

ENRICO BAJ



Alter Ego and Other Hypotheses

April 18 - May 31, 2024

**CELEBRATING
THE ARTIST'S CENTENNIAL**

with additional works by:

Richard ARTSCHWAGER

Hans BELLMER

Kerstin BRÄTSCH

William COPLEY

Jean DUBUFFET

Marcel DUCHAMP

Nicole EISENMAN

Asger JORN

Martin KIPPENBERGER

Jonathan MEESE

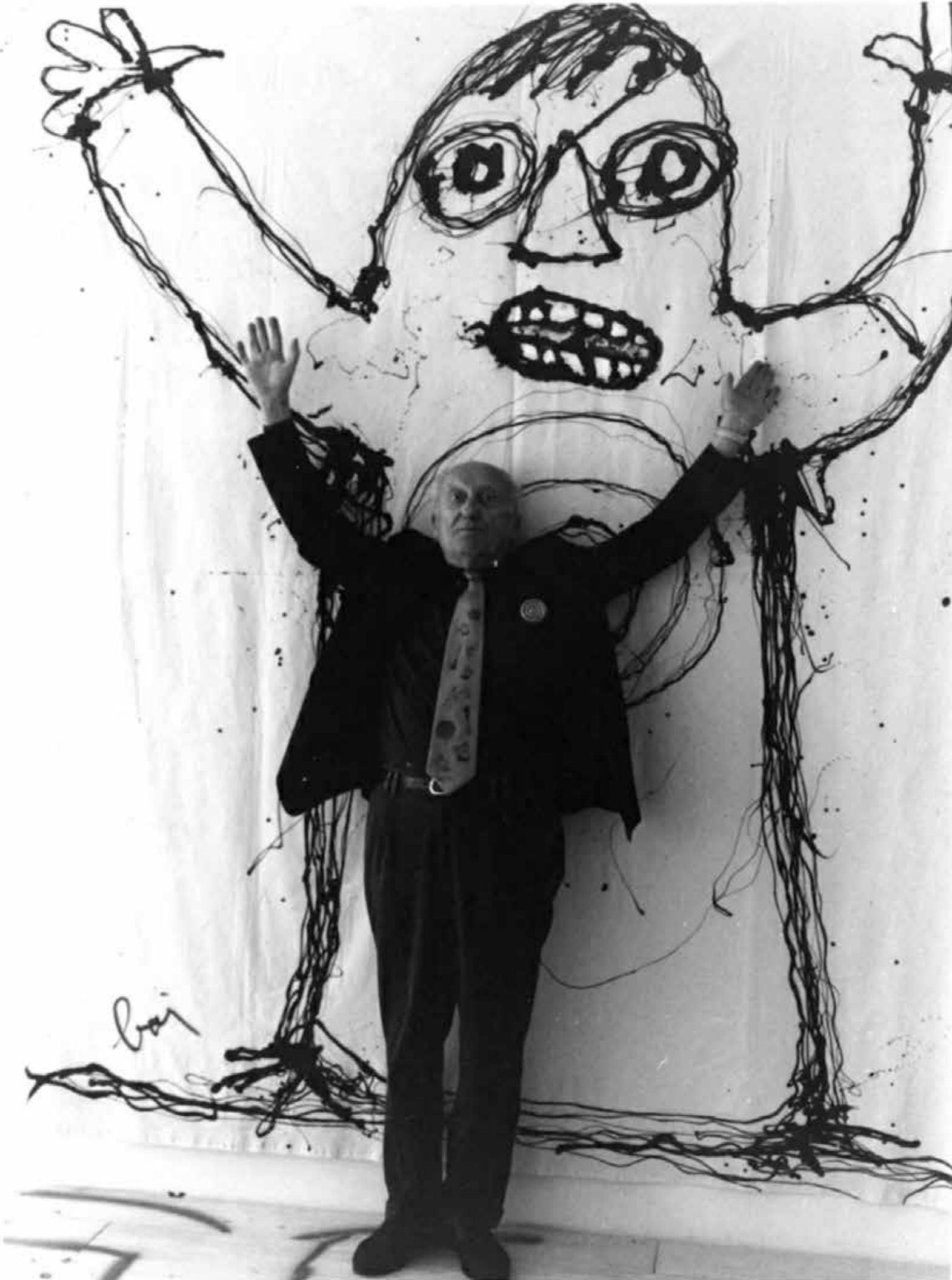
Francis PICABIA

Man RAY

and others

DAVID NOLAN GALLERY

24 East 81st Street New York NY 10028 davidnolangallery.com



Enrico Baj (Milan, 1924 - Vergiate, 2003) was one of the central figures of the Italian Neo-Avant-Garde. His art and writings played an instrumental role in influential movements, from Dada and Surrealism to Art Informel and CoBrA, as well as the Nuclear Art movement, which he cofounded in Milan in 1951.

Heir to the Surrealist-Dadaist spirit, and an experimenter in original styles and techniques, Baj departed from gestural abstraction in the mid-1950s and honed an idiosyncratic iconography for his paintings, drawings, collages, objects, and sculptures, defiantly embracing figuration and kitsch symbols, and subverting conventions. Ever since his participation in the Venice Biennale in 1964, Baj's art has been exhibited in all the major European museums and frequently in the United States since 1960.

Titled after *Alterego e altre ipotesi*, a publication which Enrico Baj designed in collaboration with Italian poet and art critic Roberto Sanesi in 1970, the exhibition features a selection of works by Baj dating between 1954 and 2002 in dialogue with works by artists from his time, most of whom he was in close contact with, and artists from younger generations with whom we would like to imagine Baj in conversation today, including Martin Kippenberger, Jonathan Meese, Nicole Eisenman and Kestin Brätsch.

Baj's oeuvre bears a distinctly political slant, most glaringly in his *Generals* and *Ladies* series. The *Generals* are pseudo-portraits of military generals, formulated from the details of a military uniform; the *Ladies* are composed of the debris of a household and its upkeep. The artist mocks the grandiose self-image of the military general, as well as the outrageous performance required of aristocratic society. Baj's unique form of artistic rebellion stands out from that of his peers; it is perhaps most comparable to the anti-establishment attitude and style of Jean Dubuffet.

It is intriguing to note the connections between Baj and his contemporaries. Active in the Milan art scene, he engaged and showed alongside artists like Francis Picabia, Marcel Duchamp, and Lucio Fontana. He owned at least three works by Picabia, one directly acquired from the artist himself. His encounter with Asger Jorn in 1953 led to the establishment of the International Movement

for an Imaginist Bauhaus opposing the rationalization of art. Collaborating not only ideologically but also artistically, Baj and Jorn worked together on Jorn's well-known *Modifications* series. *Modifications* revised found kitsch paintings, emphasizing the critique inherent in appropriating low-brow artwork.

Before meeting Marcel Duchamp, Baj belonged to a generation of artists revisiting the Dadaist's work upon the publication of Duchamp's writings and monograph in the late 1950s. Baj exhibited in the 1960 International Surrealist Exhibition, which Duchamp co-curated with André Breton, proving the awareness was mutual.

Duchamp and Baj finally met on Baj's trip to New York in 1961 for the Museum of Modern Art exhibition *The Art of Assemblage*. Baj and Duchamp, both participating in the landmark show, struck up a close friendship that would lead to support of each other's careers and, eventually, artistic collaboration on a 1965 version of Duchamp's *L.H.O.O.Q.* Their friendship, along with their shared sense of humor and embrace of the banal, established a living connection between Duchamp's Dada and Baj's Neo-Dada. What united these artists - Duchamp, Picabia, Jorn, Baj - was the humor and double entendre present in their works, rooted in the observation of real life while overlapping with several different Modern/Post-War movements.

André Breton was also friends with Baj; Breton consistently invited Baj to exhibit with the Surrealist Movement. Breton, a prolific writer and poet, penned a lengthy essay about Enrico Baj, which was published in the third edition of his book *Le Surréalisme et la Peinture*. Baj's relationship with Breton and acceptance into Surrealist institutions validates his enormous range as an artist and his category-defying legacy.

Both Breton and Max Ernst avidly collected Native American art, and frequently showed katsina dolls alongside their own works in several notable exhibitions. It is possible, even likely, that Baj encountered these dolls at their homes. Katsina dolls, known as *tithu* to the Hopi, are visual representations of the *katsinam*, the essential life force of all animate beings. The dolls unite the creative and the utilitarian, serving as a method of spiritual relief from the demands of modern life. Baj related to his art in a similar manner, channeling the raw elements of his lived experience into his work.



Enrico Baj maintained close ties with the pioneers of Dada and Surrealism, co-founding the Pataphysic Institute of Milan in 1963, an Italian equivalent of the Parisian College de Pataphysique de France, with Man Ray and others.

William Copley and Baj mesh stylistically in their collage-like aesthetic and adoption of bright color. In 1959, the two created at least two artworks together, *Personaggi e segnali (Characters and Signals)* and *Gli amanti (The Lovers)*. This sort of artistic communion typifies the exchange occurring within the milieu of artists surrounding both Baj and Copley, another example of which presents itself in the interpretations Baj made of his fellow artists in works like *Bonjour Max Ernst (1975)* and *Ritratto di Lucio Fontana (Portrait of Lucio Fontana)*.

Together, Enrico Baj and Piero Manzoni produced *Arrivo dell'ultracorpo (Arrival of the Body Snatcher)* in 1958 with oil paint, collage, mixed media and kaolin, while Fontana and Baj collaborated at *Composizione con ultracorpo (Composition with Body Snatcher)* in 1959 with oil paint, collage and stones on canvas.

Fontana Baj Manzoni was the title of two exhibitions mounted in Italy in 1958, when the third issue of the 'nuclear' periodical "Il Gesto" edited by Baj, Manzoni and Sergio Dangelo featured a cover riddled with holes, conceived by Fontana, and reproduced on its pages the latest works by contemporary artists and poets such as Gillo Dorfles, Jean Dubuffet, Marcel Duchamp, Asger Jorn, and others.

Throughout his life, Baj was in close contact with poets and intellectuals, both in Italy and abroad, and collaborated on numerous occasions to produce prints or original multiples for several artist books. In 1999, Baj confirmed once again his deep commitment to literature with a series of 164 portraits inspired by Marcel Proust's *Guermites*.

This year, one hundred years after Baj's birth, several museums in Italy are paying homage to the master of Dames and Generals, of Meccanoes and Body Snatchers; the irreverent genius, light-hearted anarchist, and pataphysical artist.

From October 2024 to January 2025, an exhibition at Palazzo Reale in Milan will feature Enrico Baj's art through the words of great writers from the 20th century who intertwined their works with Baj's lyrical and caustic images, such as André Breton, Raimond Queneau, Marcel Proust, Italo Calvino, Edoardo Sanguineti, and Umberto Eco, among others.



IMAGES

Enrico Baj Standing in Front of 'Ubu sur la Butte' in Verona, 2001

Marcel Duchamp and Enrico Baj, 1964 (Duchamp Archives, Philadelphia Museum of Art)

André Breton and his Katsina Dolls

James Thrall Solby, Max Ernst Surrounded by Katsina Dolls on the Terrace of Peggy Guggenheim's Manhattan House, ca. 1942 (Museum of Modern Art, New York, © 2021)

Enrico Baj in his Studio in Vergiate, 1975











MARCEL DUCHAMP (1887-1968)

La boîte en valise: From or by Marcel Duchamp or Rose Sélavy, 1941-1966

red leather object box containing 80 facsimile reproductions

closed: 16 3/4 x 15 1/8 x 3 7/8 in (42.5 x 38.5 x 9.9 cm)

open: 48 3/8 x 36 1/4 x 15 3/4 in (123 x 92 x 40 cm)

one of 75 produced in Milan under the supervision of Arturo Schwarz

(MD9247)





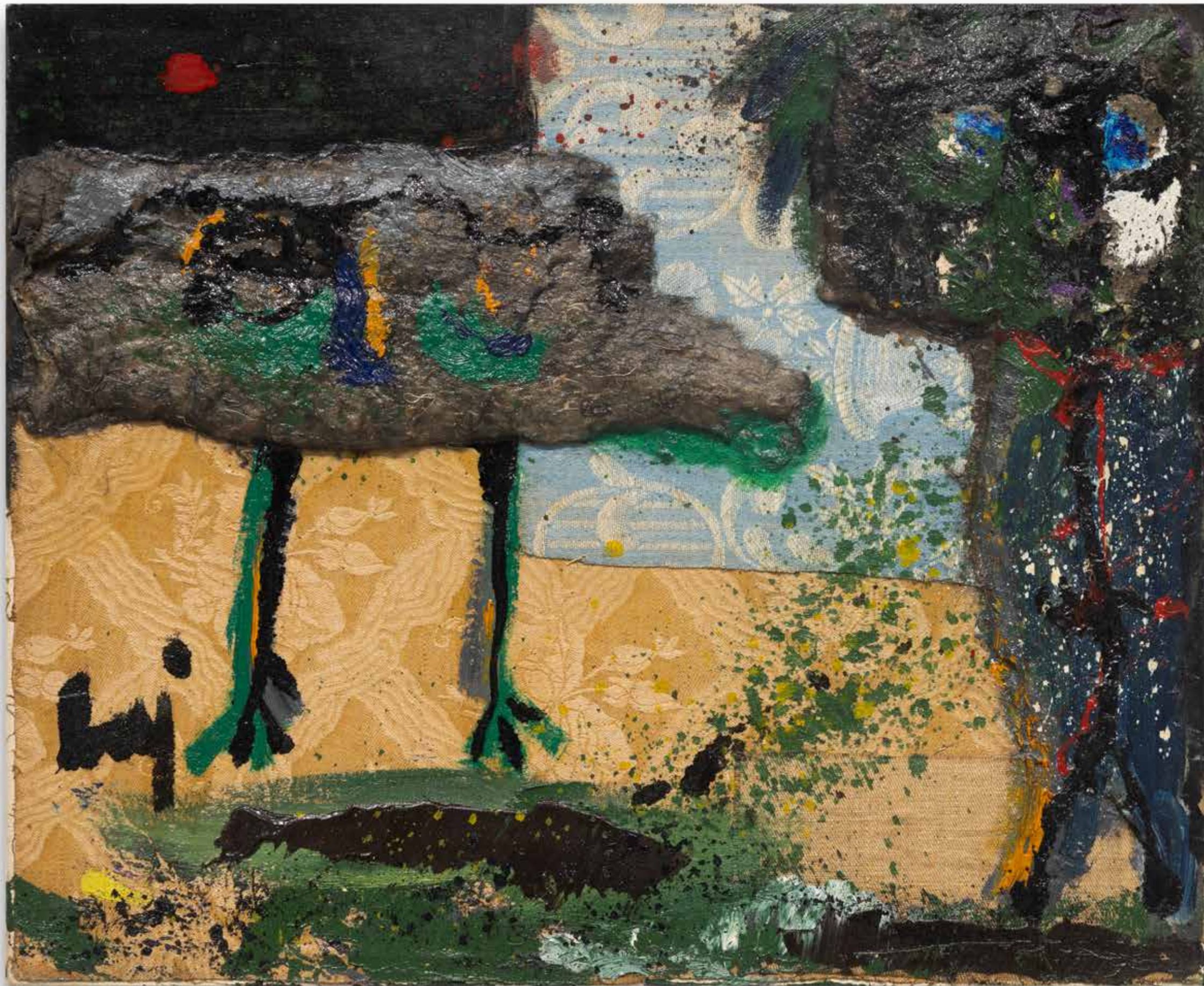








ENRICO BAJ (1924-2003)
Untitled, 1954
felt pen on paper
10 3/8 x 14 in (26.5 x 35.5 cm)
(BAJ9212)



ENRICO BAJ (1924-2003)

Gli innamorati, 1955

oil and collage on fabric on canvas

15 3/4 x 19 3/4 in (40 x 50 cm)

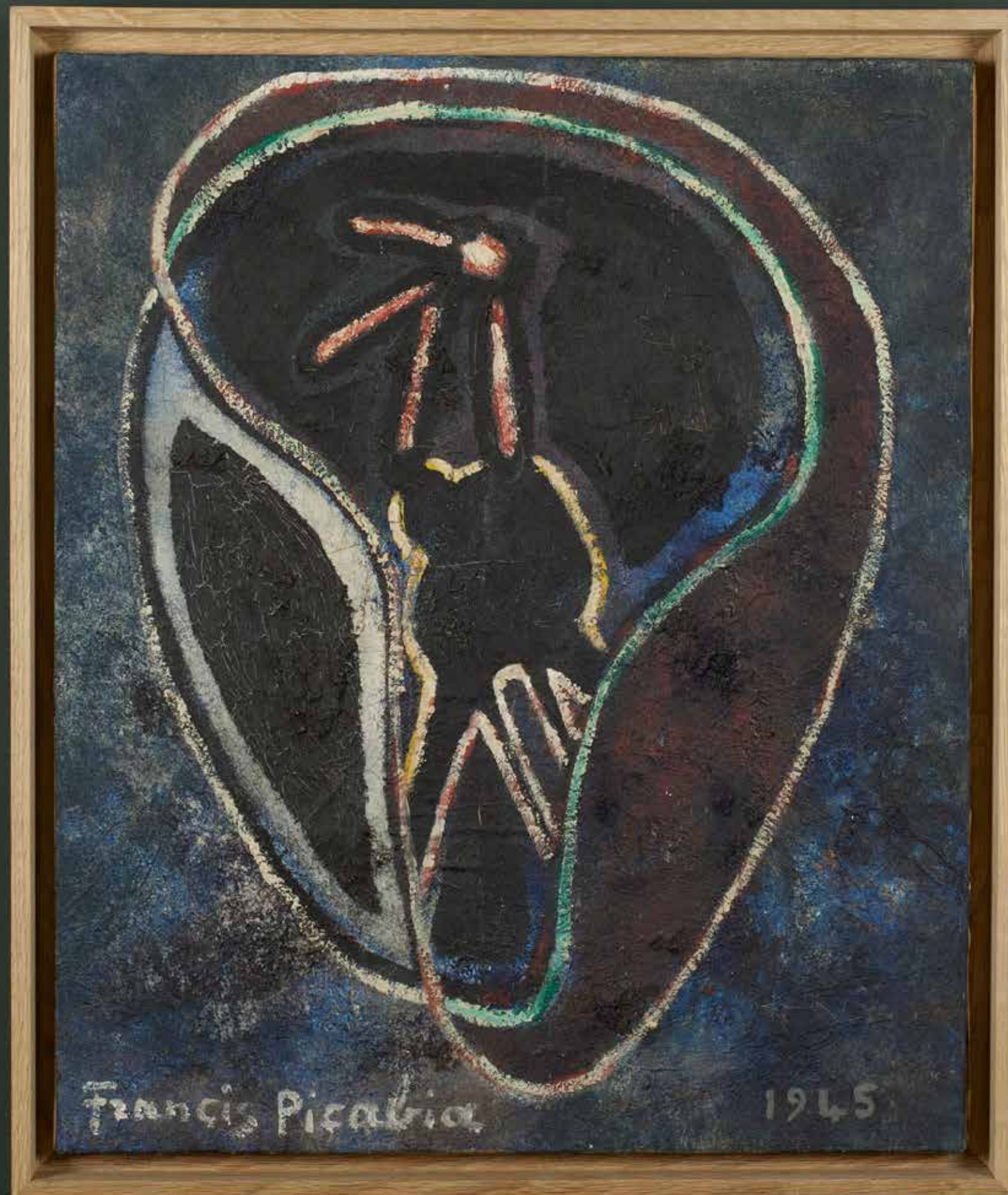
(BAJ9213)

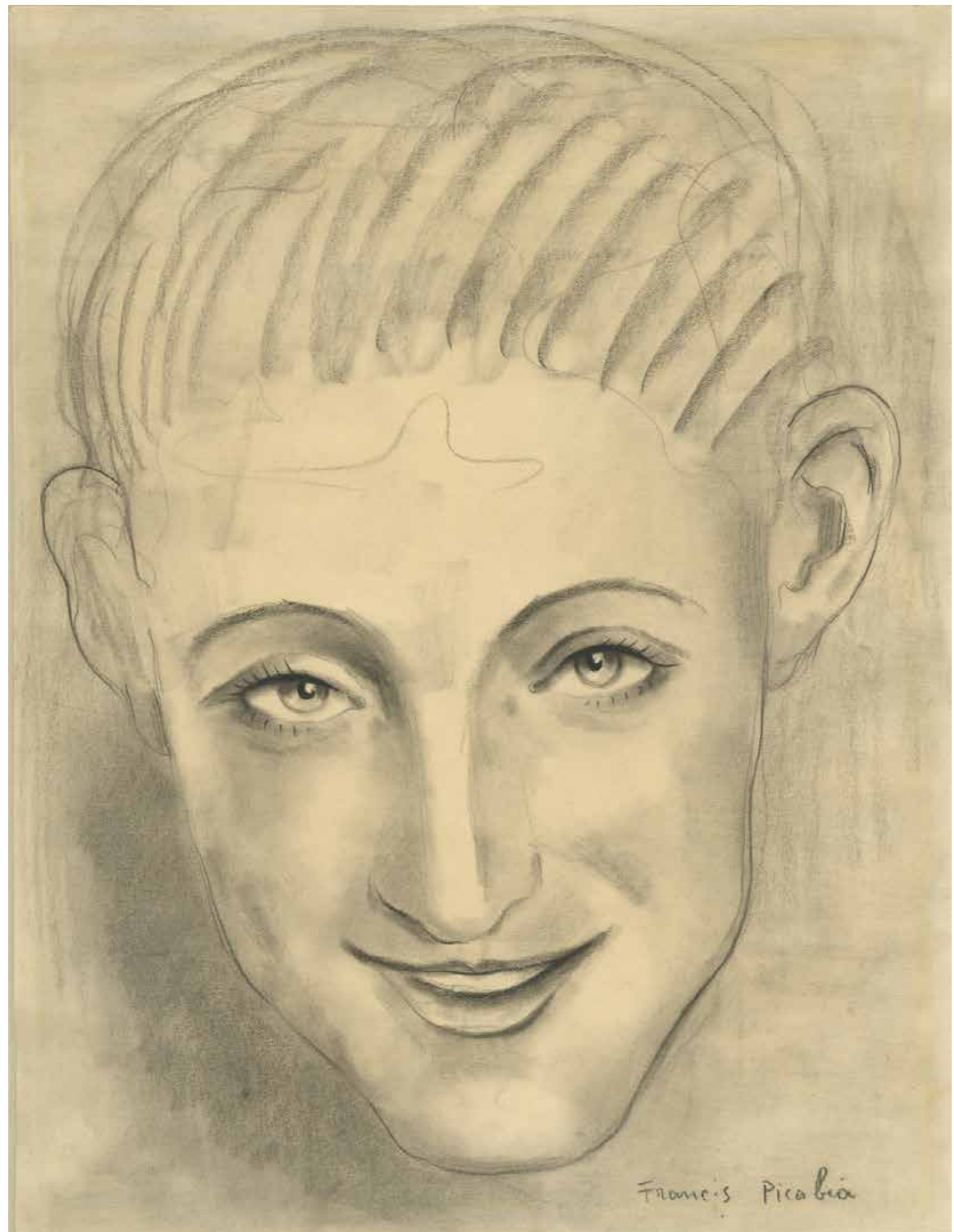




ENRICO BAJ (1924-2003)
*Des êtres d'autres planètes
violaient nos femmes, 1959*
oil and collage on found painting
28 3/4 x 36 1/4 in (73 x 92 cm)
(BAJ9216)

FRANCIS PICABIA (1879-1953)
Composition abstraite, 1945
oil on canvas
21 5/8 x 18 1/8 in (55 x 46 cm)
(PIC9249)





FRANCIS PICABIA (1879-1953)
Portrait d'homme, ca. 1940-42
pencil on paper
12 1/8 x 9 3/8 in (30.8 x 23.7 cm)
(PIC9248)



ENRICO BAJ (1924-2003)
Testa montagna, 1958
oil and collage on canvas
19 3/4 x 23 5/8 in (50 x 60 cm)
(BAJ9215)



ENRICO BAJ (1924-2003)
Gran generale, 1961
oil and collage on canvas
57 1/2 x 44 7/8 in (146 x 114 cm)
(BAJ9222)



JONATHAN MEESE (b. 1970)
VOODOOMUTTER OHNE MASKE! (STRAHLENÄUGIG), 2020
mixed media
13 x 6 1/4 x 8 1/8 in (33 x 16 x 20.5 cm)
(JM7819)



ENRICO BAJ (1924-2003)

Generale, 1960

oil, collage passementerie, and decorations
on fabric

39 3/8 x 31 7/8 x 3 3/8 in (100 x 81 x 8.6 cm)

(BAJ9218)



NICOLE EISENMAN (b. 1965)
Military Poster, 2018
paper pulp
30 x 22 in (76.2 x 55.88 cm)
framed: 34 x 26 1/4 in
(86.36 x 66.68 cm)
(PP7292)

ENRICO BAJ (1924-2003)

Generale con il suo aiutante di campo, 1959

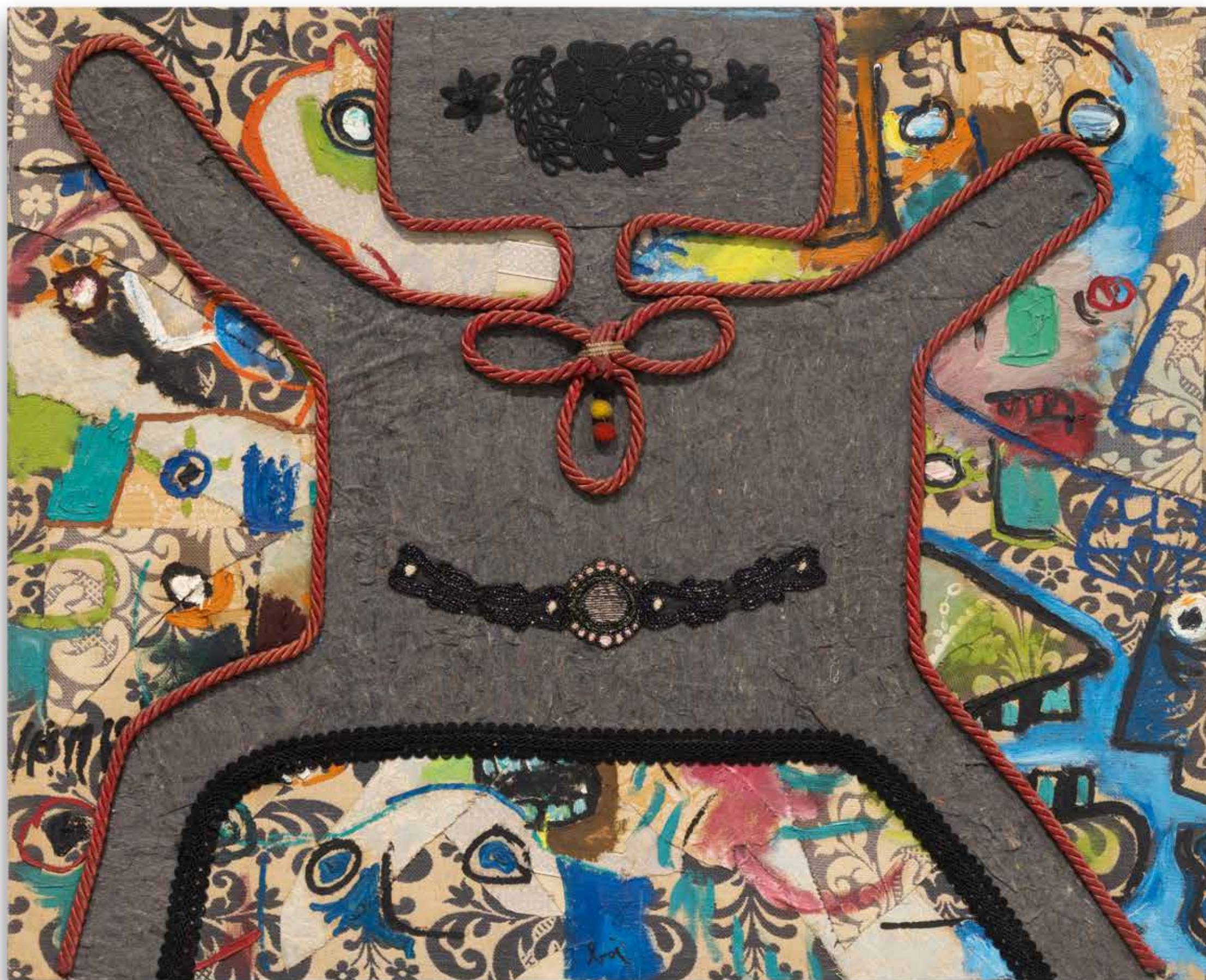
collage, passementerie, and decorations
on fabric on canvas

35 1/2 x 33 5/8 in (90.2 x 85.5 cm)

(BAJ9217)







ENRICO BAJ (1924-2003)
Ho voglia di abbracciarti, 1964
acrylic, collage, padding,
passementerie on canvas
31 7/8 x 39 3/8 in (81 x 100 cm)
(BAJ9225)



KERSTIN BRÄTSCH (b. 1979)

PARA PSYCHIC_Electro Throb;_Without striving (to the contrary), the low place which all men dislike;_Phantom Limb, 2020-2021

colored pencil and graphite on paper in artist's frames

each: 14 x 11 in (35.6 x 27.9 cm); framed: 16 7/8 x 13 7/8 x 1 5/8 in (42.8 x 35.2 x 4 cm)

(KBR9239)

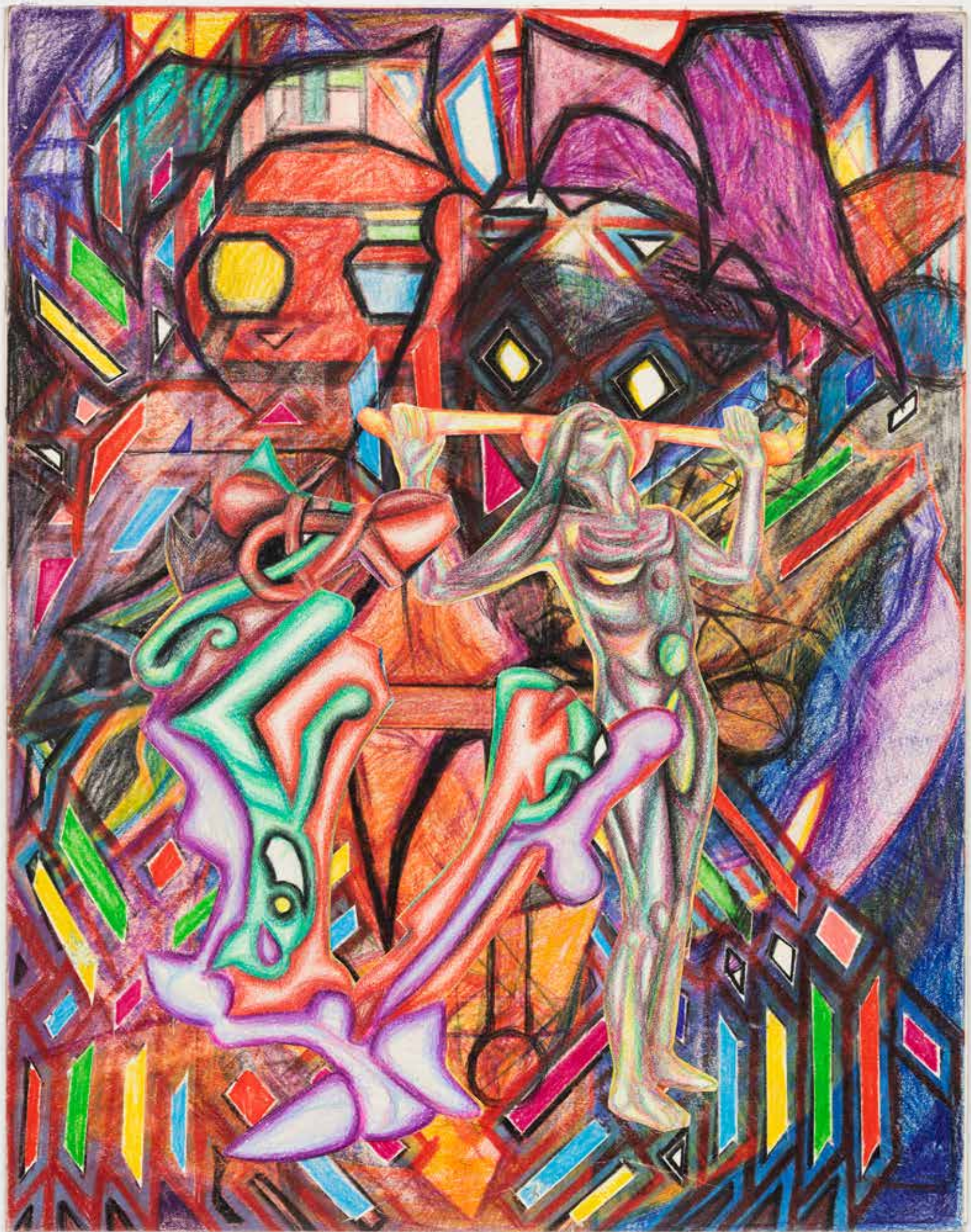
KERSTIN BRÄTSCH (b. 1979)

*PARA PSYCHIC_We are content to see nothing,
we have no control, it doesn't even Feel like failure
(The Fool), 2020*

colored pencil, graphite and collage on paper in
artist's frame

14 x 11 in (35.6 x 27.9 cm)

framed: 16 7/8 x 13 7/8 x 1 5/8 in (42.8 x 35.2 x 4 cm)
(KBR9238)



ENRICO BAJ (1924-2003)

*Mottin De la Balme, Furiere maggiore
di gendarmeria, 1964*

acrylic, collage, padding, passementerie,
and decorations on fabric laid on canvas
36 1/4 x 28 3/4 in (92 x 73 cm)
(BAJ9224)





ENRICO BAJ (1924-2003)
Generale, 1973
acrylics and collage on board
57 1/2 x 44 7/8 in (146 x 114 cm)
(BAJ9230)

ENRICO BAJ (1924-2003)
Punching General, 1961-2003
plastic sculpture with a collage of medals
edition of 6
(BAJ9223)



WILLIAM COPLEY (1919-1996)

Acrobats

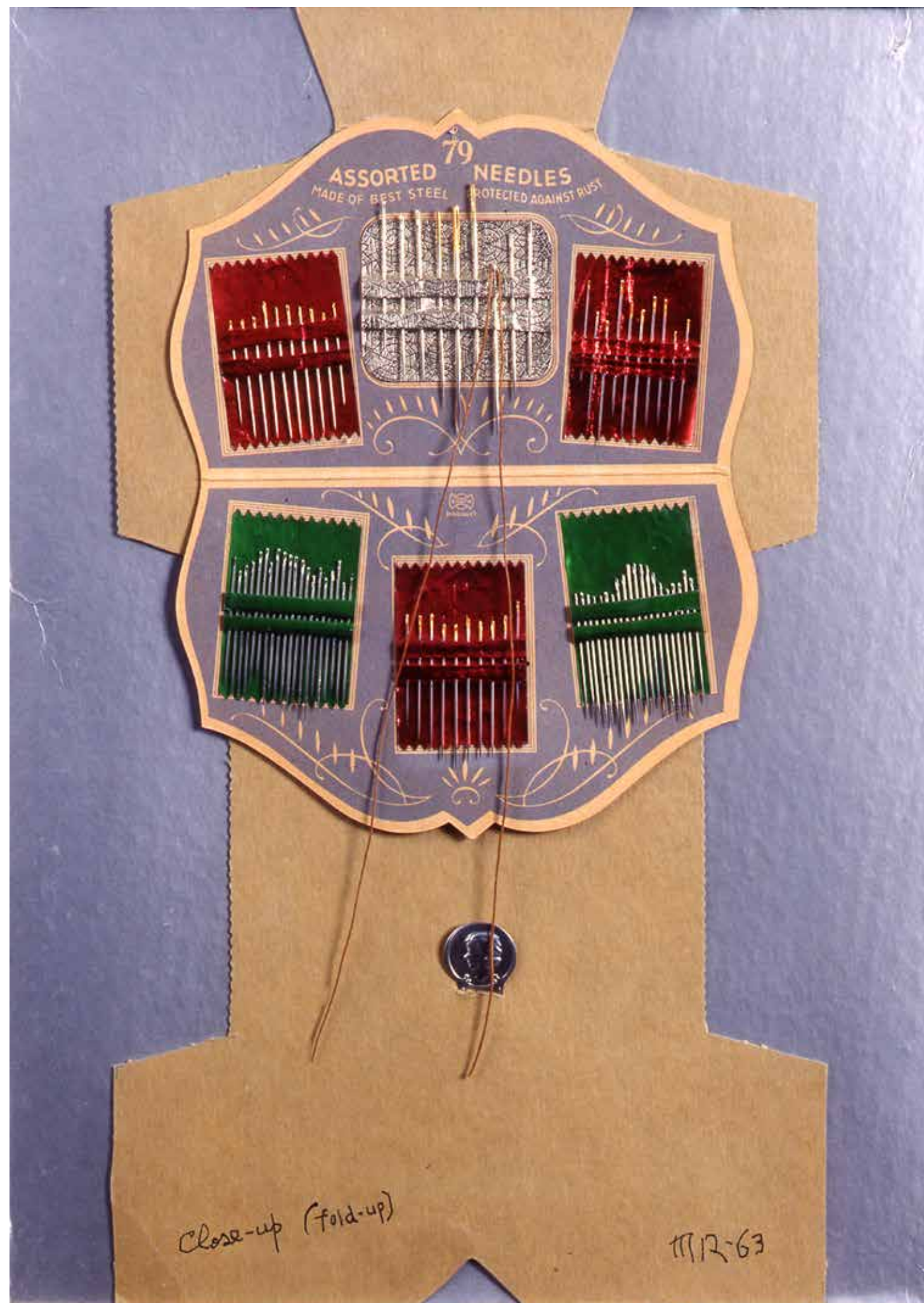
wood, painted cardboard and fabric

10 1/4 x 2 3/4 in (26 x 7 cm)

(WC9257)



MAN RAY (1890-1976)
Close up, Fold up, 1963
collage, paper and pinheads
15 x 11 in (38 x 28 cm)
(MA9237)





ENRICO BAJ (1924-2003)

A Magic, 1960

oil and mirror collage on fabric

24 1/8 x 23 3/4 x 1 3/4 in (61.2 x 60.3 x 4.5 cm)

(BAJ9219)



ENRICO BAJ (1924-2003)
Izzoighitalti, 1968
plastic collage
20 7/8 x 16 7/8 in (53 x 43 cm)
(BAJ9227)

Martin Kippenberger

(1953-1997)

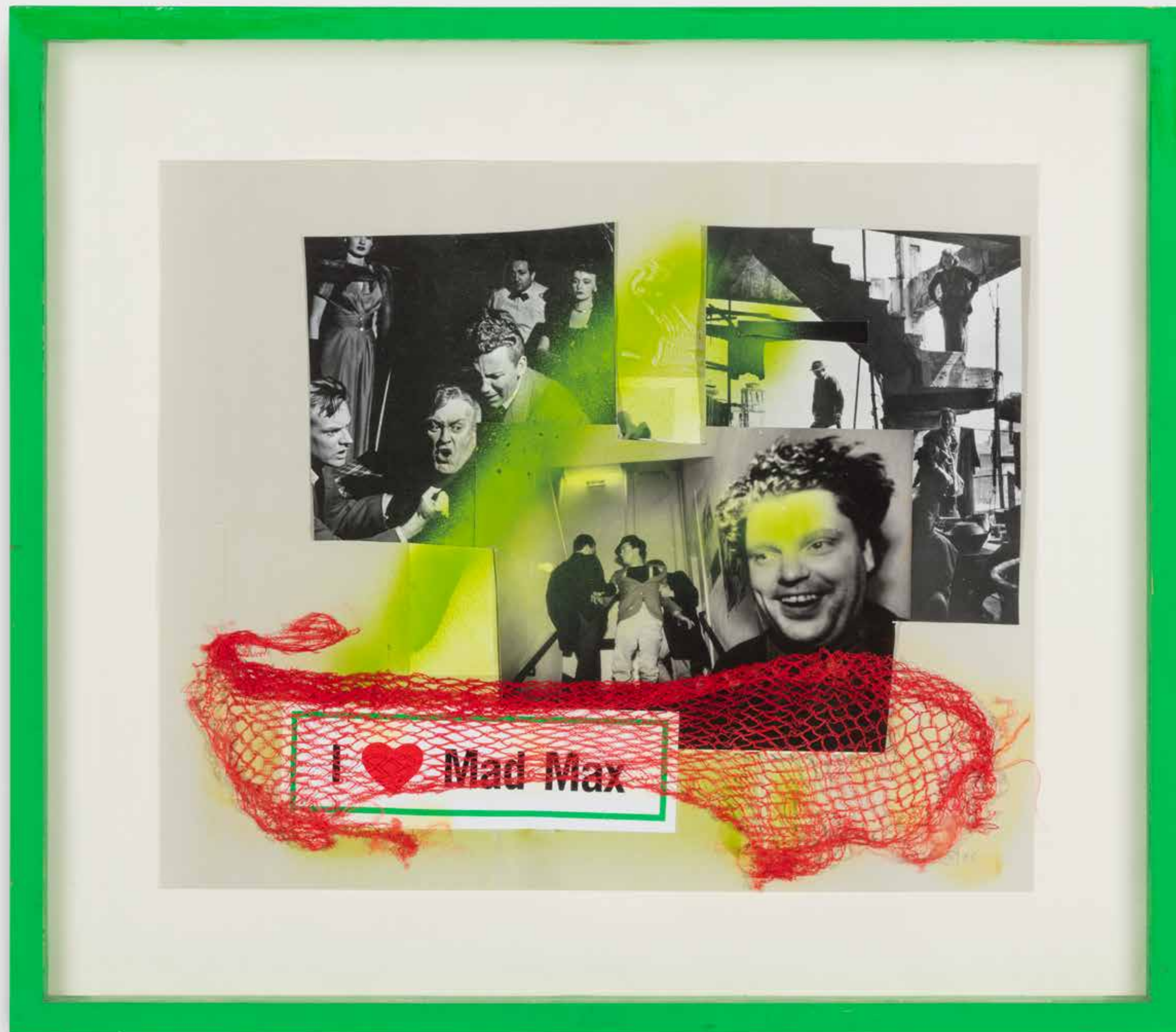
I Love Mad Max, 1985

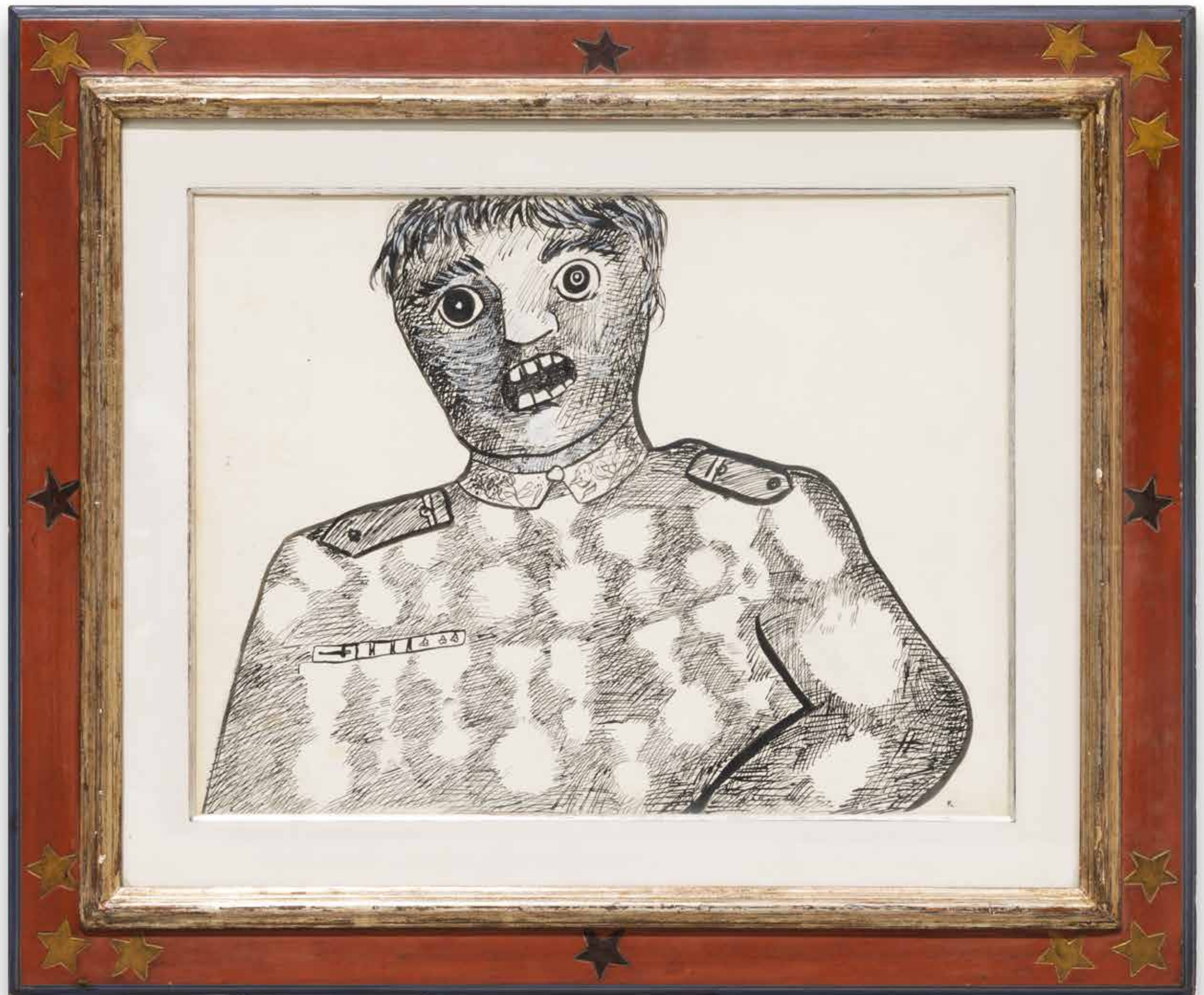
adhesive sticker, found
photographs, red netting,
spray enamel, and graphite
on paper in artist's frame

15 3/4 x 18 7/8 in

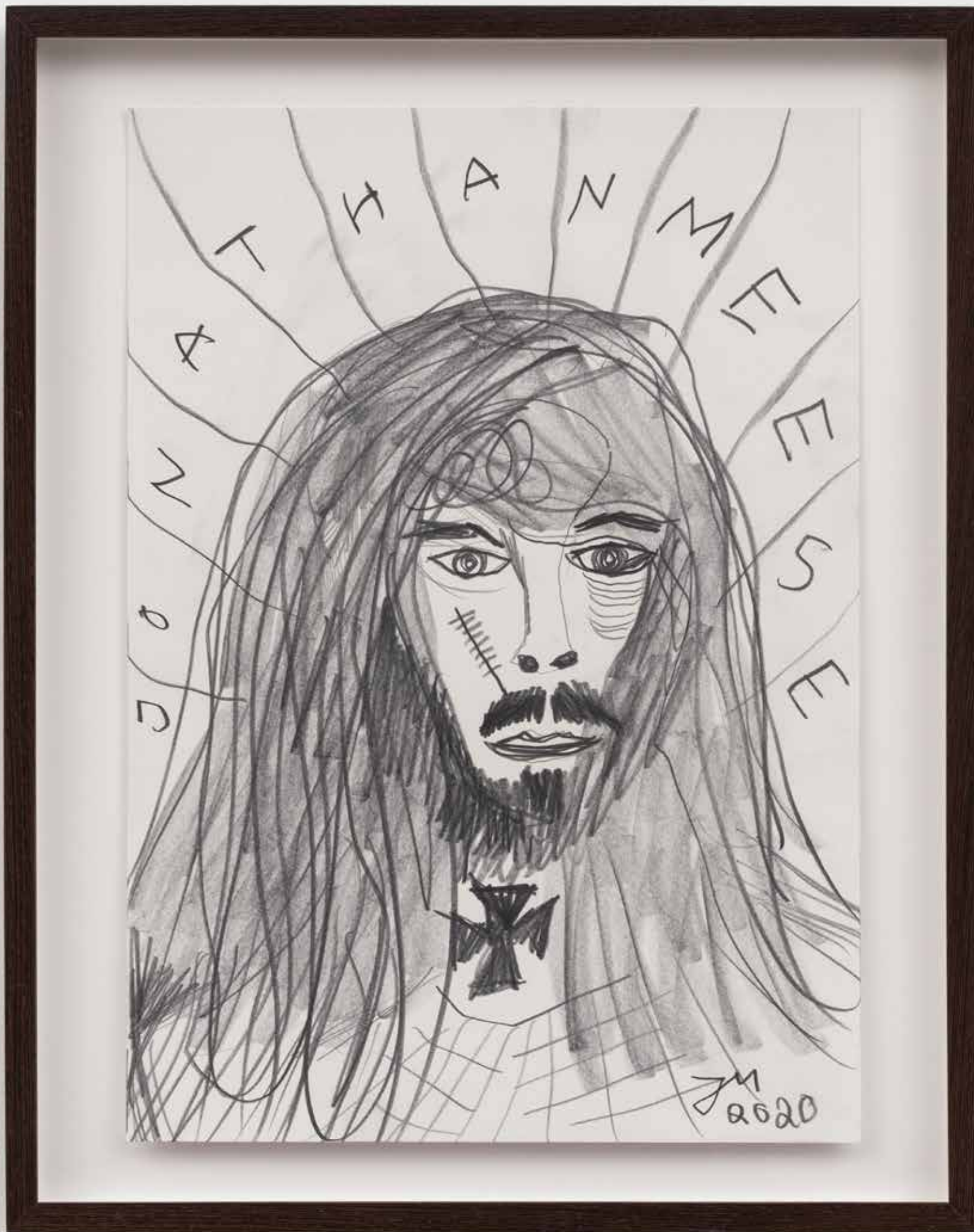
(40 x 47.9 cm)

(MK0571)





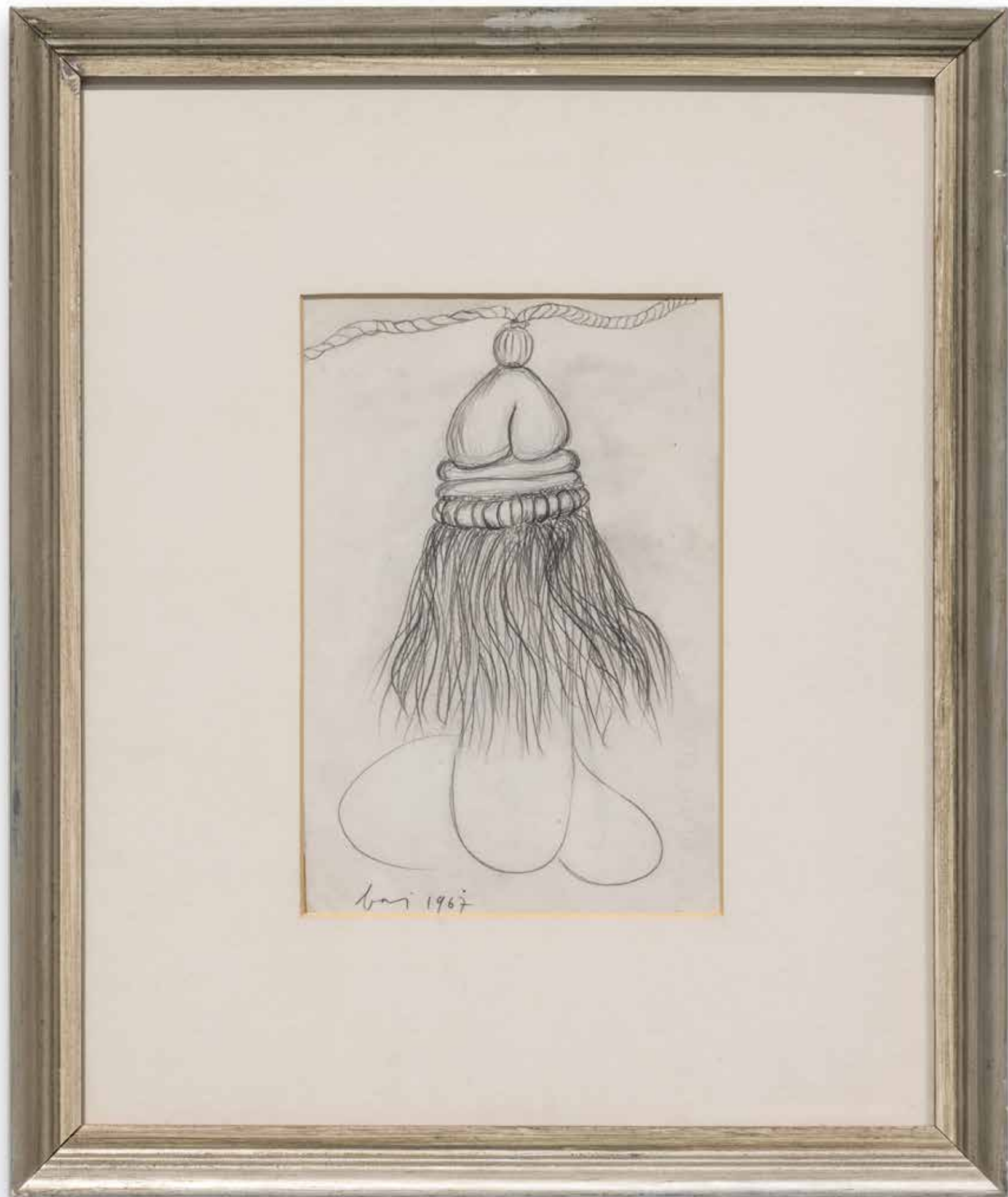
ENRICO BAJ (1924-2003)
Militare, 1972
china ink on paper
15 x 19 1/4 in (38 x 49 cm)
framed: 28 1/4 x 23 3/4 in
(71.8 x 60.3 cm)
(BAJ9229)



JONATHAN MEESE (b. 1970)
DR. SELF MEESE I, 2020
pencil on paper
16 1/2 x 11 5/8 in (42 x 29.5 cm)
(JM7877)



ENRICO BAJ (1924-2003)
Stratega militare, 1972
pencil on paper
25 x 18 1/4 in (63.5 x 46.5 cm)
(BAJ9228)



ENRICO BAJ (1924-2003)
Fiocco, 1967
pencil on paper
11 x 7 7/8 in (28 x 20 cm)
(BAJ9226)



HANS BELLMER (1902-1975)
Untitled, 1937
gouache on black paper
11 1/8 x 8 5/8 in (28 x 22 cm)
(HB7274)



left:
**ANONYMOUS ARTIST
PUEBLO, NEW MEXICO**
Fertility Figure, late 18th/
early 19th century
wood and paint
height: 14 in (35.6 cm)

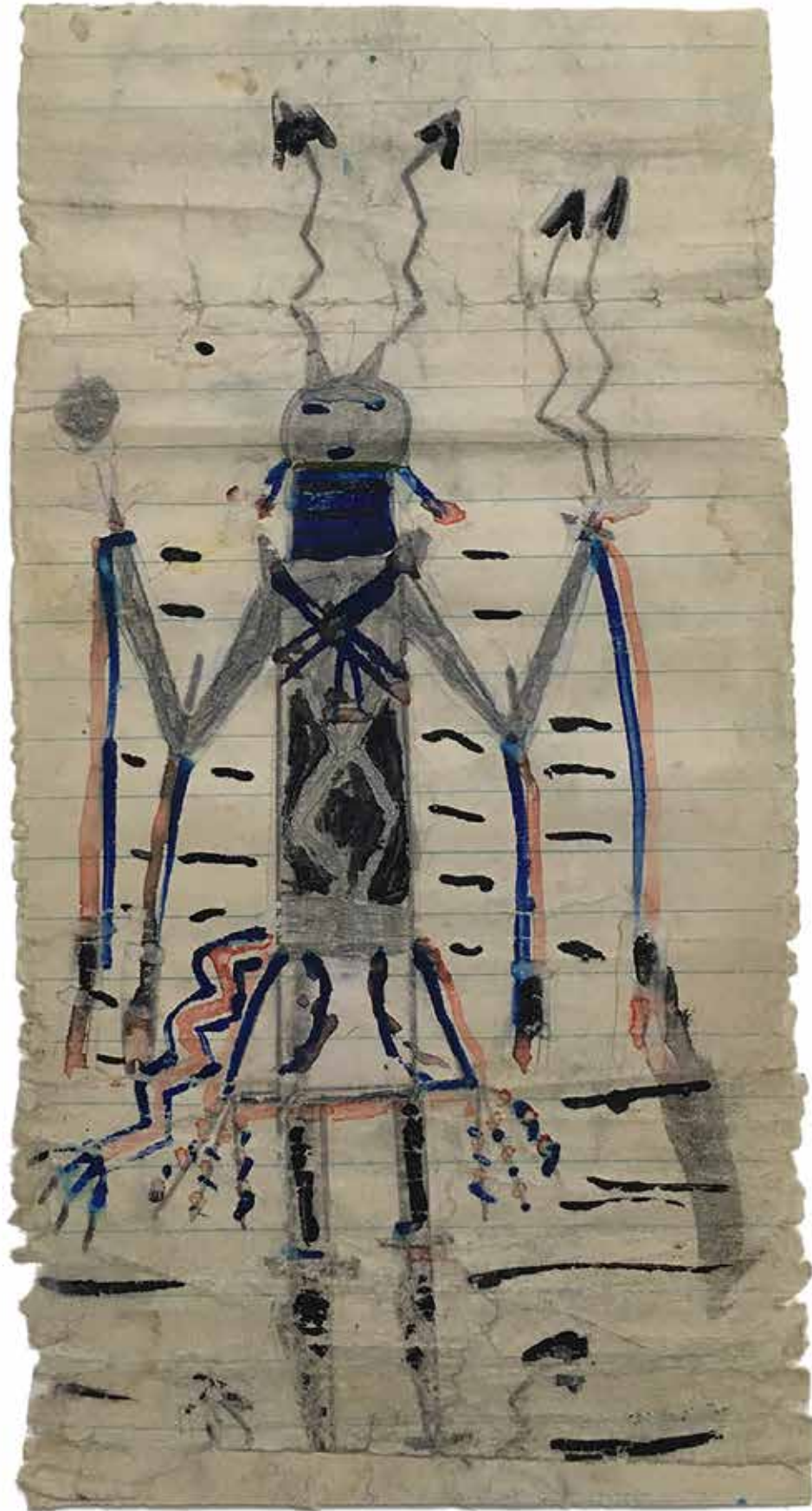
right:
**ANONYMOUS ARTIST
HOPI, ARIZONA**
Maiden Katsina, ca. 1900
cottonwood and paint
height: 11 in (27.9 cm)
(MA9253)





ANONYMOUS ARTIST
ZUNI, NEW MEXICO

Saiyatasha Katsina, early 20th century
wood, paint, hide, cotton, yarn, and metal
height: 17 1/2 in (44.5 cm)
(MA9252)



left:
ANONYMOUS ARTIST
NAVAJO, ARIZONA OR NEW
MEXICO
Memory Aid Drawing, ca. 1930
watercolor on lined paper
6 3/4 x 3 1/2 in (17.1 x 8.9 cm)
(MA9255)

right:
ANONYMOUS ARTIST
NAVAJO, ARIZONA OR NEW
MEXICO
Memory Aid Drawing, ca. 1930
watercolor on lined paper
5 3/4 x 3 1/2 in (14.6 x 8.9 cm)
(MA9256)

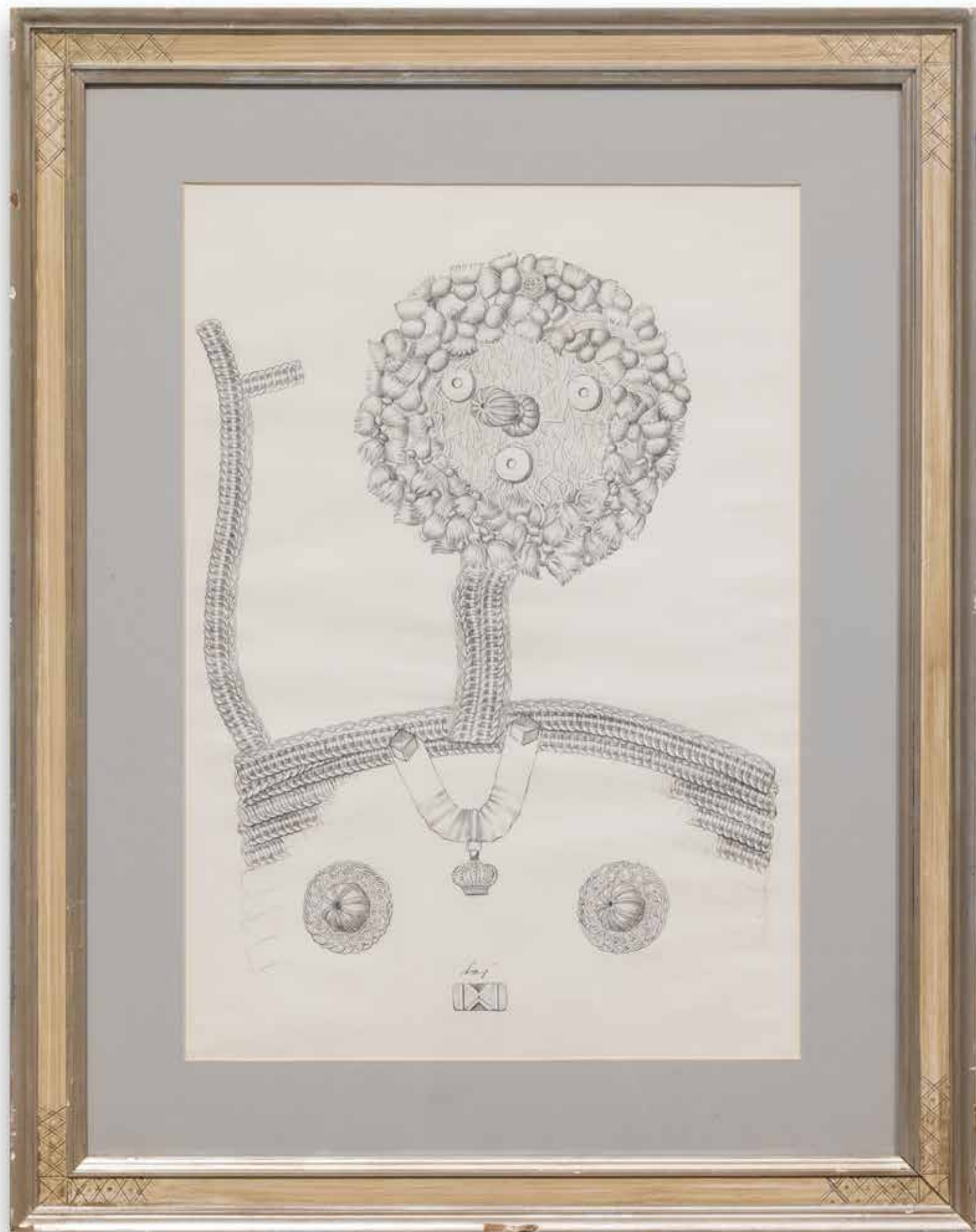




ENRICO BAJ (1924-2003)
La Duchessa di Tourzel, 1975
pencil on paper
22 1/2 x 18 7/8 in (57 x 48 cm)
(BAJ9232)

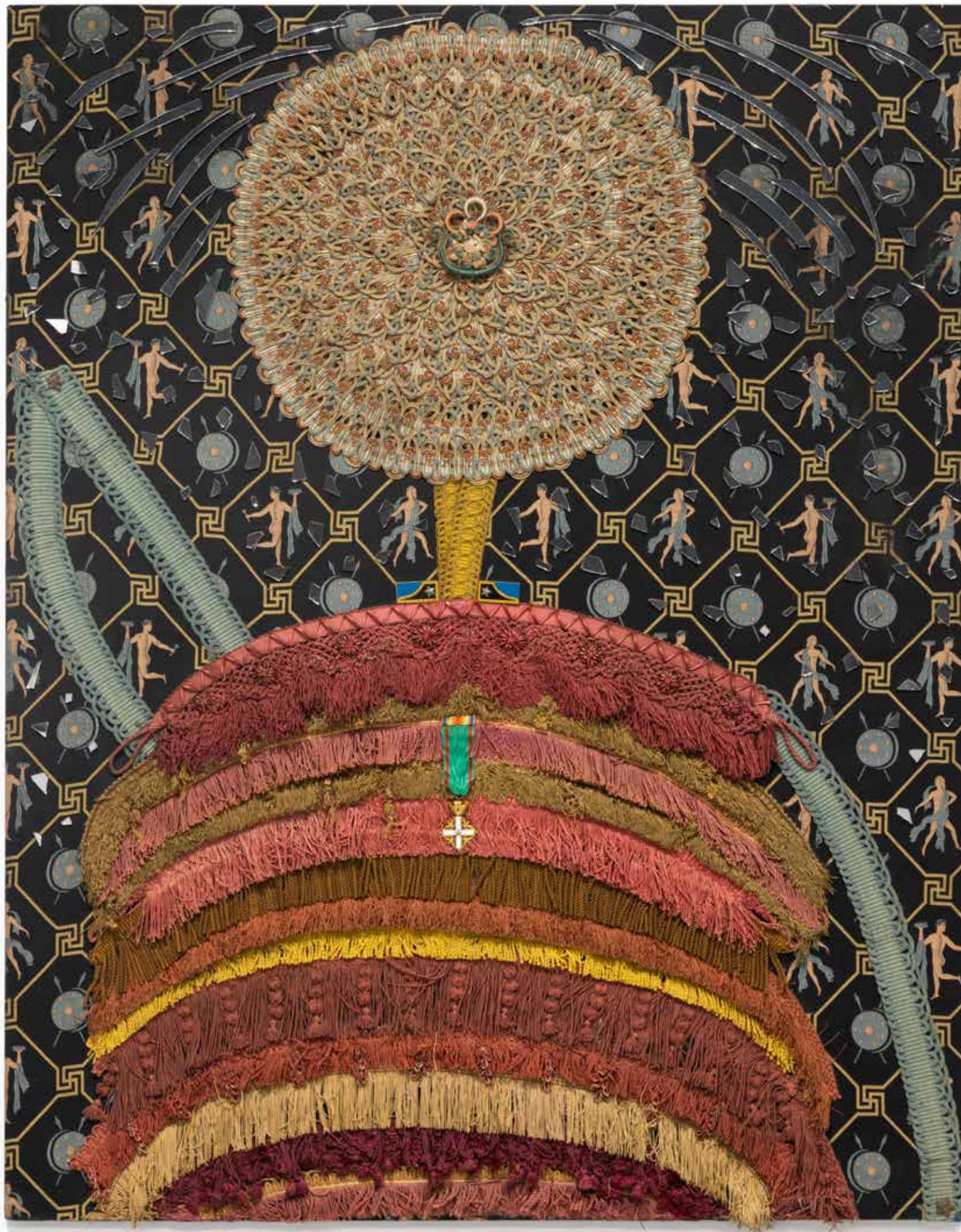
ENRICO BAJ (1924-2003)
La baronessa di Varenne, 1975
pencil on paper
27 1/2 x 19 3/4 in (70 x 50 cm)
(BAJ9233)





ENRICO BAJ (1924-2003)
Madeleine Bèjart, l'amica di Molière, 1975
pencil on paper
27 1/2 x 20 1/8 in (70 x 51 cm)
(BAJ9234)

ENRICO BAJ (1924-2003)
Madame Candida Dardalla y Rodriguez, 1974
passementerie, collage, mirrors, and objects on fabric
57 1/2 x 44 7/8 in (146 x 114 cm)
(BAJ9231)





ENRICO BAJ (1924-2003)
Sciura Schelda, 2002
passementerie and pipes collage on fabric
39 3/8 x 31 1/2 in (100 x 80 cm)
(BAJ8765)



ENRICO BAJ (1924-2003)

Lady Divina, 2002

passementerie, objects, pipes, and collage on fabric

51 1/8 x 39 3/8 in (130 x 100 cm)

(BAJ9235)



ENRICO BAJ (1924-2003)
Mobile (a Raymond Queneau), 1961
inlay on fabric laid on panel
21 1/2 x 15 x 1 1/8 in (54.5 x 38 x 3 cm)
(BAJ9221)

RICHARD ARTSCHWAGER

(1923-2013)

Door, 1987

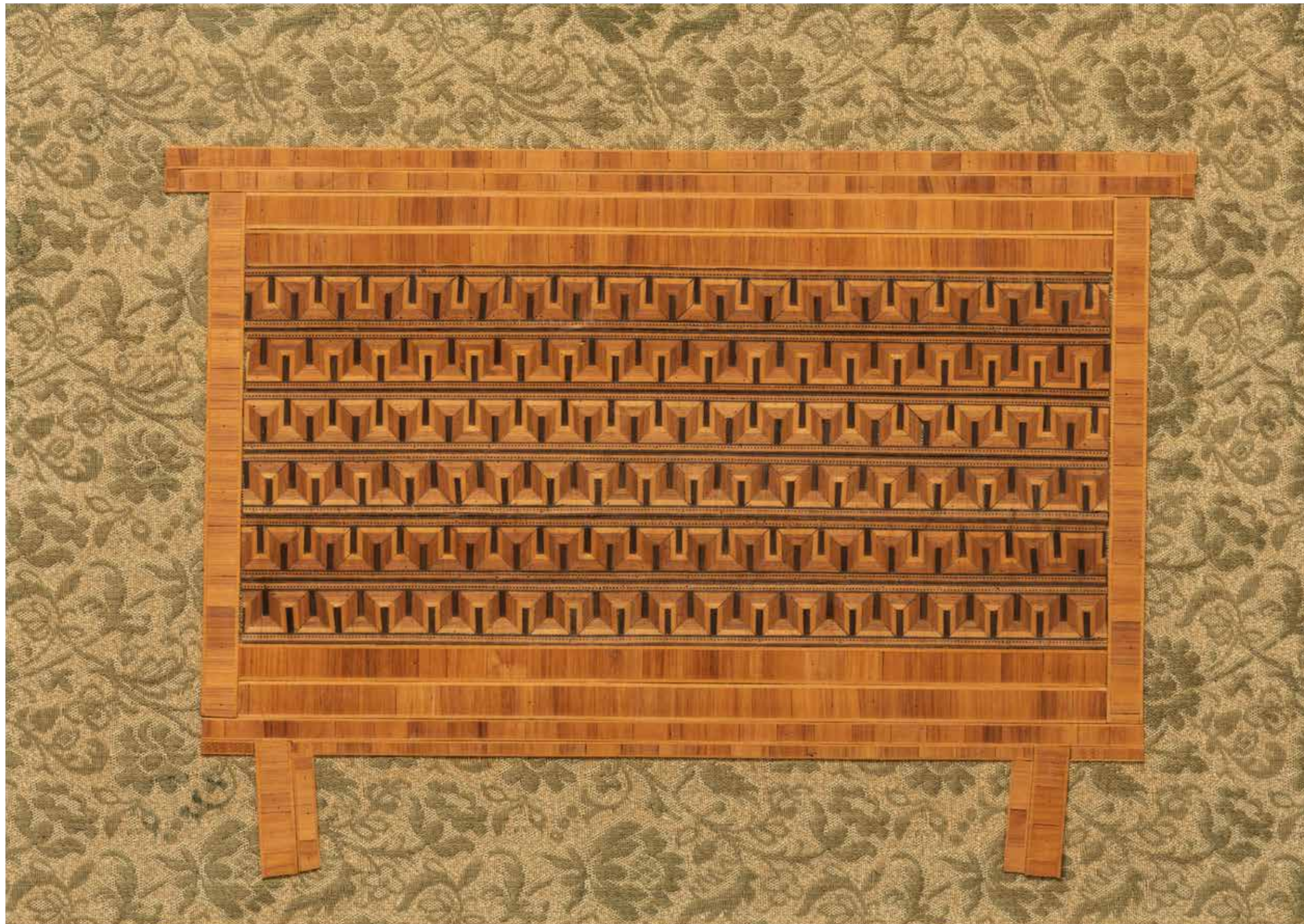
Formica and wood with metal
hardware

overall (closed): 17 x 25 x 3 7/8 in
(43.2 x 63.5 x 9.8 cm)

edition of 25

(RA9236)





ENRICO BAJ (1924-2003)
Mobile, 1961
collage, inlay, and veneer
on fabric-covered panel
20 5/8 x 28 3/4 in
(52.5 x 73 cm)
(BAJ8764)



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