

HOW I SEE MYSELF February 22, 2011

By Michael Erlewine (Michael@Erlewine.net)

I have not shared some of these images even with my family so I hesitate to post them here but I figure: what the hell. What can anyone do to me that age itself has not already managed? And the idea of learning to draw your self has been very useful to me at very different times in my life. I never even trained in art. My mother was a fine artist (as in: fine arts) and therefore all her five boys know how to draw to some degree.

Also I have been working a lot with the concept of how the self (as in you, yourself) plays into mind training and developing awareness. We all have a self and to one degree or another are selfish. It is only a matter of degree. We can't get away from it. It is like the proverbial tar baby. The more we struggle, the more stuck we are. You are no different.

That being said, I have been studying how might we use the self and our innate selfishness to become more aware and (please forgive me for the pun or whatever it is) to get over our self. It won't be by punishing ourselves, beating ourselves up, getting down on ourselves because we are being selfish. etc. In other words, you will never be able to keep your "self" at a distance, because (to whatever degree we can agree on) you are yourself. You see how that is impossible, right?

So I prefer to go the other way (If you can't beat them, join them). I am all about finding out more about our self to the point of discovering the self is not such a big deal, and certainly not worth all this worry society does about it. After all, it is just our self, much like a personal assistant, perhaps a selfish one, but who would expect the self to not be, well, self-ish. Make sense?

I find it easier to be kind to myself, give it what it needs or at least a diet of what it thinks it wants, and put it out to pasture and let it be happy. "Don't take it so seriously" is my philosophy. It is not the best part of me, but there is no reason not to treat it like I would treat another person, as kindly as I can manage.

That being said, here are some portraits of (you guessed it) myself, some by others and some by myself itself – in person. For example, I love the self-portrait I did when I was six years old. I have no idea or memory of what I was thinking, but I love the little cut-milk-glass vase in the background. I still have it!

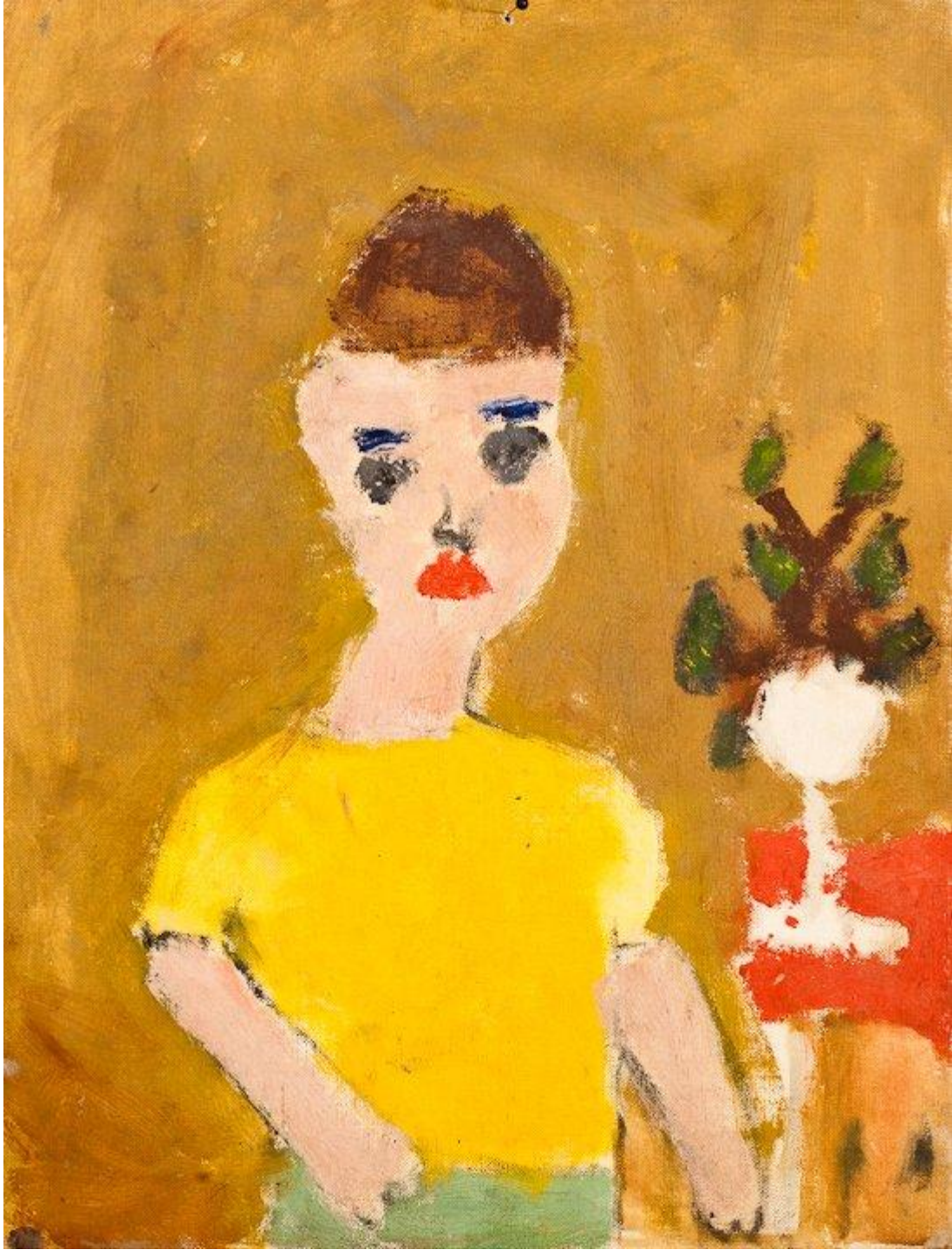
I have made some notes on each one to explain something about what was going on. A lot of these are what are called "contour drawings," which involve placing your pen on paper and then not looking at the paper but just at the subject... and drawing. I like them a lot and I have captured different moods and mind-storms in myself over the years on paper.

Don't be afraid to try this yourself. You don't have to let anyone see them. I haven't for the most part shown these to anyone and am doing so just now because: why not?

Anyone else do this? And here is a poem I wrote back in the 1960s about, you guessed it, myself.

Me, Myself, and I

I see myself,
To see my self,
To be:
Myself,
To see myself,
To be myself,
To see.



Six Years Old. First portrait.



Drawing of my in 1960 by Ed Newell, a fine artist, when I was living at the Gas House on Venice Beach in California. I then wanted to be an artist.



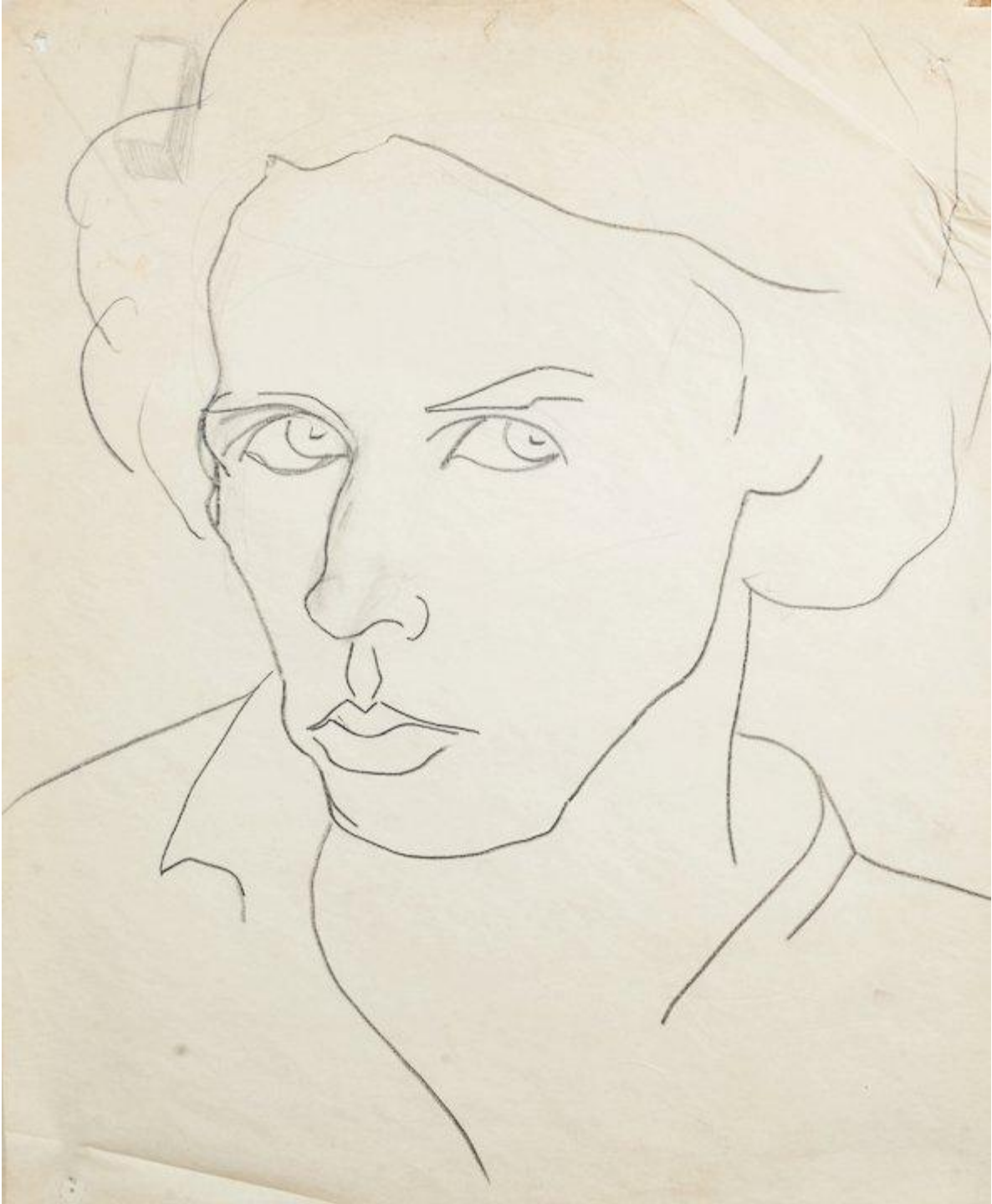
A portrait (a Batik) my mother made of me back in the day.



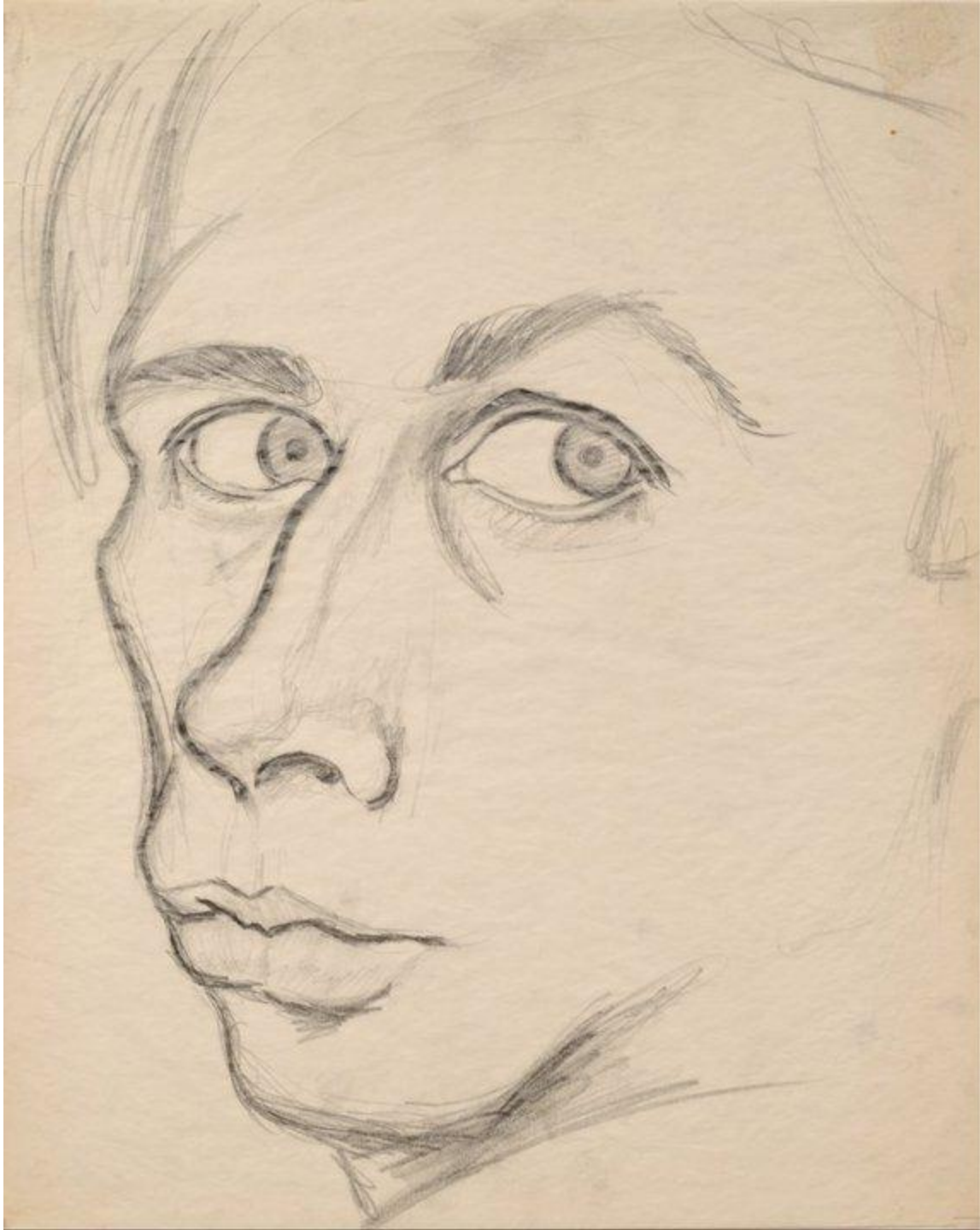
1960. A rough self portrait.... Venice Beach, Santa Monica. I was a beatnik at that point... or thought so.



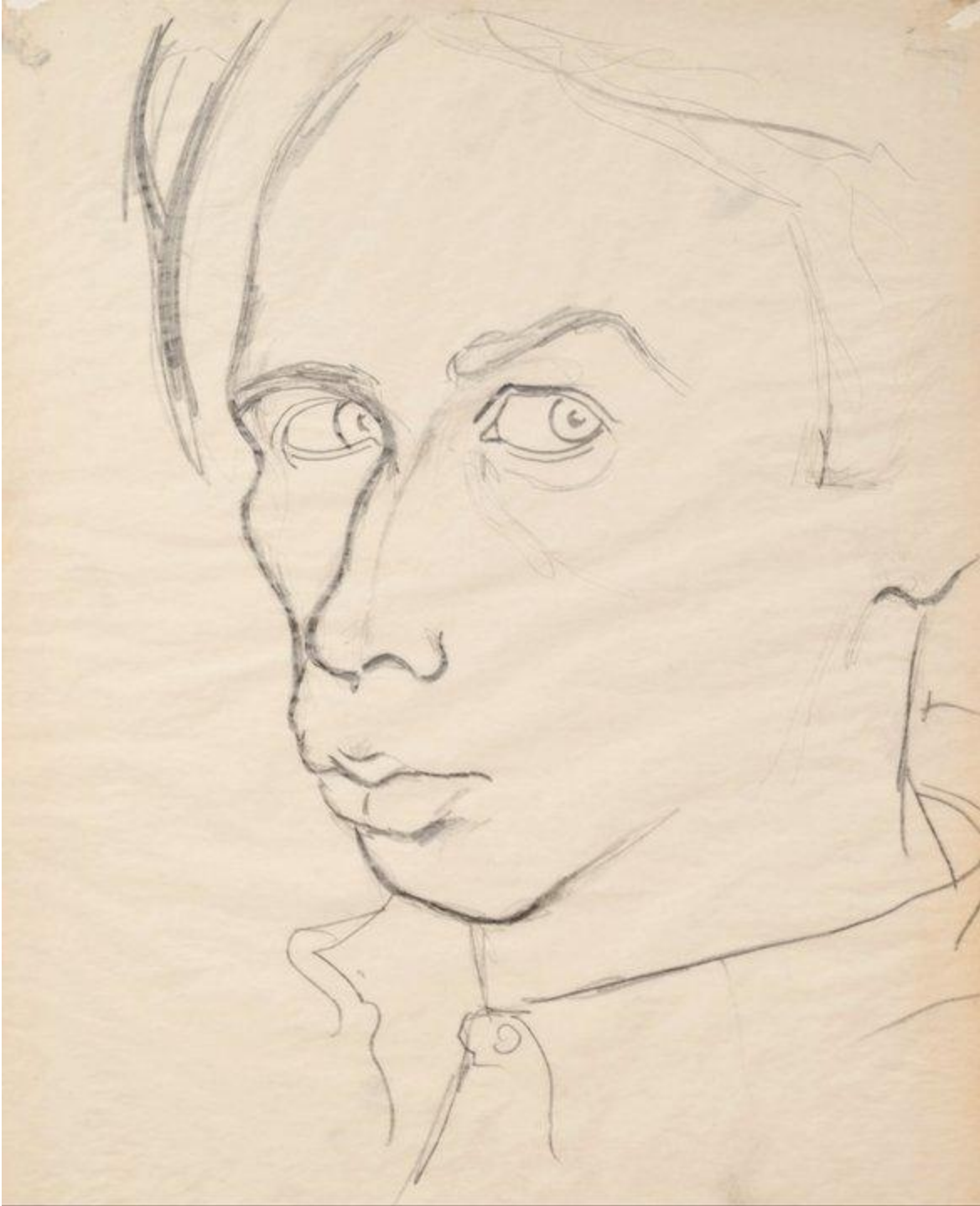
Mid-1960s. A contour drawing.



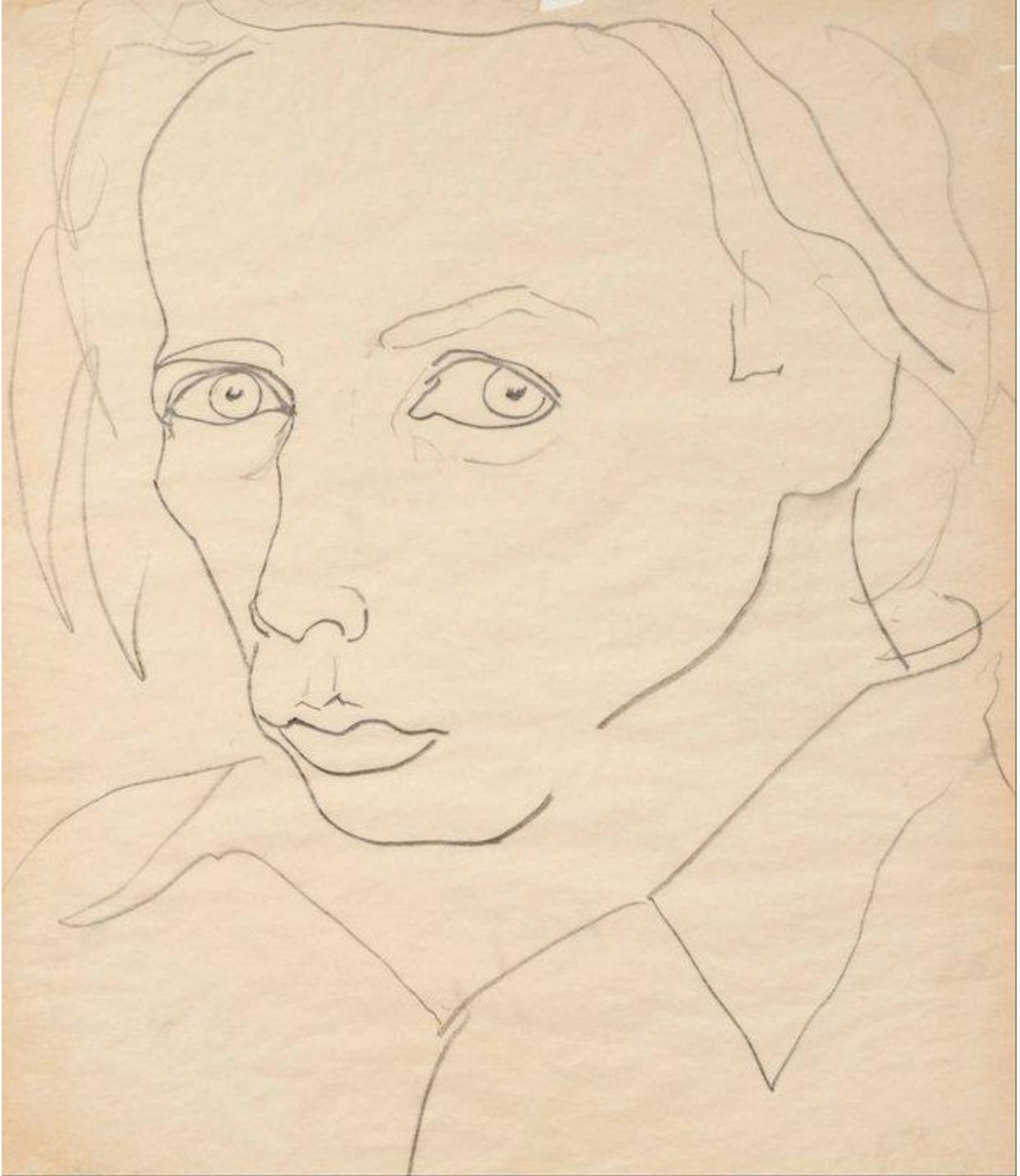
Mid-1960s. A contour drawing.



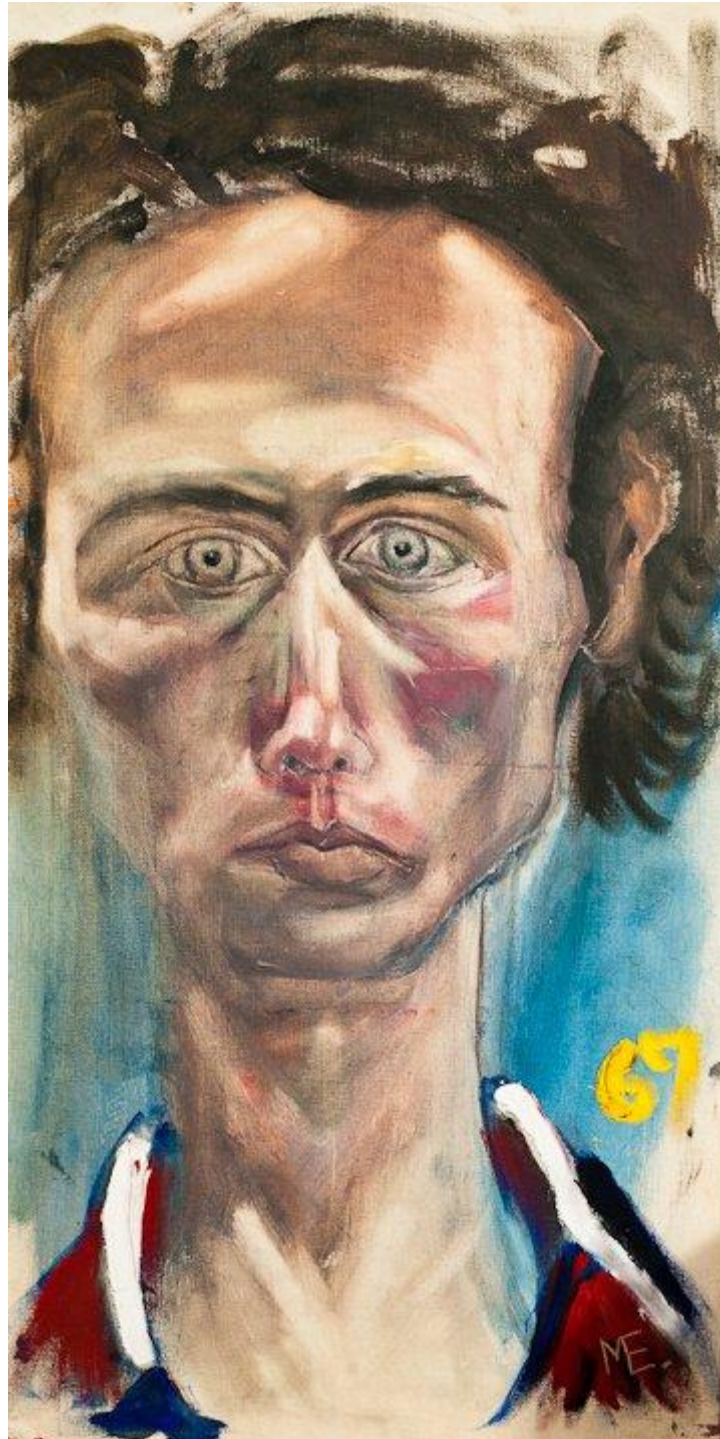
Mid-1960s. A contour drawing.



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June of 1967, done in my mom's basement using her acrylics. First attempt at a painting since I was a six year old. I was very awake then.