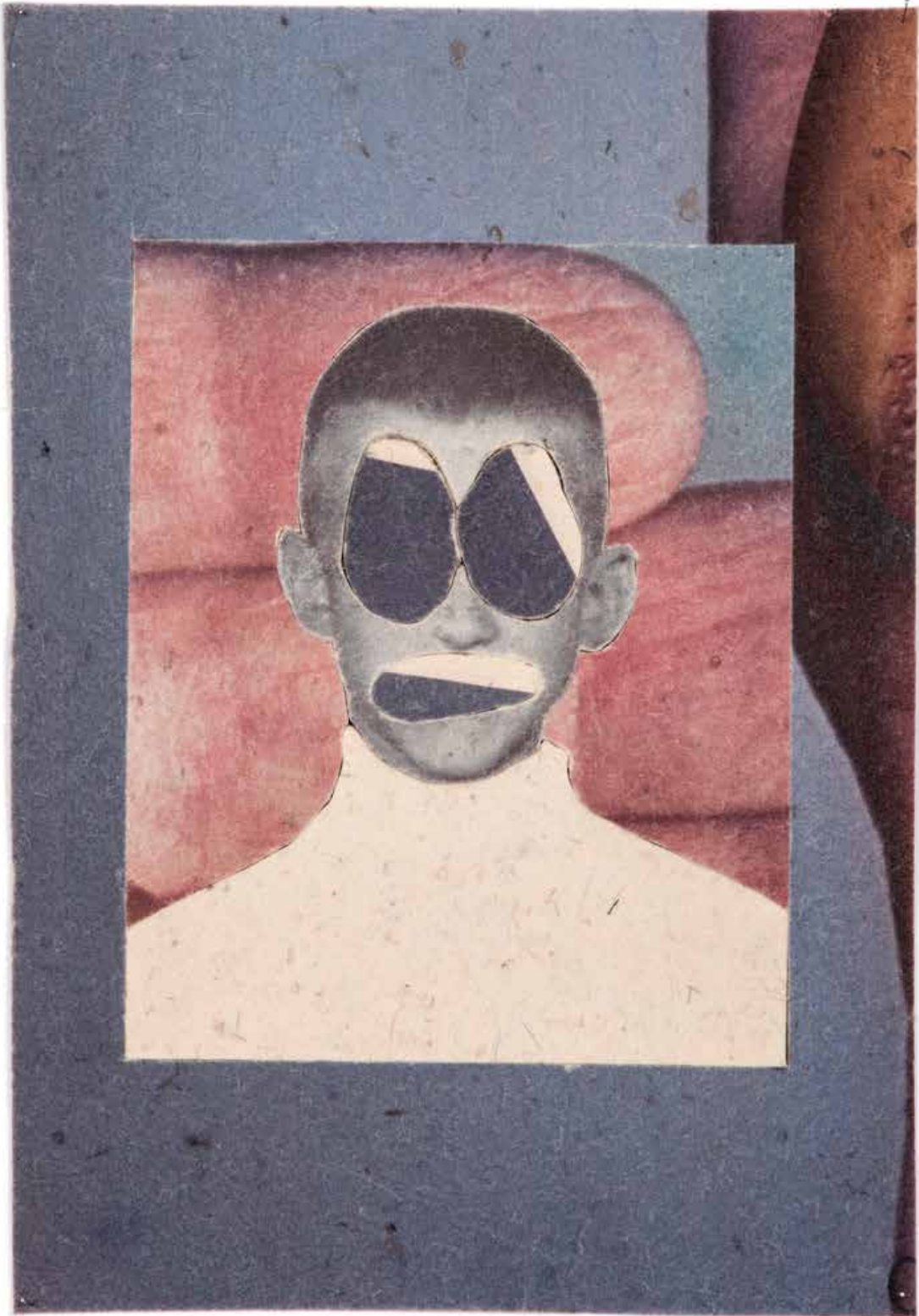
PORTRAITS





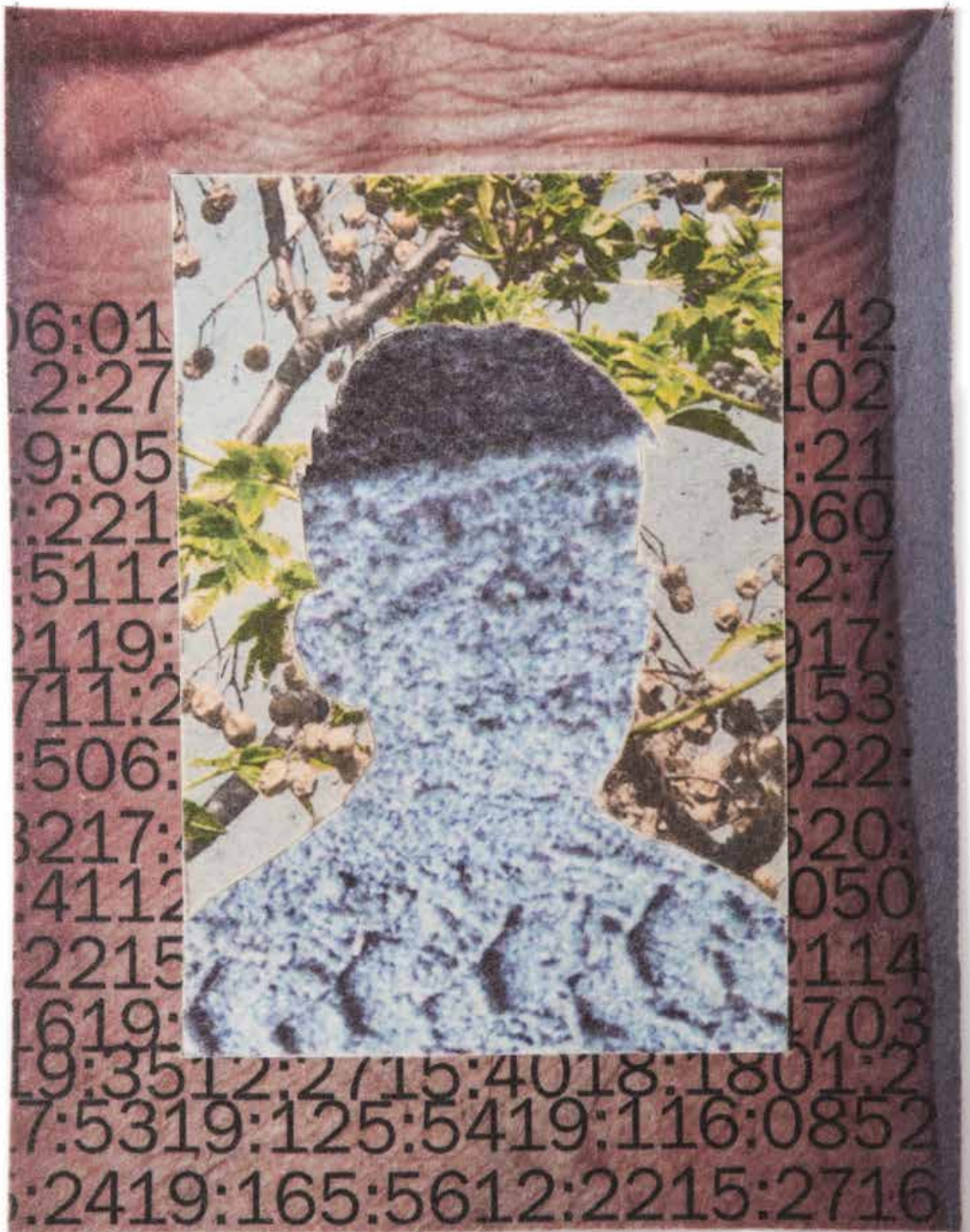






















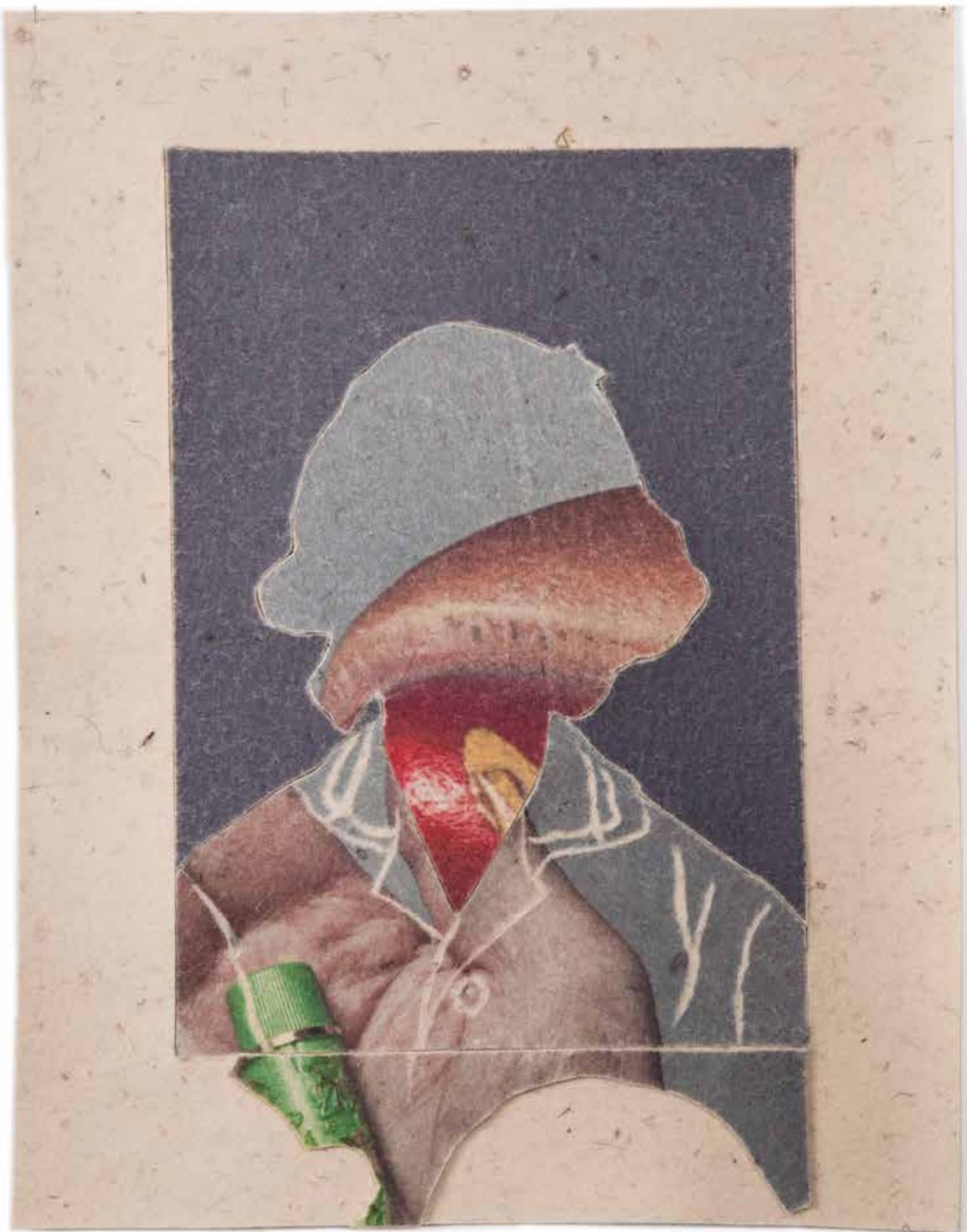


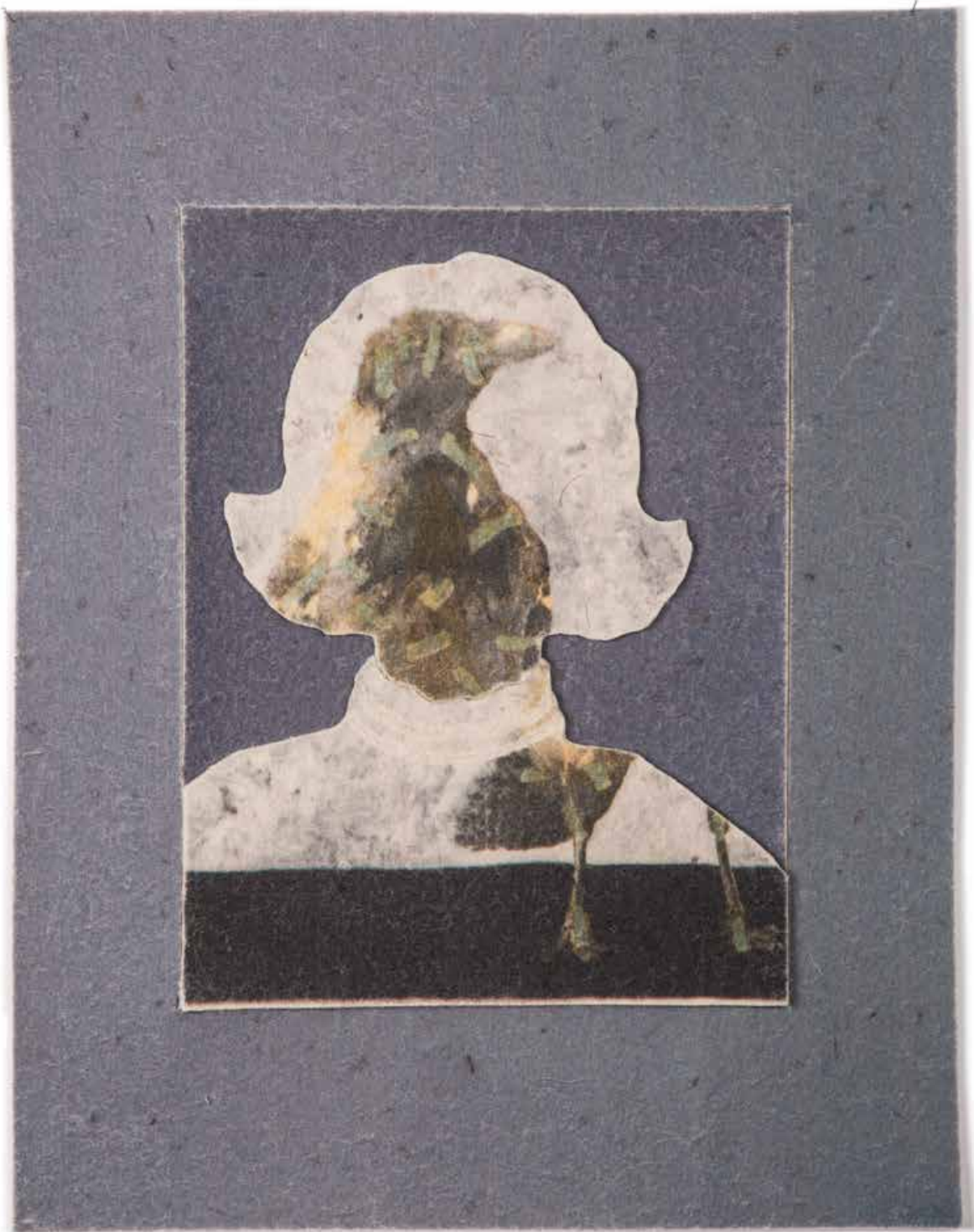






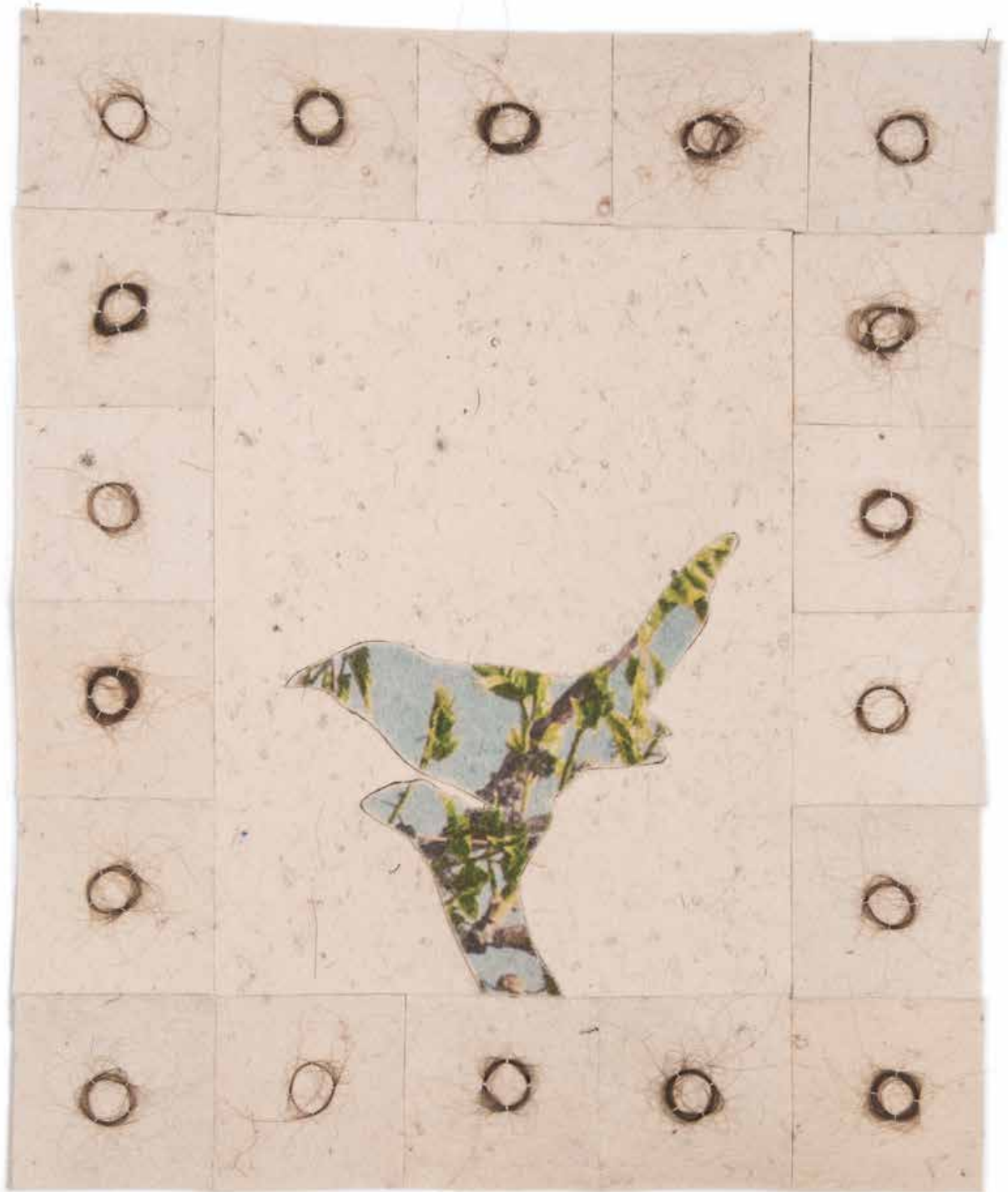


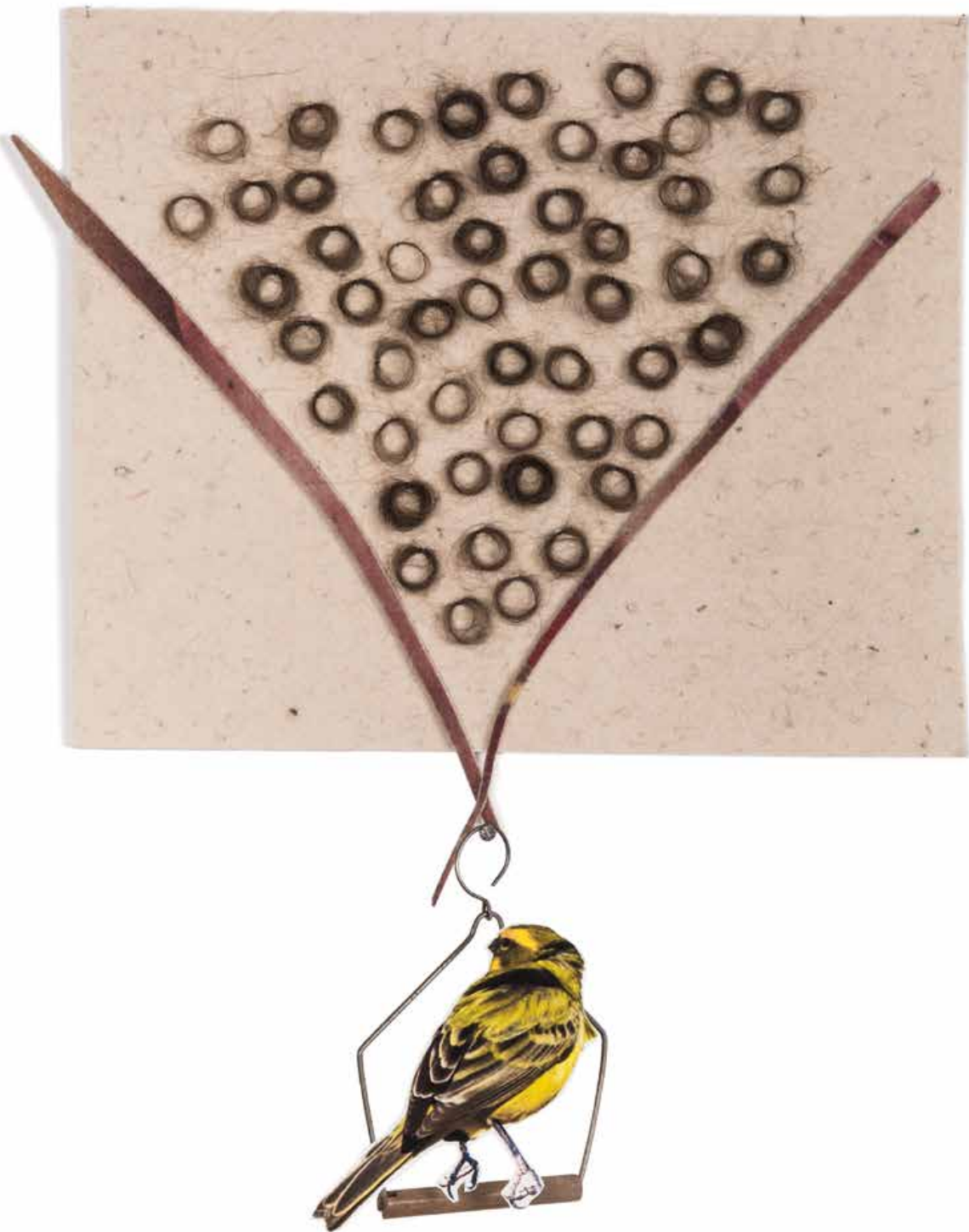


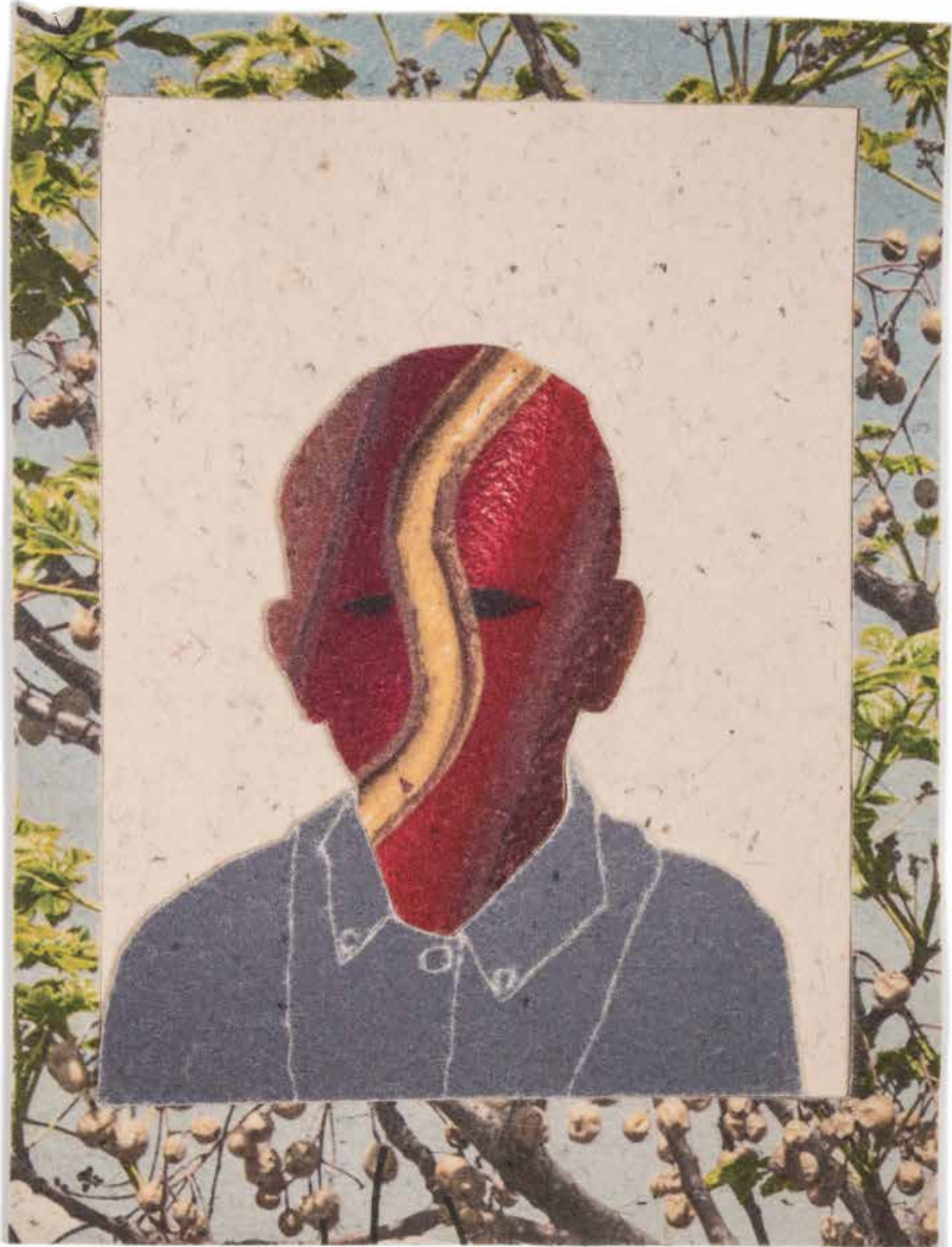












AN UNEXPECTED WITNESS

Lynn Criswell does not shy away from precise juxtapositions that are simultaneously transparent and opaque, narrative and non-linear, personal and general. She combines photography with tactile materials and purposefully mixes incongruent imagery. These rich contradictions define her work.

In her most recent series, Criswell continues her exploration of visual paradoxes, transforming the ubiquitous school portrait into a collage of absurd and poignant images. Reprinting pictures from her 1965 fifth grade class on industrial felt—giving the images a textural presence—head, shoulders, background, and borders are cut-out and replaced with hand-drawn outlines and magnified details of zebra hair, fingers, even a hot-dog with a perfect squiggle of mustard. These seemingly unrelated images, repurposed from other studio projects, are simultaneously startling and moving. Each portrait becomes a reassembled puzzle of perfectly fitted, mismatched images that, surprisingly, retains a grade-school familiarity.

This physical mash-up of form and imagery acts as a conduit between past and present. One can envision the artist asking, who are these individuals now? This line of questioning might be directed inward as well. Who was I then? Who am I now? Criswell deftly fills in her former classmates with snippets of details drawn directly from her recent artistic production. While some of the imagery hints at the physical passing of time—wrinkled skin, weathered hands—perhaps a reflection on aging, there is an urgency to other imagery. The profile of a bird (a frequent motif in Criswell's work) overlaid on the girl with a flip hairdo or the extreme close-up of that hot-dog forming a boy's head and shoulders—these images assert Criswell's identity as an artist. They also beg a

different kind of question. Would you know me now? In these potent juxtapositions, the silhouetted portraits are asked to become witnesses to the present.

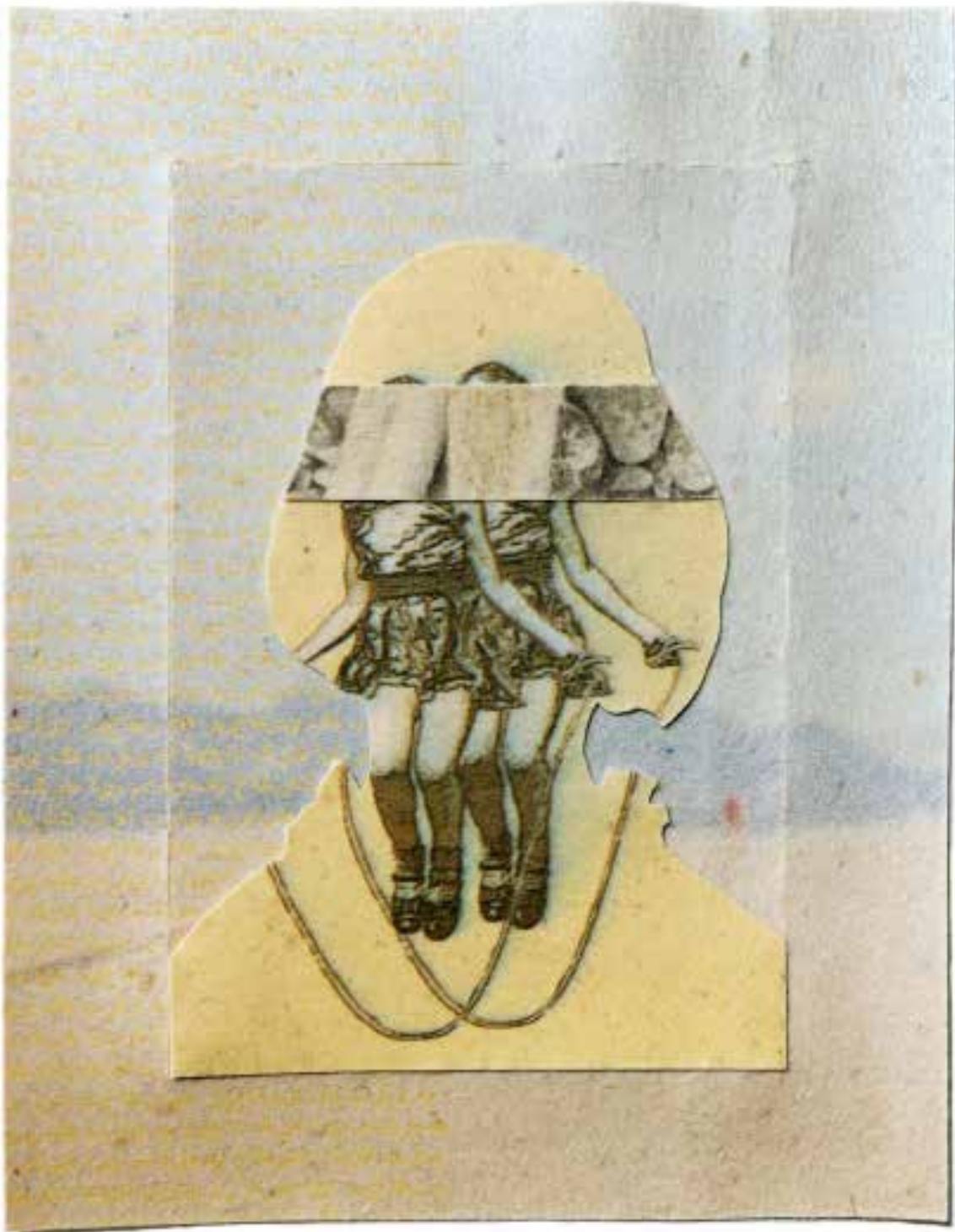
At the same time, Criswell playfully counteracts their ability to see. While some of the figures are formed in simple silhouette, others have cutout ovals or x's where you expect to find eyes. Are the figures blinded or protected? In a 1966 interview with Jacques Dupin, Alberto Giacometti offered an explanation of his interest in the human head and in particular, the eyes:

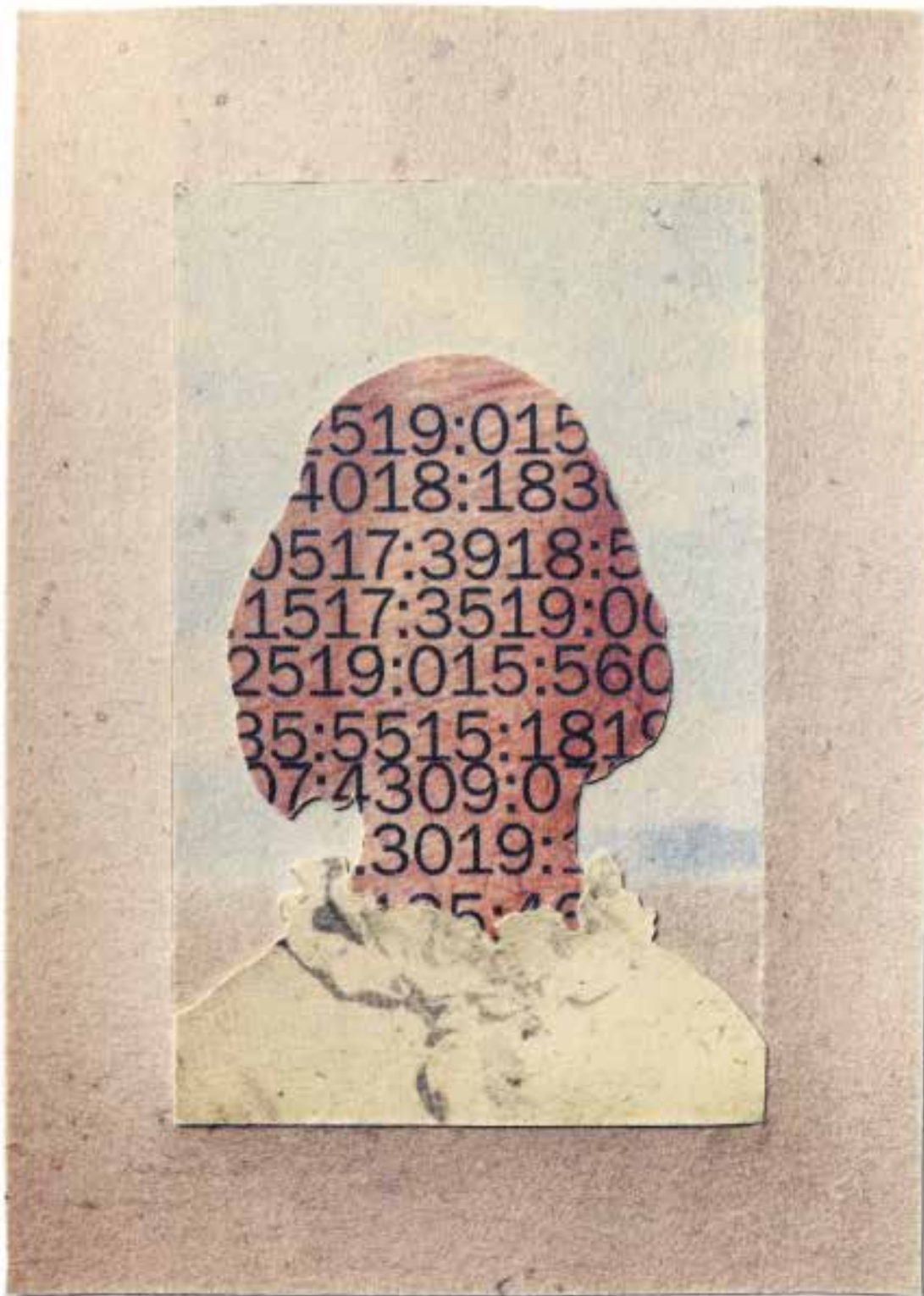
When you look at a human face you always look at the eyes. Even if you look at a cat, it always looks you in the eye. And even when you look at a blind man, you look where his eyes are, as if you could feel the eyes behind the lids. . . The eye is something special insofar as it's almost as though made of a different material from the rest of the face. . . Now the strange thing is, when you represent the eye precisely, you risk destroying exactly what you are after, namely the gaze.

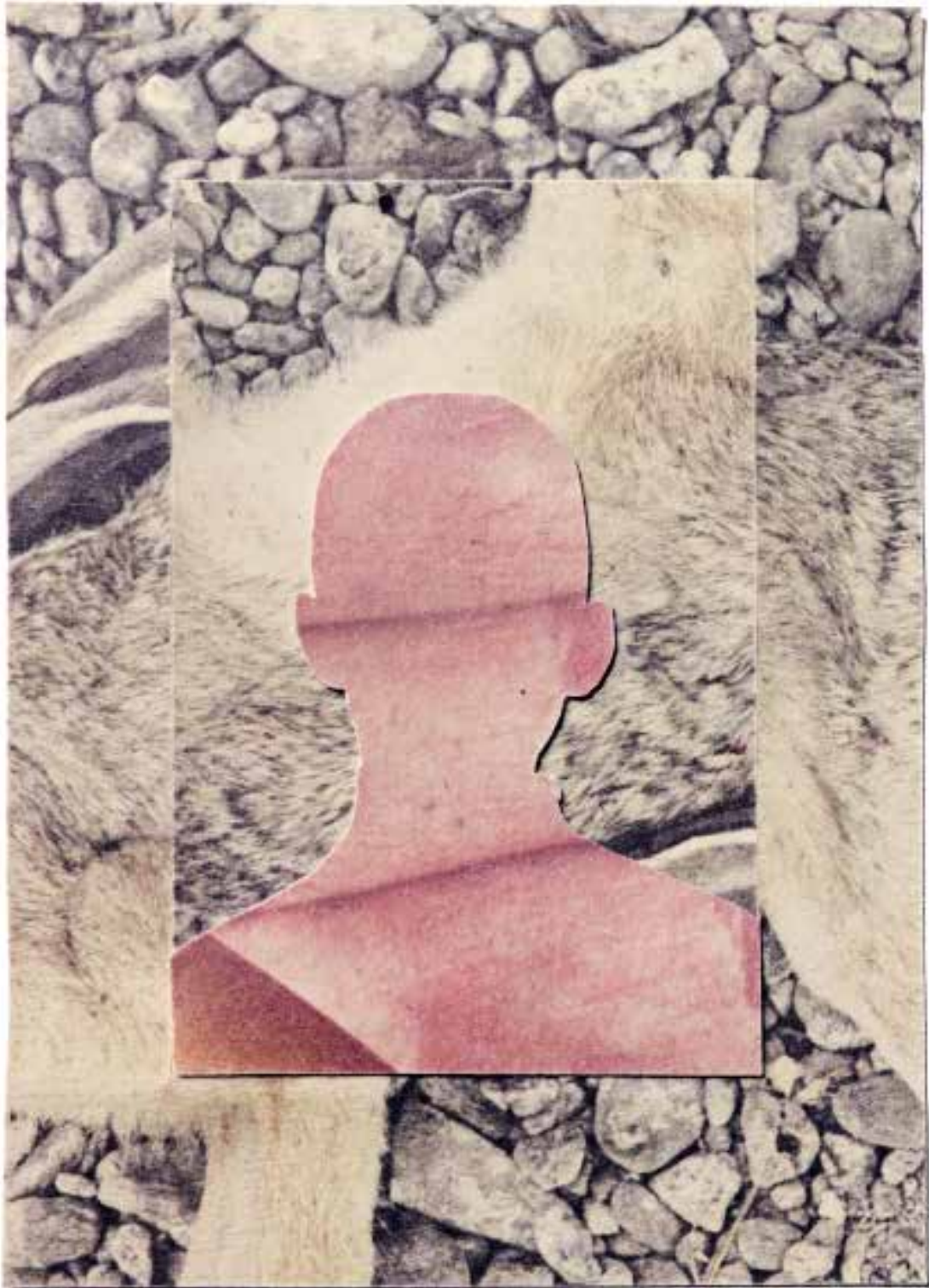
Giacometti's statement comes before current theories of "the gaze" as a power structure. Yet his observation of how the eyes create a connection between subject and viewer is also at play in Criswell's portraits. Without their ability to see, can these figures bear witness?

Ultimately, each portrait reflects the struggle to simultaneously remake a memory and embrace the present. As the fragments of materials and images come in and out of focus, we are left with a sense of wondering at the familiarity and the strangeness coexisting in each work. Who might the girl with the daisy head be today? And the boy with eyes resembling fried eggs, I know he looks familiar.

Kelly Lindner
Curator
Jacki Headley University Art Gallery
California State University, Chico









- 1 Boy with finger head ($17\frac{1}{4}" \times 12\frac{1}{2}"$)
- 2 Boy with x eyes ($17\frac{3}{4}" \times 12\frac{1}{2}"$)
- 3 Lipstick in hair ($15\frac{3}{4}" \times 12\frac{1}{2}"$)
- 4 Boy with blue and pink eyes ($17\frac{1}{4}" \times 12\frac{1}{2}"$)
- 5 Boy with zebra head ($17\frac{1}{4}" \times 12\frac{1}{2}"$)
- 6 Boy with cutout eyes and mouth ($15\frac{1}{2}" \times 11"$)
- 7 Susan with cutout eyes and mouth ($15\frac{3}{4}" \times 12\frac{1}{2}"$)
- 8 Boy with flower head ($15\frac{3}{4}" \times 12\frac{1}{2}"$)
- 9 Boy with snow head ($15\frac{3}{4}" \times 12\frac{1}{2}"$)
- 10 Boy with fried egg eyes ($17\frac{3}{4}" \times 12\frac{1}{2}"$)
- 11 Daisy head ($15\frac{3}{4}" \times 12\frac{1}{2}"$)
- 12 Boy with tree head and blue oval ($15\frac{3}{4}" \times 12\frac{1}{2}"$)
- 13 Frame with triangles ($15\frac{3}{4}" \times 12\frac{1}{2}"$)
- 14 Boy with real eyes ($17\frac{3}{4}" \times 12\frac{3}{4}"$)
- 15 Boy with turtleneck ($15\frac{3}{4}" \times 12\frac{1}{2}"$)
- 16 Double bird ($9\frac{1}{2}" \times 11"$)
- 17 Boy with real shirt ($15\frac{3}{4}" \times 12\frac{1}{2}"$)
- 18 Boy with wrist numbered head ($15\frac{3}{4}" \times 12\frac{1}{2}"$)
- 19 Girl with hotdog and lipstick ($15\frac{3}{4}" \times 12\frac{1}{2}"$)
- 20 Girl with bird head ($15\frac{3}{4}" \times 12\frac{1}{2}"$)
- 21 Double ($21" \times 17"$, $21" \times 15"$)
- 22 Bird in green painting ($11" \times 9\frac{1}{2}"$)
- 23 Bird hair curls ($15" \times 12\frac{1}{2}"$)
- 24 Hair triangle ($12\frac{1}{2}" \times 15"$)
- 25 Boy with snakehead ($15\frac{3}{4}" \times 12\frac{1}{2}"$)
- 26 Double Dutch ($15\frac{3}{4}" \times 12\frac{1}{2}"$)
- 27 Girl in landscape ($15\frac{3}{4}" \times 12\frac{1}{2}"$)
- 28 Boy with hare ($15\frac{3}{4}" \times 12\frac{1}{2}"$)
- 29 Boy with flicker eyes ($15\frac{3}{4}" \times 12\frac{1}{2}"$)

Lynn Criswell
Portraits

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