

MUGS:

ANTHROPOMETRIC PORTRAITS





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Overview

The customs official looks at my passport photograph and then looks at me. He asks me to remove my hat and sunglasses. His eyes dart back and forth between the photograph and me. What does he see? A tourist? A terrorist? A jittery soul? I have no idea. When I look at this overexposed drugstore mug shot, with blown out highlights and blurry details, I don't recognize myself. It could be someone else, yet this officially stamped photograph represents my personal and social identity to worldwide authorities.

Anthropometric photography, the measurement of the size and proportions of the human body, has its origins in conventions of mid-to-late nineteenth century portrait photography that demanded a sharp, frontal view of the head and shoulders with minimal facial expression. Commonly known as a police mug shot, it was considered so accurate that it would prevent any future attempt by an individual to claim a fictitious identity, thereby linking the physical body with criminal tendencies. When the mug shot was combined with textual data about an individual, the results could be indexed, sorted, accessed, and exchanged within and between government and law enforcement agencies. The outcomes were utilized to re-enforce stereotypical social theories and hierarchies, thus making the camera an essential tool of authoritarian regulation and control.

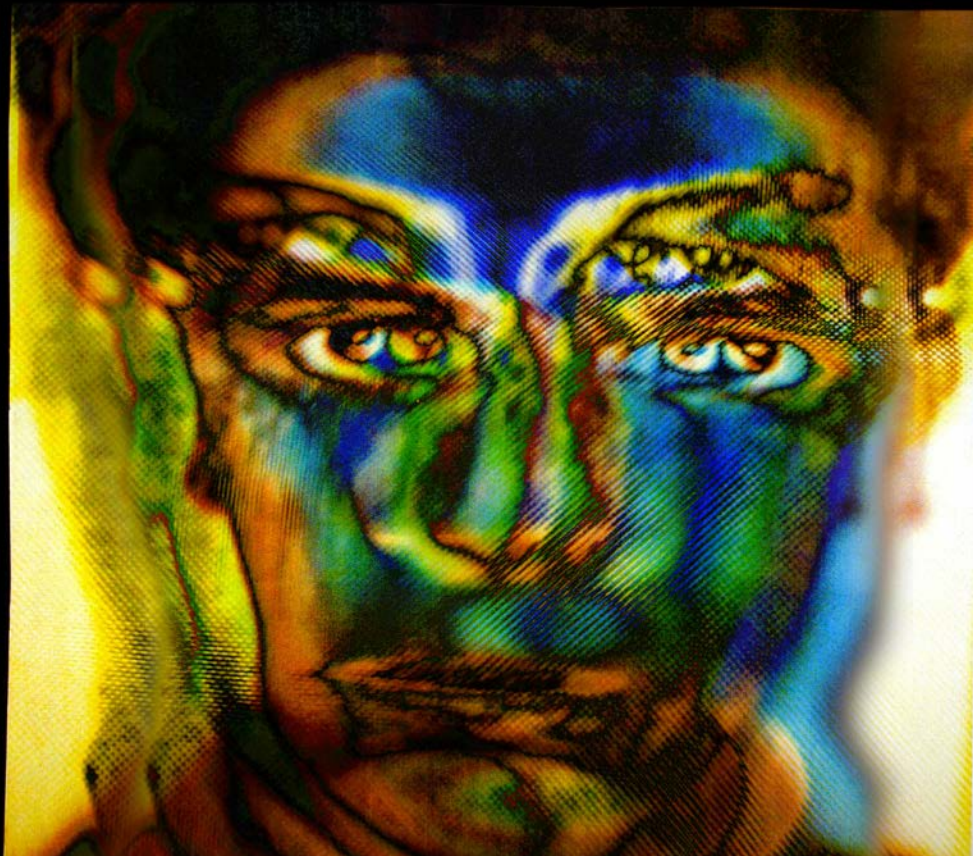
This body of work, consisting of prints, animations, three-dimensional image cubes, and a restructured Victorian Cabinet picture album, is based on the Higgins Pocket Gallery, 1934 compiled by James W. Higgins, who was the Buffalo New York Police Commissioner from 1934 -1937. Through the cross-pollination of haptic and electronic processes, the images transform these tiny, poorly mechanically reproduced mug shots demonstrating how all photographs are constructions whose end products should be interpreted by what is actually seen as opposed to confirming customary social expectations. The animations reinforce the subjective, fluid nature expressed in the melded images, demonstrating that outmoded notions of identity cannot be expressed or resolved in a monolithic frame. The bold hallucinatory colors dislocate reality, generating chimera-like mythical portraits composed of disparate parts.

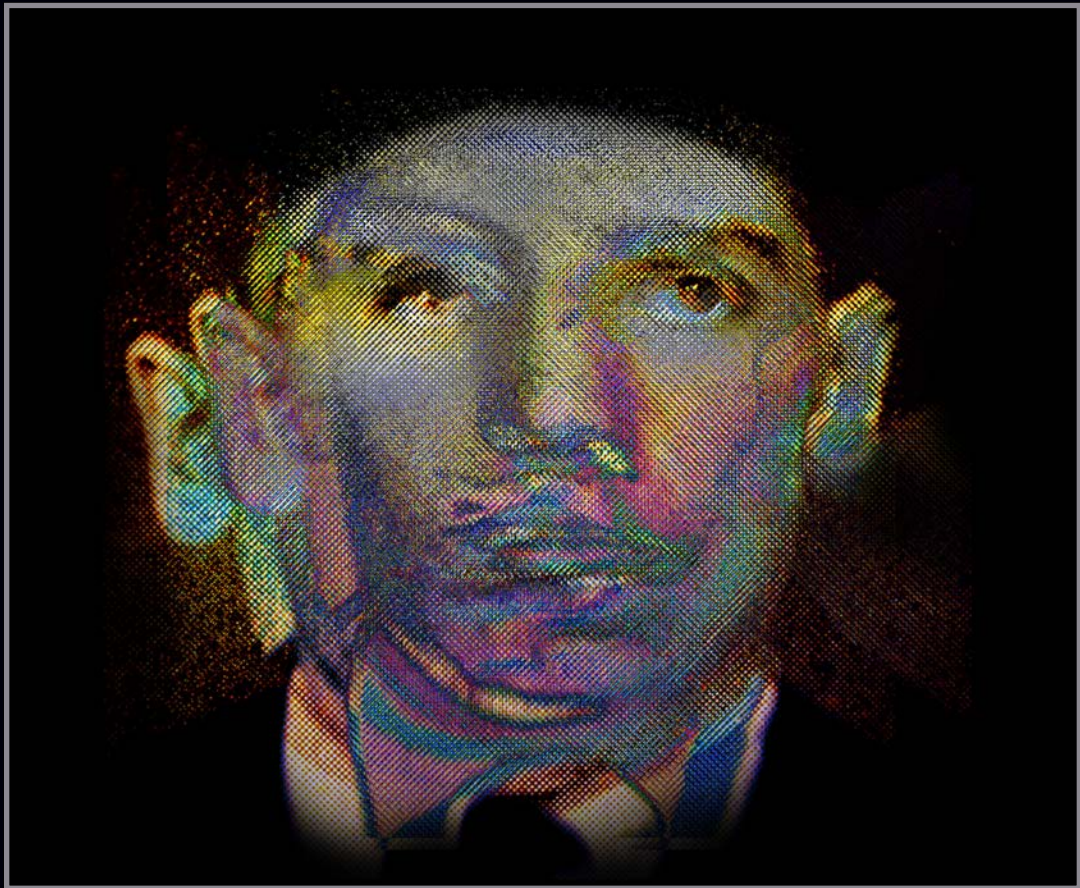
Rooted in allegory, these layered images get beneath the physical surface of the skin by linking visible features with the invisible subjective quantities. The process is a means of looking inside the otherwise opaque experience of consciousness that organizes human culture. The images grapple with a subject beyond its external physical features to examine the deep structures of cultural, political, and psychological models that inform the realities "behind" or beyond our history and societal values. They play against notions of race and social identity that negatively reinforce an us-versus-them dichotomy. From this standpoint, Mugs' approach is similar to taking a walk at sundown and observing that the day does not have an abrupt border with the night. Rather, it is a complex and often-indistinct progression filled with twists and turns, a penumbra of counterpoints, subtlety, and false appearances – an infinite matrix of compound tales – that indirectly confronts the subjective nature of photographic representation. Instead of defining archetypes, these images blur and upset the assumed dichotomy between individual separateness and group togetherness, finally resolving that we are all composite figures.

This simulacrum of catalogued subjects, who do not exist in the real world, addresses the intersections of self-awareness with visual rituals, technological change, and justice in our mediated world. The pictures explore such questions as: How do artists and creative technologists respond to, or intervene in, new technologies to create more equitable ways of seeing, sharing, and interpreting social identity? How does technology affect both democratized representation and privacy? What are the implications of representation and obfuscation in the age of artificial intelligence, big data, and amplified surveillance?

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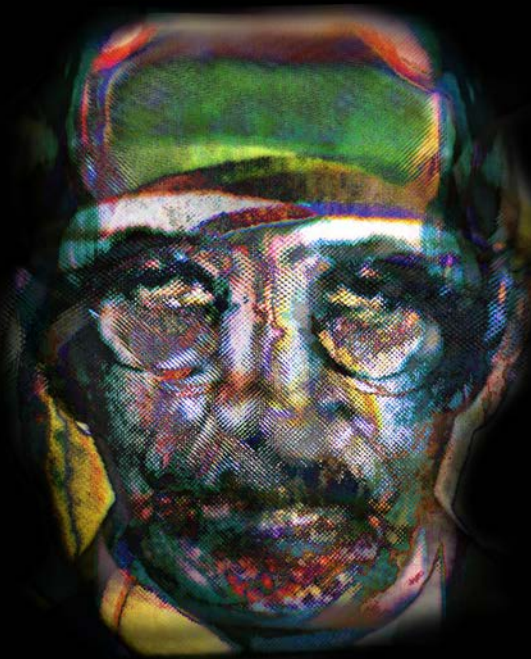
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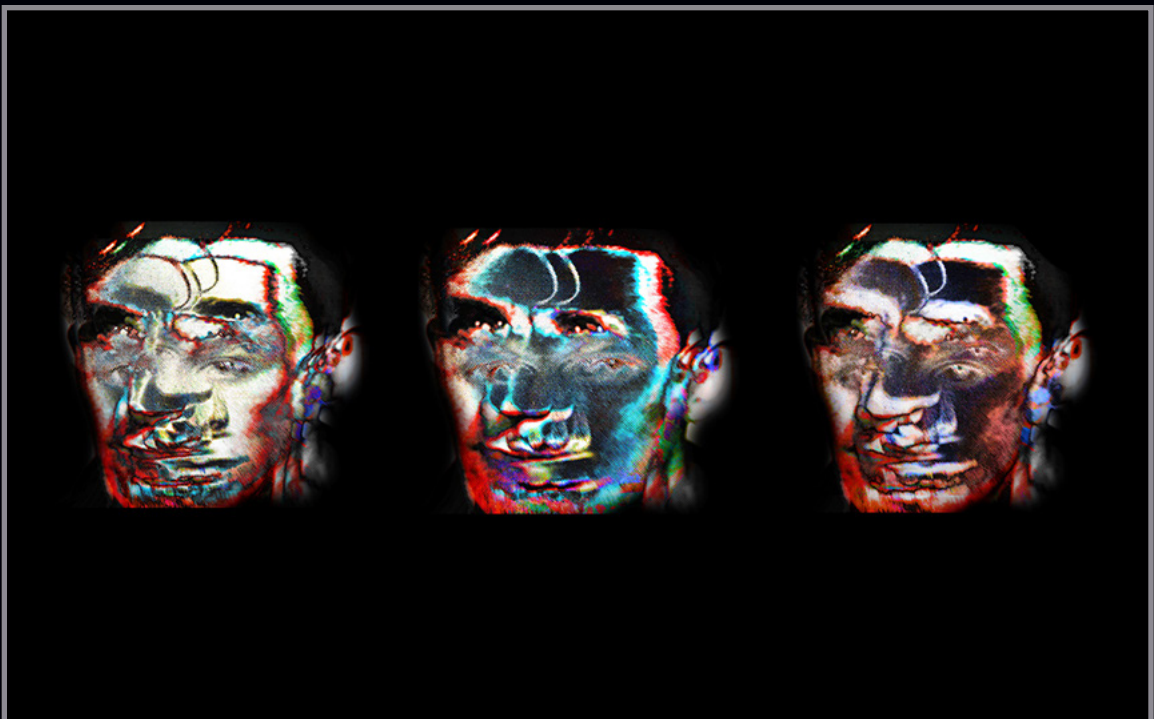


Single Image Portraits. Variable Dimensions. Inkjet Prints. 2016-2019.



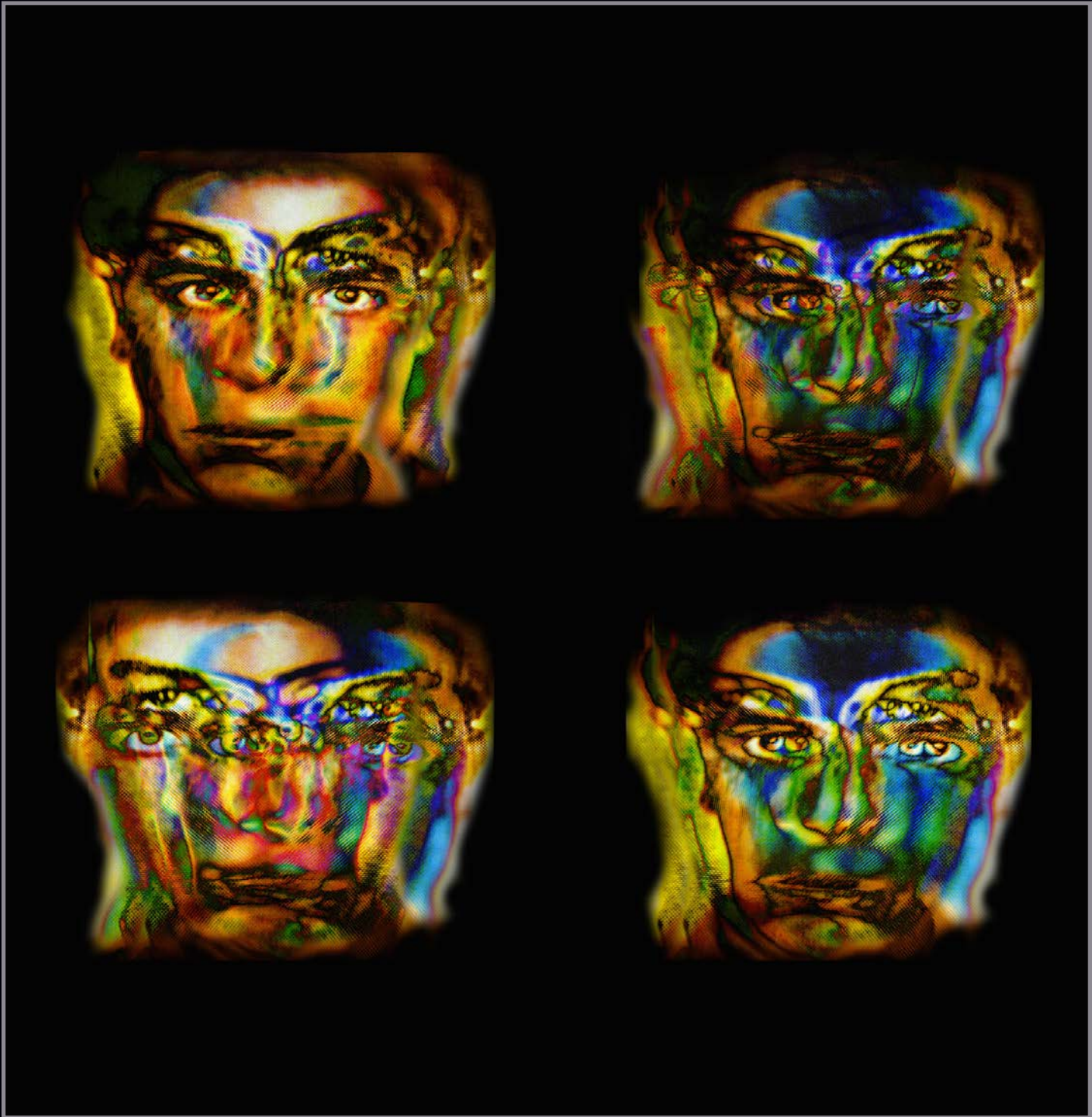


Single Image Portraits. Variable Dimensions. Inkjet Prints. 2016-2019.





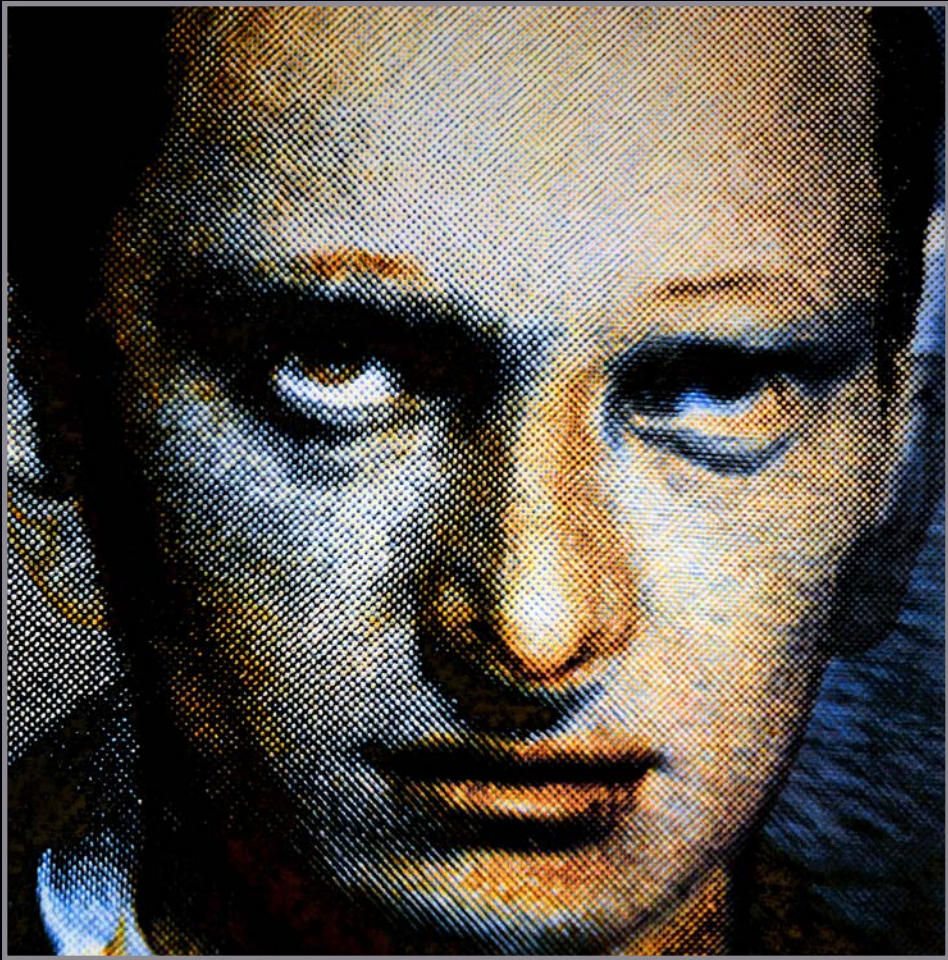
Multiple Image Portraits. Variable Dimensions. Inkjet Prints. 2016-2019.





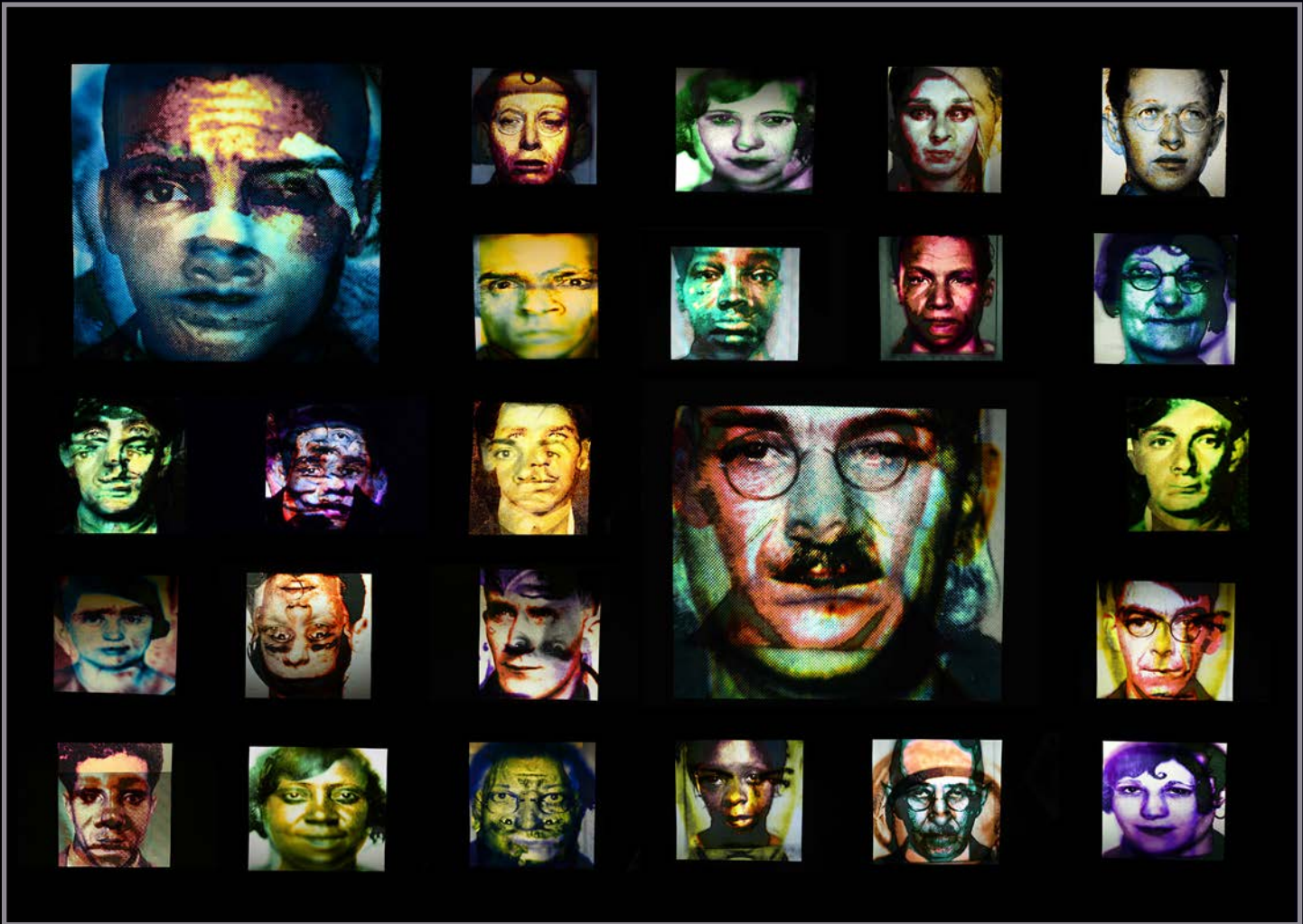
Multiple Image Portraits. 24 x 10.25 inches. Inkjet Prints. 2018-19.



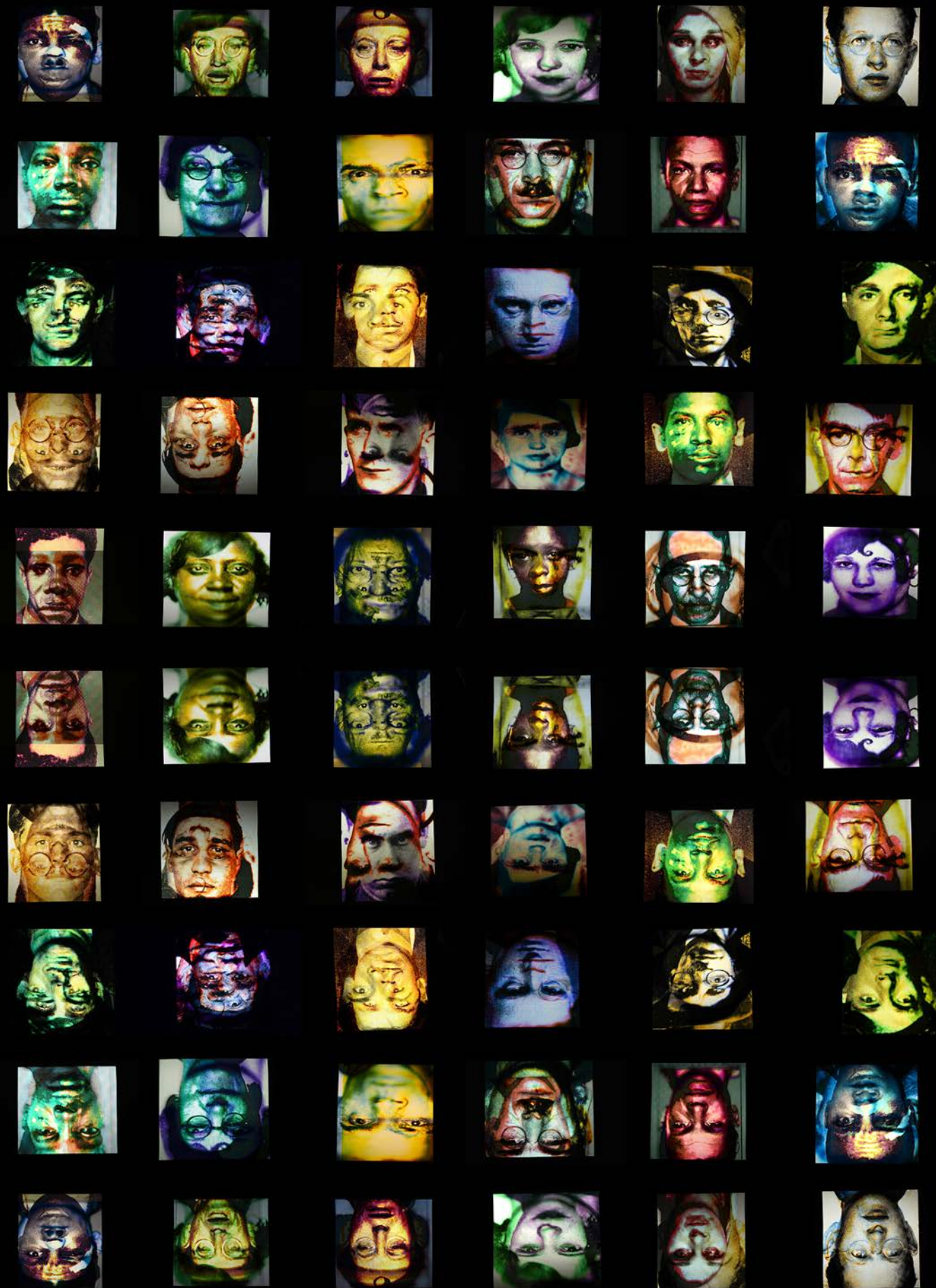


Large Portraits. 20 x 20 inches. Inkjet Prints. 2018





Montage. Variable Dimensions. Inkjet Prints. 2016-2019.



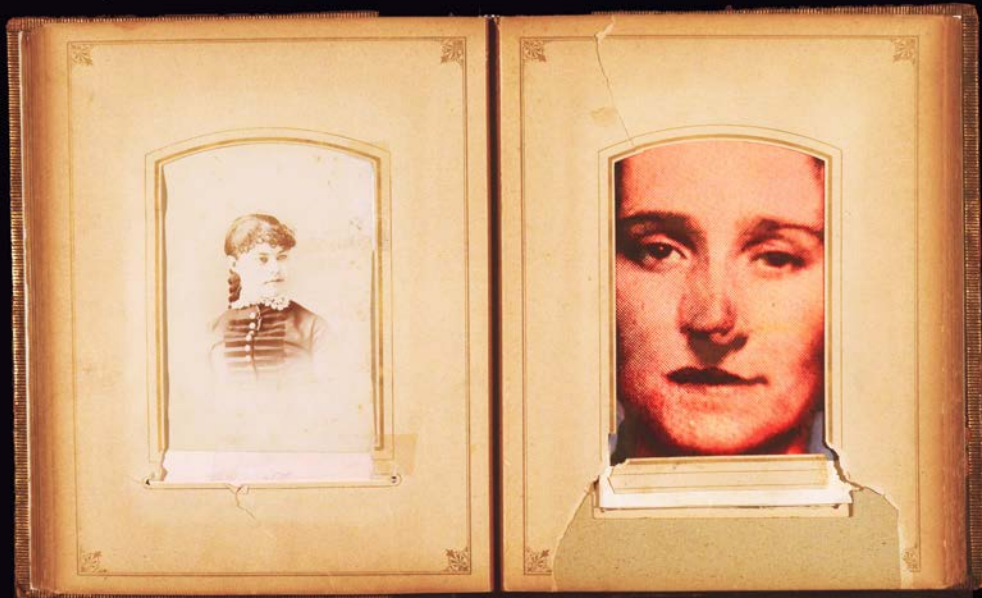


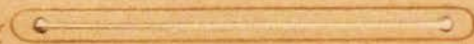
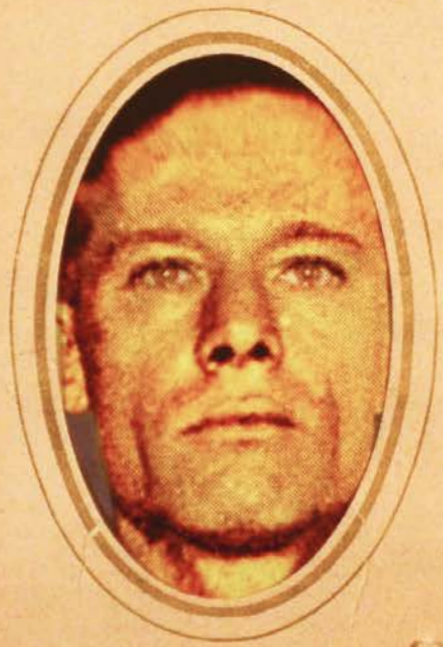
Cubes. Variable arrangements. 4 Inch Cubes.
Electrostatic prints on wood. 2018-19.

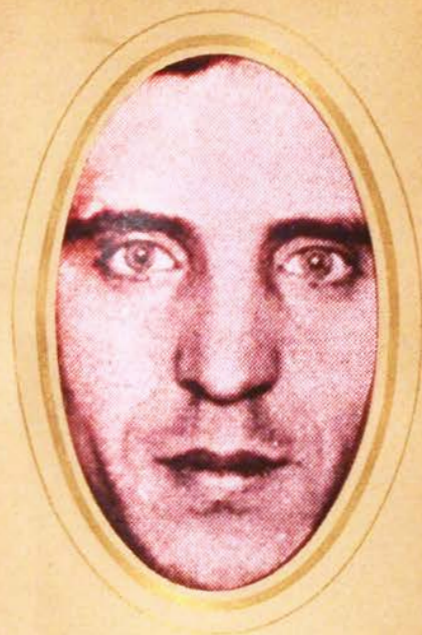




Altered Victorian Photo Album. 8.5 x 11 x 2 inches. 2018.









Ceramic Cups 4 x 3 inches. 12 oz. 2018.



Artist made USA Postal Stamp Sheet. 8.5 x 9.5 inches, 20 individual 50¢