

James Barron Art



Norris Embry Available Work

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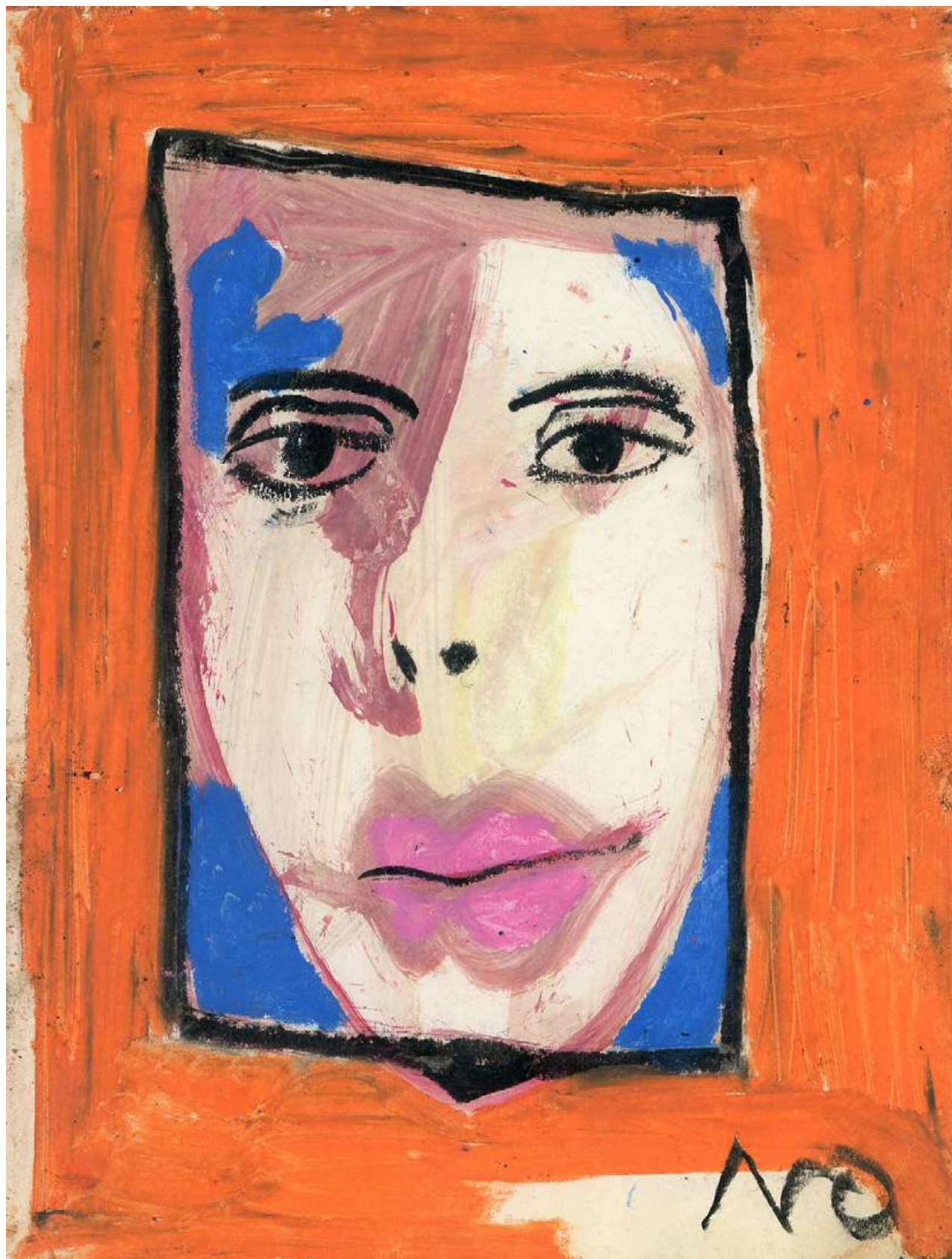
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NORRIS EMBRY

Untitled, circa 1960s
mixed media on paper
8 1/2 x 6 1/2 inches (21.6 x 16.5 cm)
NE084



“Embry’s notebook style, very often applied to works on paper in general, depends upon stark and potent images — whether legibly representative or not — crowded with maximum intensity upon a small, well defined space.”

Thomas M. Messer,
Former Director of the Solomon
R. Guggenheim Foundation



NORRIS EMBRY

Untitled, circa 1960s
mixed media on paper
8 1/2 x 6 1/2 inches (21.6 x 16.5 cm)
NE112



“Random writings, frequently corrected, crossed out, underlined, or provided with other marks of special emphasis, are among other enlivening features in Embry’s remarkably direct transference of his state of mind and emotion upon the picture surface.” ●

Thomas M. Messer





“The power of Norris Embry's work derives from its obsessive quality, which is transmitted by a single painting no less than by a view of his immense output.”

Tom L. Freudenheim
Former Director of the
Baltimore Museum of Art

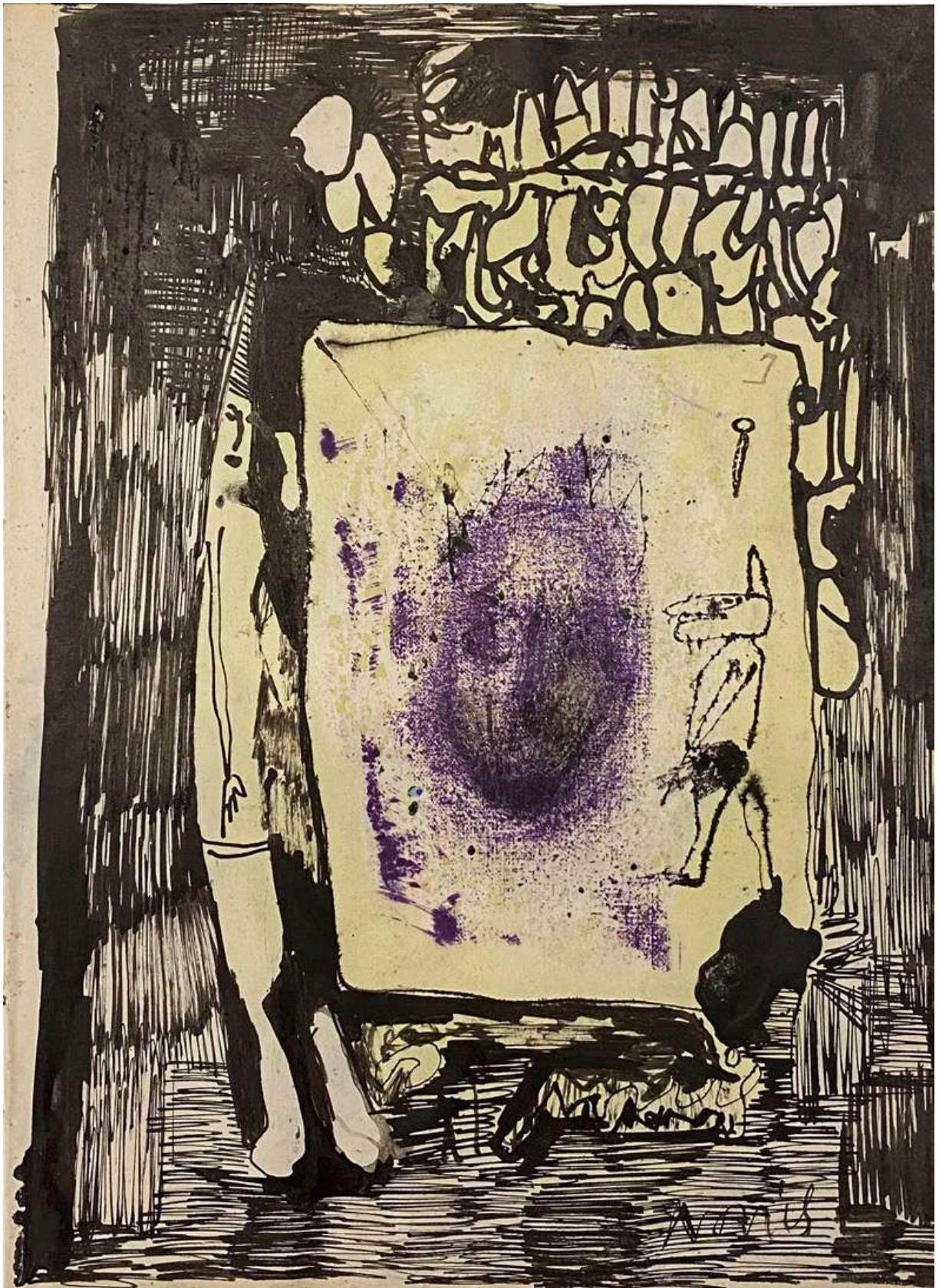
NORRIS EMBRY

Untitled, circa 1960s
mixed media on paper
8 1/2 x 6 1/2 inches (21.6 x 16.5 cm)
NE060



NORRIS EMBRY

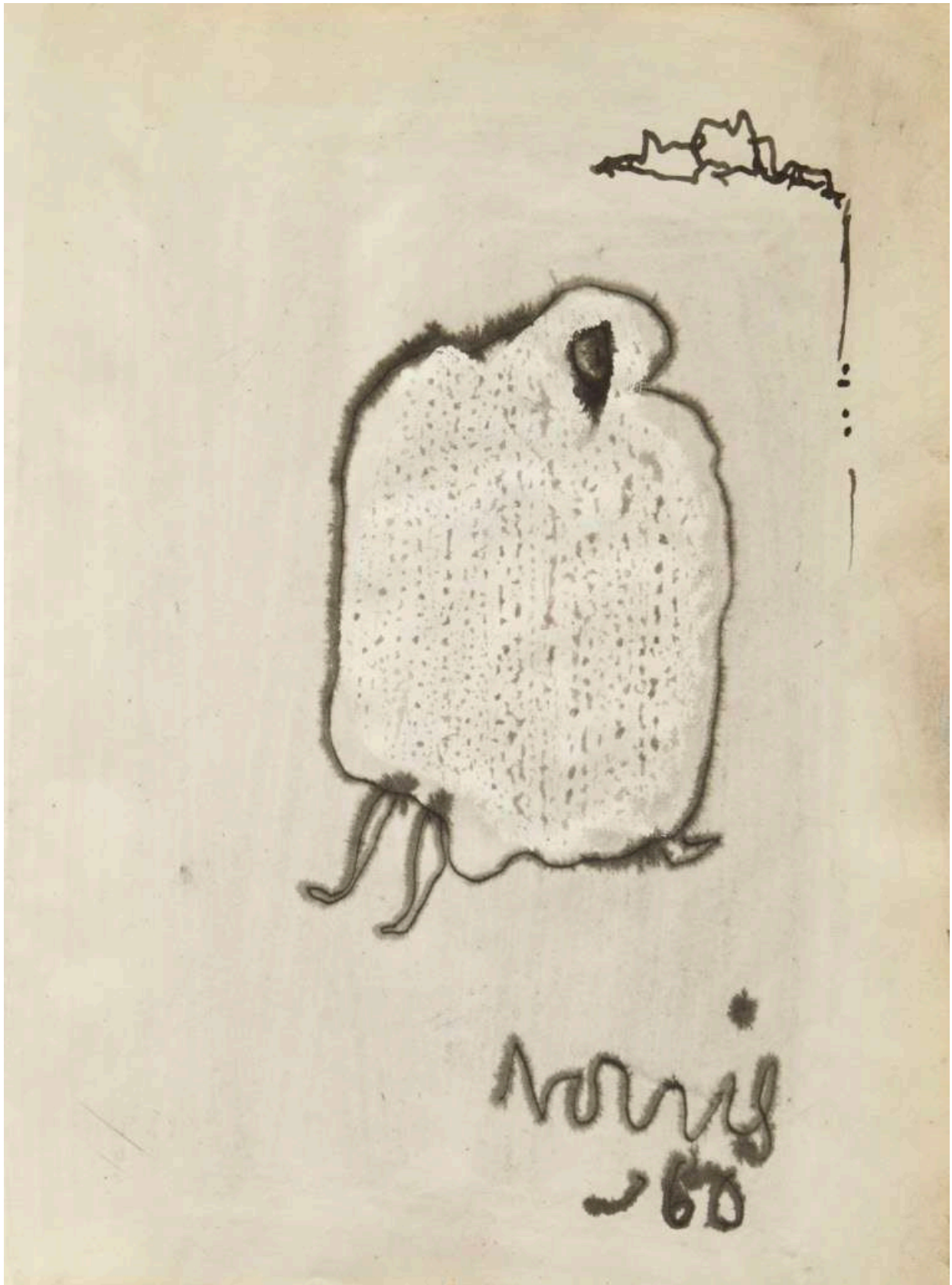
Untitled, circa 1960s
mixed media on paper
8 1/2 x 6 1/2 inches (21.6 x 16.5 cm)
NE058





NORRIS EMBRY

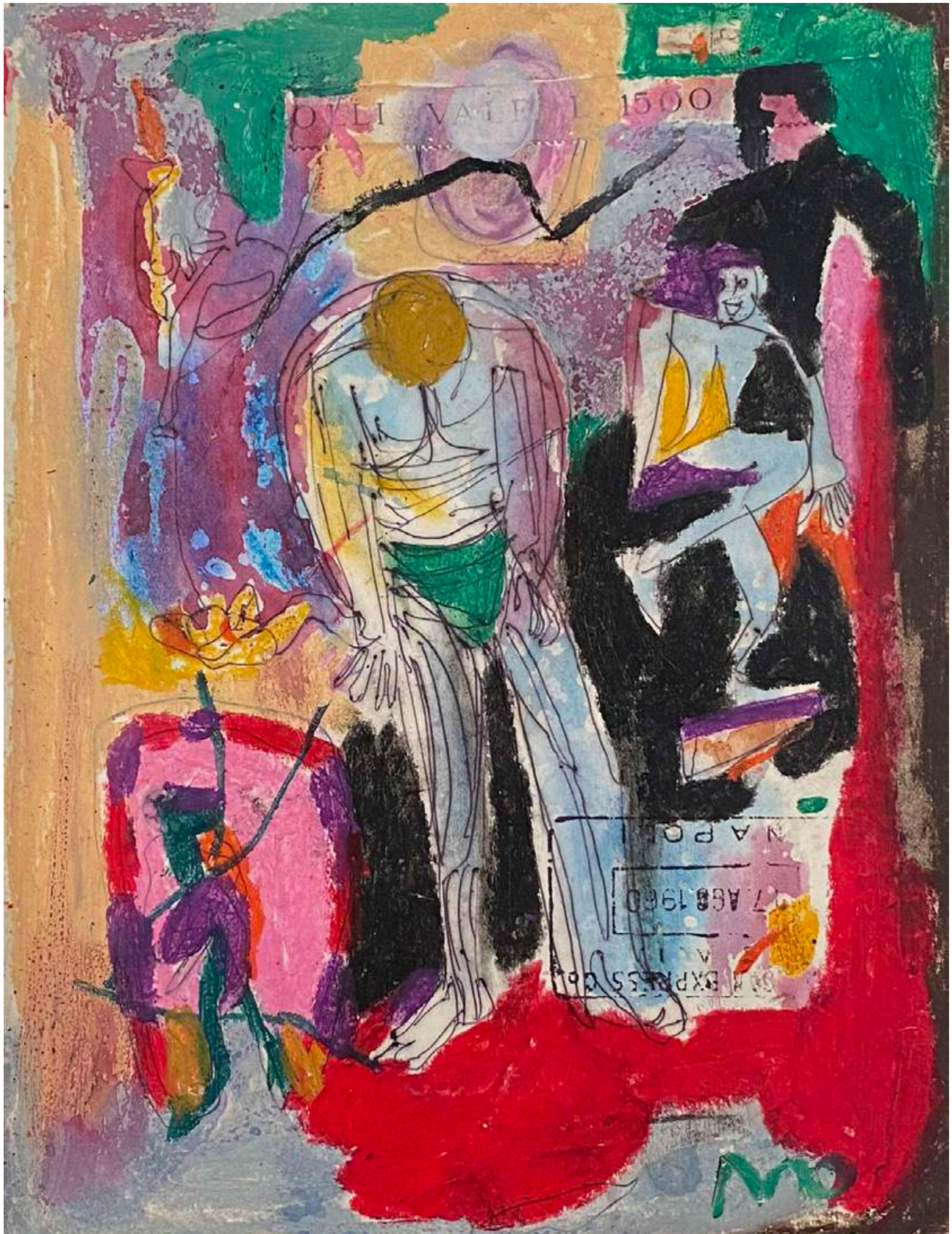
Untitled, circa 1960s
mixed media on paper
8 1/2 x 6 1/2 inches (21.6 x 16.5 cm)
NE010





NORRIS EMBRY

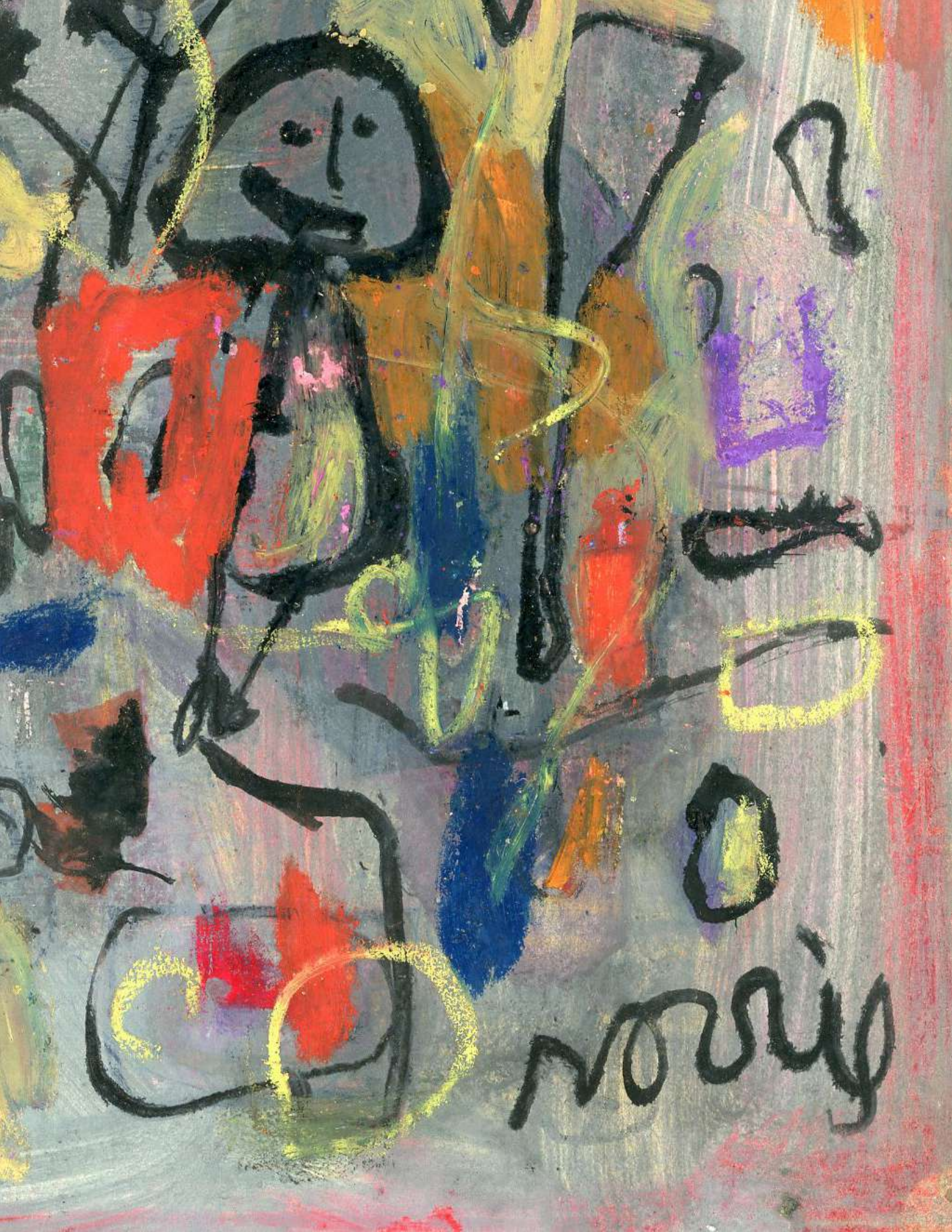
Untitled, circa 1960s
mixed media on paper
8 1/2 x 6 1/2 inches (21.6 x 16.5 cm)
NE071



NORRIS EMBRY

Untitled, circa 1960s
mixed media on paper
8 1/2 x 6 1/2 inches (21.6 x 16.5 cm)
NE017





moris

NORRIS EMBRY

Untitled, circa 1960s
mixed media on paper
8 1/2 x 6 1/2 inches (21.6 x 16.5 cm)
NE053



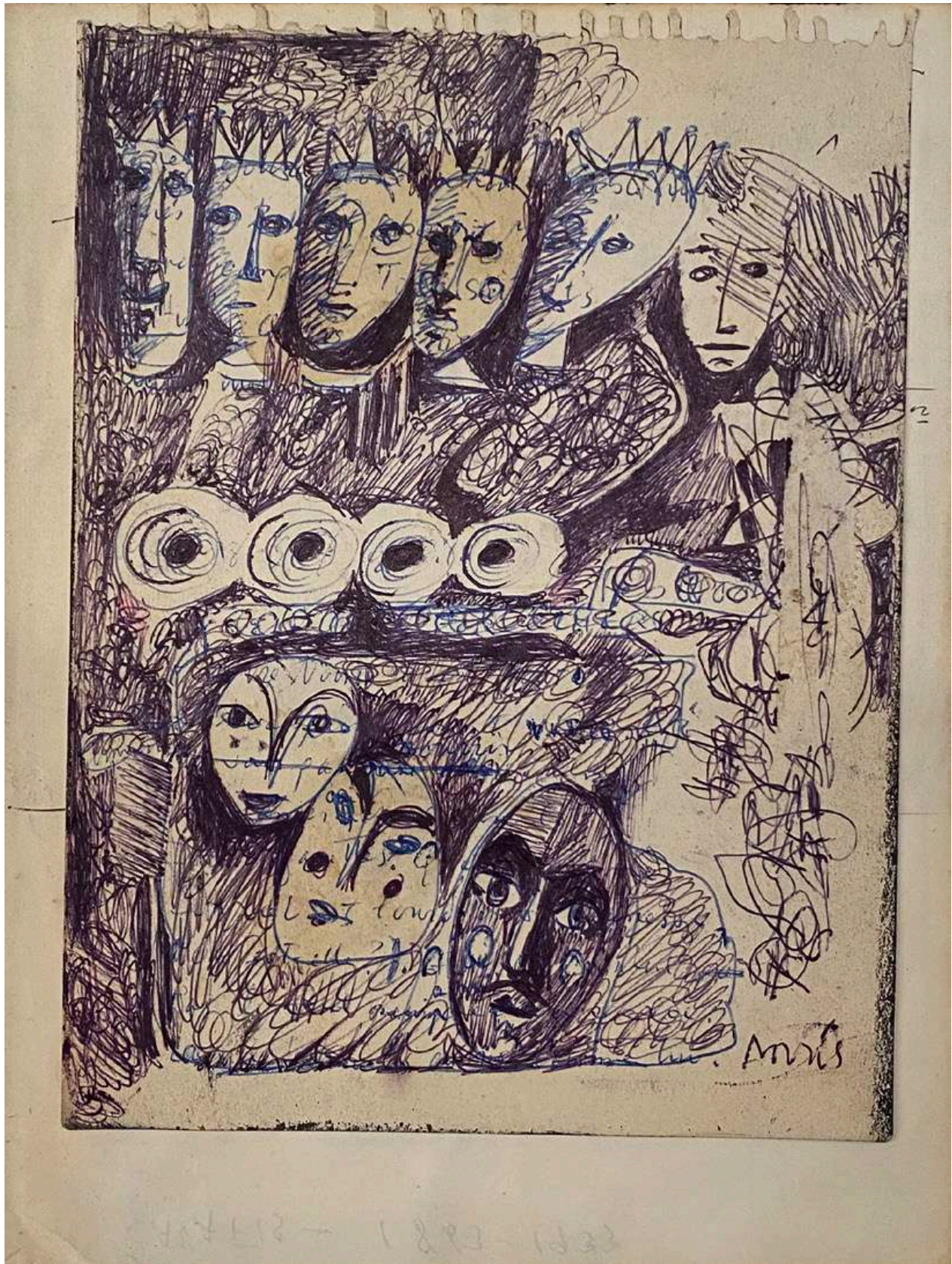
“The suggestion that each work is a puzzle to be dissected and then reassembled gives way to the most obvious fact about Embry's oeuvre: it is his diary. ... It is almost with a sense of embarrassment that one must approach an artist so open and willing to share with the viewer all that he is.”

Tom L. Freudenheim



NORRIS EMBRY

Untitled, circa 1960s
mixed media on paper
8 1/2 x 6 1/2 inches (21.6 x 16.5 cm)
NE059



NORRIS EMBRY

Untitled, circa 1960s
mixed media on paper
8 1/2 x 6 1/2 inches (21.6 x 16.5 cm)
NE061



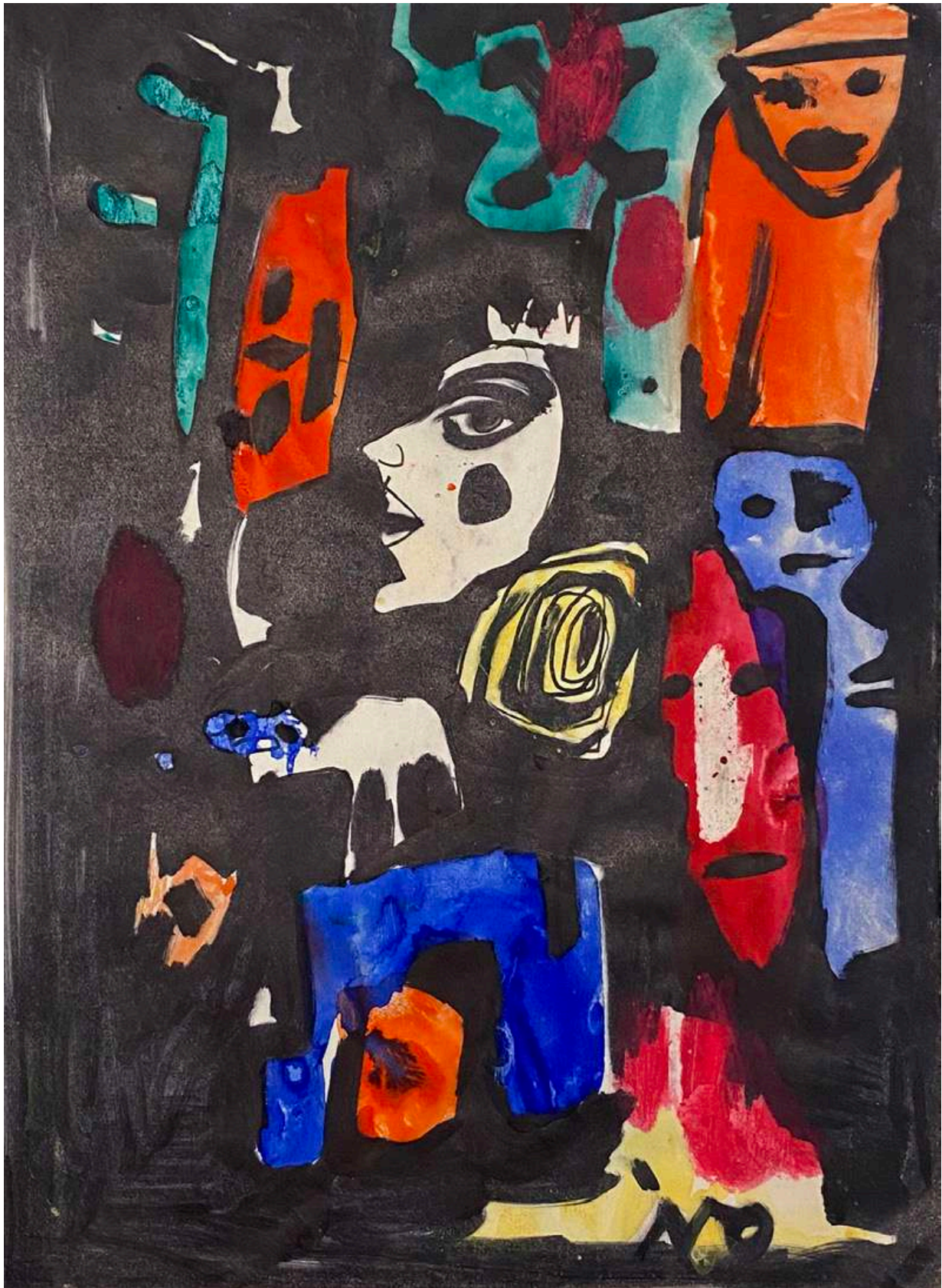
NORRIS EMBRY

Untitled, circa 1960s
mixed media on paper
8 1/2 x 6 1/2 inches (21.6 x 16.5 cm)
NE062



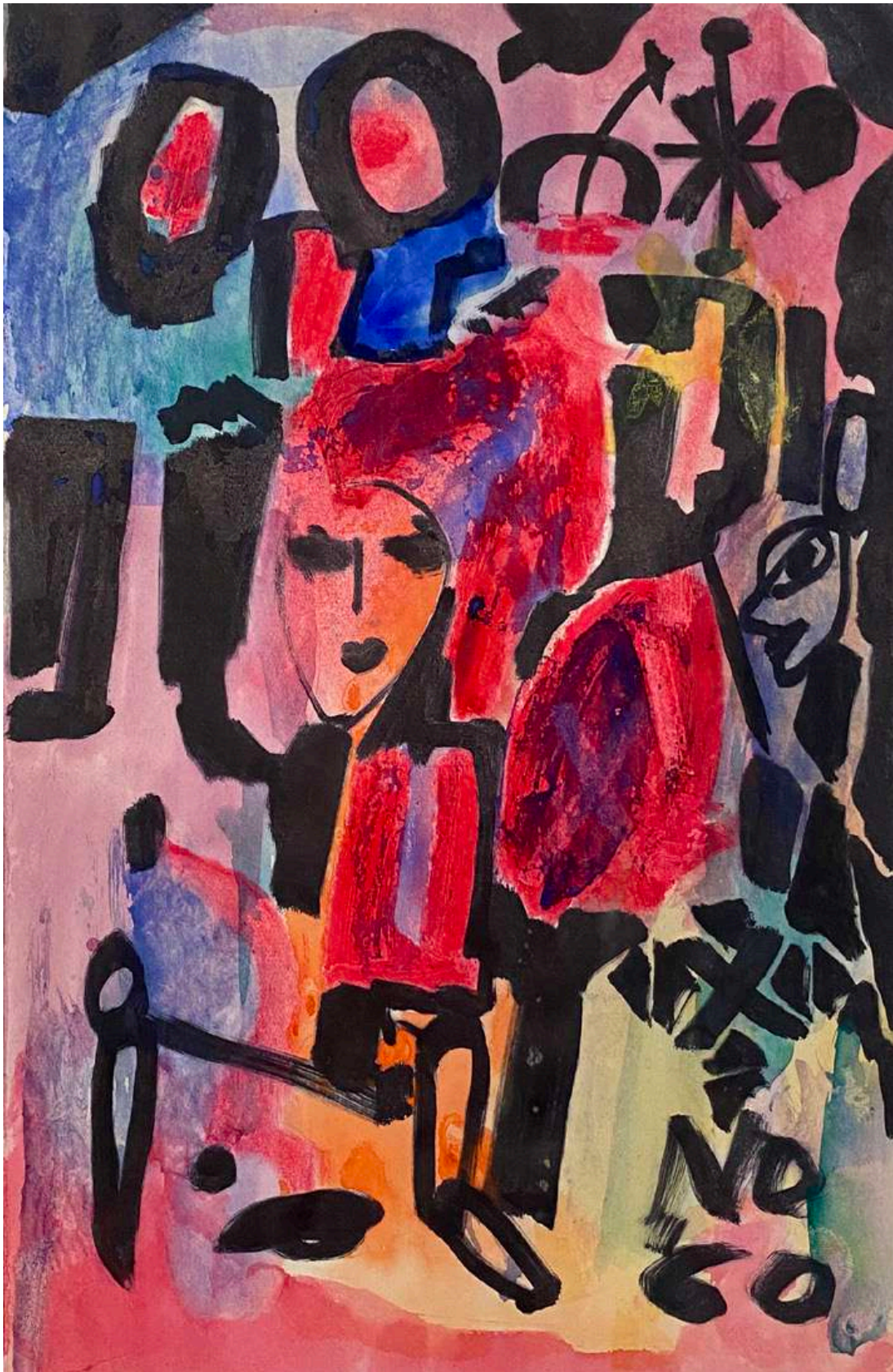
NORRIS EMBRY

Untitled, circa 1960s
mixed media on paper
8 1/2 x 6 1/2 inches (21.6 x 16.5 cm)
NE063



NORRIS EMBRY

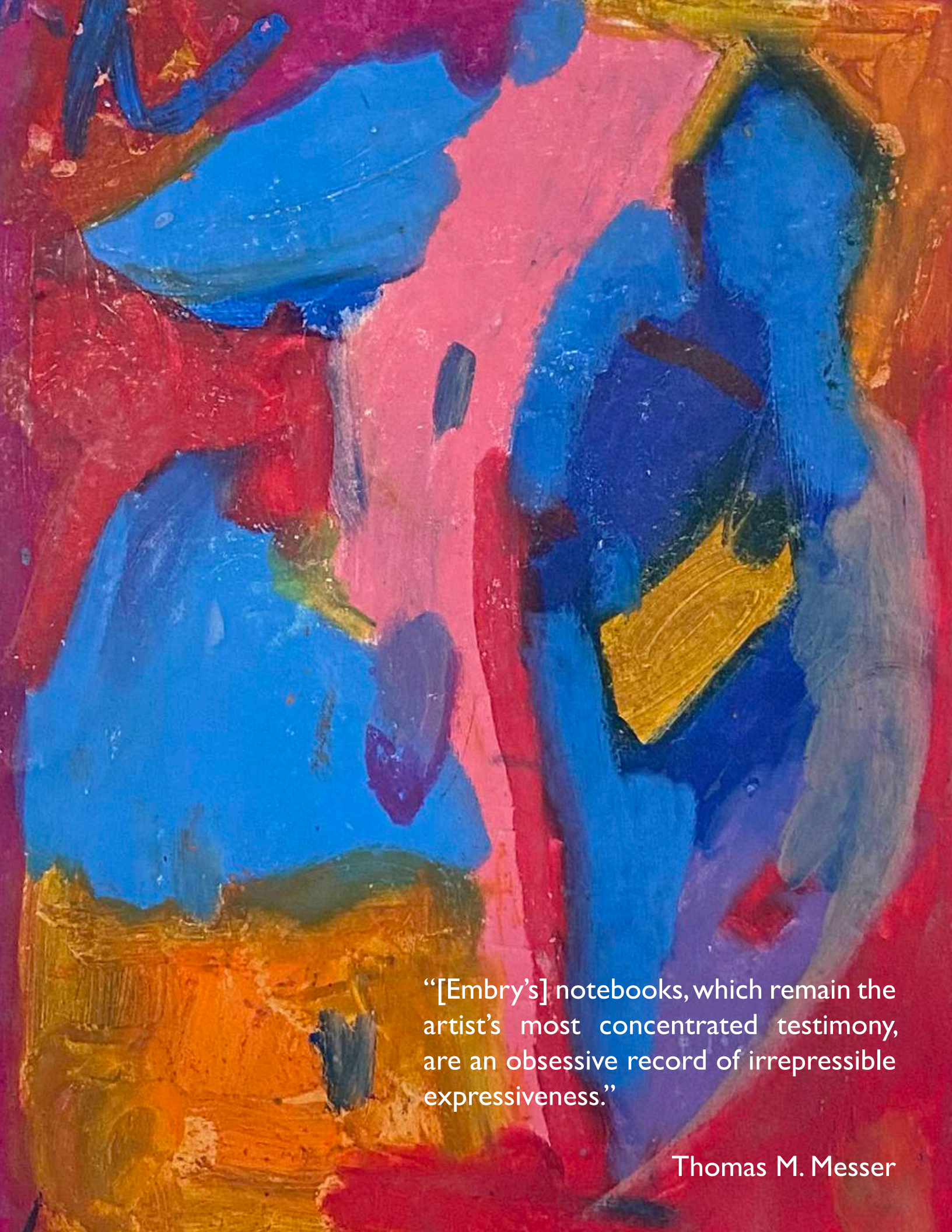
Untitled, circa 1960s
mixed media on paper
8 1/2 x 6 1/2 inches (21.6 x 16.5 cm)
NE064



NORRIS EMBRY

Untitled, circa 1960s
mixed media on paper
8 1/2 x 6 1/2 inches (21.6 x 16.5 cm)
NE066



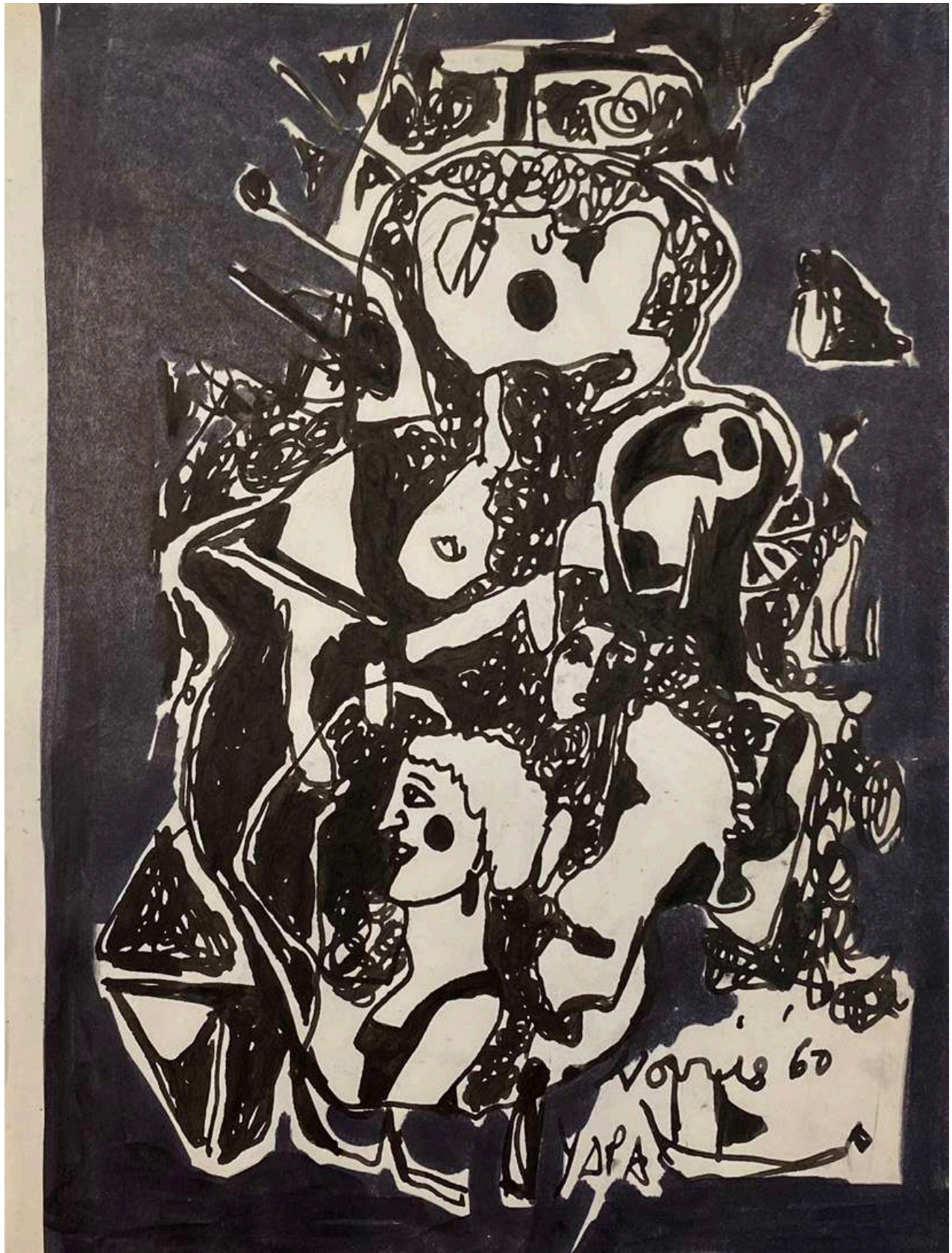


“[Embry’s] notebooks, which remain the artist’s most concentrated testimony, are an obsessive record of irrepressible expressiveness.”

Thomas M. Messer

NORRIS EMBRY

Untitled, circa 1960s
mixed media on paper
8 1/2 x 6 1/2 inches (21.6 x 16.5 cm)
NE067



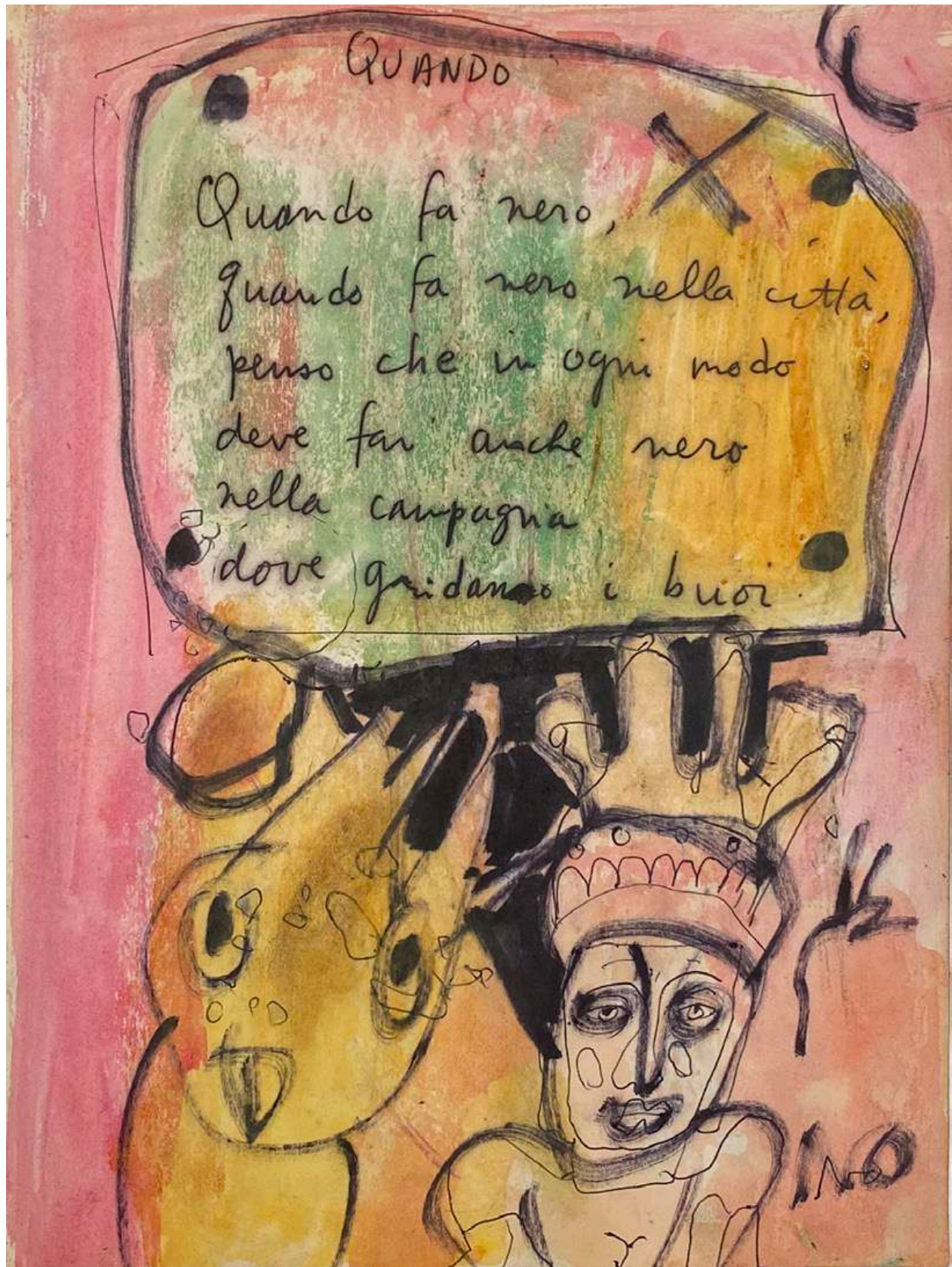
NORRIS EMBRY

Untitled, circa 1960s
mixed media on paper
8 1/2 x 6 1/2 inches (21.6 x 16.5 cm)
NE068



NORRIS EMBRY

Untitled, circa 1960s
mixed media on paper
8 1/2 x 6 1/2 inches (21.6 x 16.5 cm)
NE069



NORRIS EMBRY

Untitled, circa 1960s
mixed media on paper
8 1/2 x 6 1/2 inches (21.6 x 16.5 cm)
NE070 (verso of NE069)



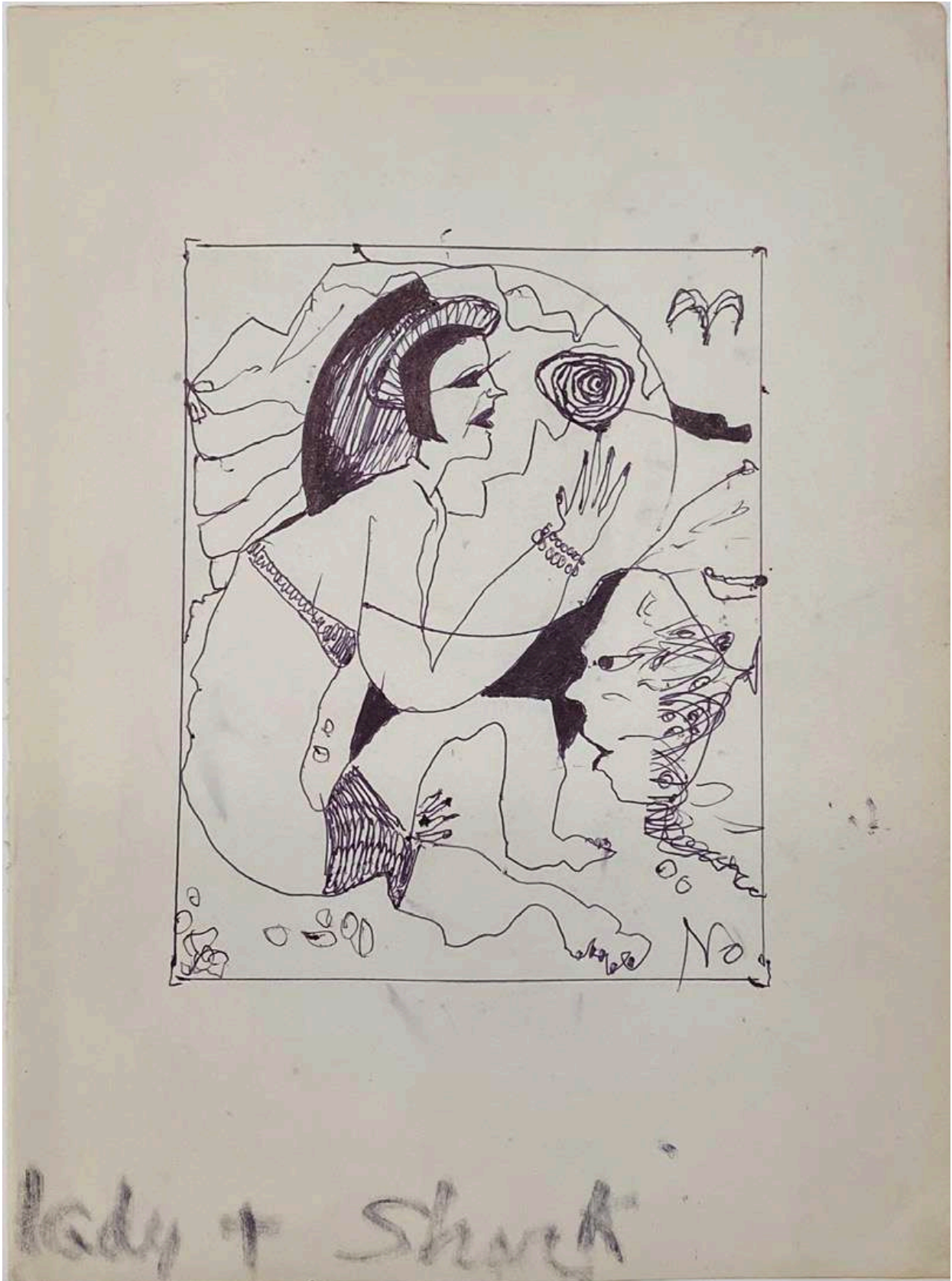
NORRIS EMBRY

Untitled, circa 1960s
mixed media on paper
8 1/2 x 6 1/2 inches (21.6 x 16.5 cm)
NE072



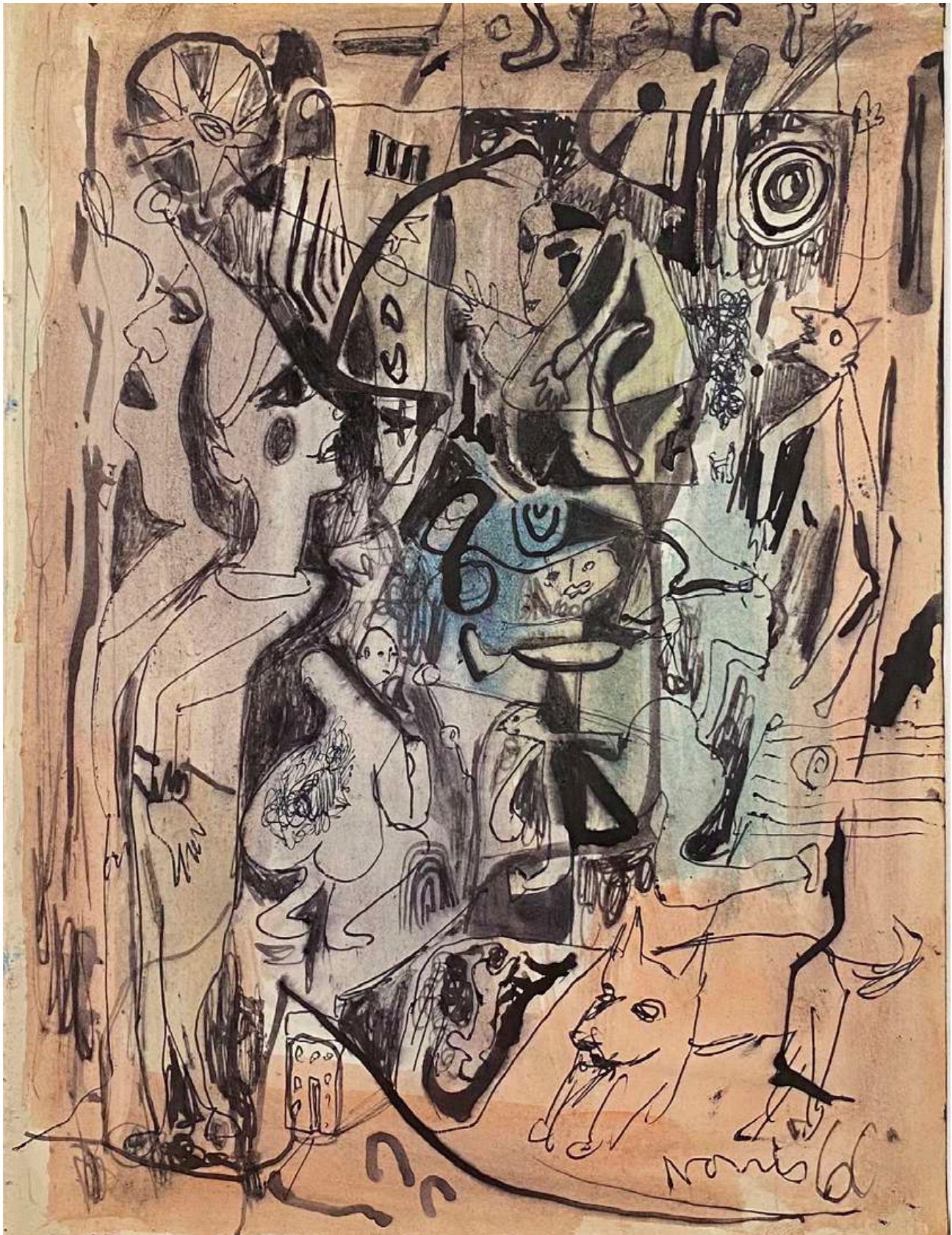
NORRIS EMBRY

Untitled, circa 1960s
mixed media on paper
8 1/2 x 6 1/2 inches (21.6 x 16.5 cm)
NE073



NORRIS EMBRY

Untitled, circa 1960s
mixed media on paper
8 1/2 x 6 1/2 inches (21.6 x 16.5 cm)
NE074



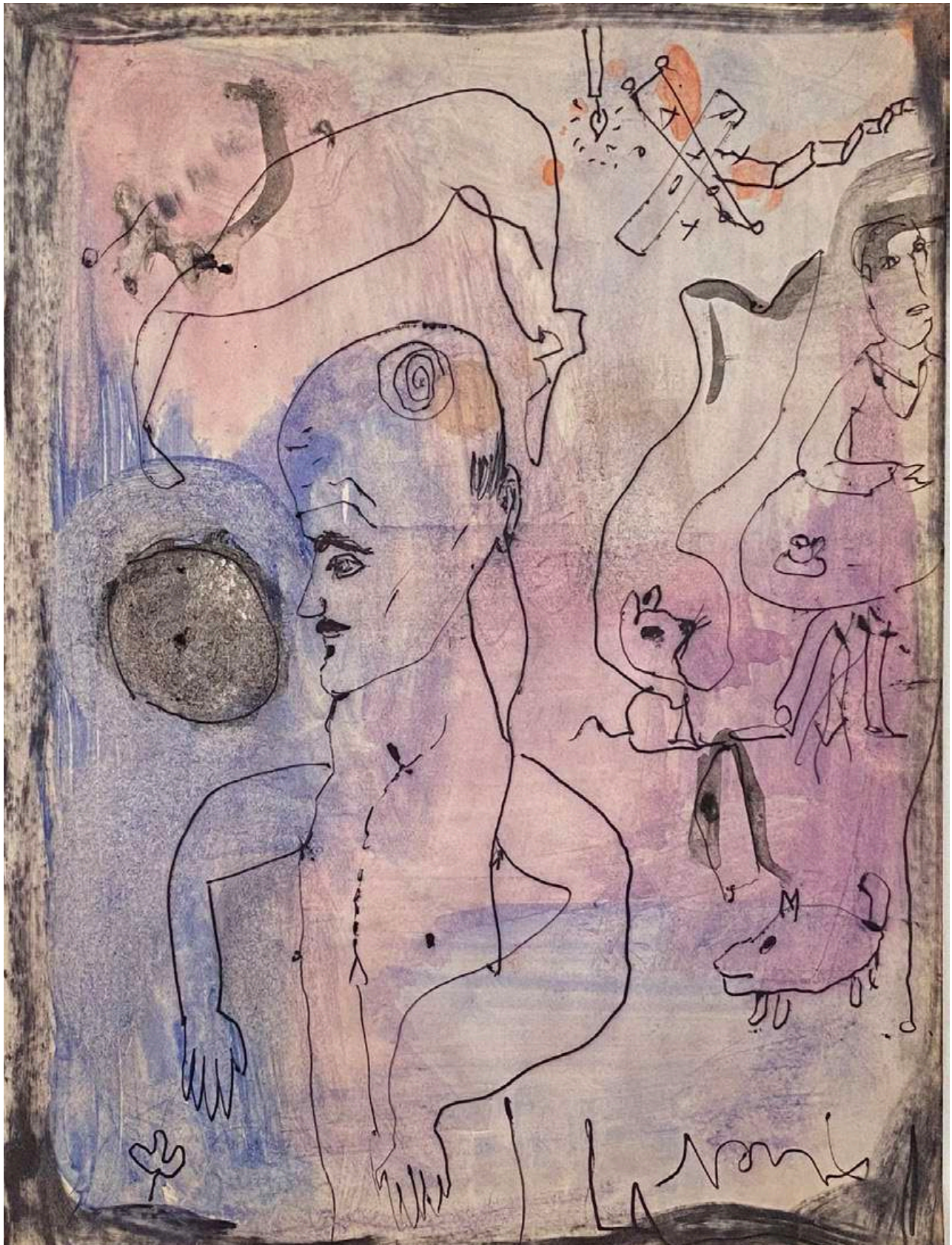
NORRIS EMBRY

Untitled, circa 1960s
mixed media on paper
8 1/2 x 6 1/2 inches (21.6 x 16.5 cm)
NE075 (verso of NE074)



NORRIS EMBRY

Untitled, circa 1960s
mixed media on paper
8 1/2 x 6 1/2 inches (21.6 x 16.5 cm)
NE077



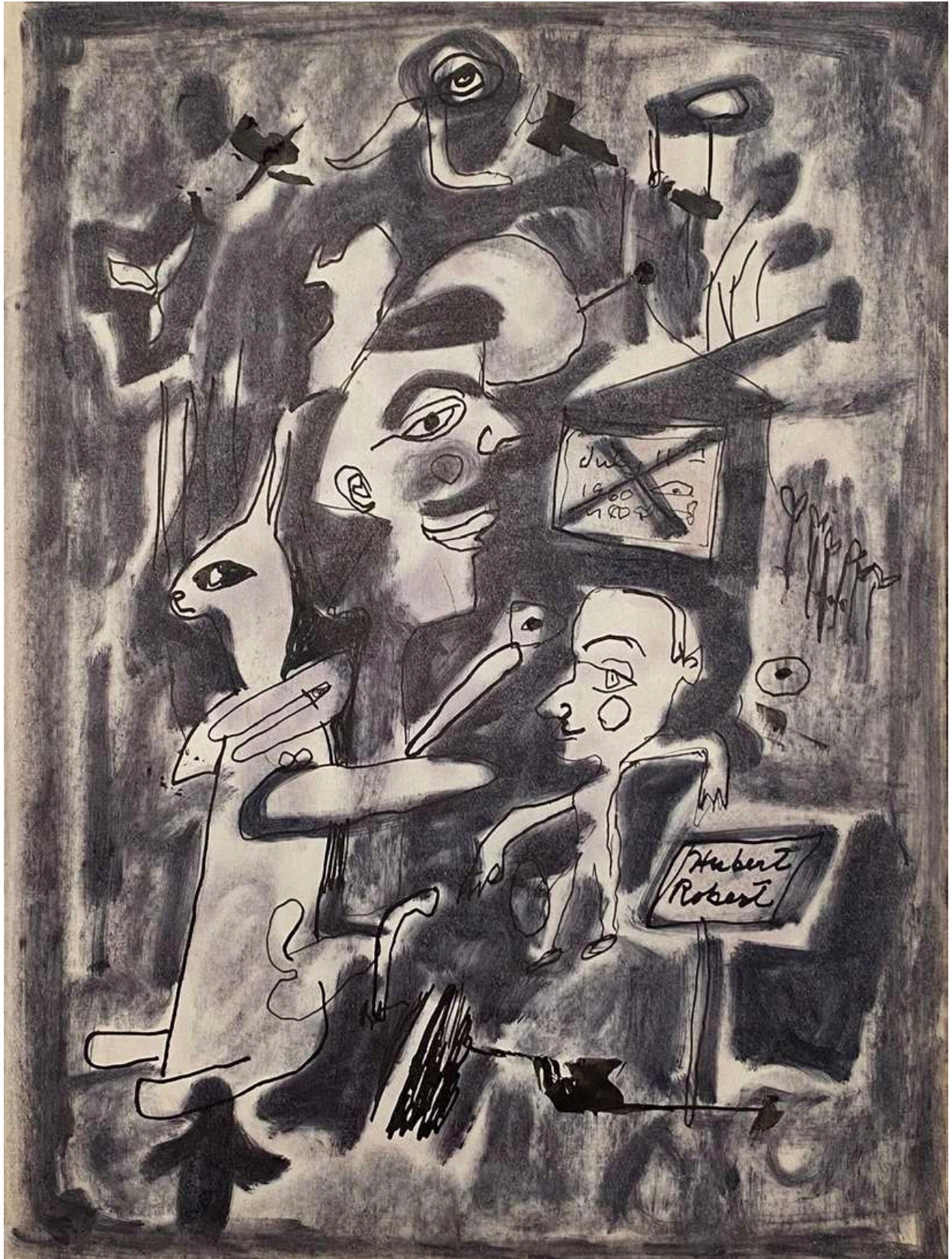
NORRIS EMBRY

Untitled, circa 1960s
mixed media on paper
8 1/2 x 6 1/2 inches (21.6 x 16.5 cm)
NE078



NORRIS EMBRY

Untitled, circa 1960s
mixed media on paper
8 1/2 x 6 1/2 inches (21.6 x 16.5 cm)
NE079



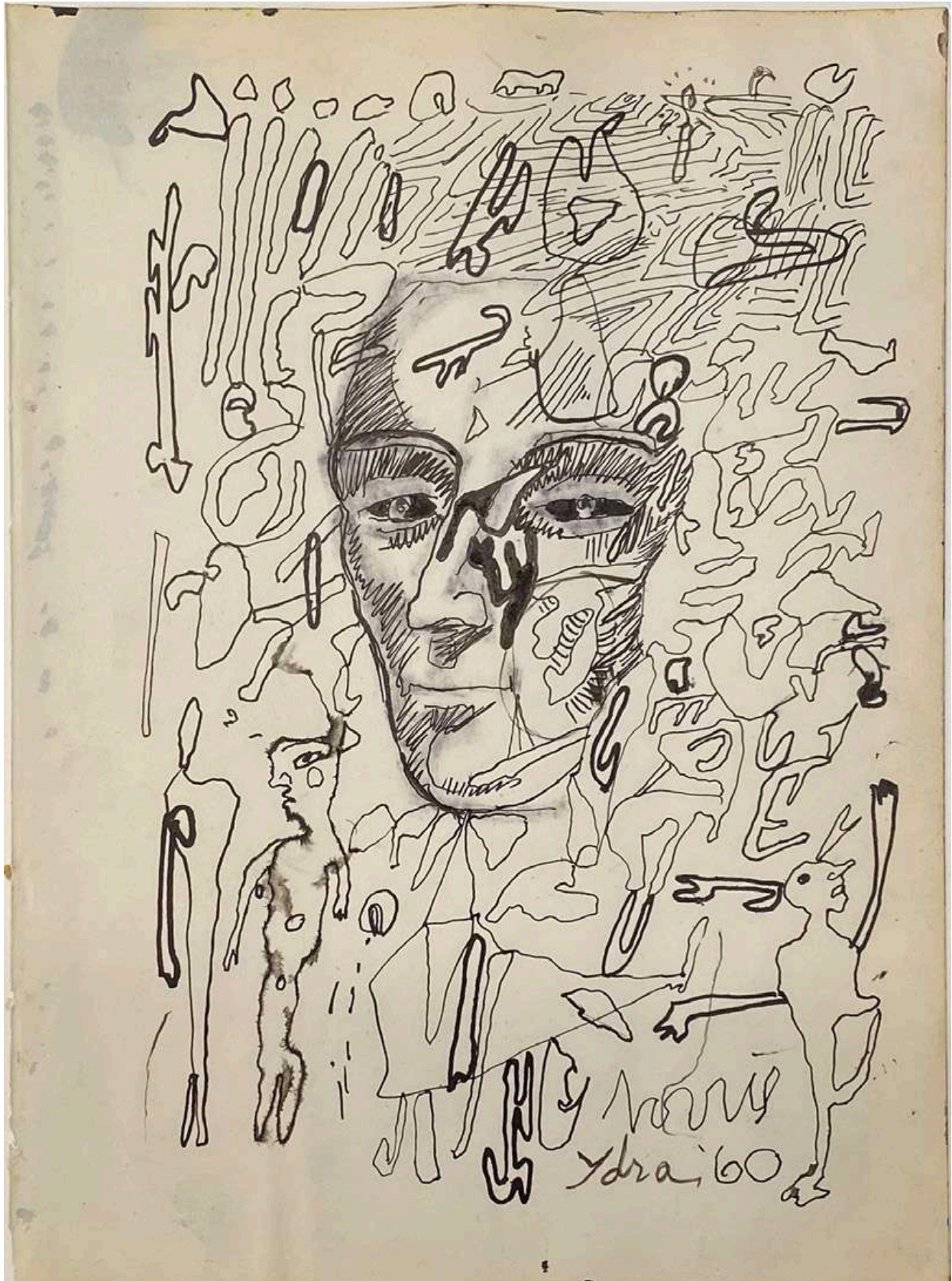
NORRIS EMBRY

Untitled, circa 1960s
mixed media on paper
8 1/2 x 6 1/2 inches (21.6 x 16.5 cm)
NE080



NORRIS EMBRY

Untitled, circa 1960s
mixed media on paper
8 1/2 x 6 1/2 inches (21.6 x 16.5 cm)
NE081



NORRIS EMBRY

Untitled, circa 1960s
mixed media on paper
8 1/2 x 6 1/2 inches (21.6 x 16.5 cm)
NE082



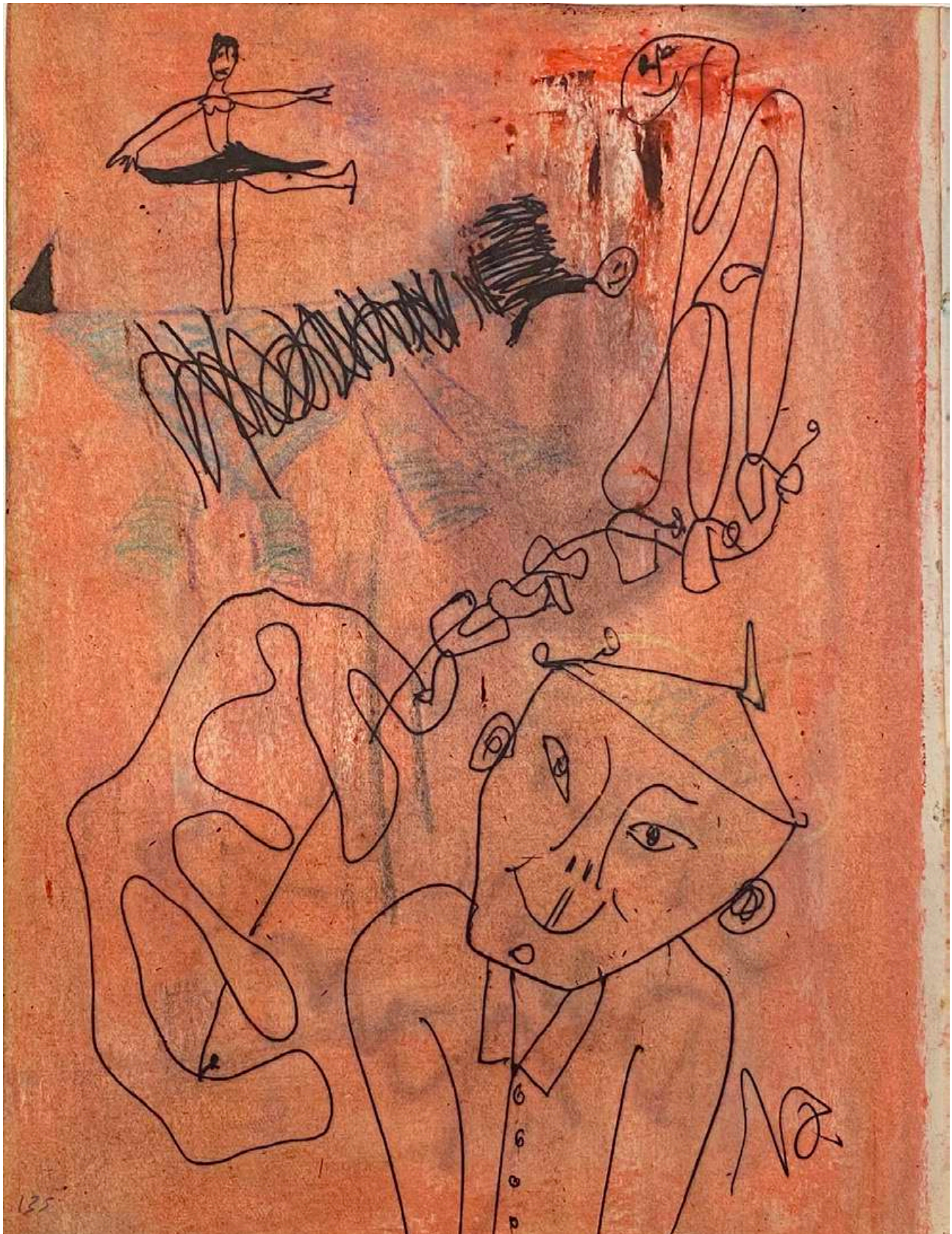
NORRIS EMBRY

Untitled, circa 1960s
mixed media on paper
8 1/2 x 6 1/2 inches (21.6 x 16.5 cm)
NE083



NORRIS EMBRY

Untitled, circa 1960s
mixed media on paper
8 1/2 x 6 1/2 inches (21.6 x 16.5 cm)
NE085



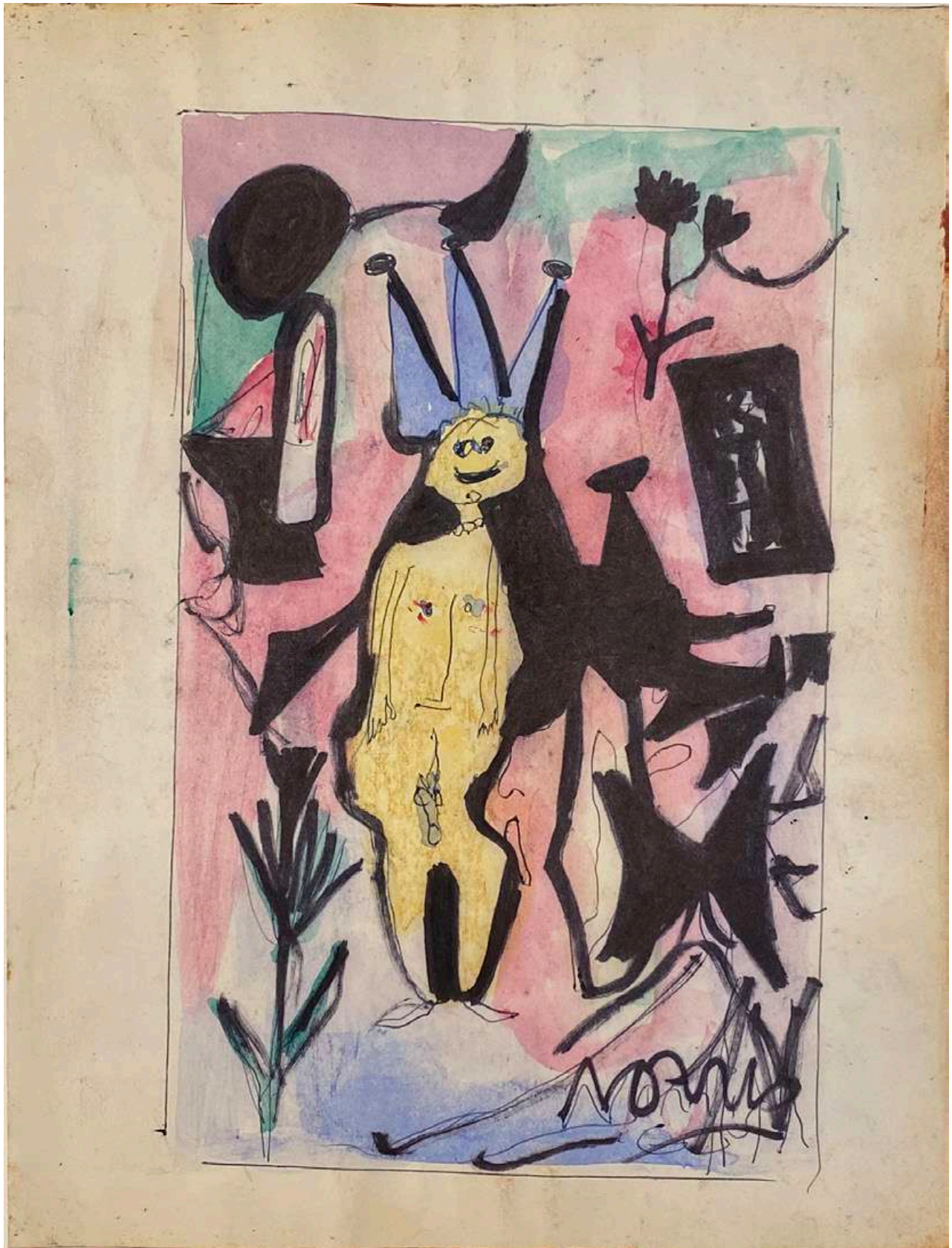
NORRIS EMBRY

Untitled, circa 1960s
mixed media on paper
8 1/2 x 6 1/2 inches (21.6 x 16.5 cm)
NE086



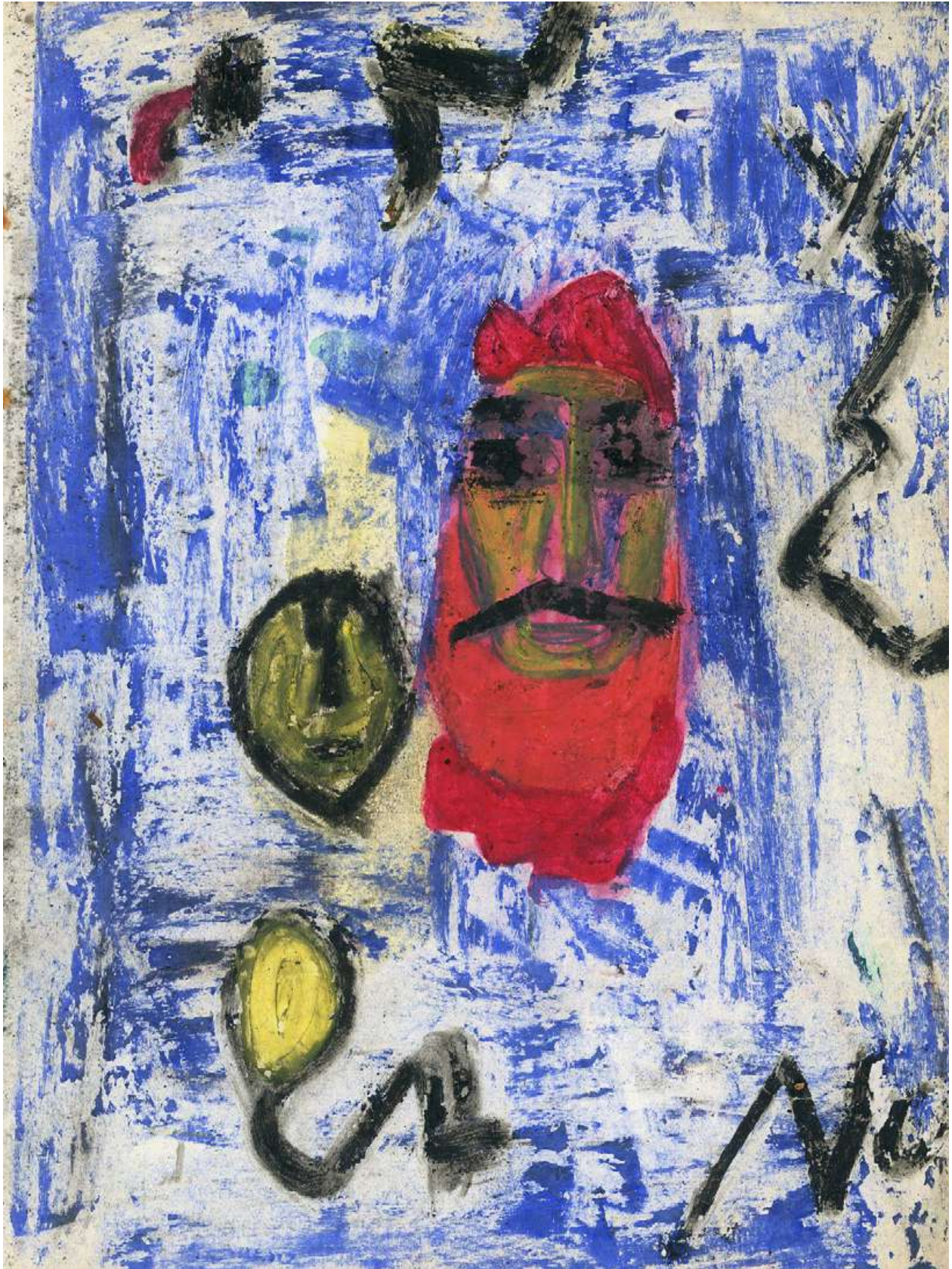
NORRIS EMBRY

Untitled, circa 1960s
mixed media on paper
8 1/2 x 6 1/2 inches (21.6 x 16.5 cm)
NE110



NORRIS EMBRY

Untitled, circa 1960s
mixed media on paper
8 1/2 x 6 1/2 inches (21.6 x 16.5 cm)
NE111



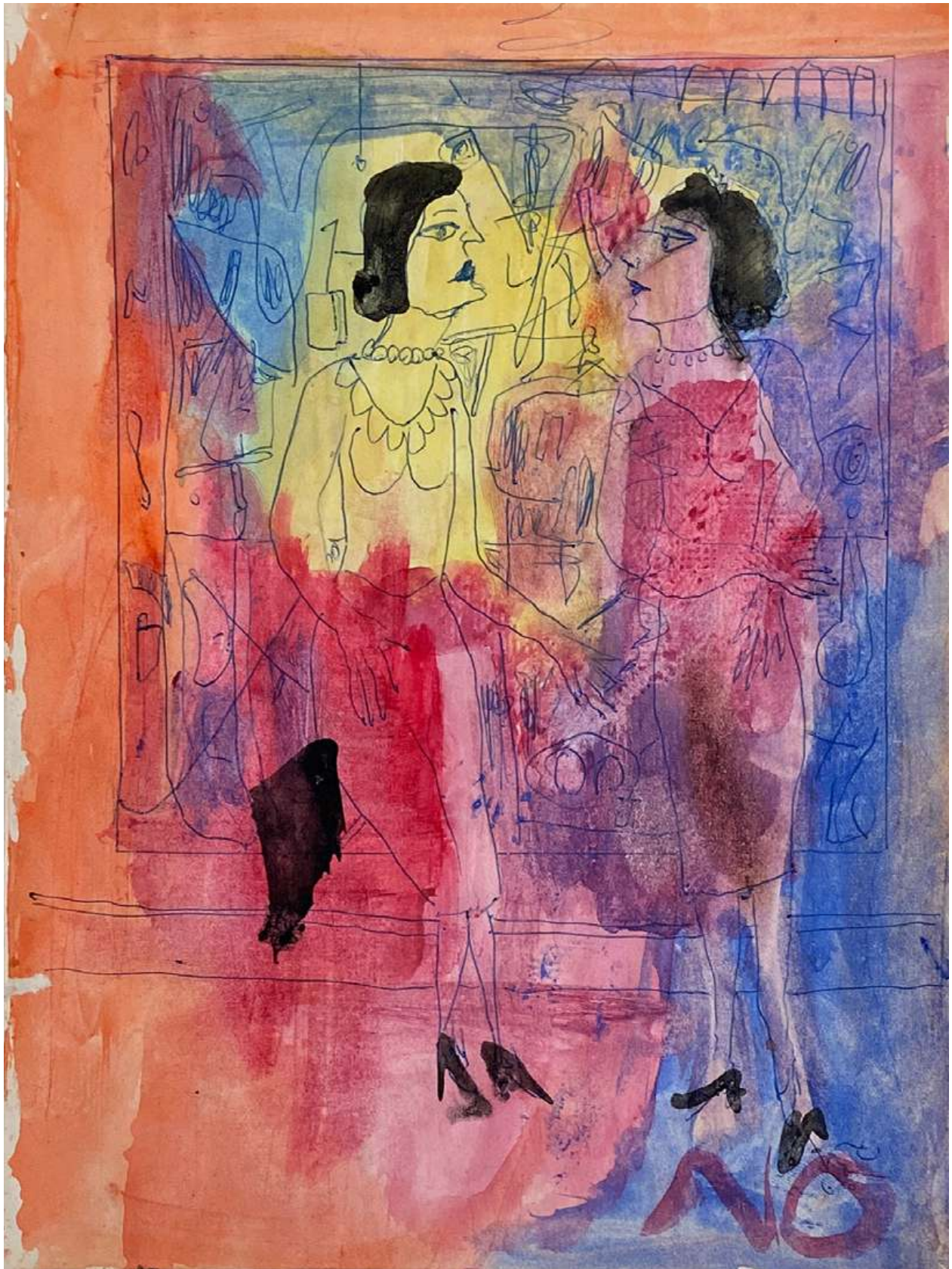
NORRIS EMBRY

Untitled, circa 1960s
mixed media on paper
8 1/2 x 6 1/2 inches (21.6 x 16.5 cm)
NE113



NORRIS EMBRY

Untitled, circa 1960s
mixed media on paper
8 1/2 x 6 1/2 inches (21.6 x 16.5 cm)
NE114



NORRIS EMBRY

Untitled, circa 1960s
mixed media on paper
6 1/2 x 8 1/2 inches (16.5 x 21.6 cm)
NE115



Outsider Art Fair, New York, 2017



NORRIS EMBRY



James Barron Art
April 27
13

NORRIS EMBRY: BIG EXPLOSION



NORRIS EMBRY: BIG EXPLOSION

John Beardsley / Catalogue Essay for
Scios Nova Presents Works by Norris Embry
May 5 – 8, 1996, NY

Norris Embry (1921 – 1981) was a prolific artist who filled notebook after notebook with densely-wrought, lavishly-colored compositions combining edgy figures and totemic faces with random shapes and written notations, all of which constituted a kind of visual diary of his life. He was also diagnosed as schizophrenic. But his art and his illness are not one in the same. There are undoubtedly points of intersection between them, but they may be too subtle and too complex for the art historian or the psychiatrist separately to describe. We should be wary of the now too casual yoking of creativity and insanity, an association that has been with us at least since the first century when Seneca, paraphrasing Aristotle, declared that “There is no great genius without some touch of madness.” Creativity owes at least as much to outward as to inward conditions; it is as much an expression of cultural and social circumstances as mental health.

In the case of Norris Embry, this is especially true. Although he was largely self-taught as a painter, his work was hardly the unmediated expression of a controlling pathology. Nor, according to those who knew him, was its primary value to him as a diagnostic or therapeutic tool. Embry was cultured, well-read, and widely-traveled, with connections to artists in the United States and Europe that shaped his art as much as, if not more than, any illness. He studied for one summer as a young man at the Art Institute of Chicago and for a few weeks in 1949 with the Austrian painter Oskar Kokoschka in Italy. His work shows a familiarity with various European expressionist styles, especially the figurative expressionism of Kokoschka’s early years, when he depicted distorted, even emaciated figures with dark outlines. Embry’s work also suggests a debt to the abstract expressionism of the German artist Wols (Alfred Otto Wolfgang Schulze), whom Embry befriended in Paris in the early 1950s and whose painting blended networks of nervous lines and splotches of color and scumbled surfaces...

Notwithstanding the horror of mental illness, Embry seems to have recognized its potential for inspiring creative expression in other people. He developed a life-long interest in the art of the mentally ill, to which he was introduced through a German friend, a psychologist named Gertie Siemsen, during one of his extended sojourns in Europe. Siemsen had inherited a copy of Hans Prinzhorn’s 1922 book *Bildneri der Geisteskranken* (Artistry of the mentally ill) from her father, which documented the pioneering collection of art by mental

patients put together by the Heidelberg psychiatrist in the late 'teens and early 1920s. This book became something of an underground bible for Surrealists such as Max Ernst and Andre Breton, for whom mental illness was one of the most compelling paradigms of unmediated creativity. From time to time, Embry too seems to have looked to the art of the mentally ill, perhaps as inspiration, perhaps as confirmation of the direction in his own work...

In the end, it may be impossible to say whether Embry's art was more disease-driven or culturally-determined. It may not even be that important a question. The more empathic response to his art might recognize it as an alternate world to which he retreated when he could. In this paradigm, his painting would not be seen as a direct result of his illness, but as an attempt to master it. It would be a strategy to give shape to an overwhelming mass of undifferentiated sensory data and an antidote to a life of extreme emotional isolation. This is the paradigm I prefer. Surely in his life Embry earned our empathy. In his death, let us celebrate his compelling and masterful art.



NORRIS EMBRY