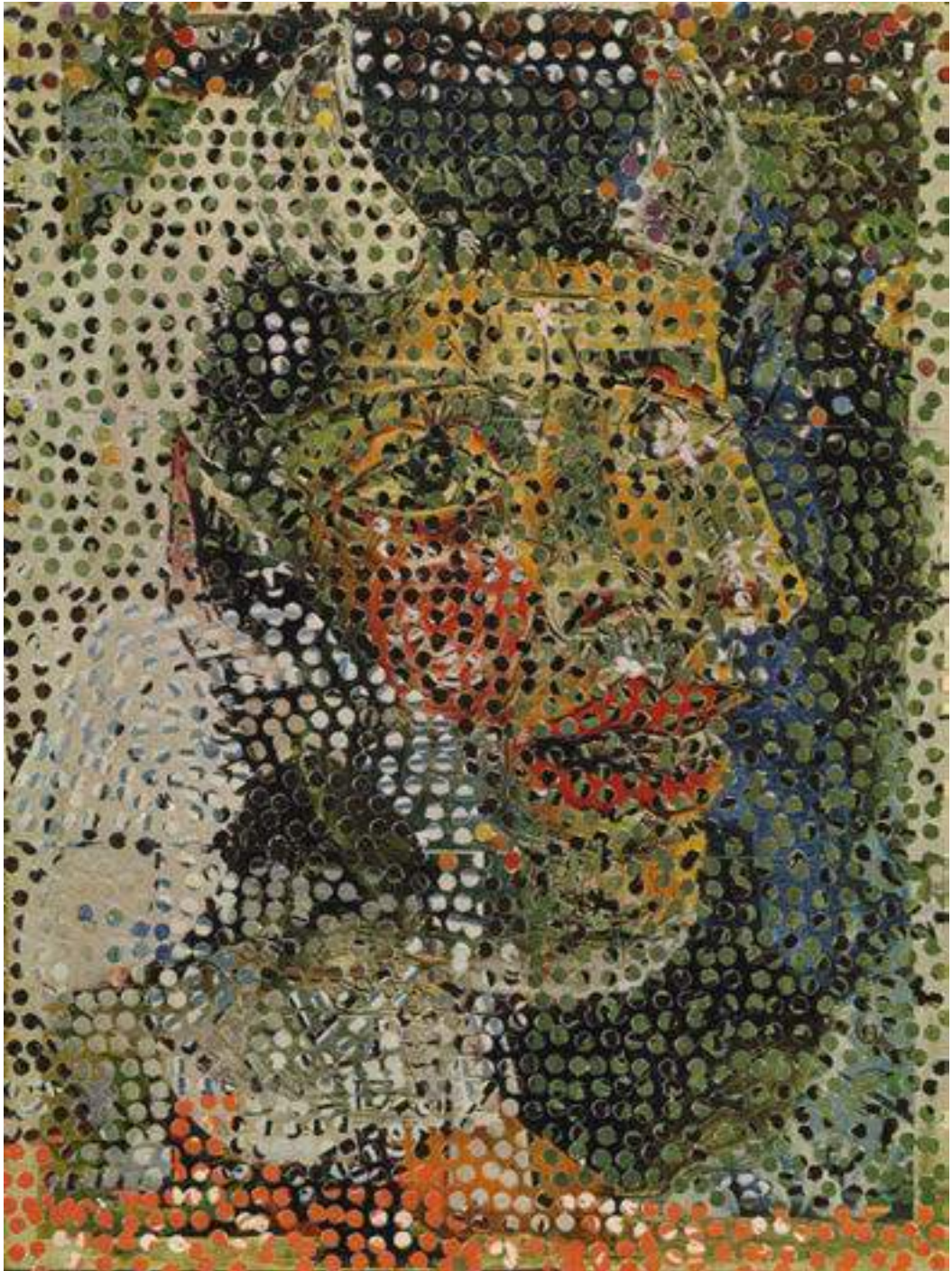


PICASSOID

COLLAGES - JOEL CARREIRO



PICASSOID

Collages
Joel Carreiro

Curated by Sarah Mills

Fine Arts Gallery
Westchester Community College
SUNY



Picassoids: The Science Fiction of Art History

Shortly after the Second World War ArtReview became one of the first art magazines of its kind: slim and paper bound with color reproductions and commentary on the greatest artists of the time. Its first issue arrived in 1949, the same year Joel Carreiro was born. If Carreiro was born in the age of the art magazine, he grew up in the years art history became a standardized field of study, as evinced in the emergence of the art history survey course, now ubiquitous in higher education nationwide, and the development of the art history textbook with a founding canon of the most important artworks. These facts shaped Carreiro's visual environment as much as they have helped to underpin, in part, the meaning of his recent body of work: the Picassoid. Picassoid is the term Carreiro uses to describe his new collages, made by the layering of one print or photographic reproduction of a Pablo Picasso painting (sourced from an art book) over another, different image of a Picasso painting. Carreiro's primary form of alteration of these reproductions involves punching holes in a grid-like formation on the top print layer so that the bottom one shows through.

In the 1960s, 70s and 80s the development of the art magazine with ever-bigger, ever-glossier color reproductions dovetailed with advancements in printing. Lots of high-quality expendable print soon attracted the attention of artists, such as those associated with the Independent Group and later the American Pop art movement, who sought to analyze and critique a new visual vocabulary generated by the media. In the 1980s, artists of the Pictures Generation continued to appropriate imagery found in the media, this time only subtly subverting the photographic reproductions they found in print, and thus, questioning the notion of originality tied to the concept of art. While these artists mostly derived their content from imagery of the popular press, Carreiro has turned his attention to the imagery of art – the reproduction of a painting found in the art book and magazine.

In the 1960s, the decade Carreiro first received a scholarship to make art (at the Haystack School of Arts and Crafts), the first edition of H.W. Janson's notorious History of Art was published. For decades to come Janson's tome became one of the most used textbooks in higher education. My first journey into art history also began with Janson's text – by that time, a 13th edition(?). I dared not remove and paste to the wall my favorite images from the text – as I would do later – or write in the margins of these precious objects – as I do now. Presently, as a professor at Westchester Community College, I have stacks of textbooks that seem nearly obsolete considering the more current and digitally available sources. Nevertheless, my affinity for them is well preserved, as is Carreiro's. His affection for the art book has prompted his consumption of them; even ones that are old and worn out. Some time ago,

Carreiro came upon a bookstore with art books in so little demand that the shop owners placed them in a give-one-take-one bin. There he saw a book on Picasso, one so tattered around the edges that he felt no qualms in cutting out the images and punching holes in them – in a move intended to re-see them rather than destroy them.

In 1973, two years after Carreiro completed his BFA at Cornell University and one year before his own artwork was first reproduced in the catalog for the Herbert Johnson Museum of Art, Pablo Picasso died. In textbook narratives, such as Janson's, Picasso competed with only a few other artists for the status of "father of modern art." To teach art history, one could not avoid getting around Picasso. Picasso is, for instance, recognized as the founder of Cubism, an art movement that Alfred Barr, the first director of the Museum of Modern Art, positioned as the origin point of all the most significant art movements in the western world. Carreiro recalls that while working towards his MFA at Hunter College, CUNY in the early 1980s, many of his professors grappled with how to deal with Picasso in their own work; they, Carreiro describes, sensed the weight of the artist, who they felt they had to overtly reject, reference or be inspired by. In other words, one had to stake one's ground in relationship to Picasso in order to move on. A generation younger than his teachers, Carreiro felt Picasso's influence but perceived him as less of a hurdle or roadblock than as an established figure in the canon of art history. In his recent body of work representing collages of Picasso's paintings, Carreiro has encountered a new Picasso dimension, one that ruminates on the mundanity of his images and the peculiar possibility of knowing his work through its reproduction, or having viewed more often than not reproductions instead of original material forms.

Science fiction is a world full of uncanniness. It is fiction after all and unreal in obvious ways. Weird objects operate in unusually useful ways and people communicate with unknown verbs, descriptive of the functions of their techno apparatuses. However farfetched the fantasy of science fiction, its ultimate strangeness lies in its proximity to our own world – this makes it easy, for example, for us to comprehend made-up terms or objects; we apprehend their meaning easily enough from a context we know so well. Picassoid is a made-up term with an allusion to the terminology of science fiction. Yet found in its context, as a term related to art, one grasps its reference to the artist Picasso.

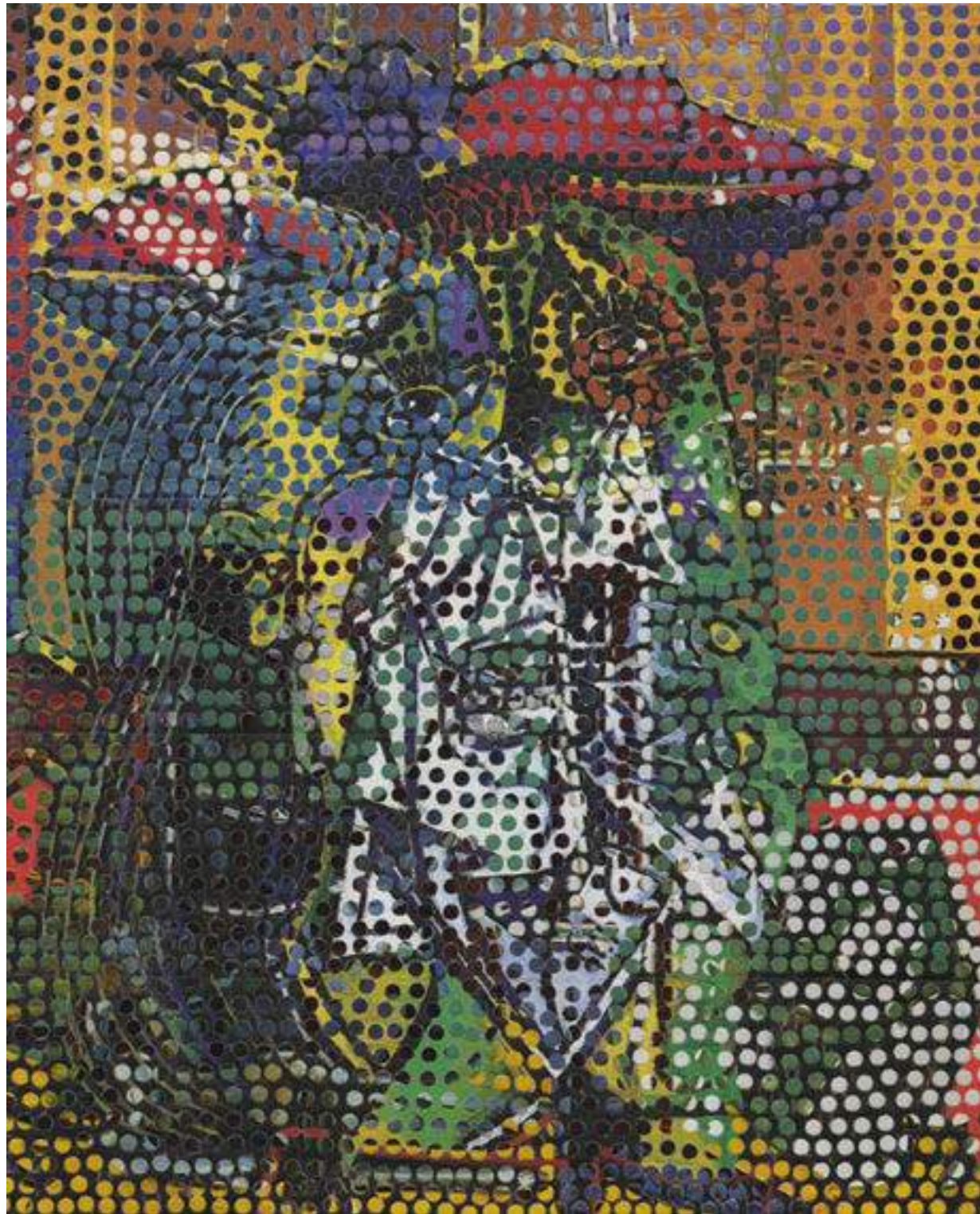
Viewing Carreiro's Picassoids, one discerns a formal arrangement akin to the style of Picasso's work and perhaps begins to recognize a particular painting, but only with a bizarre sense of incomplete certainty – not unlike the experience of viewing or reading science fiction. The juxtaposition between the hole-punched reproduction and the bottom layer, another Picasso reproduction, fosters the sense of an unrecognizable thing within a recognizable framework. The lines, brushstrokes and porous composition may be perceived as Picassoesque, but the full composition and the color – never standard across printing – skews one's sense of authority on the matter.

A striking thing about the Picassoids is their imperfect knowability. Think, for instance, how many images of Picasso's paintings have you seen? One or two or ten or hundreds: on the back of cereal boxes, in an art history textbook, in a subway advertisement for an exhibition opening or in an old book at a local bookstore with a take-one-leave-one box. In our time, it is impossible to count, even to know how many times we've been exposed to an image of Picasso's art. In our image-saturated world Picasso has become so knowable, so recognizable that perhaps even an individual who thinks him/herself ignorant of the subject could point out a Picasso amongst other artworks. Perhaps. Yet, are not all these images in somehow different? Are not their sizes and color and even context unique, maybe even un-Picassoesque? There the beautiful imperfection of knowing lies.

While Carreiro uses prints of Picasso's paintings in his work, a Picassoid is not really about Picasso's art; in other words, Carreiro does not borrow from Picasso's forms, style or manner of making. Indeed, the Picassoids are something unique, an arrangement of new forms in space. And yet they have an automated sensibility. The exactness and uniformity of the punched holes in the top-most layer of paper resemble a grid made by a machine or a strict regulation of the hand. In suppressing a highly gestural style, Carreiro succeeds at curtailing the overtly personal in his work. Instead, he moves toward locating the collective cognizance of a 21st century western society, their knowability which has come to suffuse one of the many meanings of great art(ists). Yet, Carreiro playfully visualizes the forever-fractured state of our knowability through his use of found Picasso images and his collage process. Despite an increasing visual literacy in the last half century, which has resulted, in part, from the proliferation of art magazines, textbooks and art history courses, our visual knowledge can only ever be partial, and to that end, inimitable. We cannot all see the same original in the same place at once. This Carreiro considers with the Picassoid. There is no better way to question a society's eruditeness than to poke holes in what it knows.

Sarah Mills, PHD

Professor of Art History and Gallery Director
Westchester Community College



Carreiro's Picassos

The time has come. The lights dim and you are asked to please take your seat. This will be good.

A master magician walks toward you as warmer light rises. He looks nice enough, smiling. His voice is calm. He shows you his hands and urges you to not take your eyes from them. This is why you are here after all, to see if you can catch him, how hard could it be? You stare at his hands without blinking. Piece of cake.

But as your eyes begin to strain from the effort, the moon rises, stars appear, the ceiling now gone. While you have been staring at those hands, the chair in which you were sitting has been turned into a miniature donkey, the one you adored and lost when you were five. Before you can even speak her name – Patches! – your donkey has vanished. The magician smiles more broadly, he's having a bit of fun. He looks straight into your eyes and asks for your keys. You reach for your pocket, only to find that you are naked.

We thrill to the things we can't see, even as we stare at them, enraptured, yet sleight of hand is not illusion. It is the sum and substance of existence, the blood and sinew of art. A child becomes an adult, a stranger becomes a lover, the adult becomes a corpse, the lover becomes a stranger. We transform a piece of marble into a woman, a few sticks of colored chalk into a bowl of tangerines, two hundred solitary voices into Bach's Mass in B Minor. How is it done? It doesn't matter how. We are richer for not knowing. Night after night we line up.

Joel Carreiro is calm. He does not look dangerous, but he is the master magician your mother warned you about. Stare at his hands all you'd like, Carreiro will have you looking one place while he is busy in another, such is his trade. After long and diligent years at his craft, he has produced a body of new work that is primed to knock your socks off. Seeing things no one else can see, he arrays them before us, the trickster's deck of cards we only thought we knew. Carreiro has always borrowed fragments of the visible world to suit his invisible purposes. Asking how he does what he does, we are reminded that only another illusionist knows how an illusionist performs his tricks. These guys recognize each other from across the room, across centuries, and it is understood. Omerta. Silence.

Another trickster who spent years quietly transforming the stuff of the world - cutting, piercing, piecing and bending until he was done with one reality and on to the next - was Picasso. We believe we know this old Spaniard, sly illusionist, nothing ever what it seemed, he himself a changeling. Appropriately, he is gone and yet still is here, now ripe for transformation, as everything was transformed in his hands. We may know these new works and in the same moment feel we have never seen them. We never have. Picasso endows Carreiro by joining one to one, in many senses, and arriving at a third.

Carreiro's Weeping Women cry more intensely than ever they did at Picasso's hands, crying not only for their own lost children, lost love, lost youth. They have seen beyond Guernica, Hiroshima, the ovens, they weep for those as they always have, indeed they cannot stop, yet a century on, their anguish has deepened, for the dead of My Lai, Kent State, for Dallas and Memphis, for the leaping men on a bright September day, the travesty of America in its broken moment. They have pleaded and fallen before how many rounds of ammunition, fired from the blind weapons of their mute assassins, we cannot count their scars. They have wept for decades and they cry now for the sweep of time that carries each of us away. How has Carreiro intensified their sorrow and given such force to their tears? I watch it happening and cannot explain it.

It is equally mystifying to wonder how, in these deceptively unassuming works, he has rendered the harlequin more serene yet more wistful in his task of making us laugh. How has he freed the child toward a more youthful translucence, urged the cat to be more aloof, the rooster more insane? None of these could possibly be more than they were, under the touch of their master, or so we would have imagined, and yet they are, under their new master. They fly apart, and in reconvening become more themselves, and is this not what we each strive for in our own brief transit, to pierce our world and reveal another dimension - the afterlife, nirvana, Brigadoon - which has been there all along, waiting? Yes, and please, tell us, how is it done? I do not know. And I believe that Carreiro himself does not, which is as it should be, the truthful answer from an artist about his art.

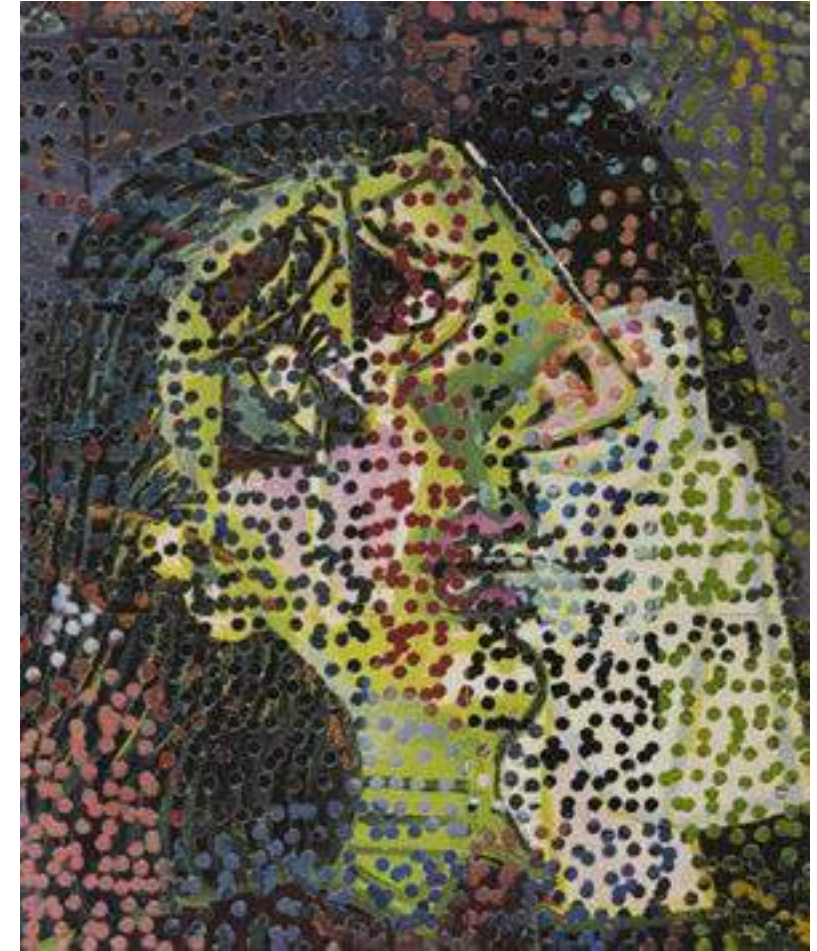
The one who might be able to say won't speak. He is a member of the fraternity, Omerta y Muerto, among the lost and silent illusionists, and maybe his women weep for him still. I would most love to walk quietly into the gallery with the old bull, offering him a good lunch and a glass of wine afterwards, promising that the artist will join us. The satyr now dead, yet still alive, I would give him a steadying arm and lead him to these works. I want to stand beside him, to feel the jump in his pulse at the sight of his most magnificent eye, his soul, joined with those of another. He lived for the unexpected, and I think he would admire them.

Carreiro has touched his Picassos lightly, taking only what he needs, coming away newly armed. With a skill unconscious and metabolic, he has transformed their spirit and body into the next wave, imbued them with unforeseeable life. This is a humbling and gracious achievement. Only he has done it. As with all enchantment, it feels effortless, at once respectful, loving and subversive, its secrets held in silence.

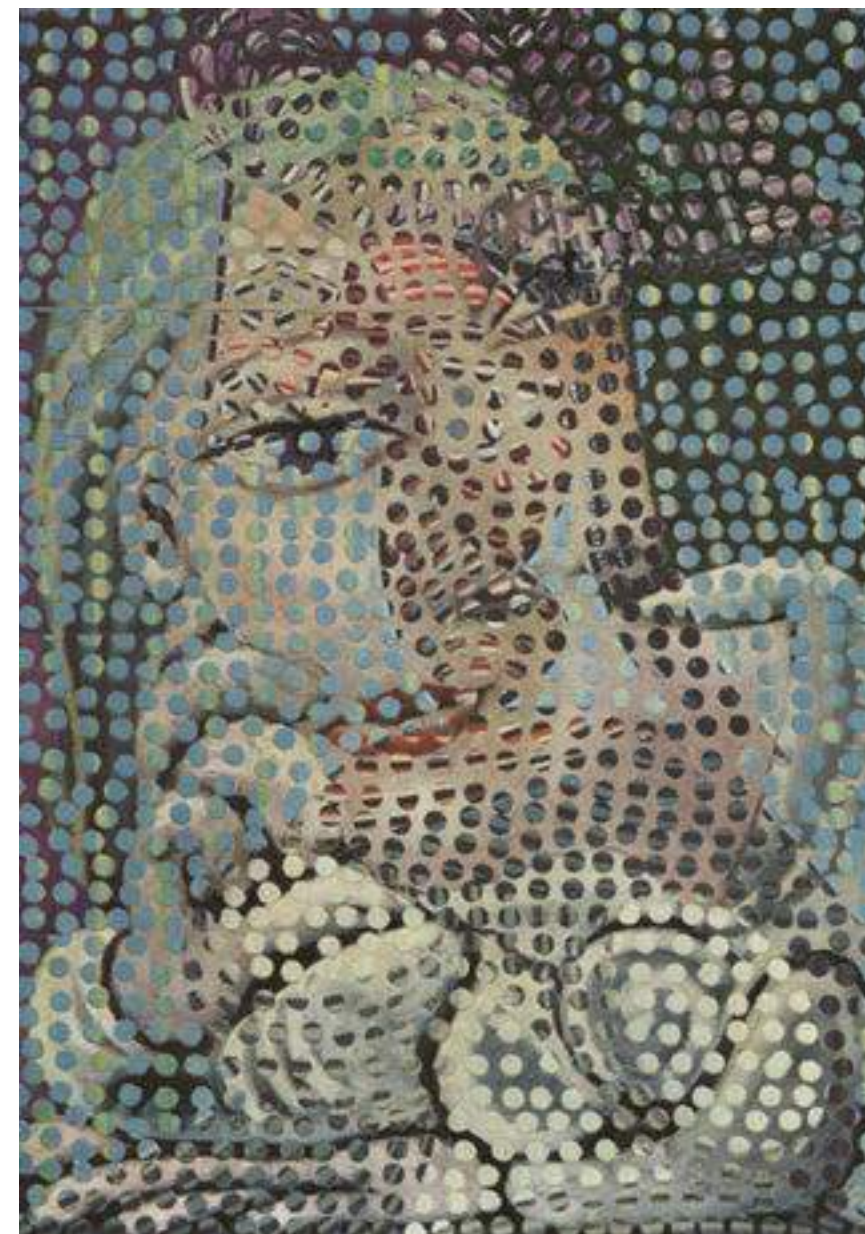
Paul Bochner
December 13, 2019

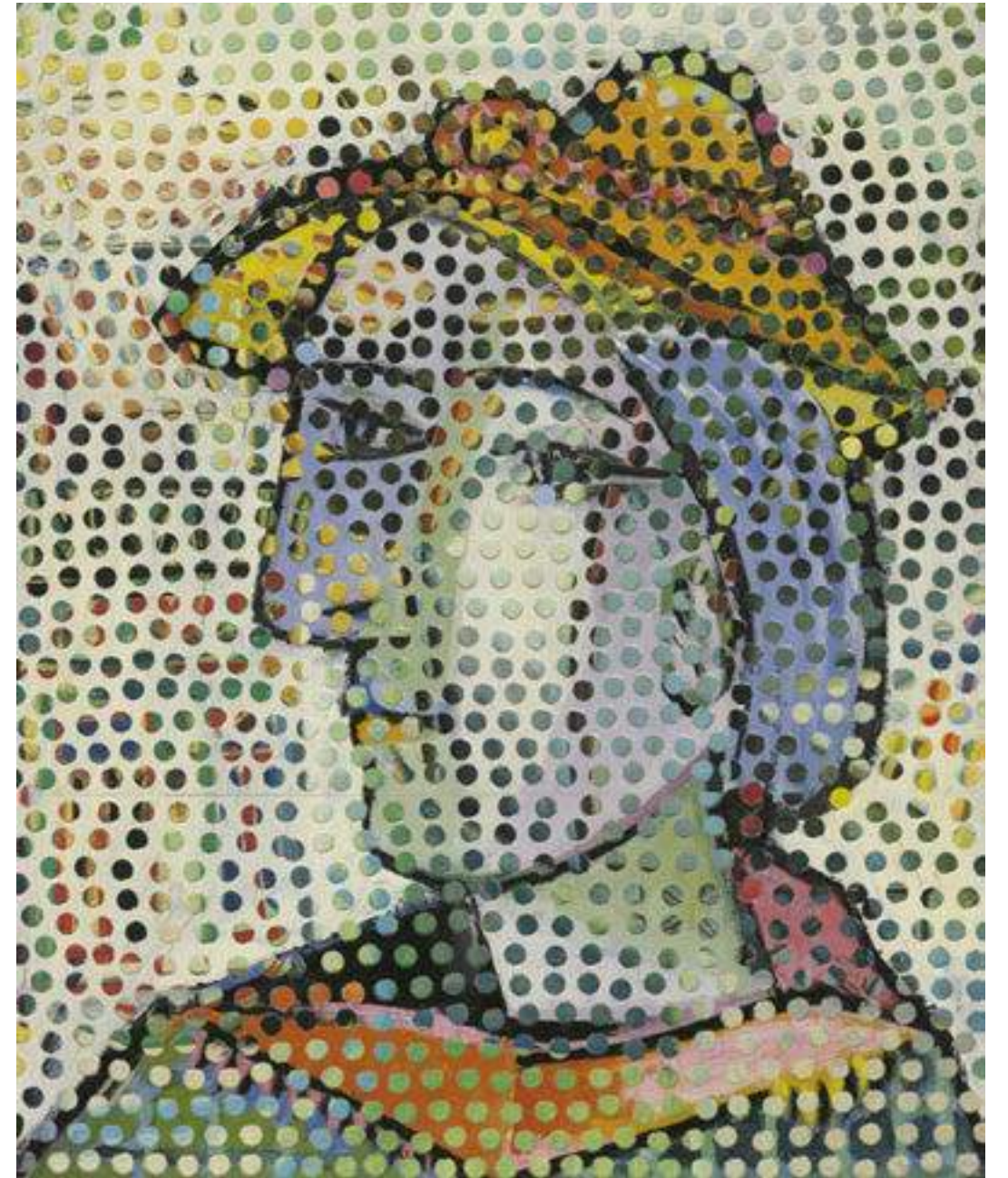
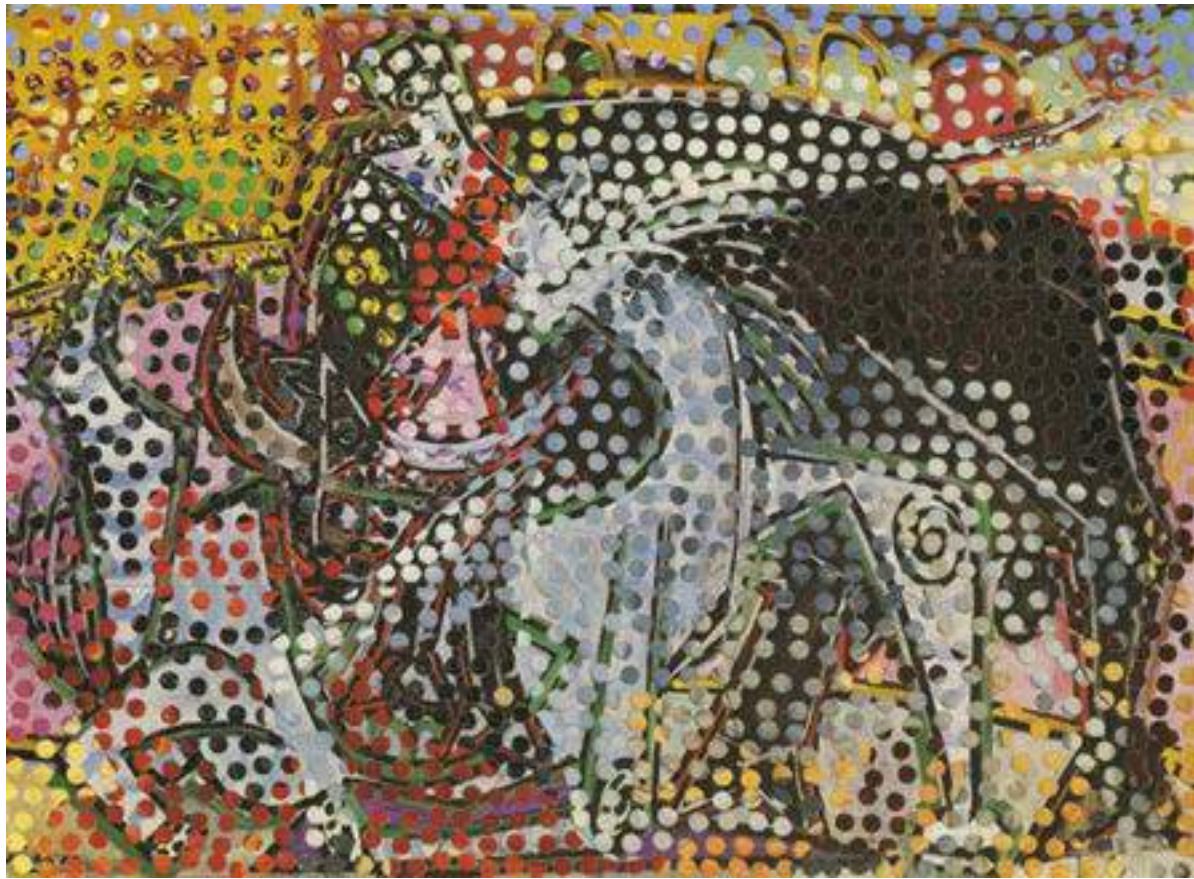
Paul Bochner is a writer and filmmaker.
He has held a Guggenheim Fellowship in painting.

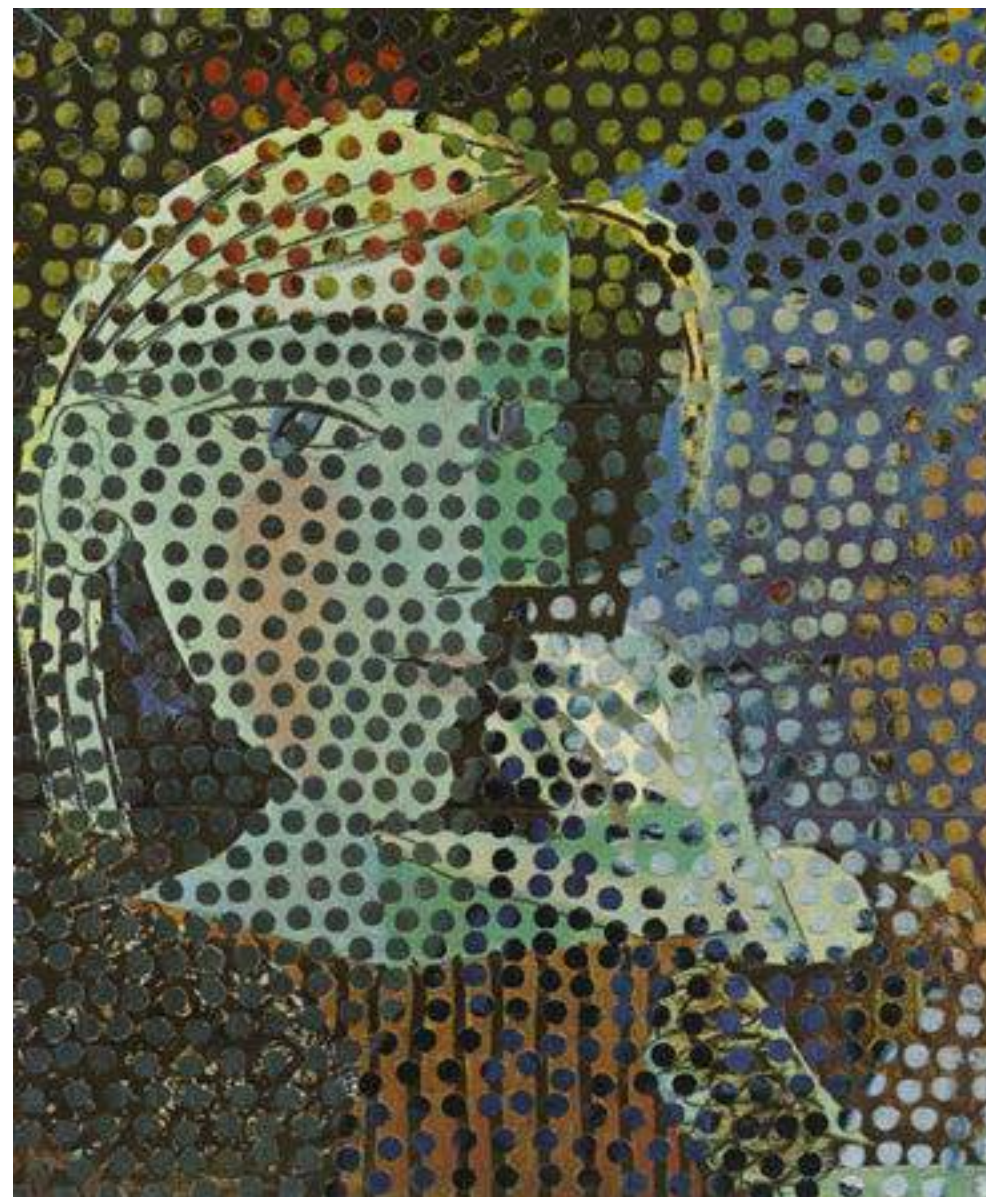




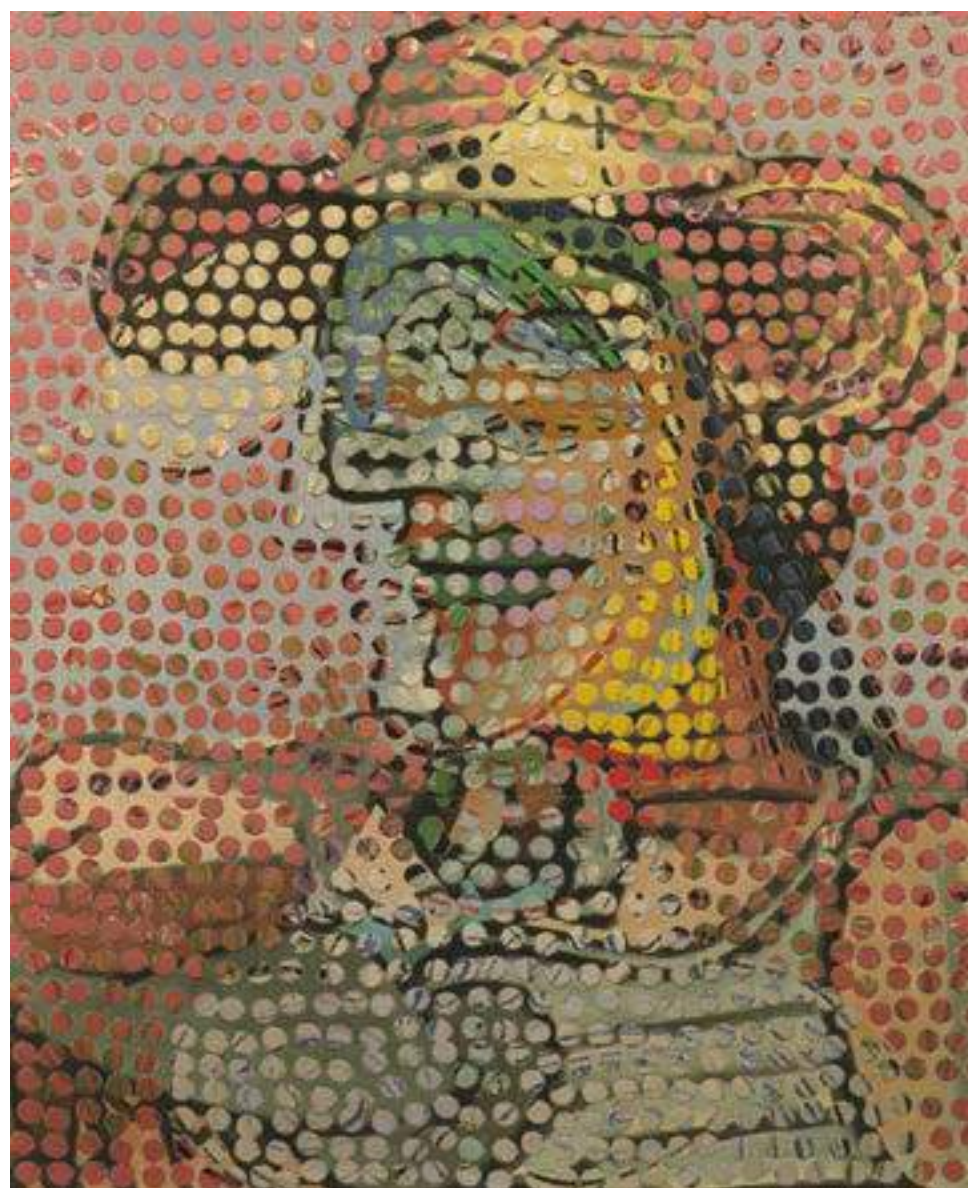




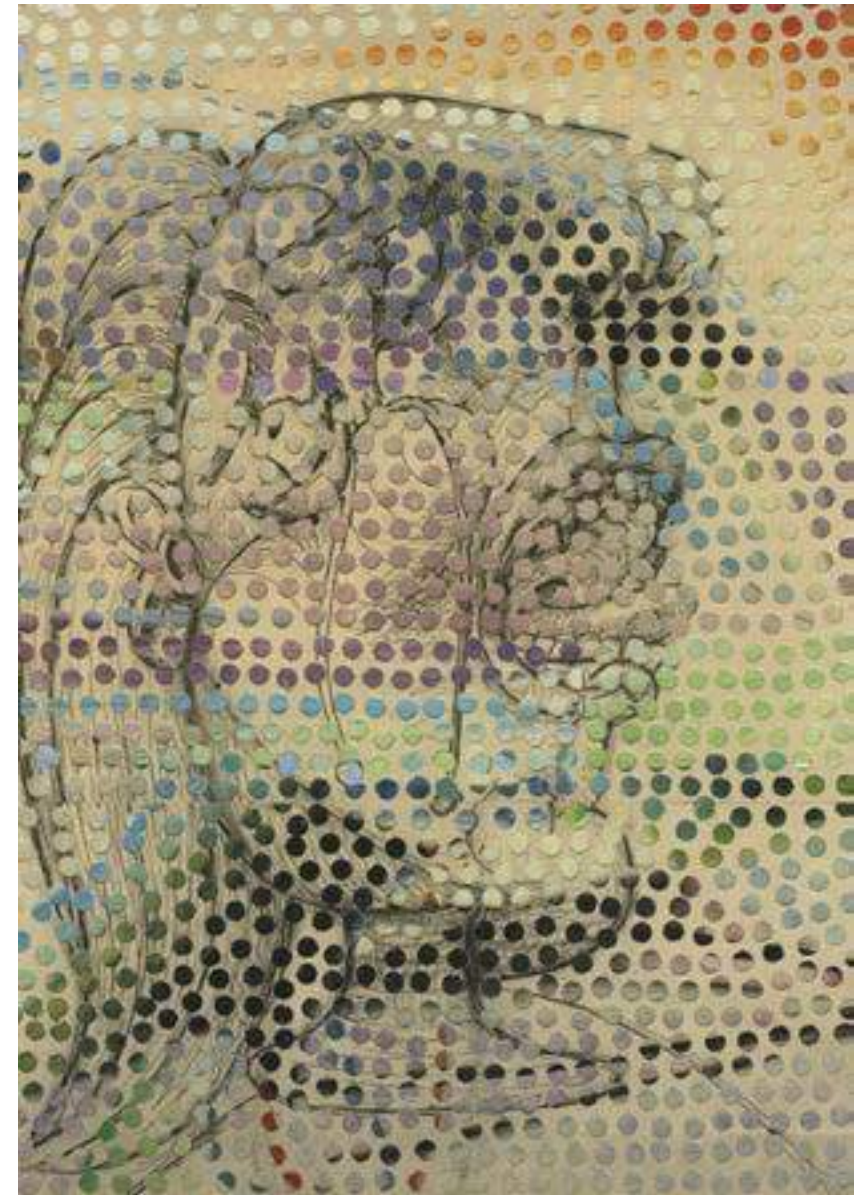




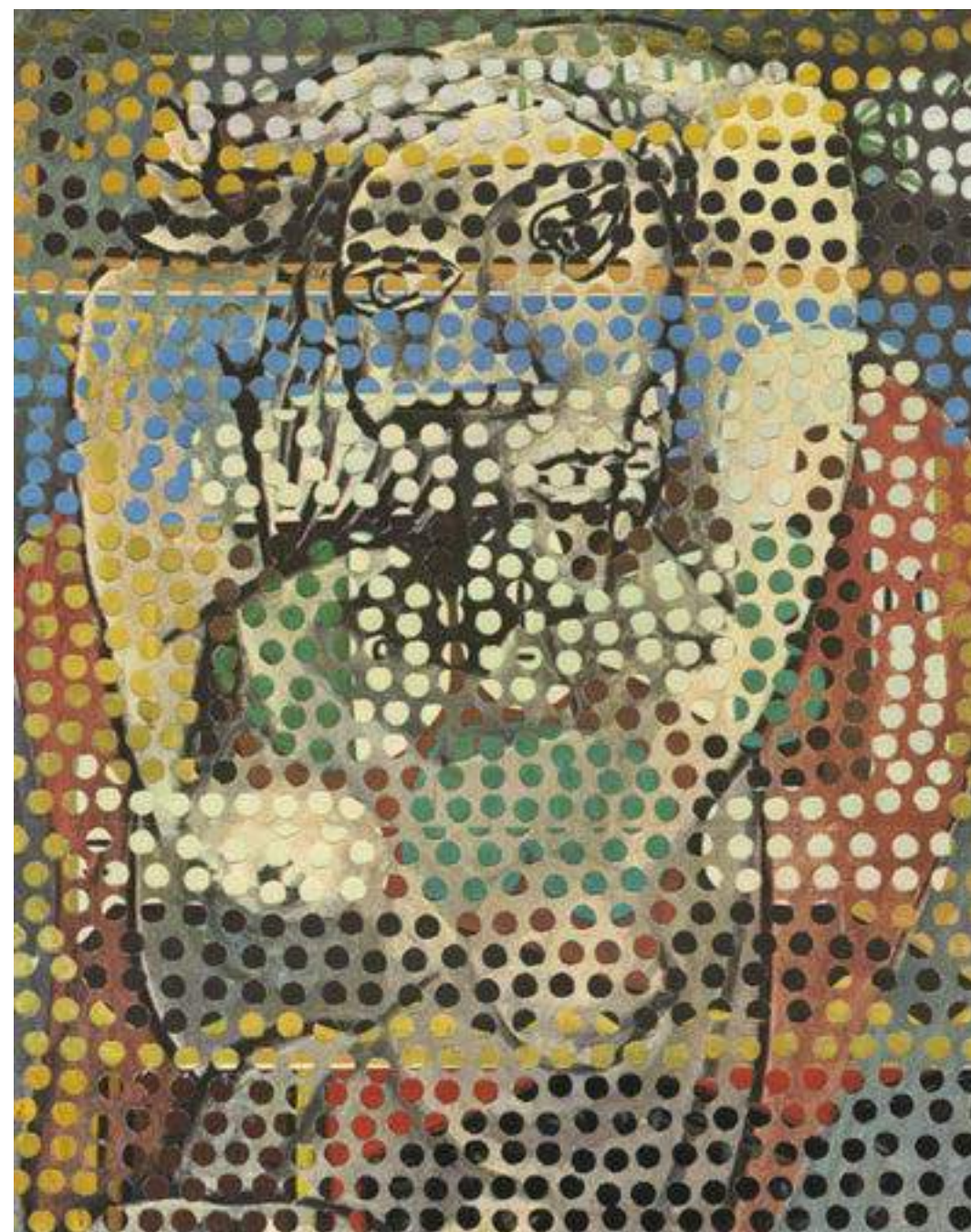


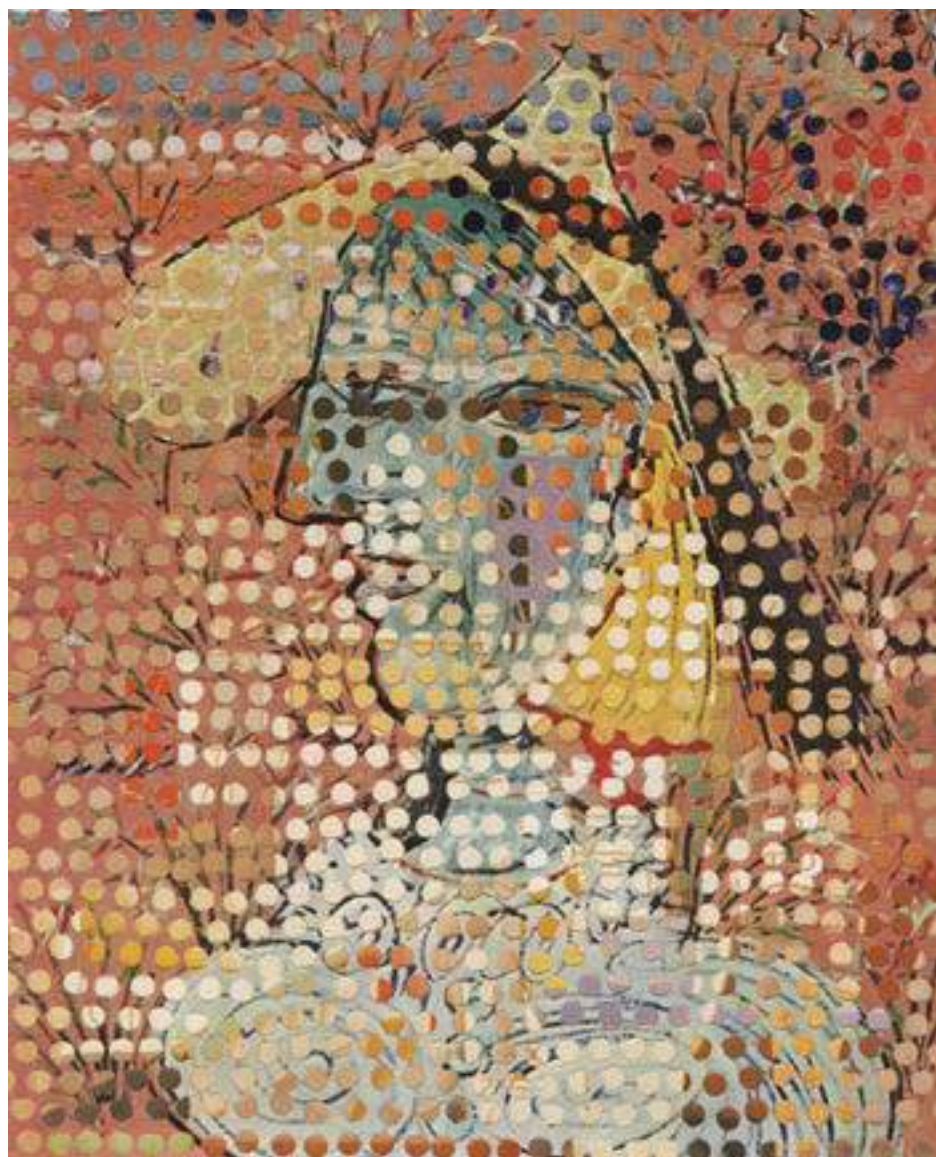


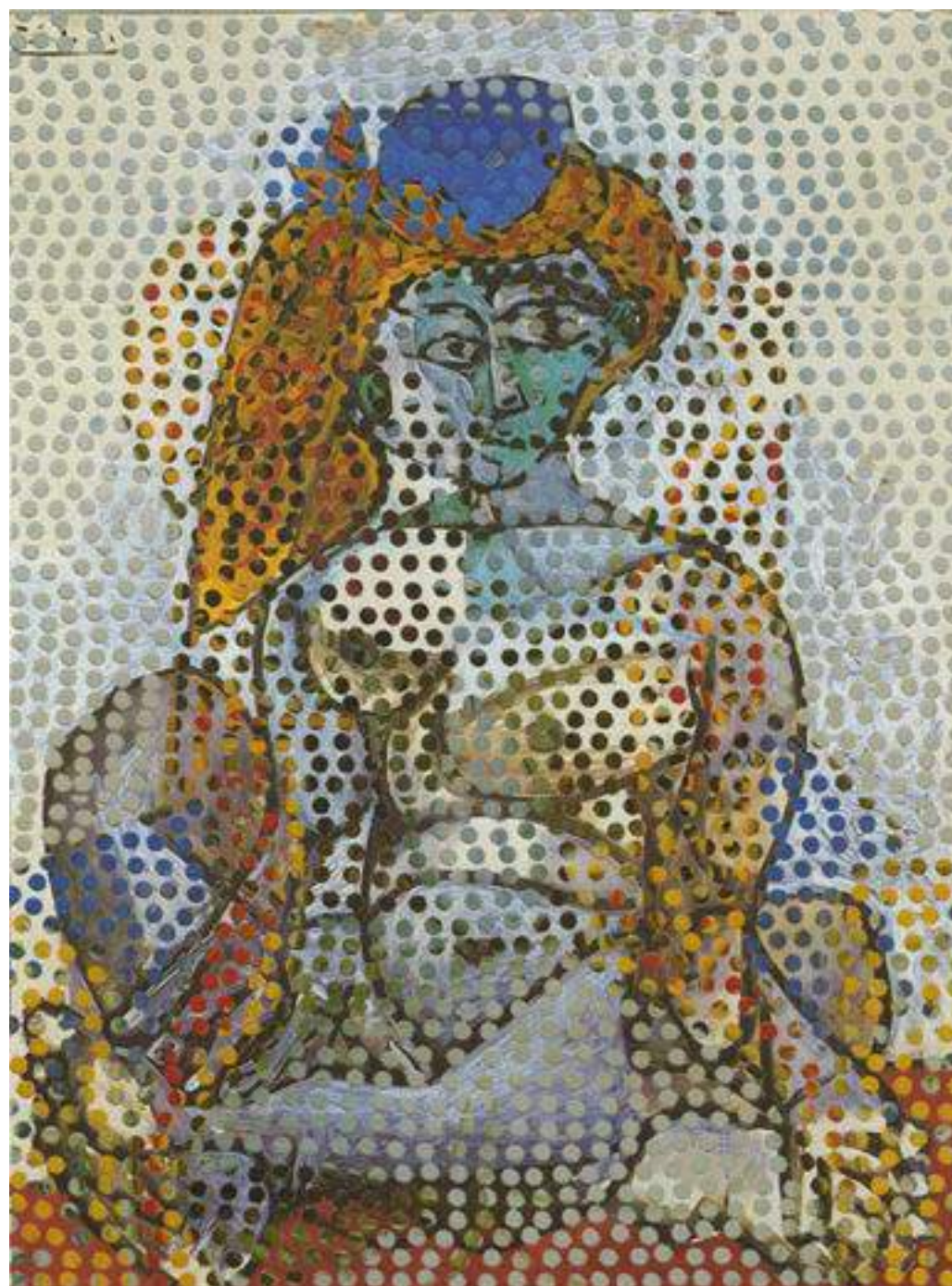


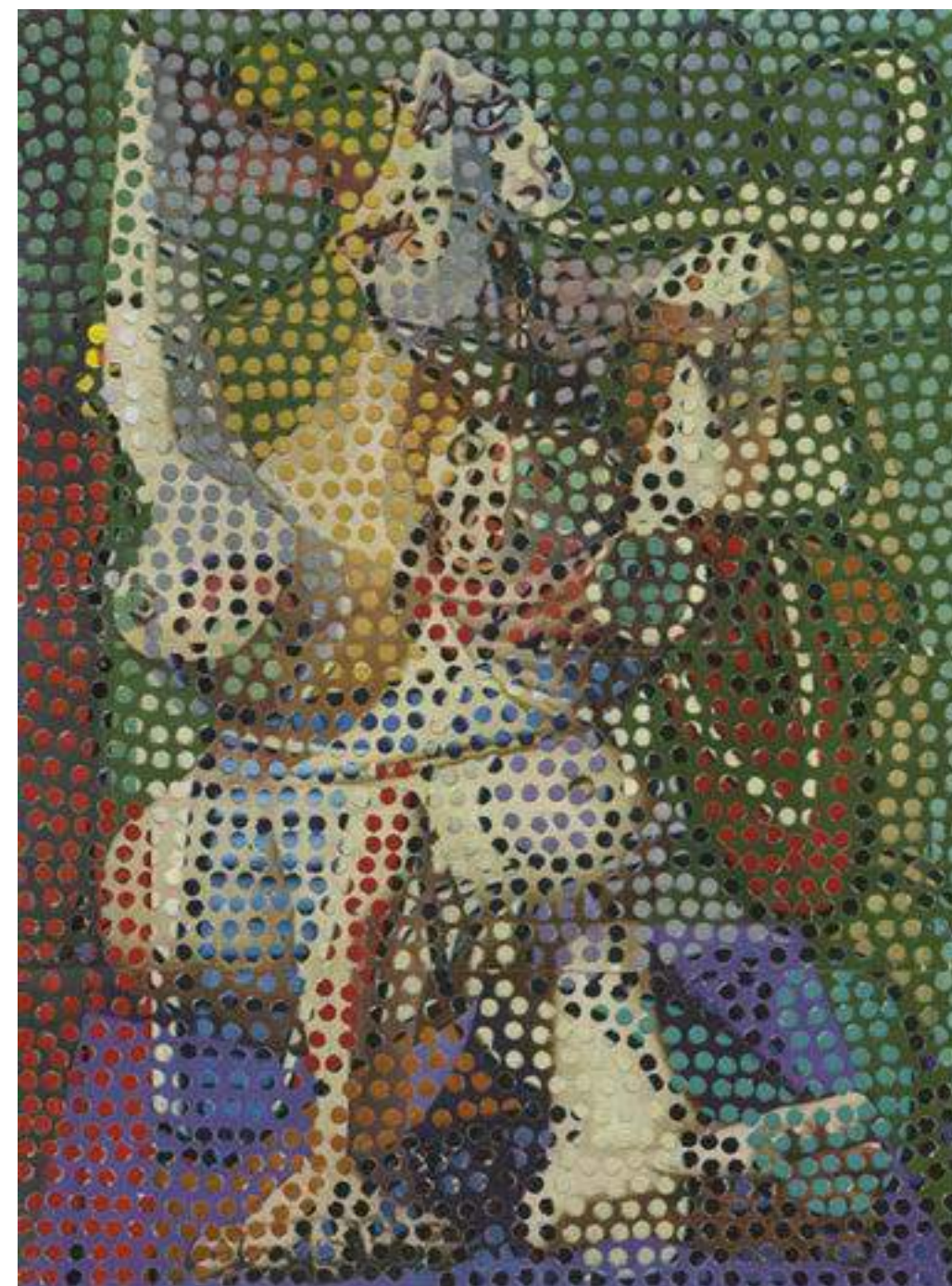
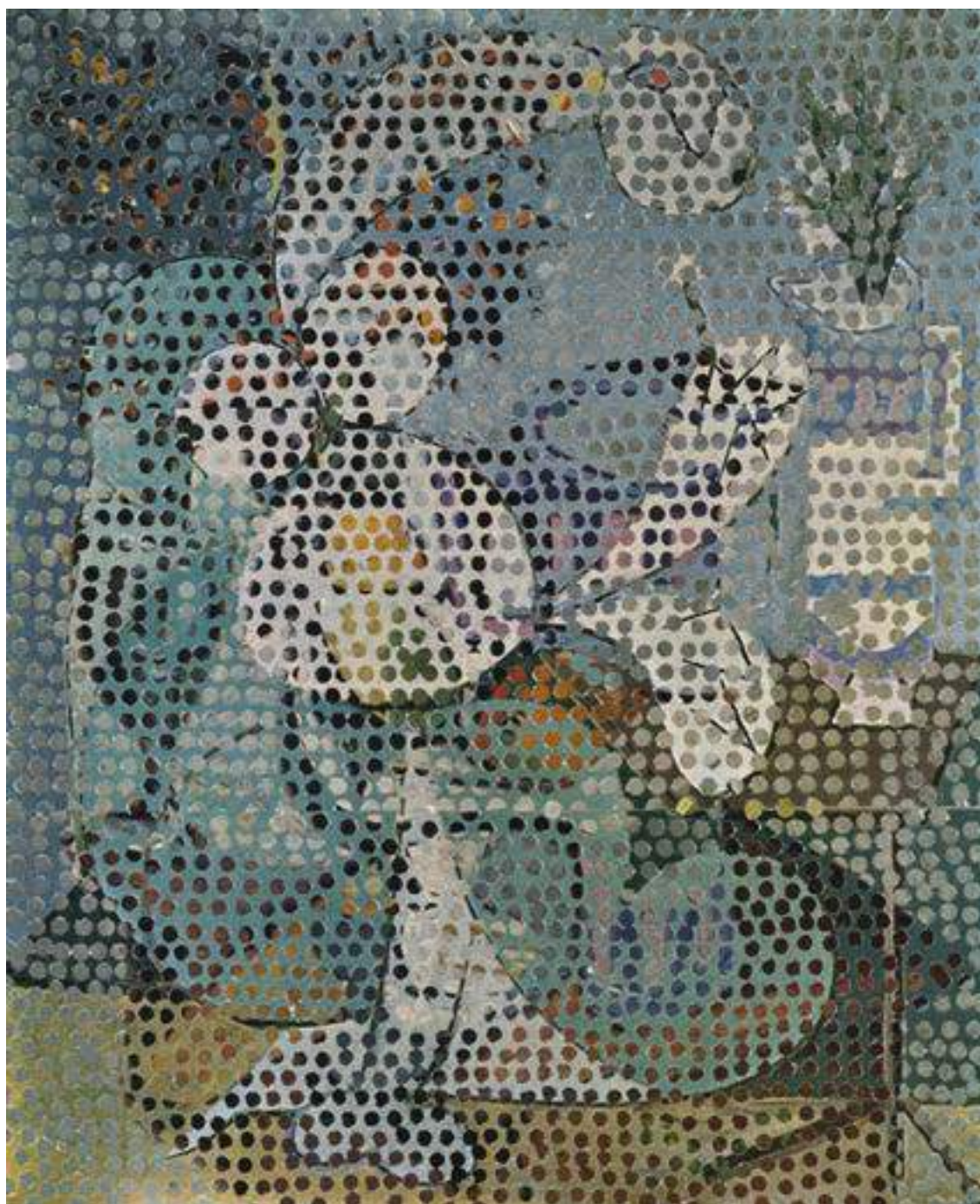


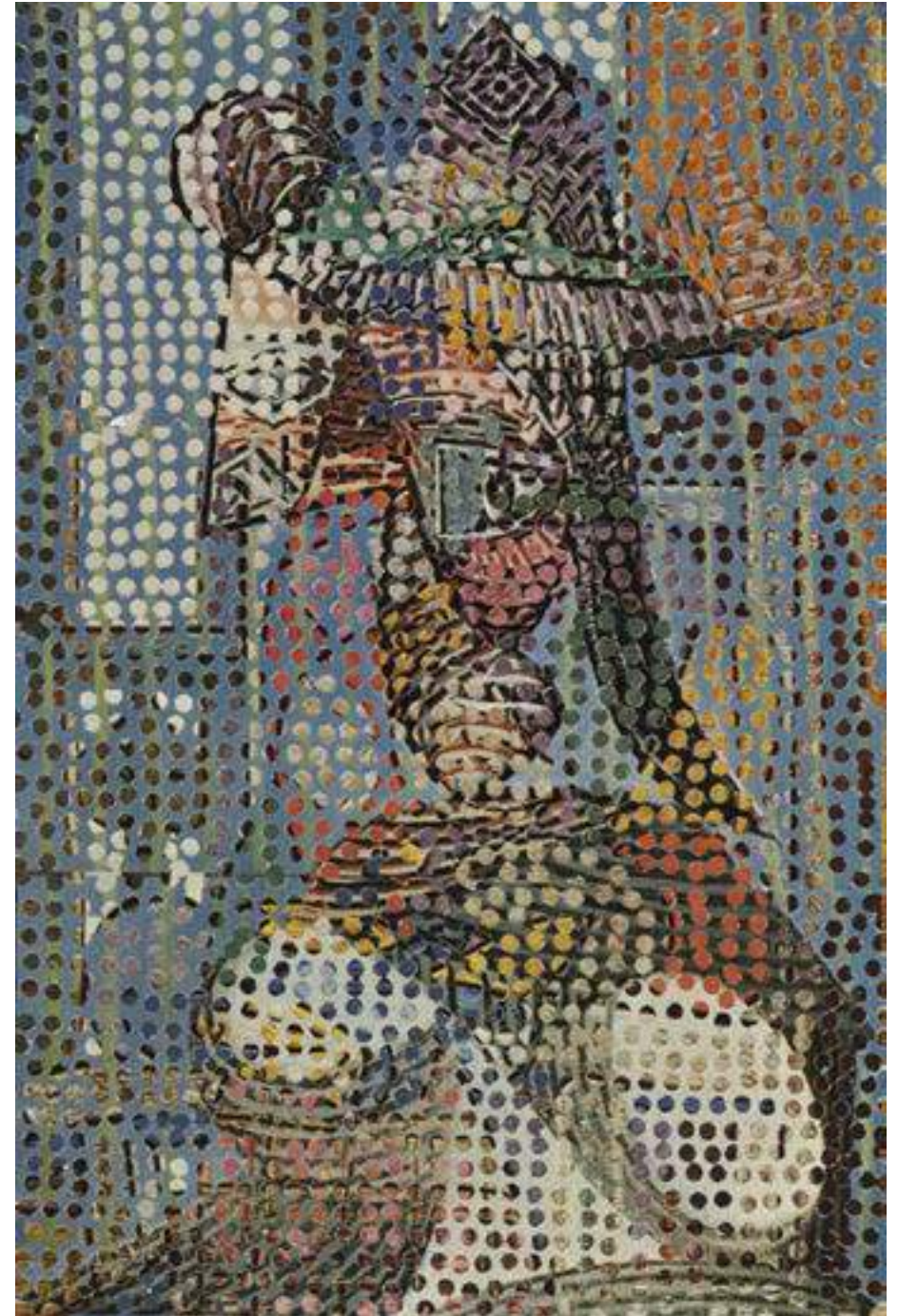


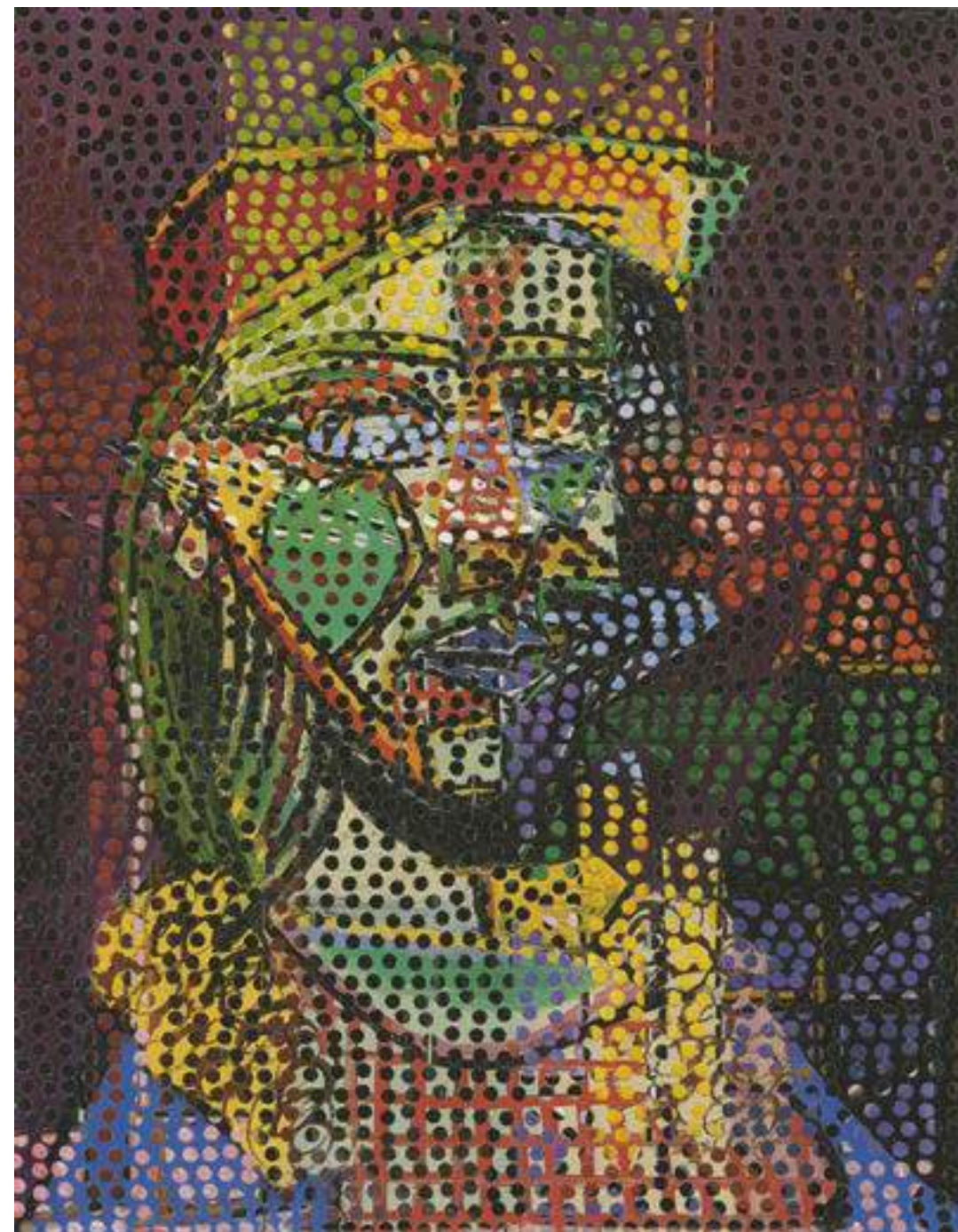
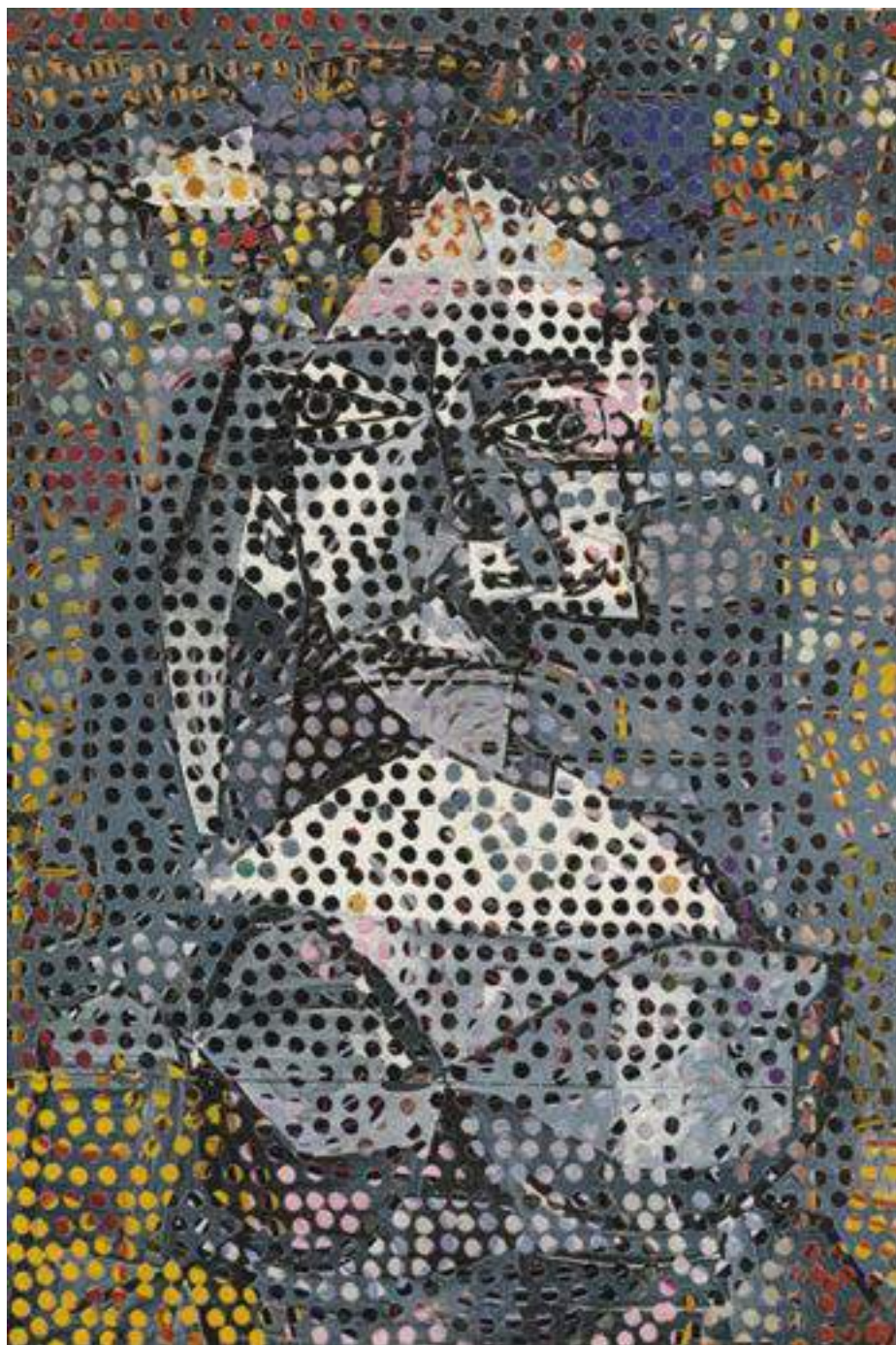




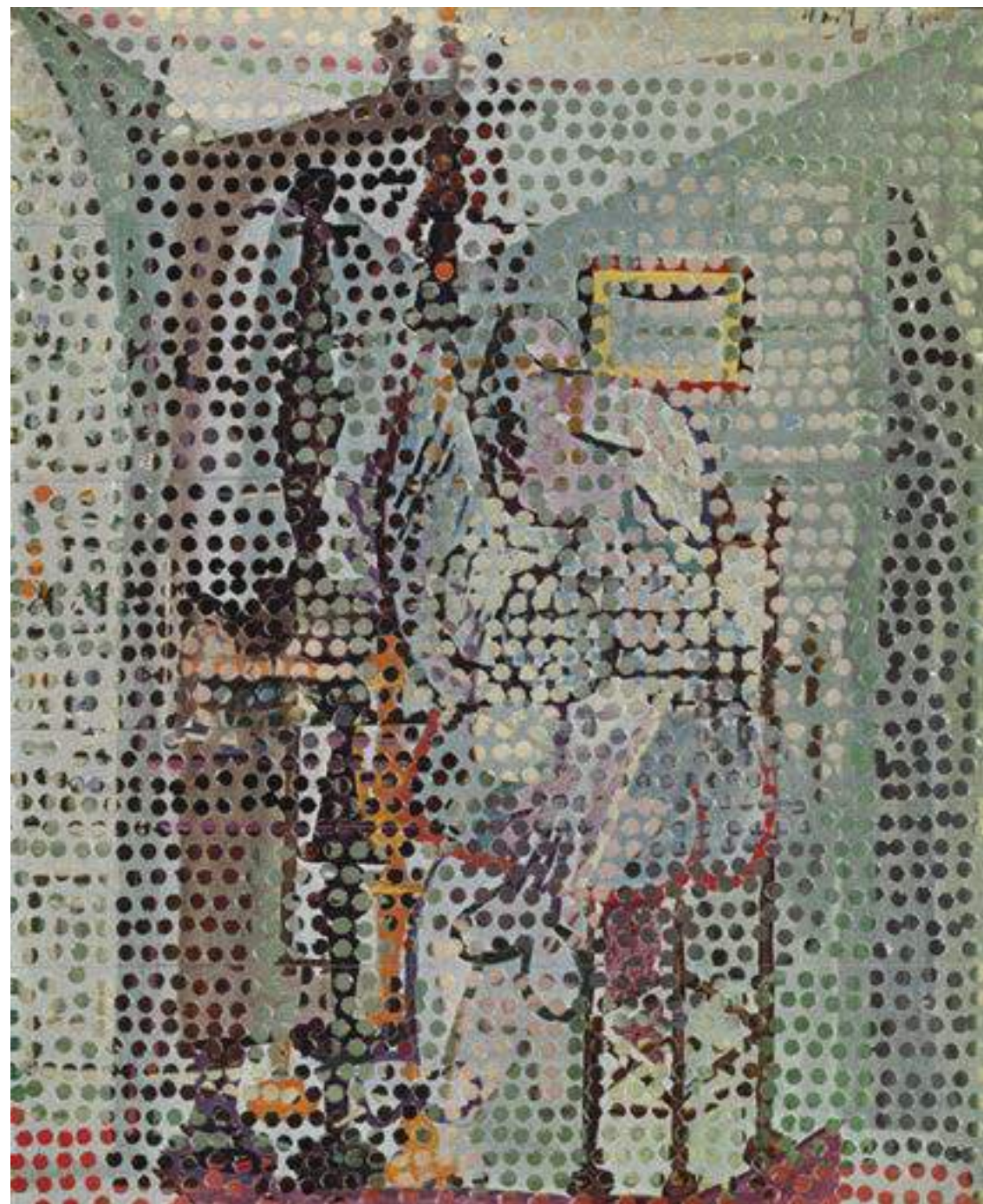
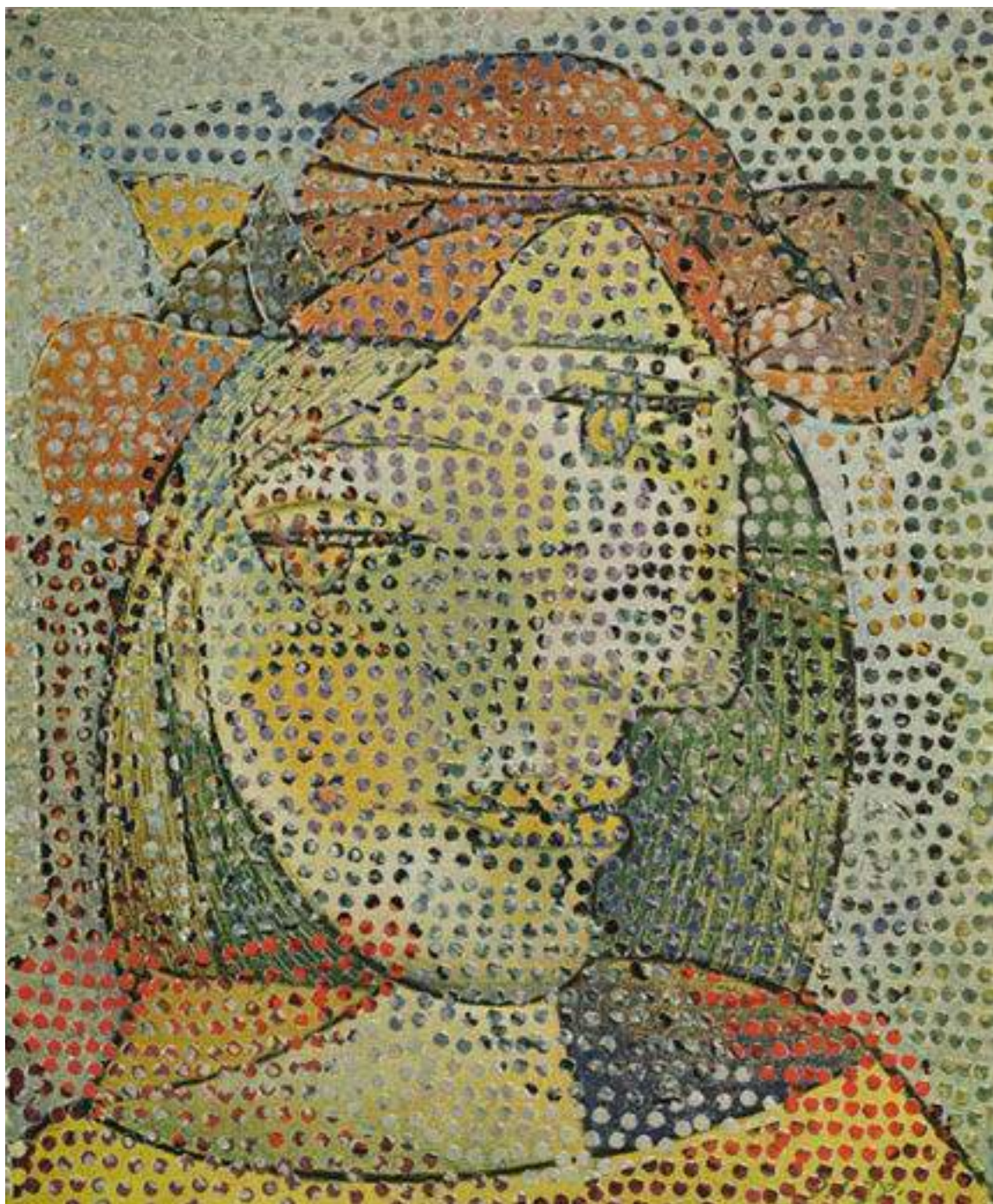




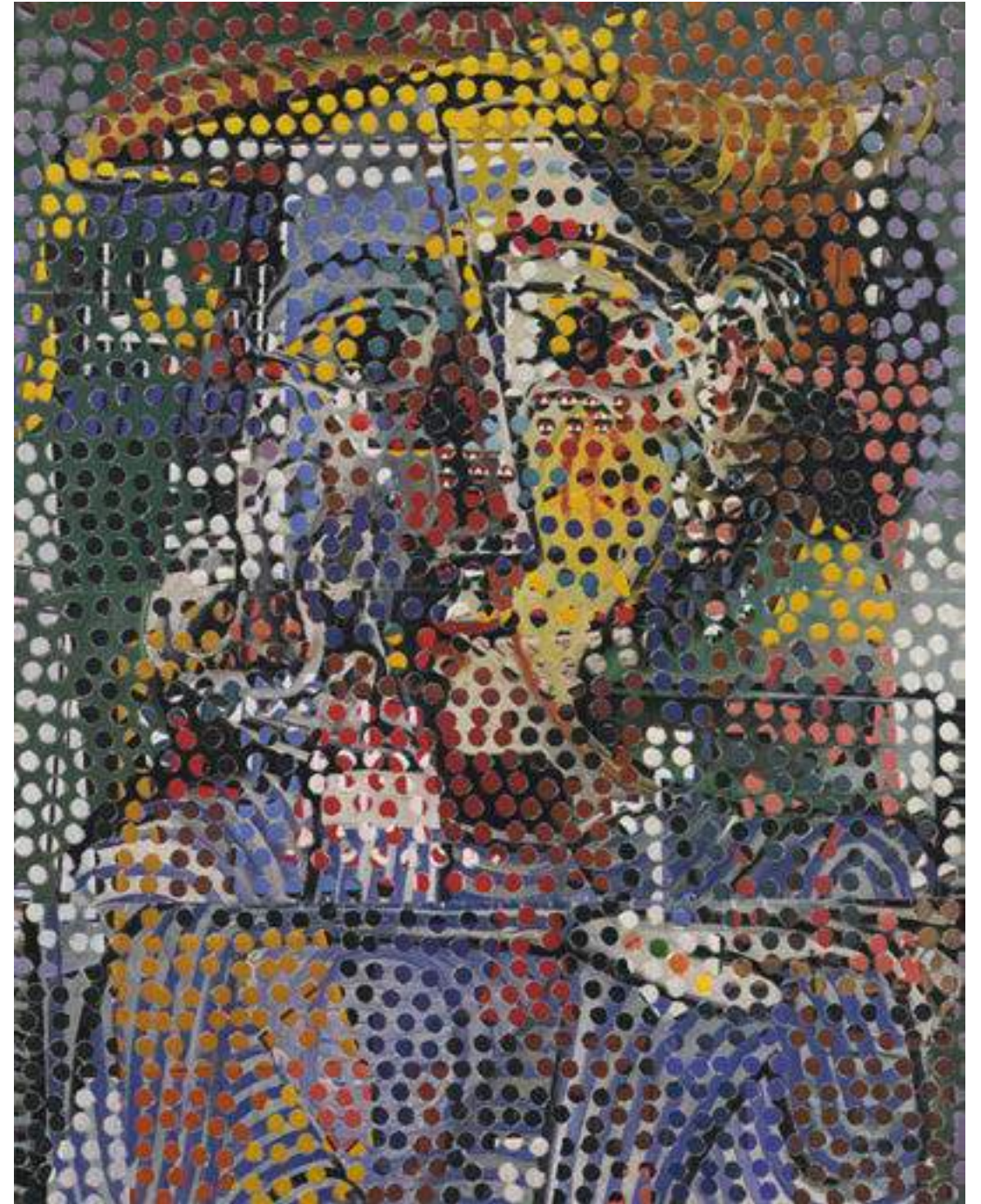


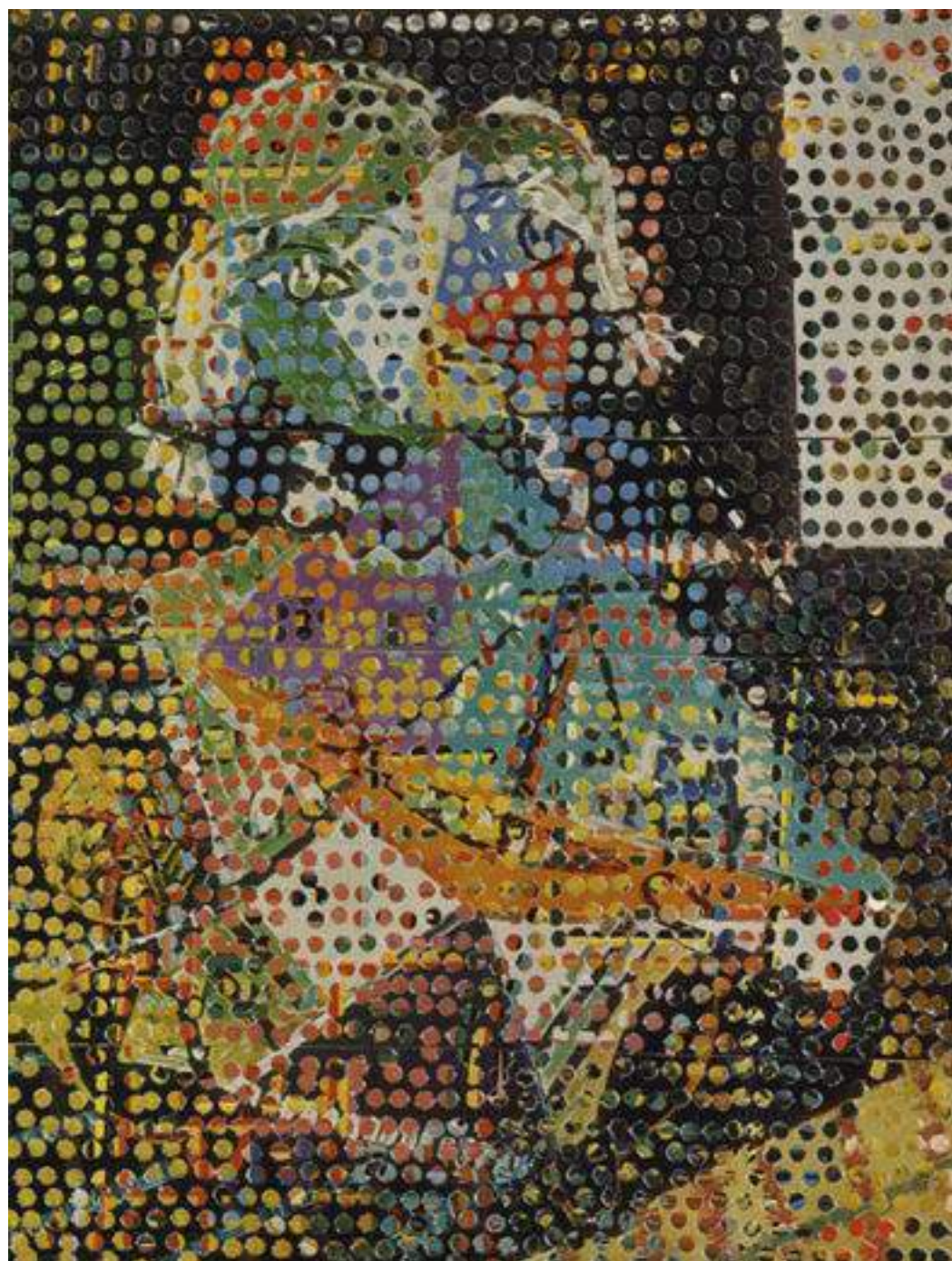


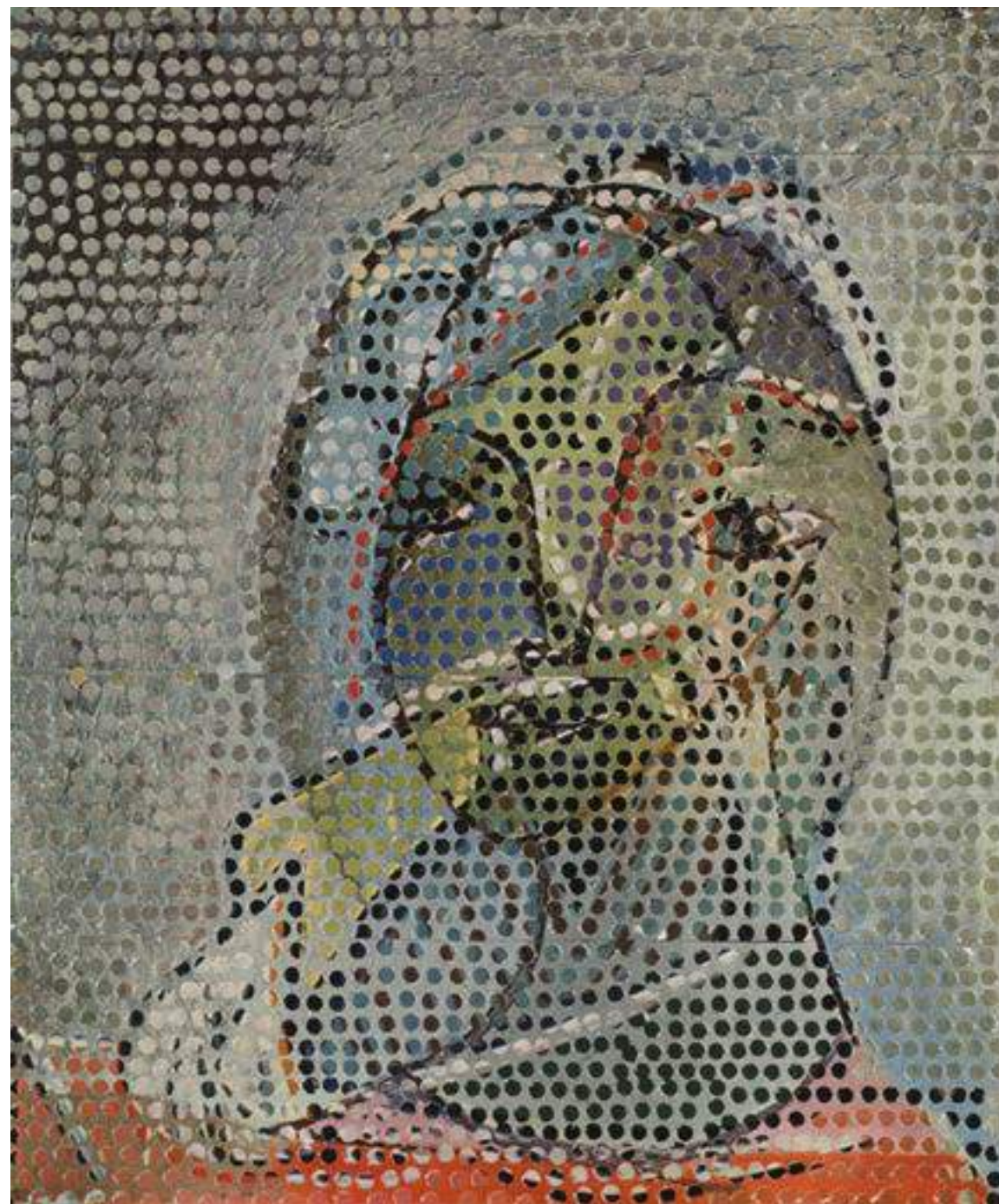


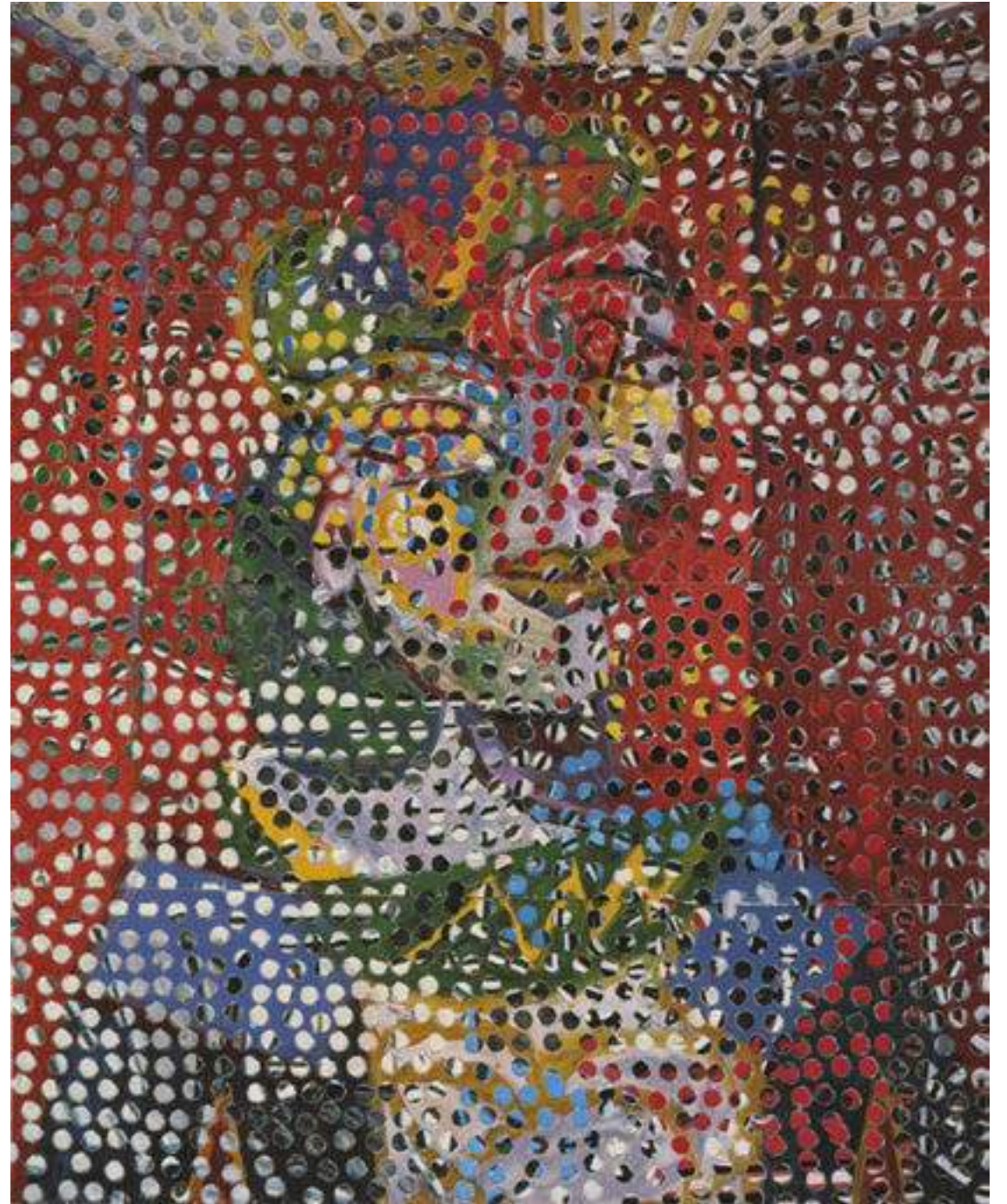
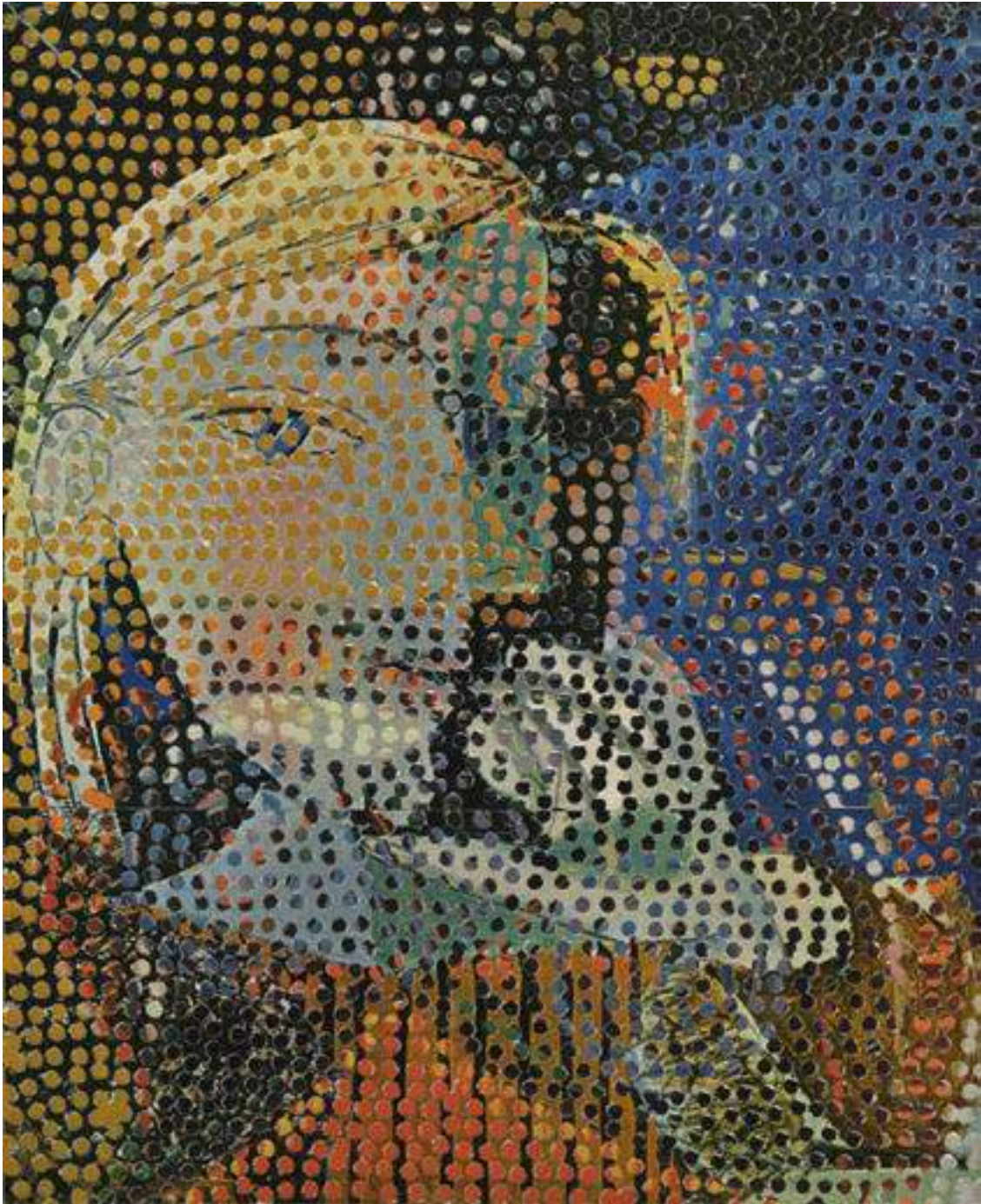


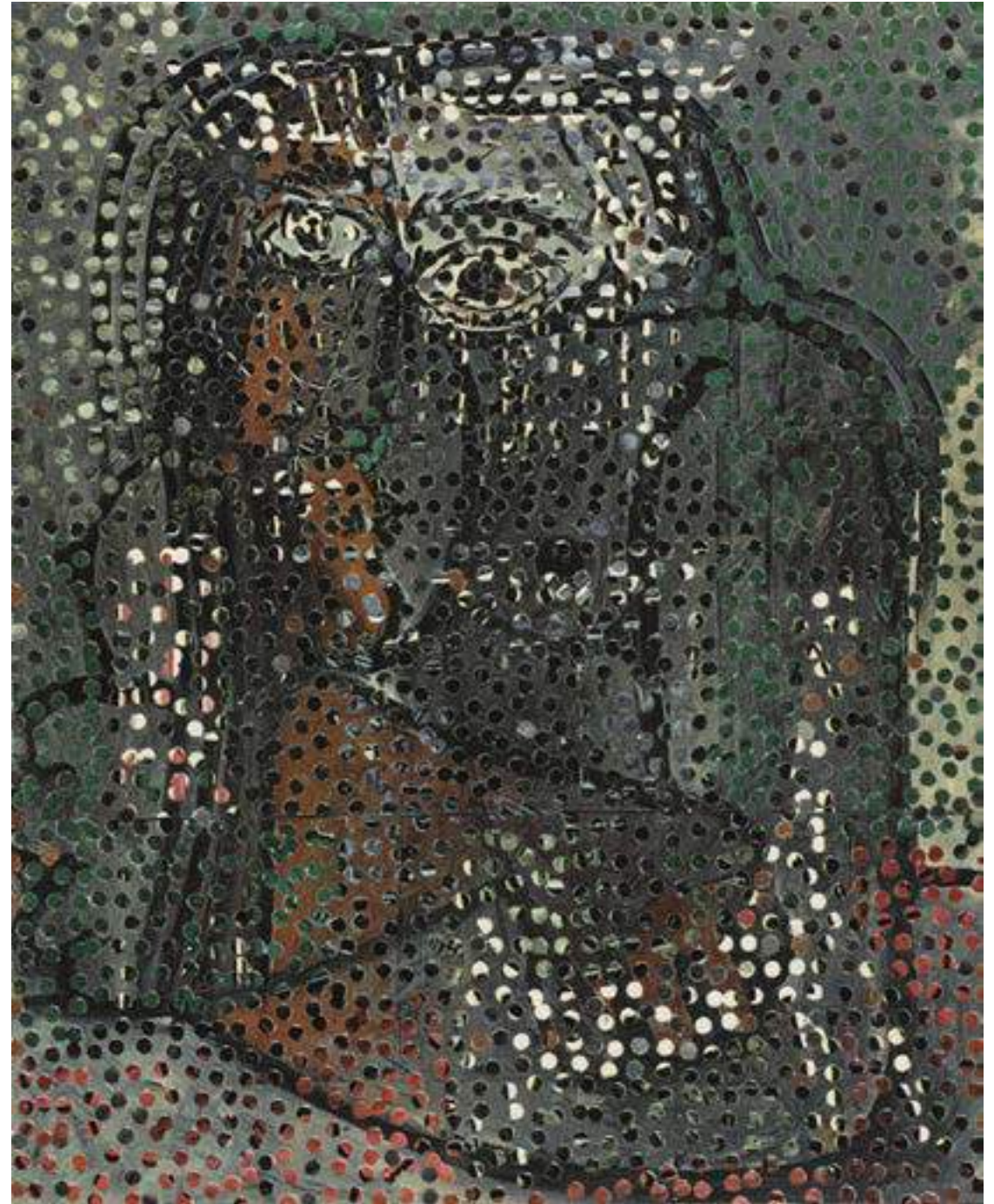
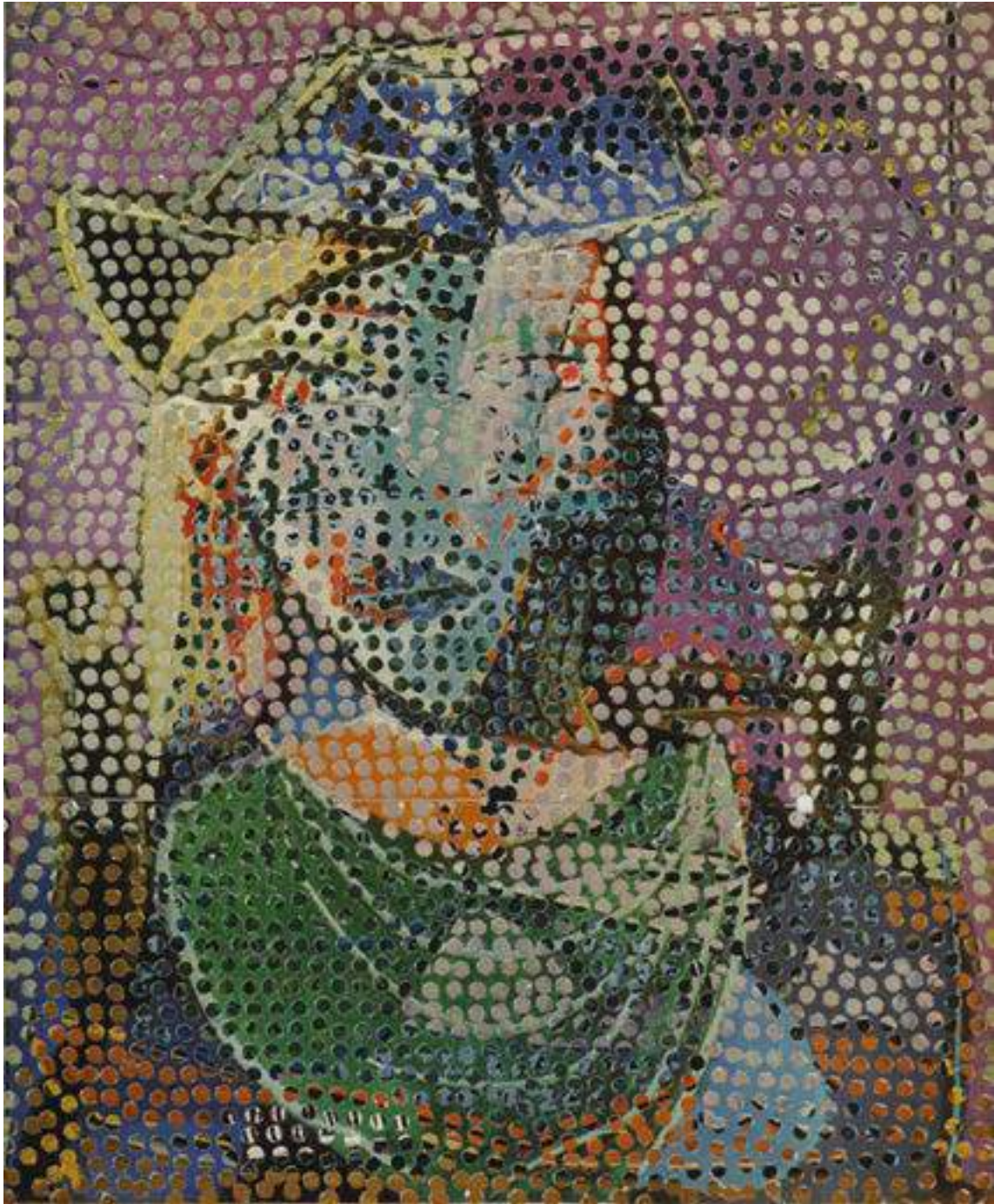


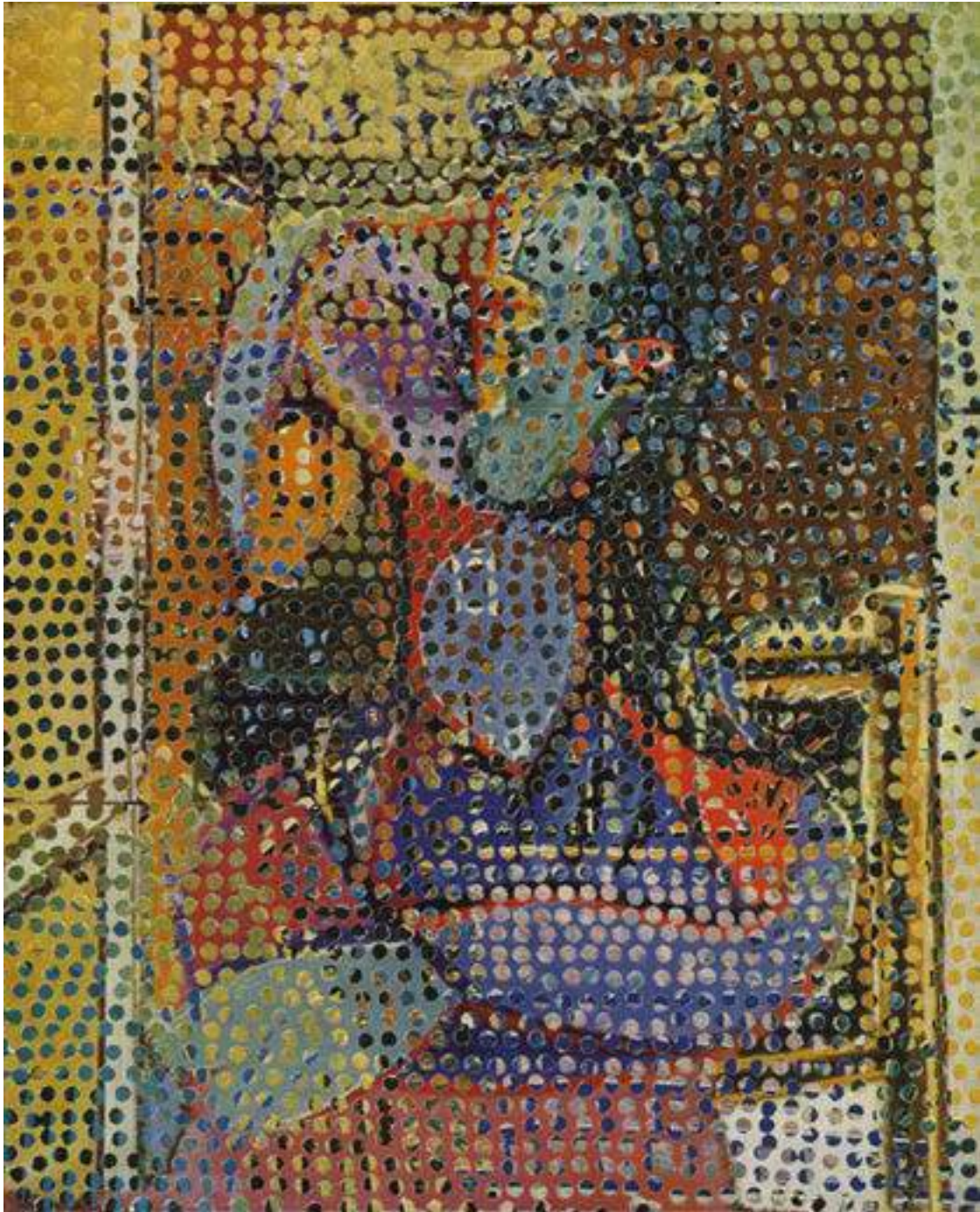


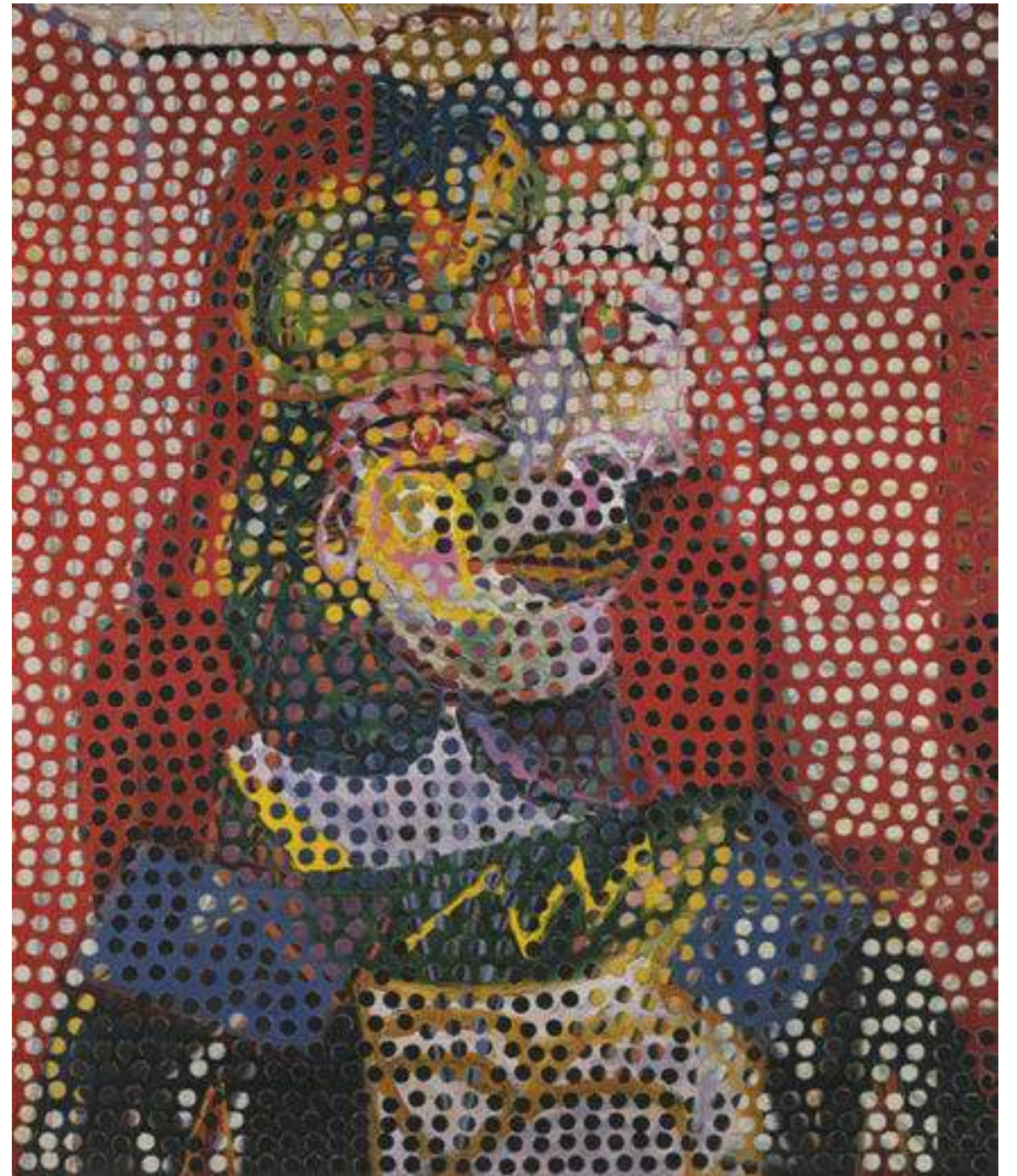
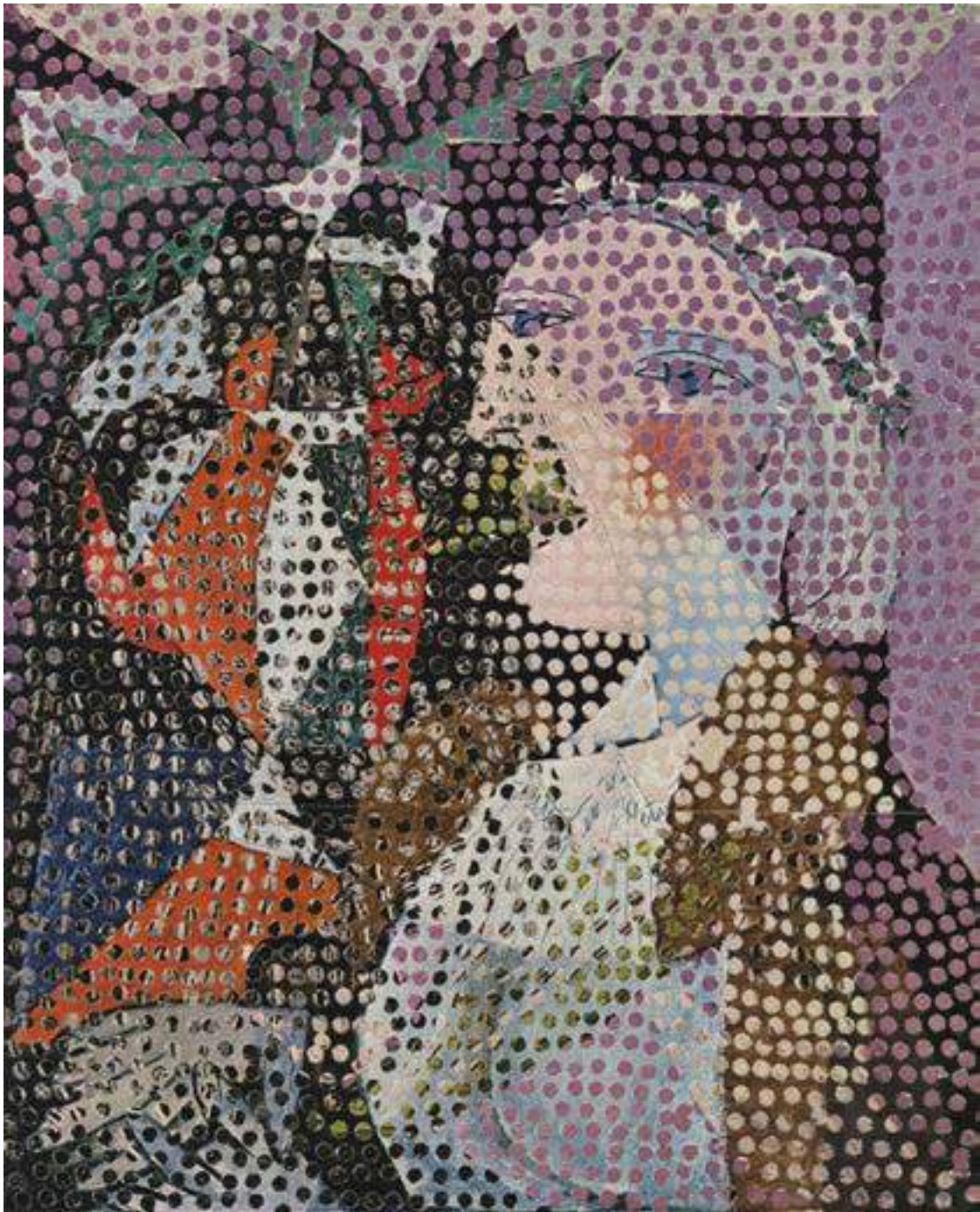


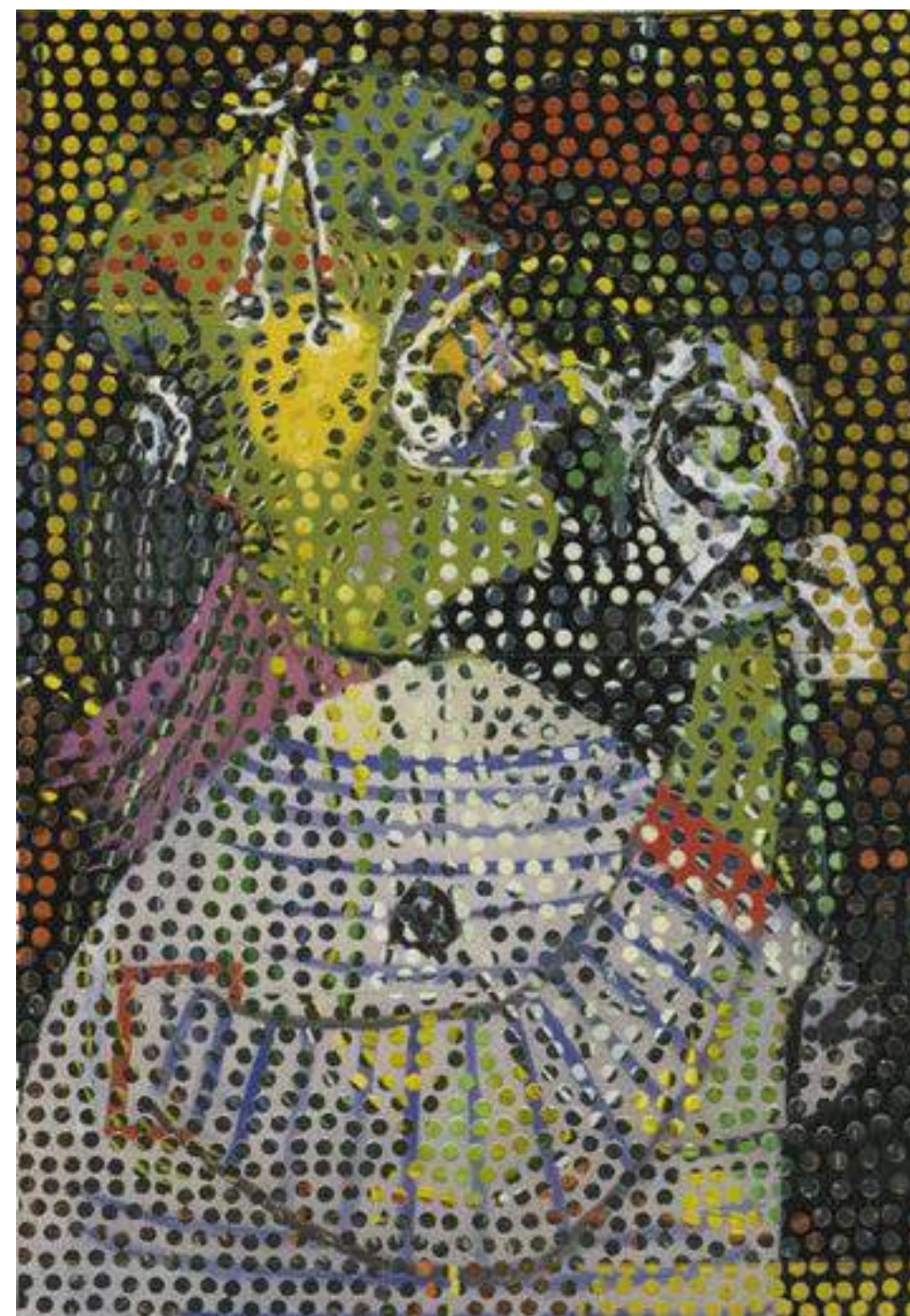
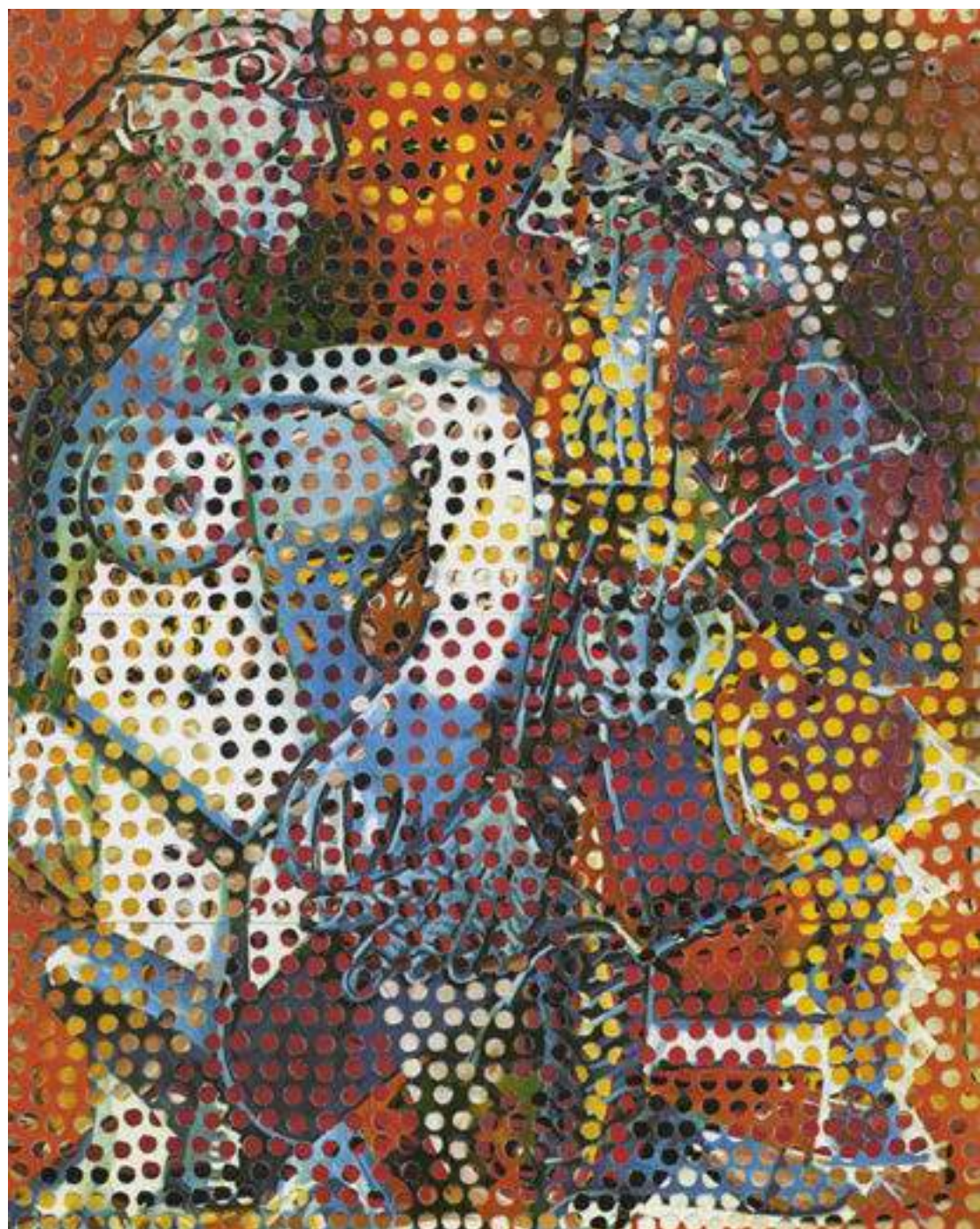


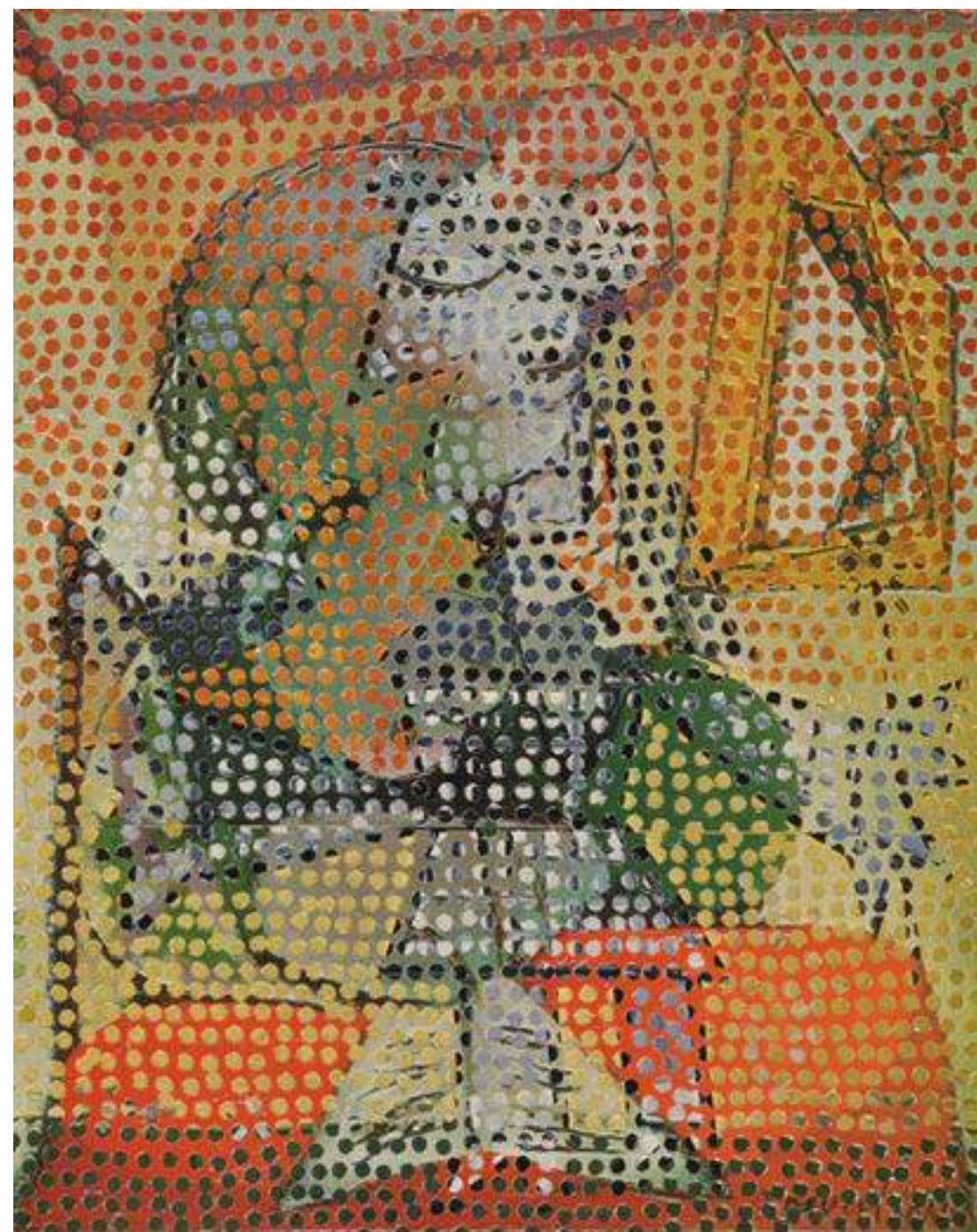
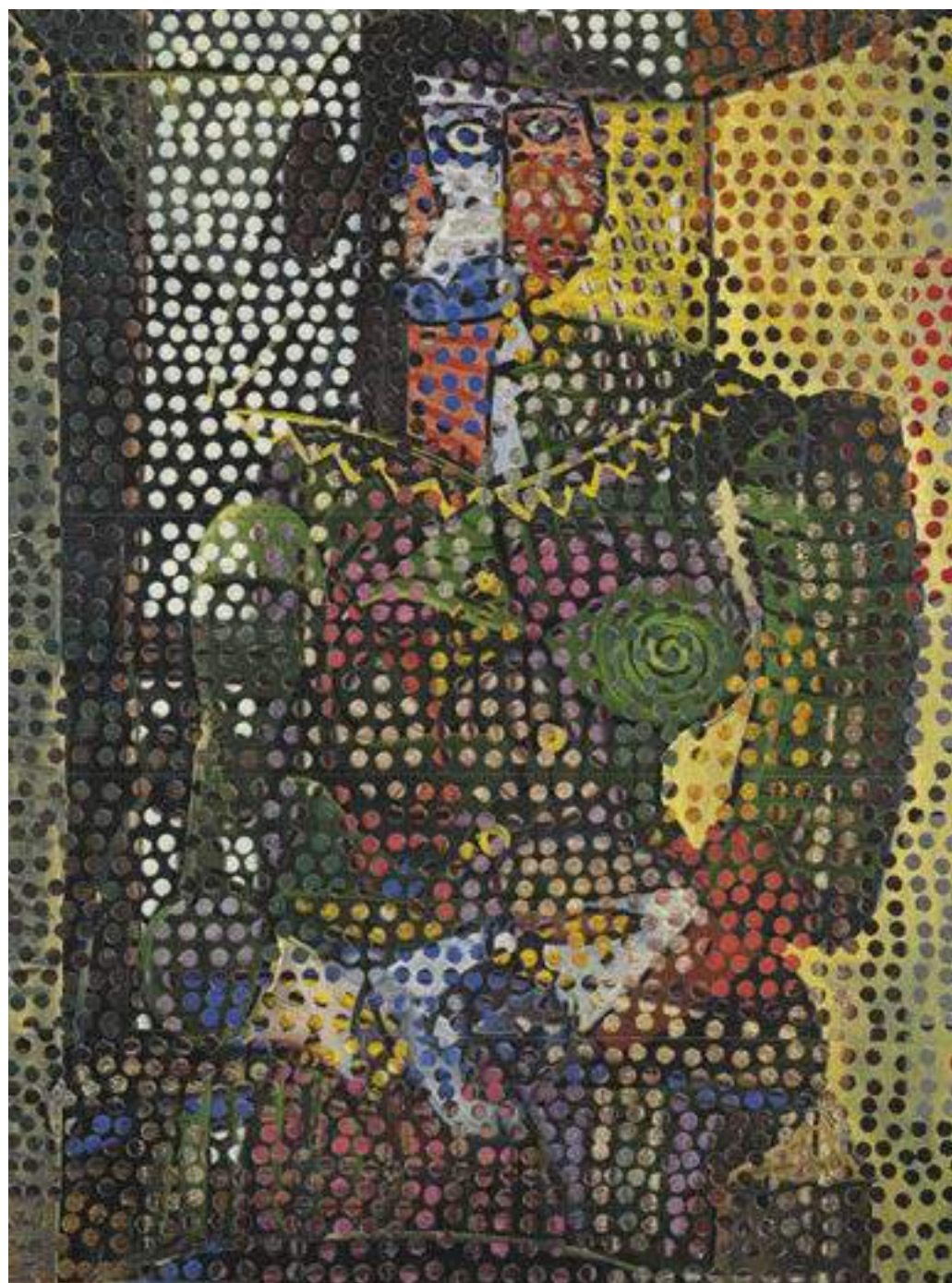


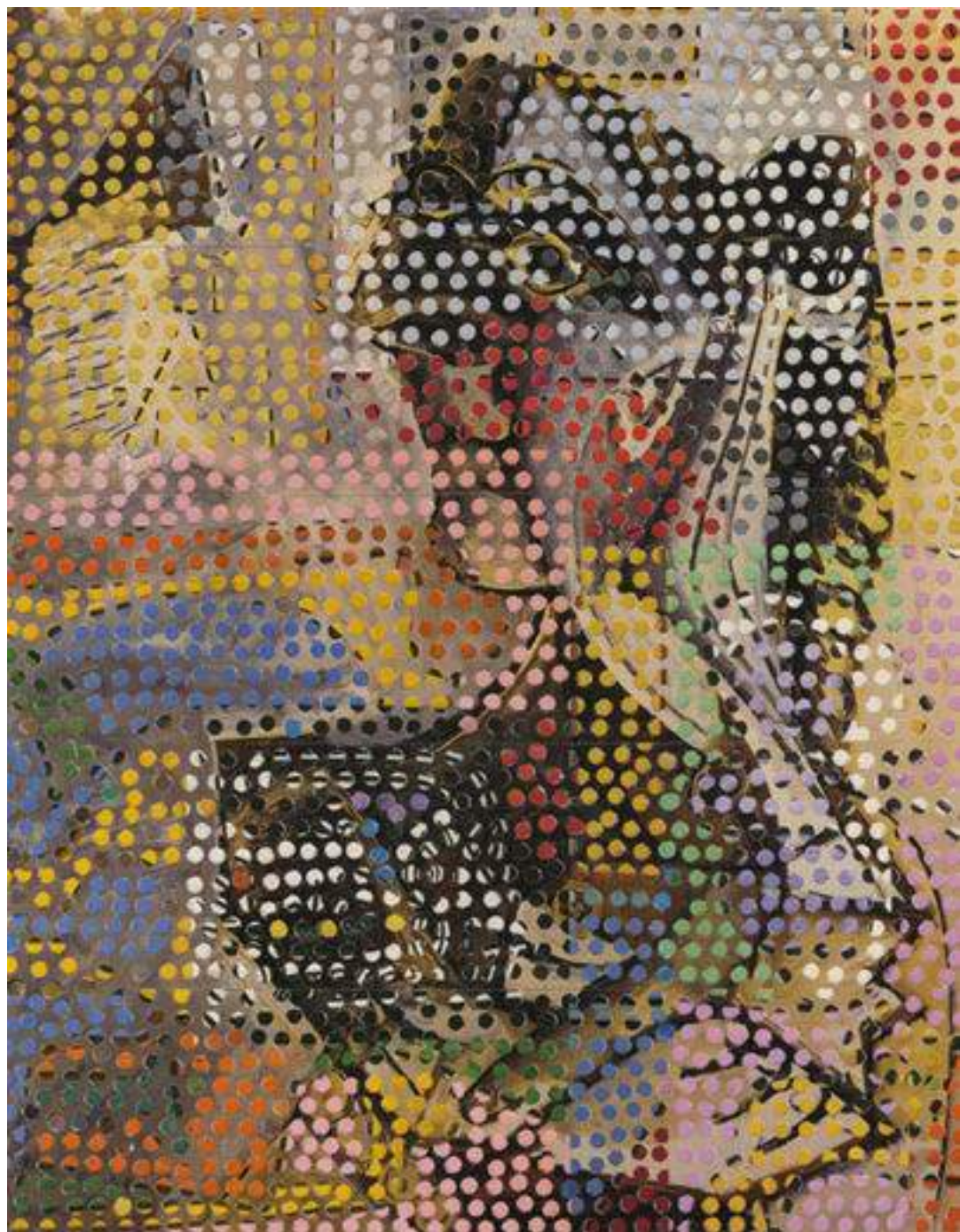


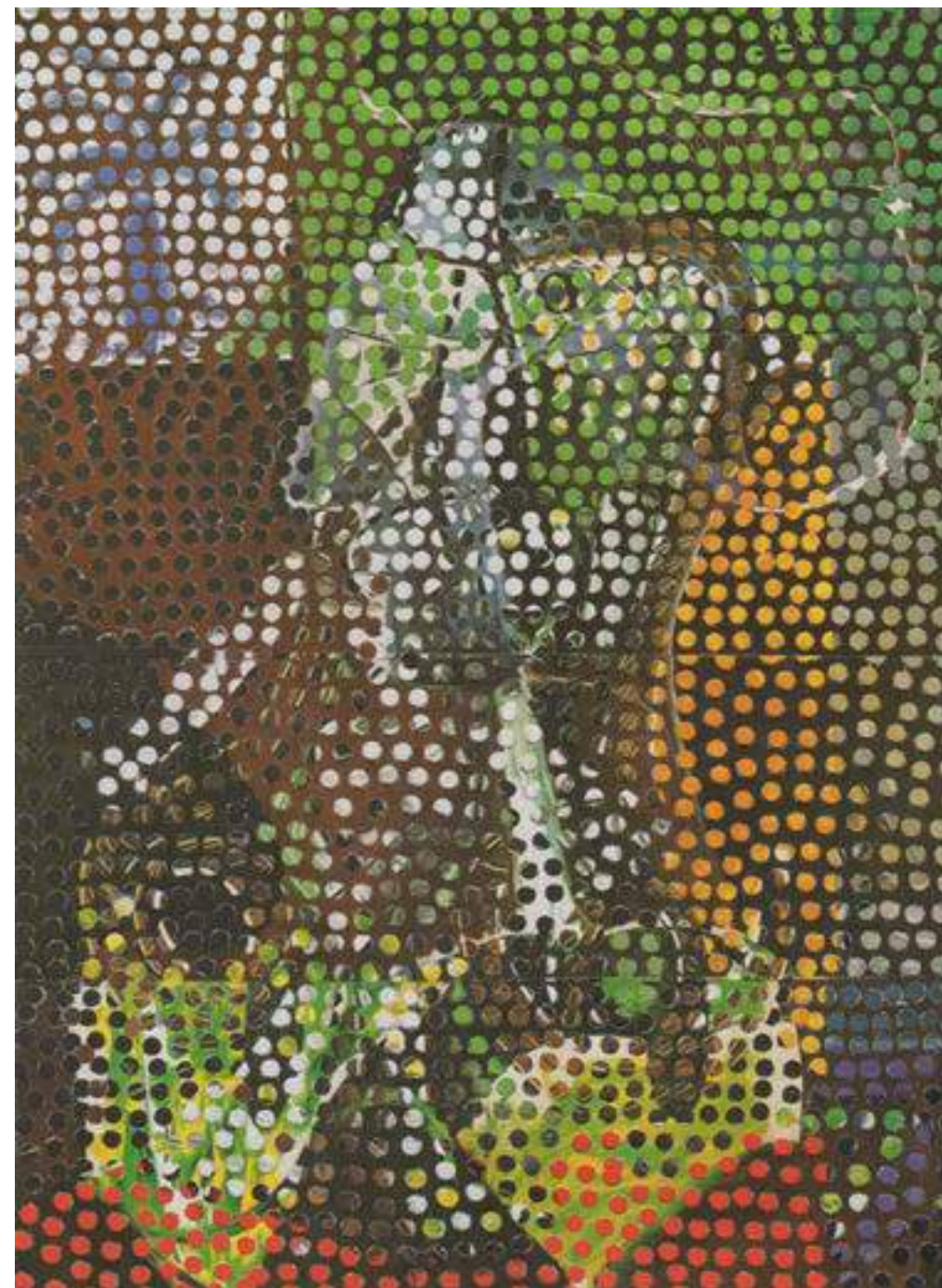
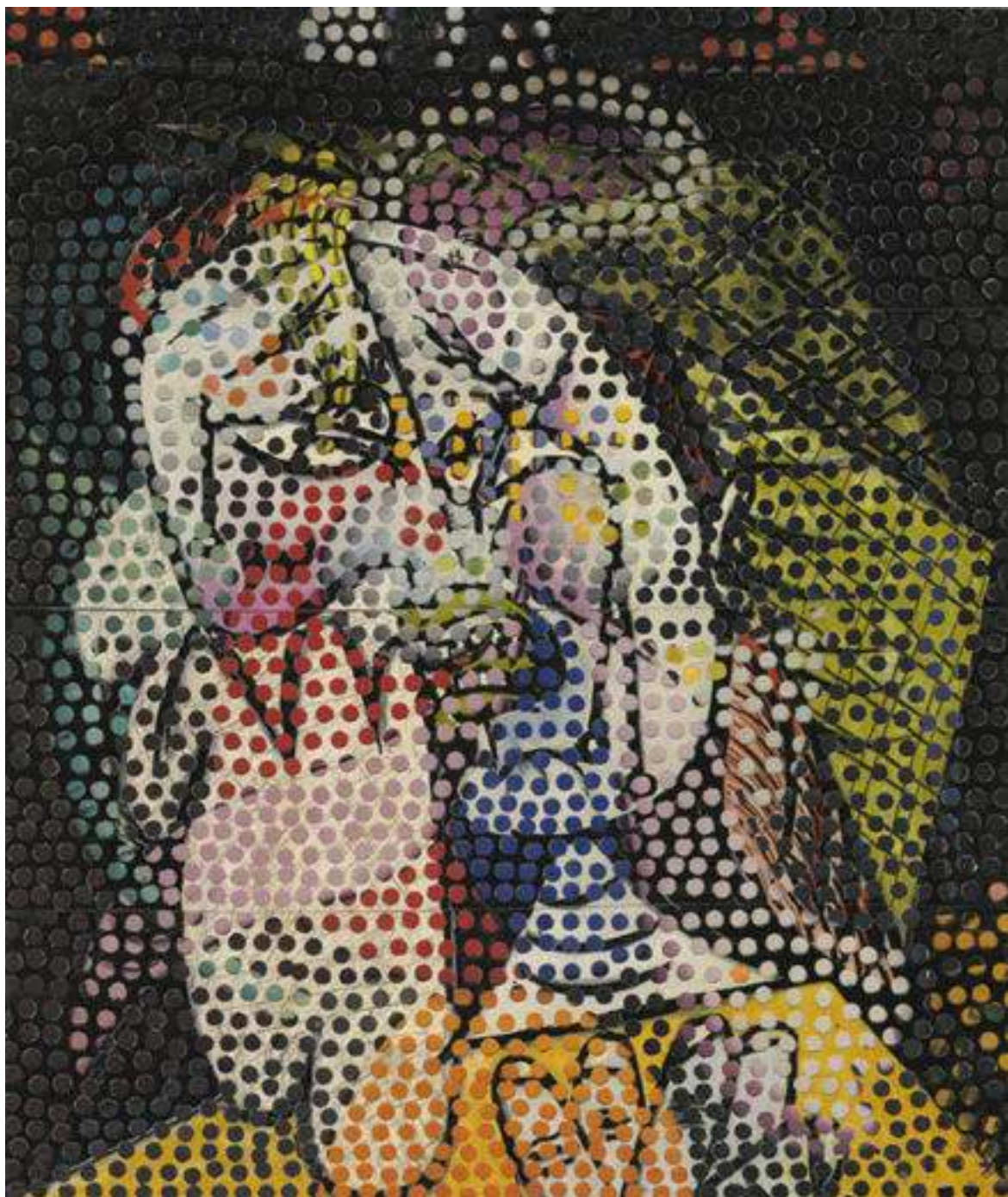


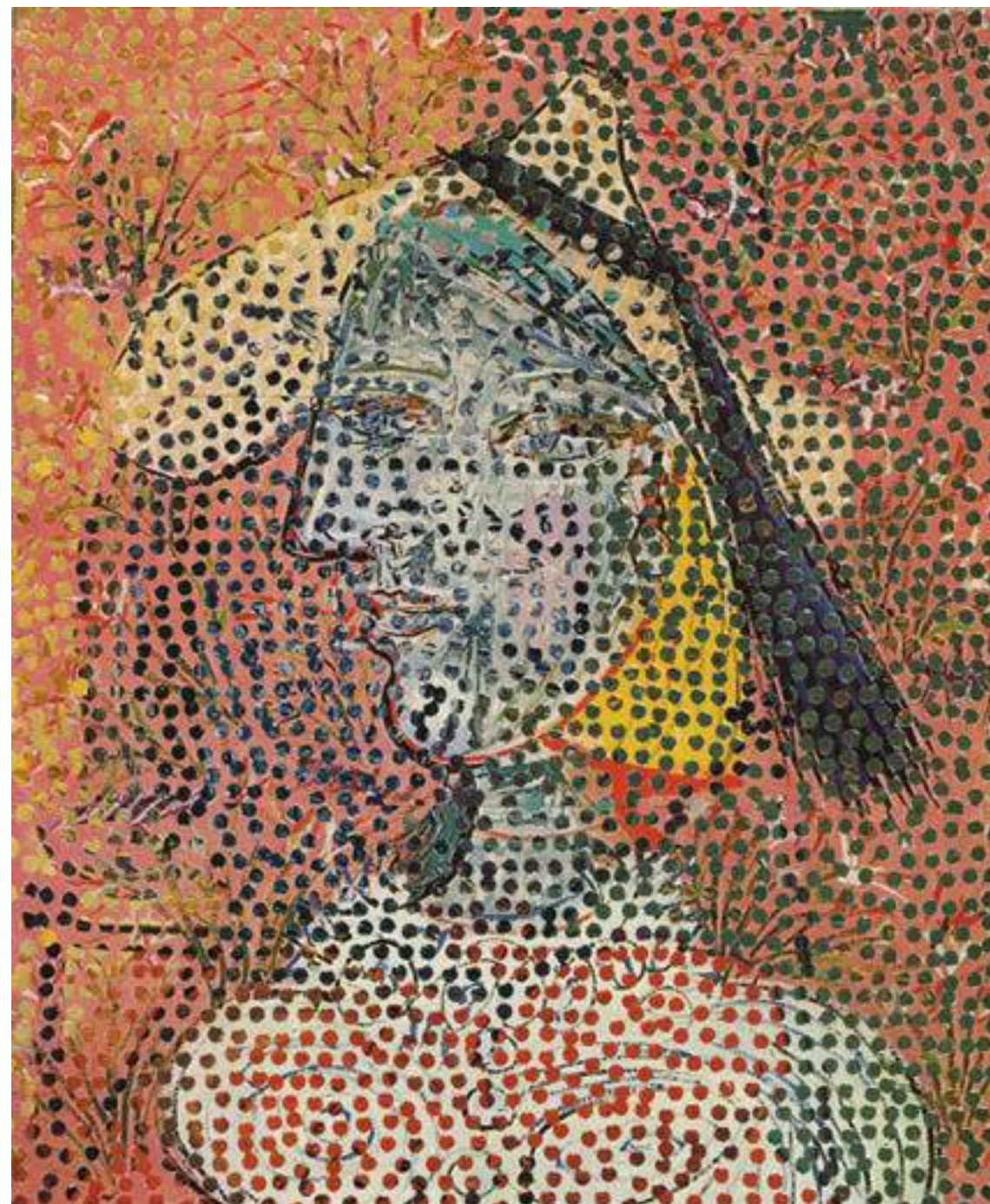
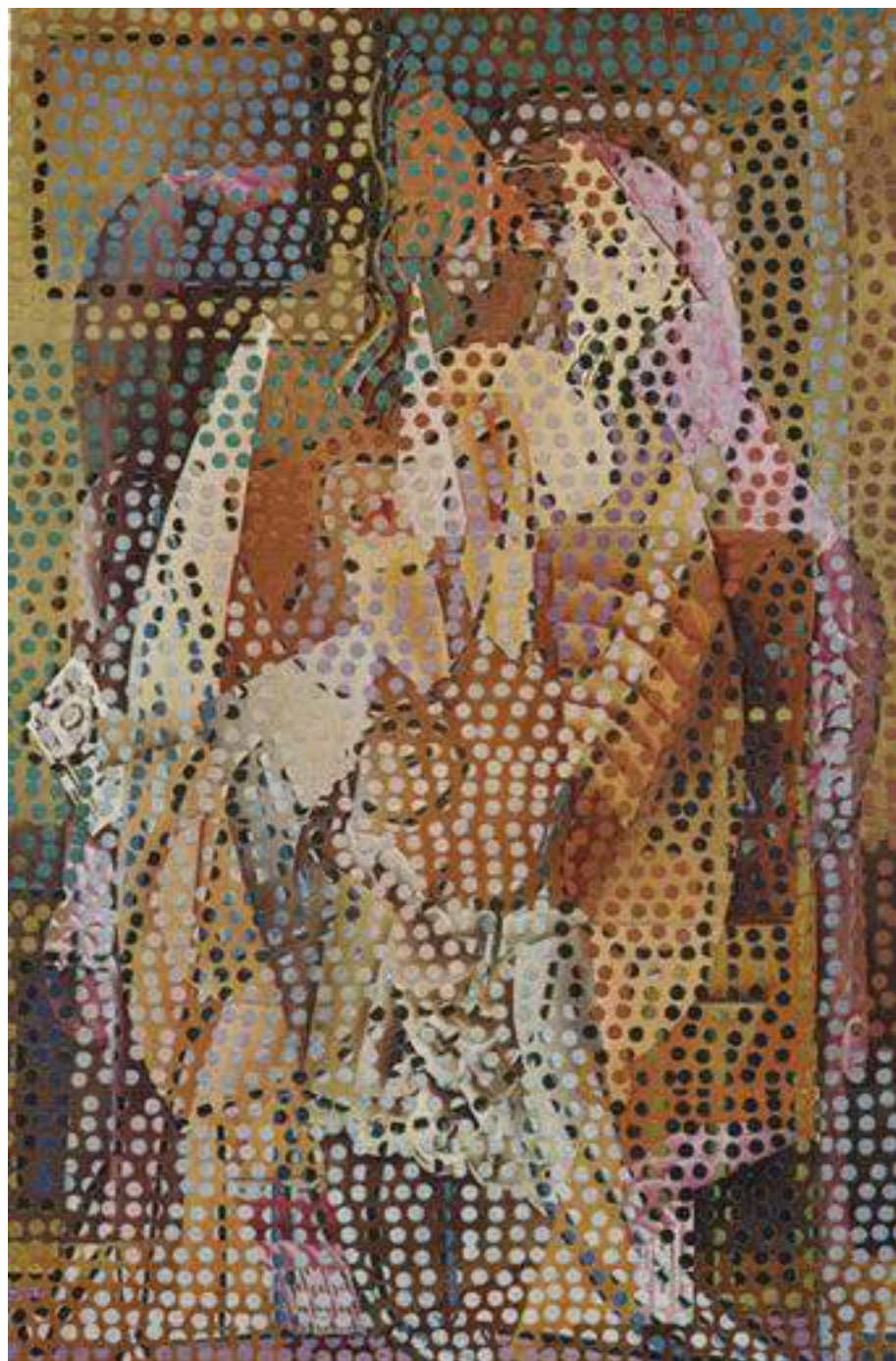


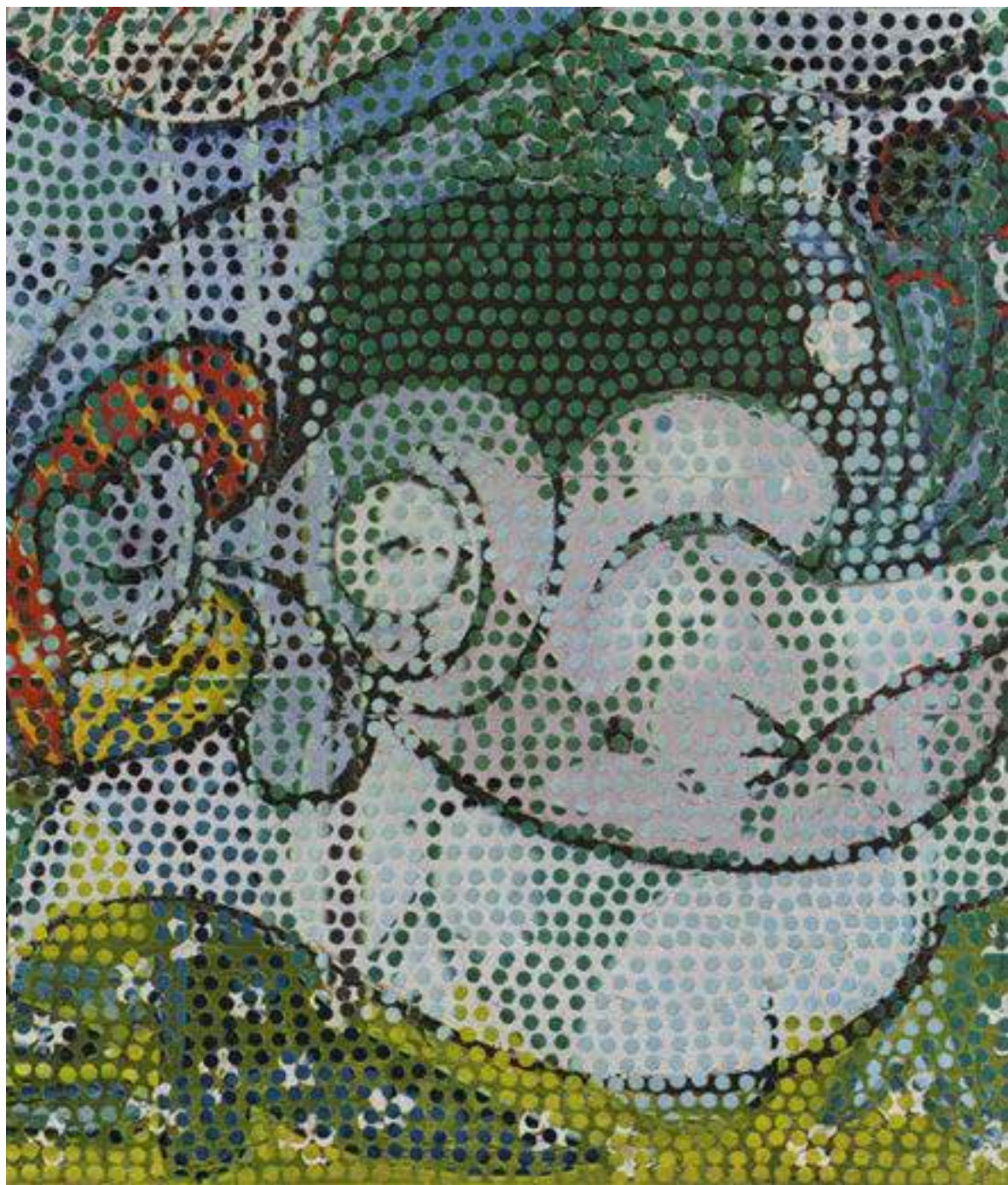


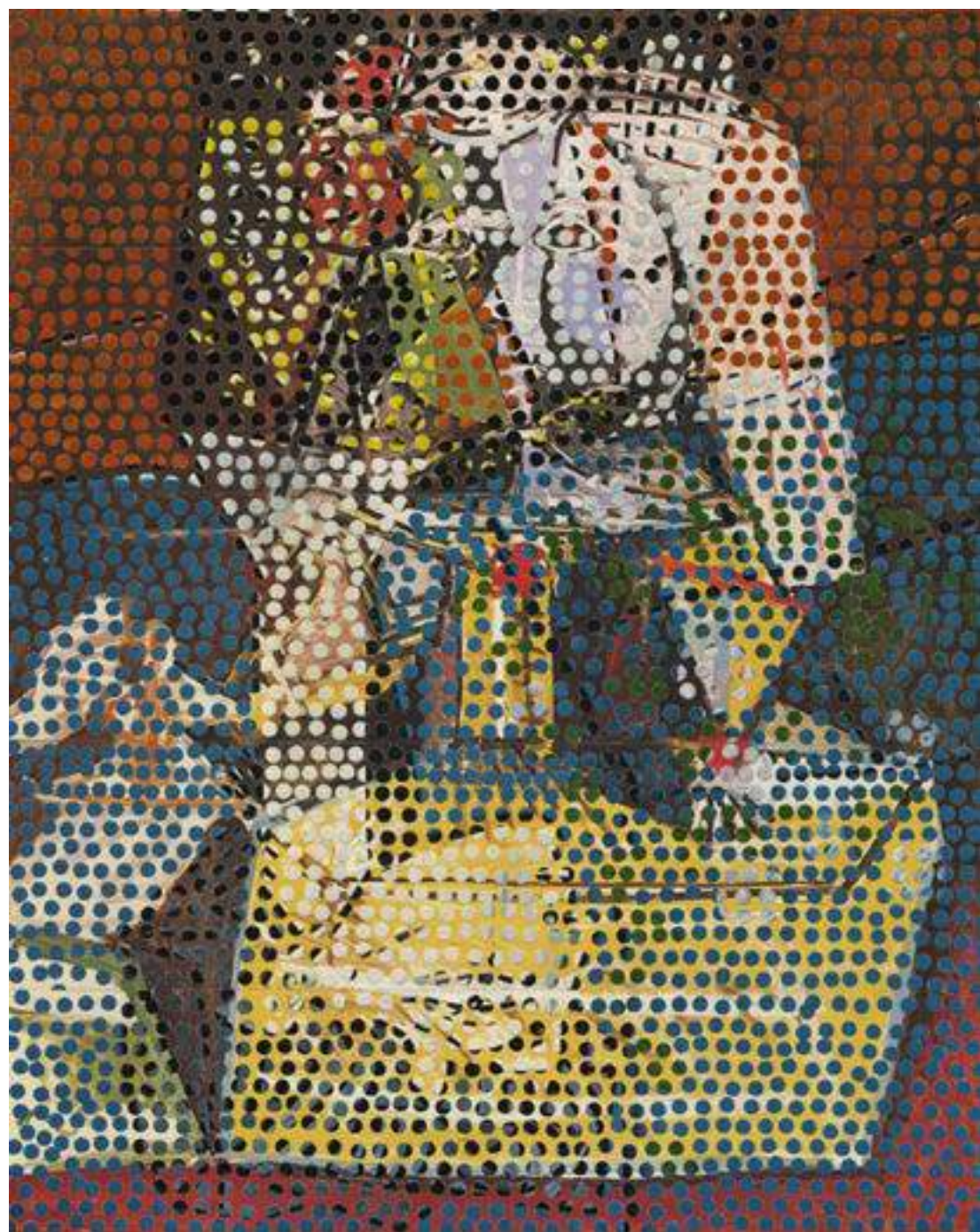




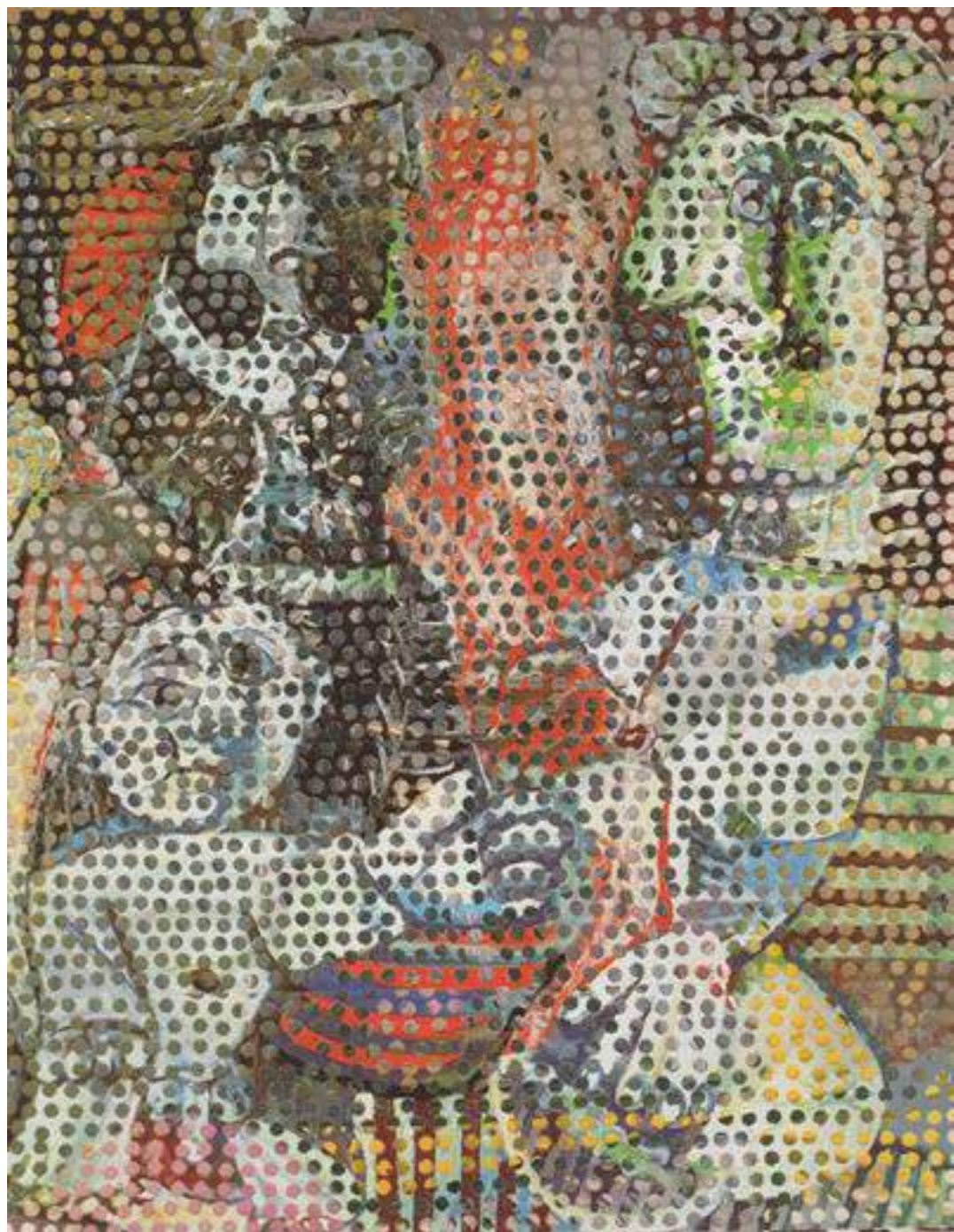






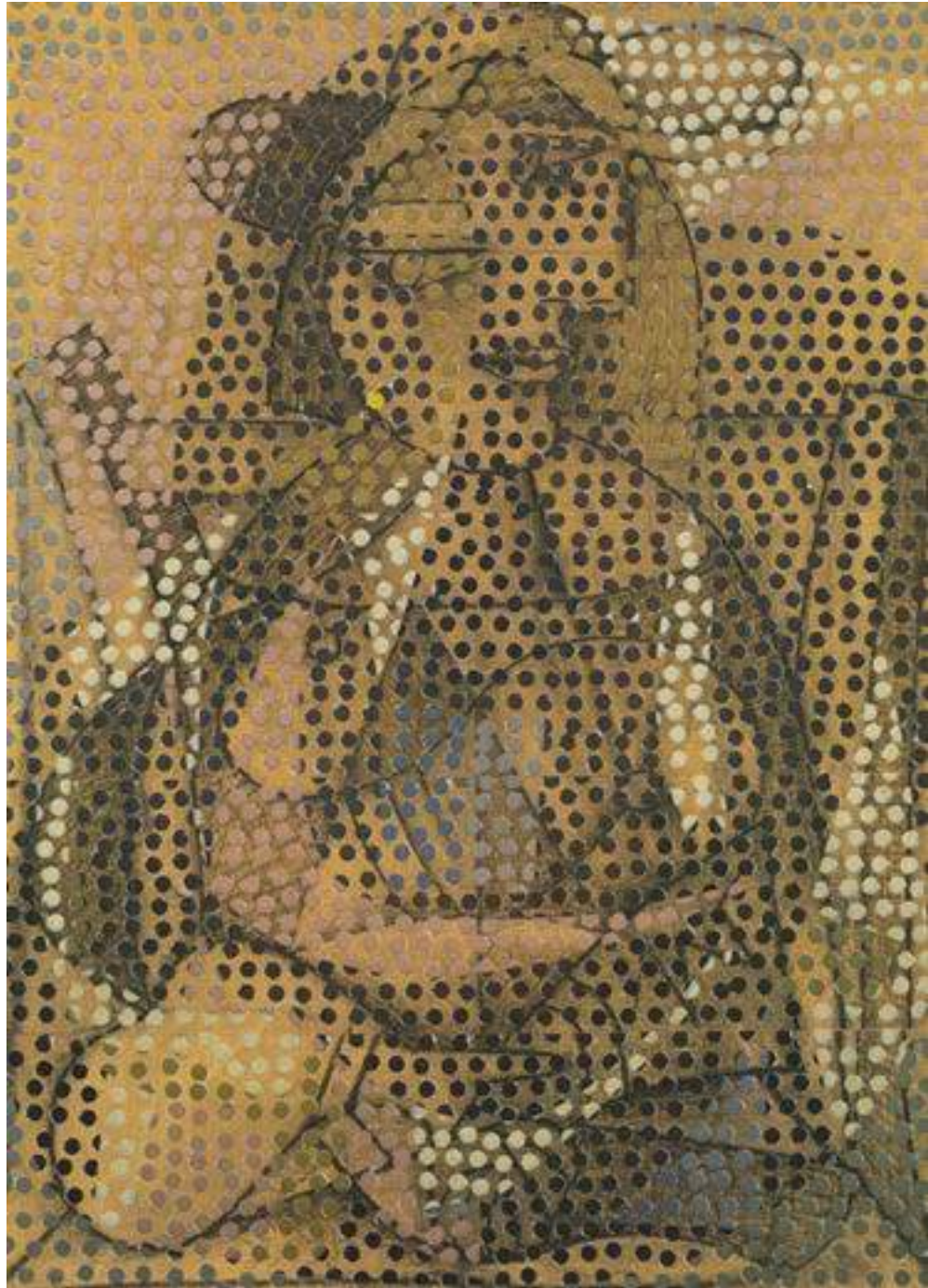


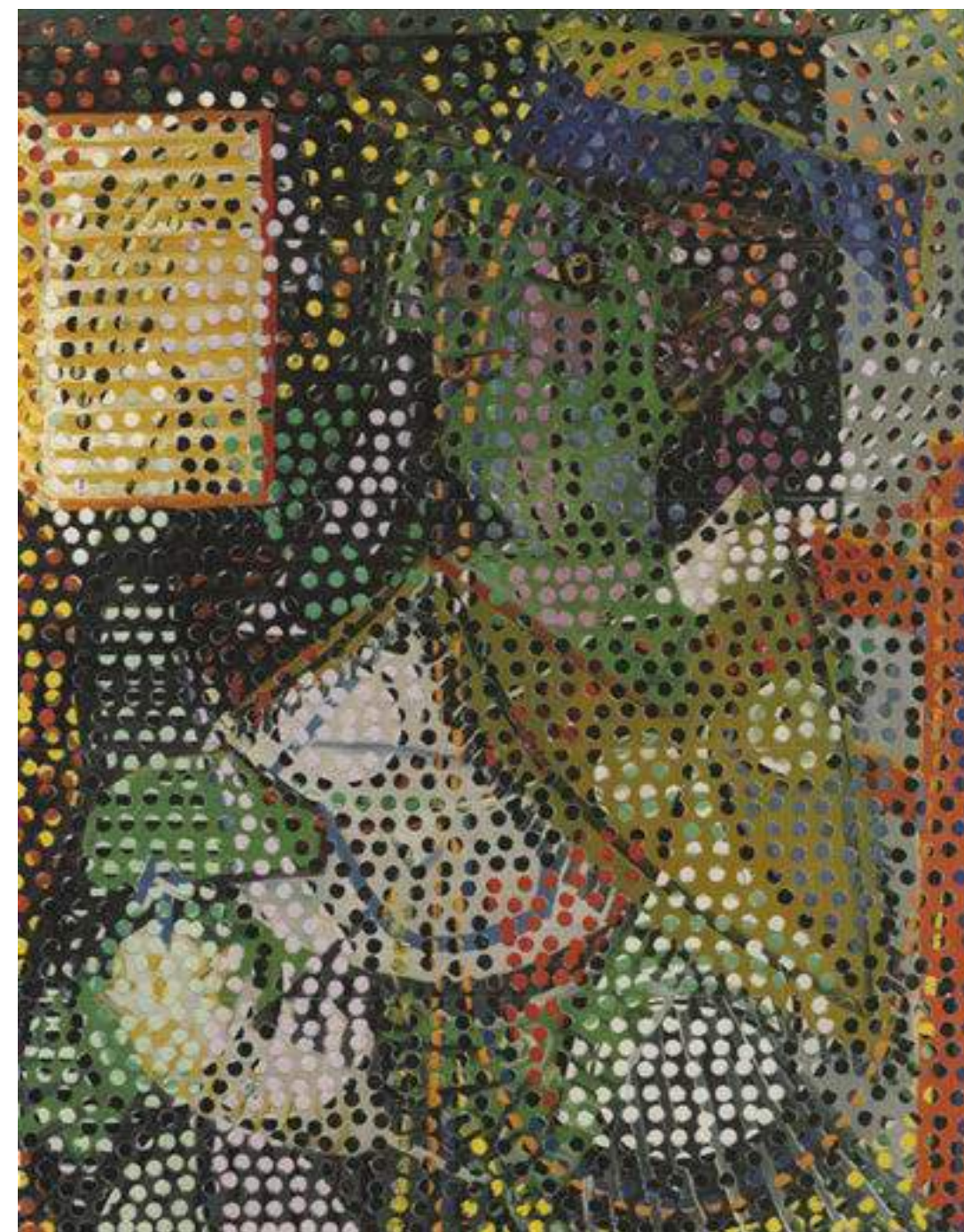
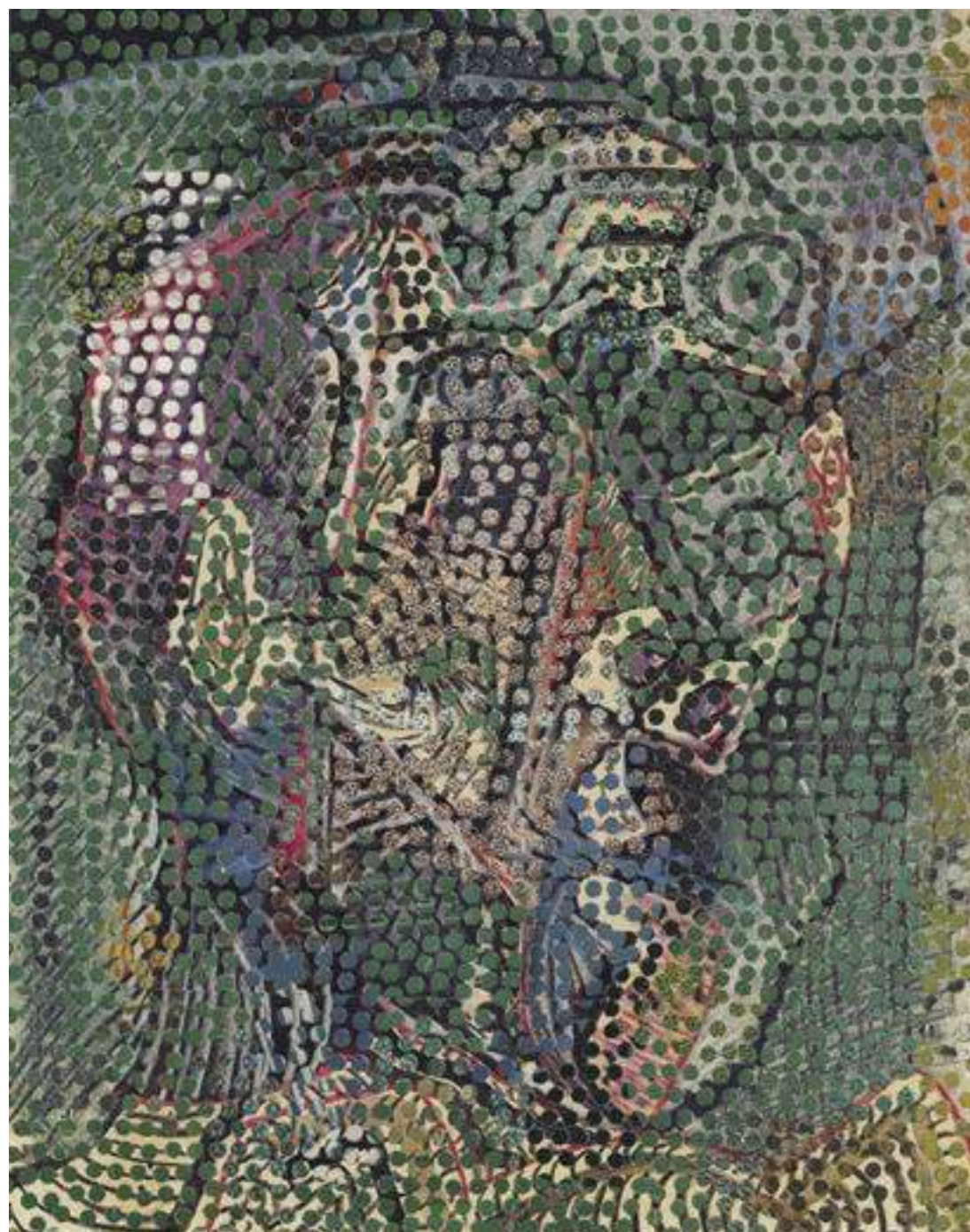


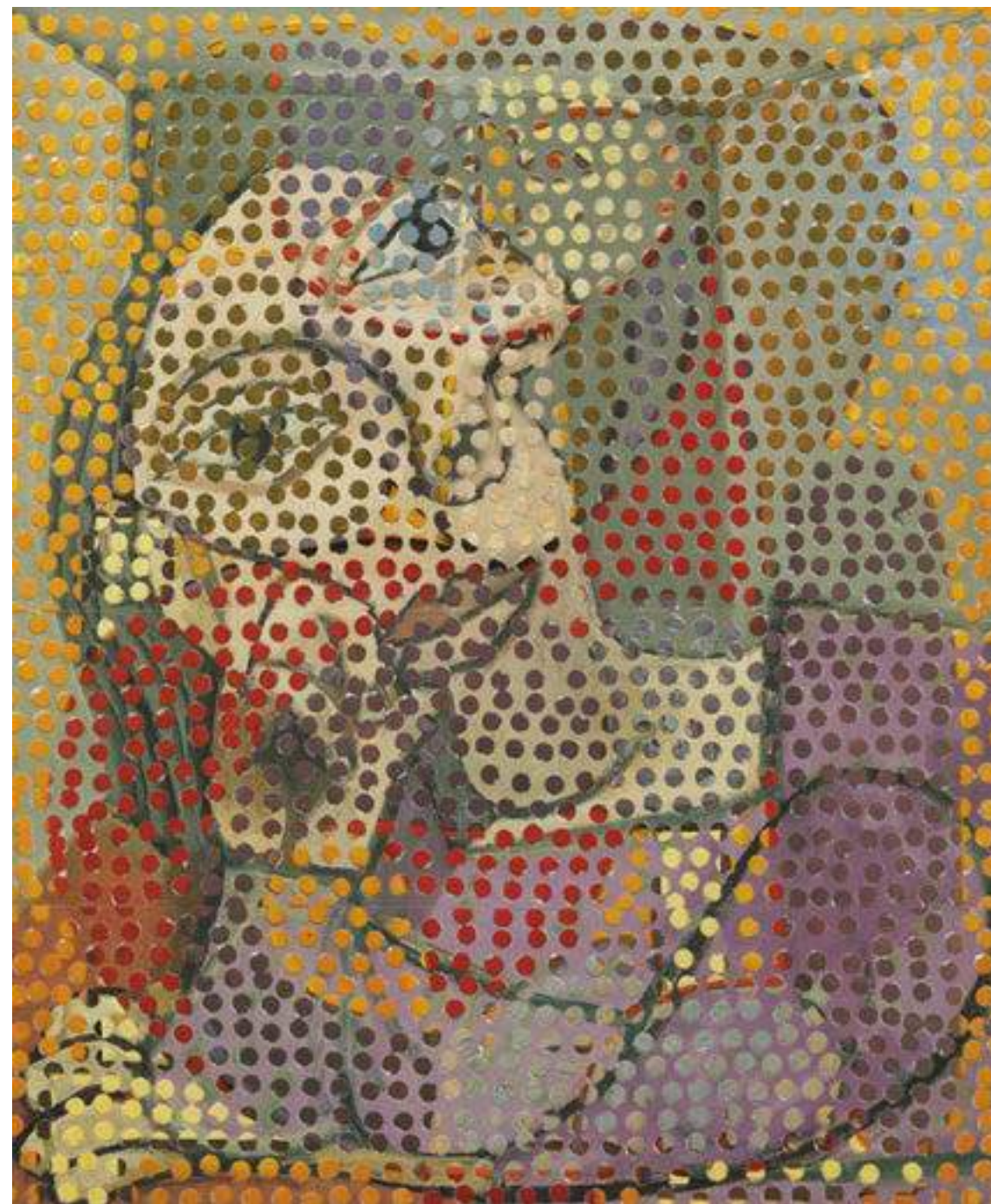


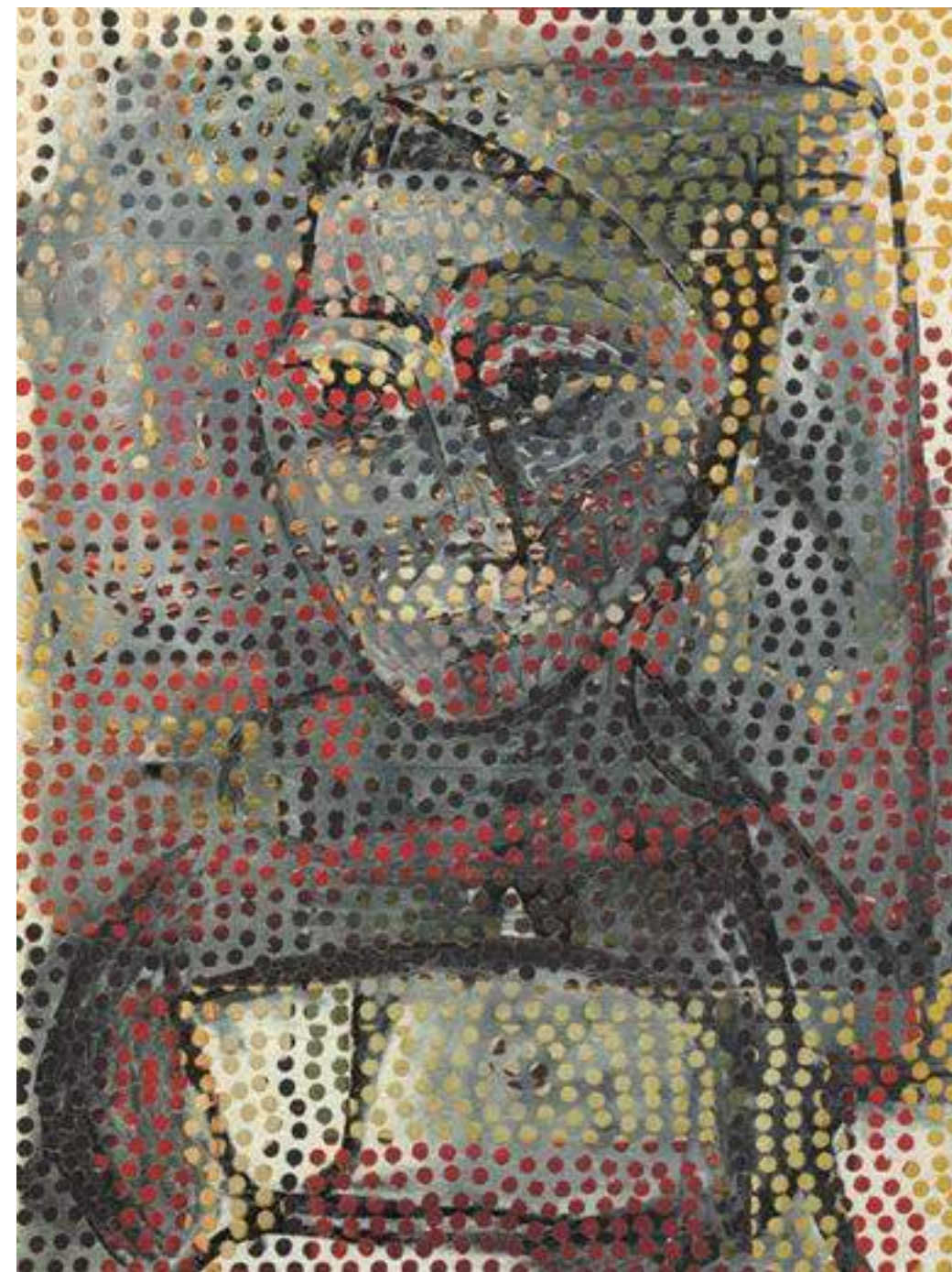


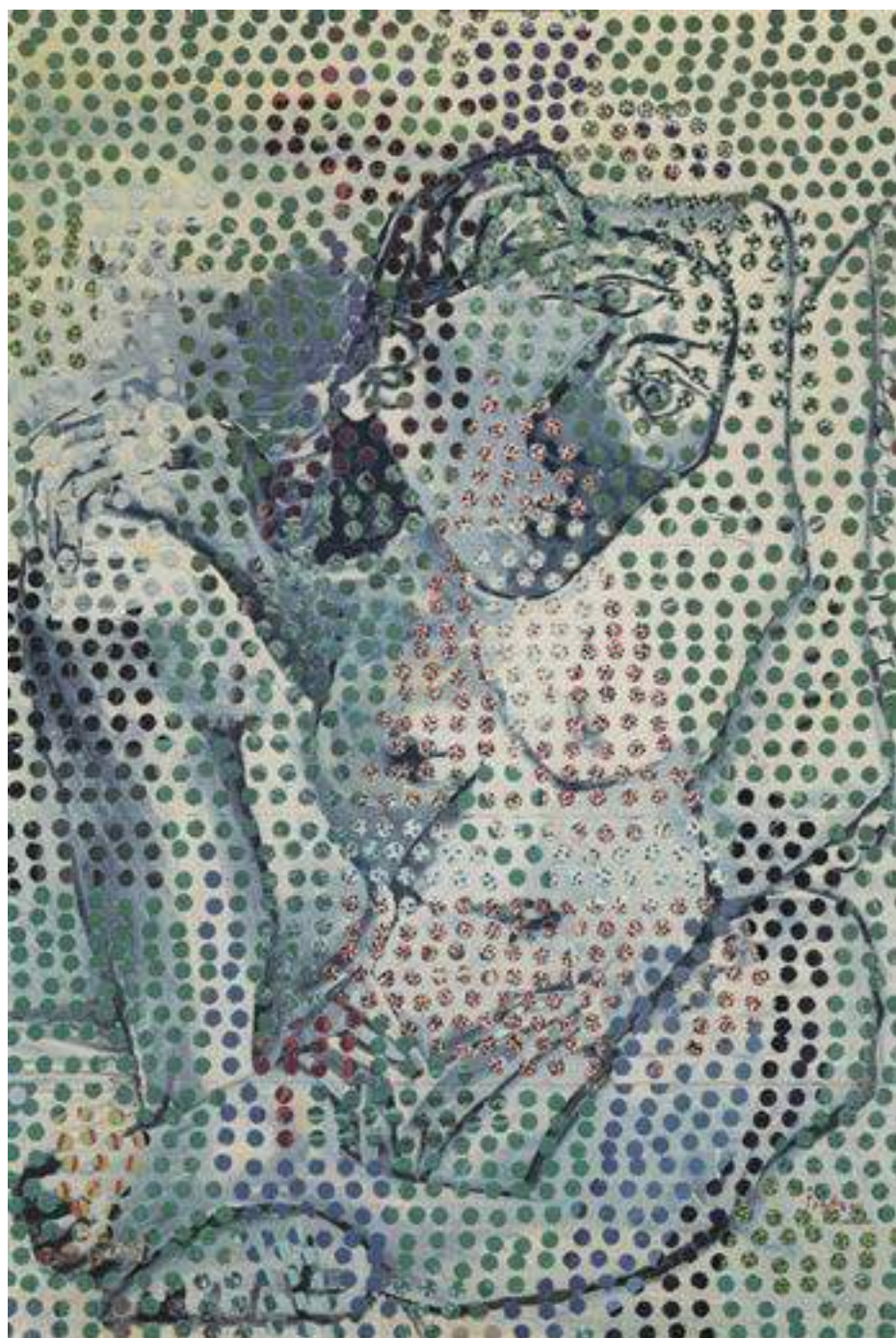


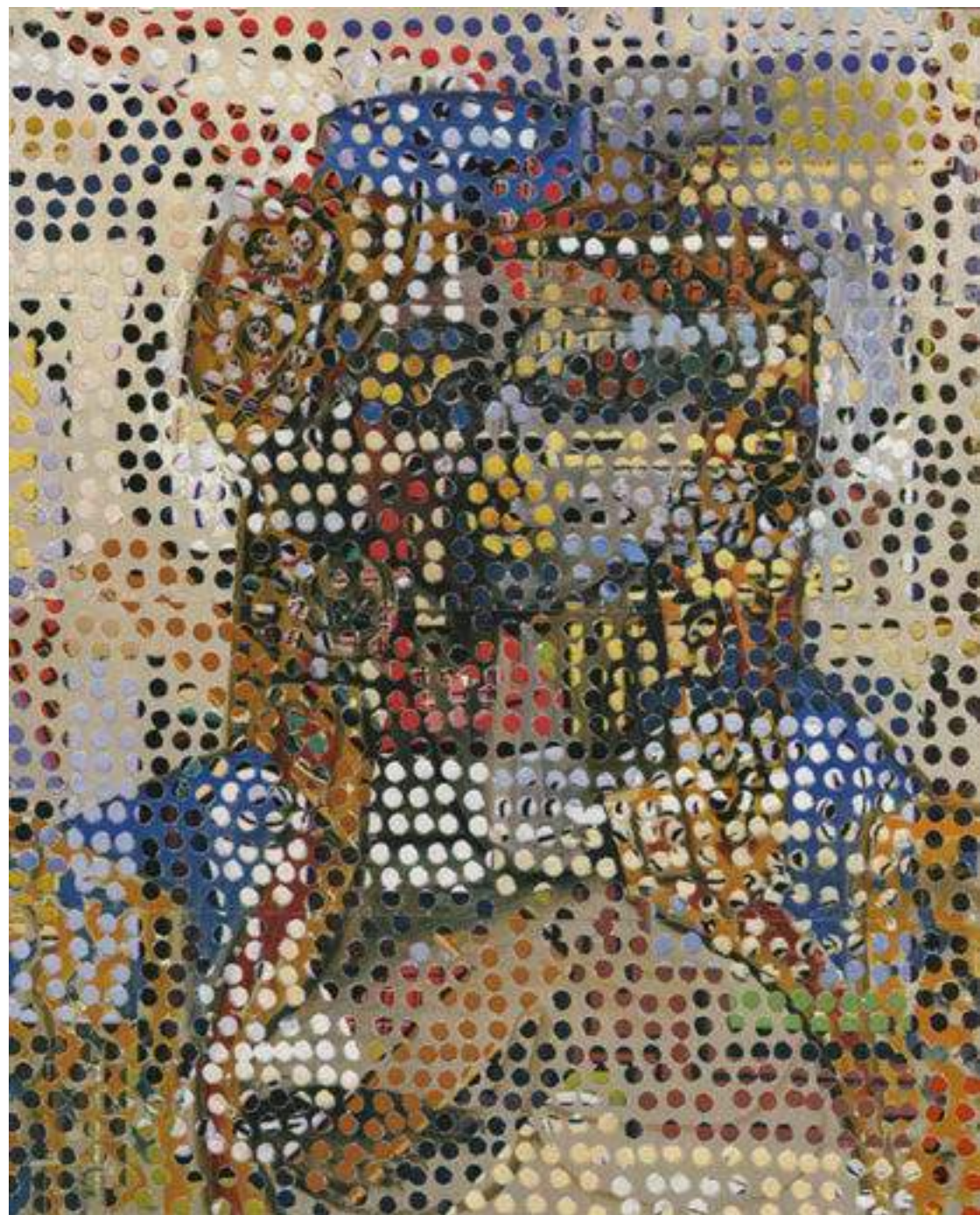
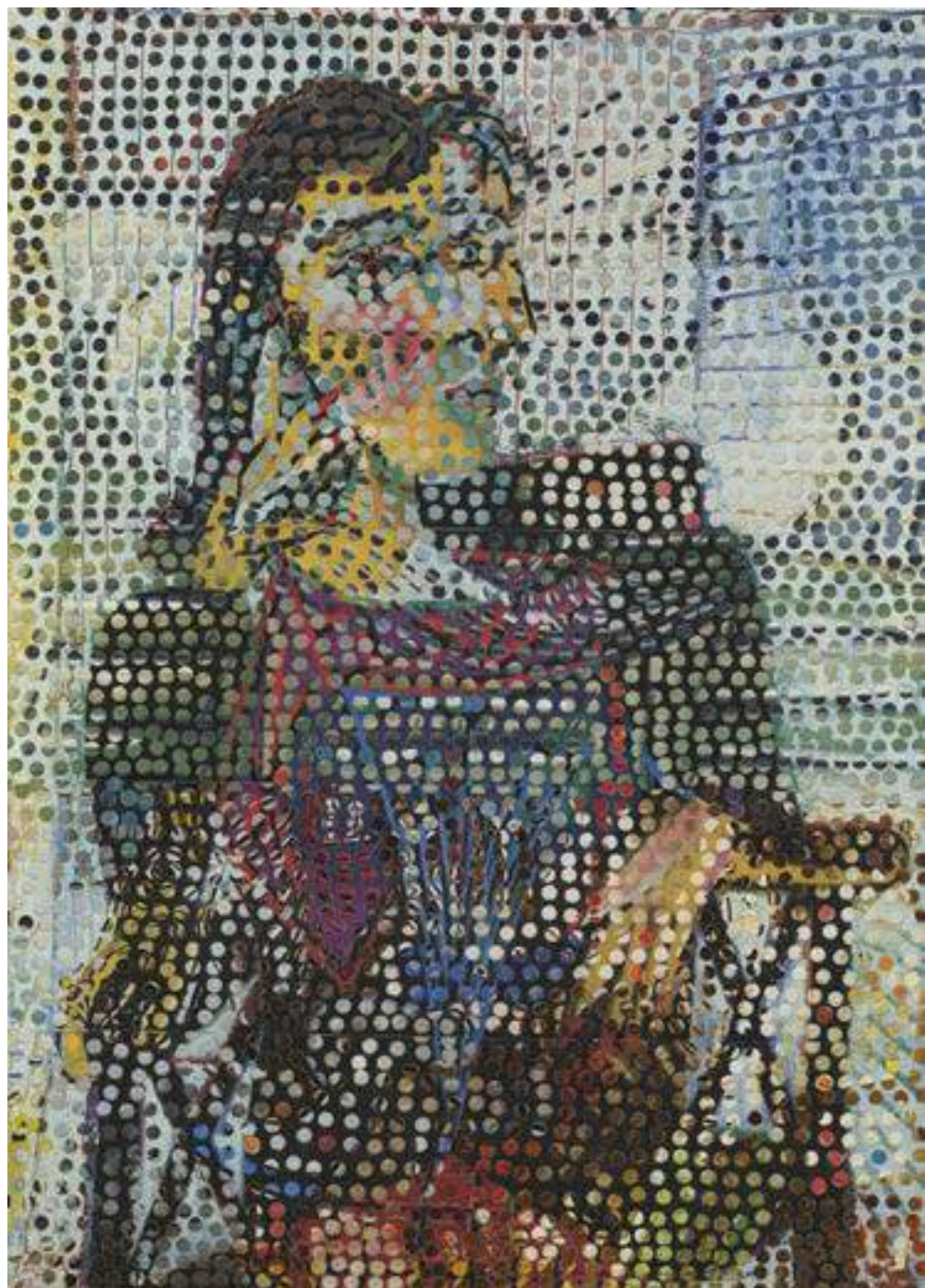


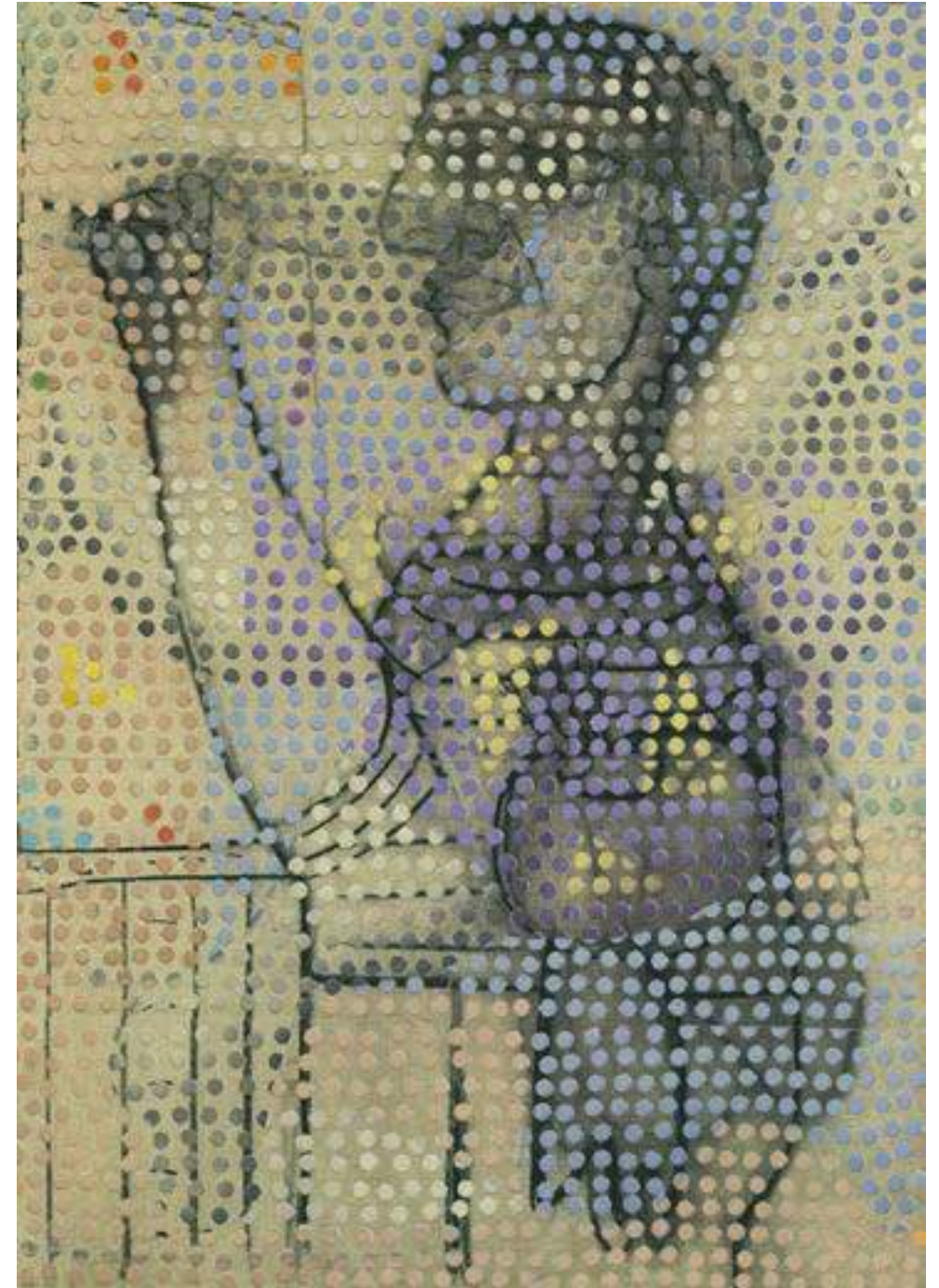
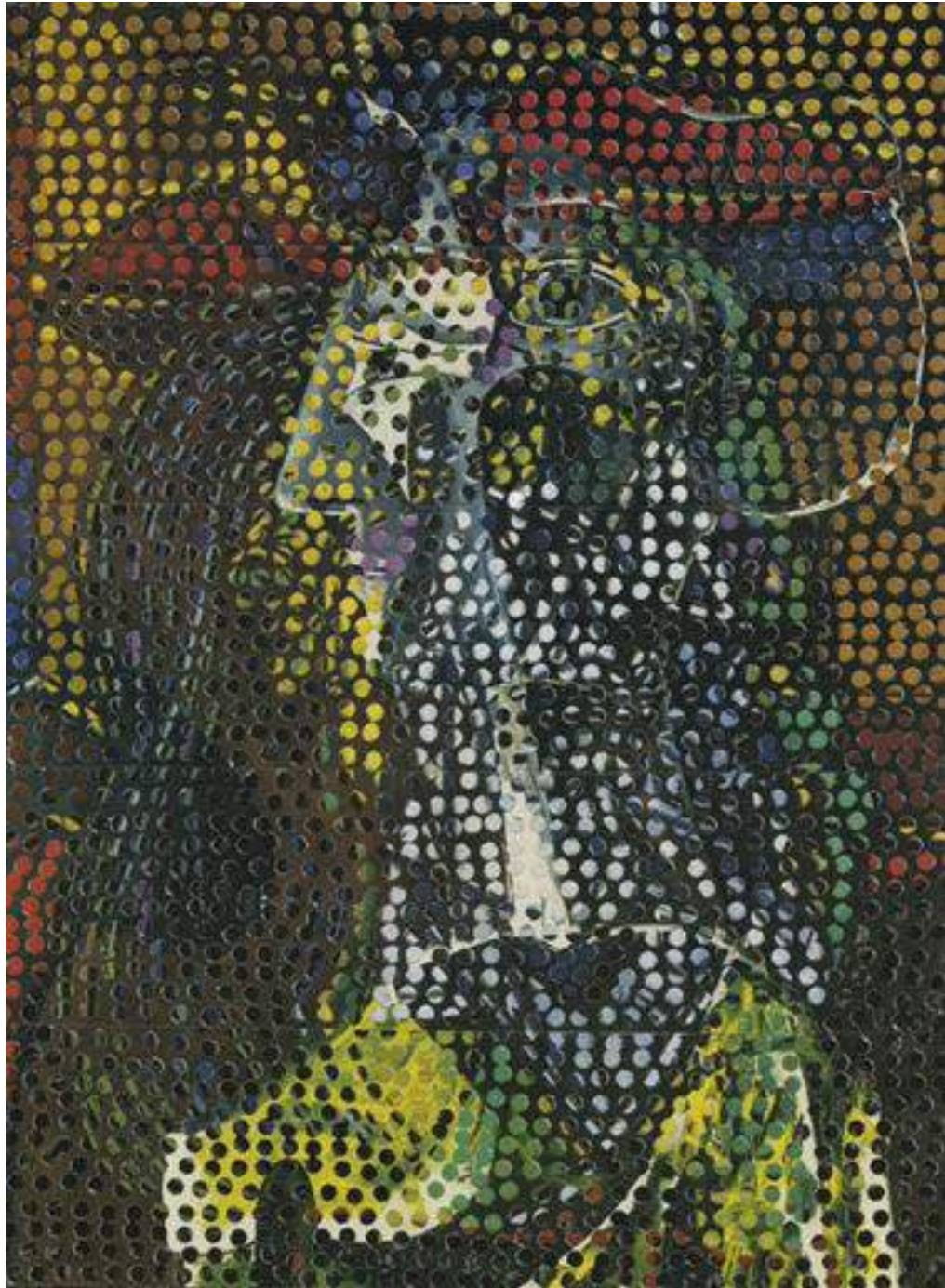


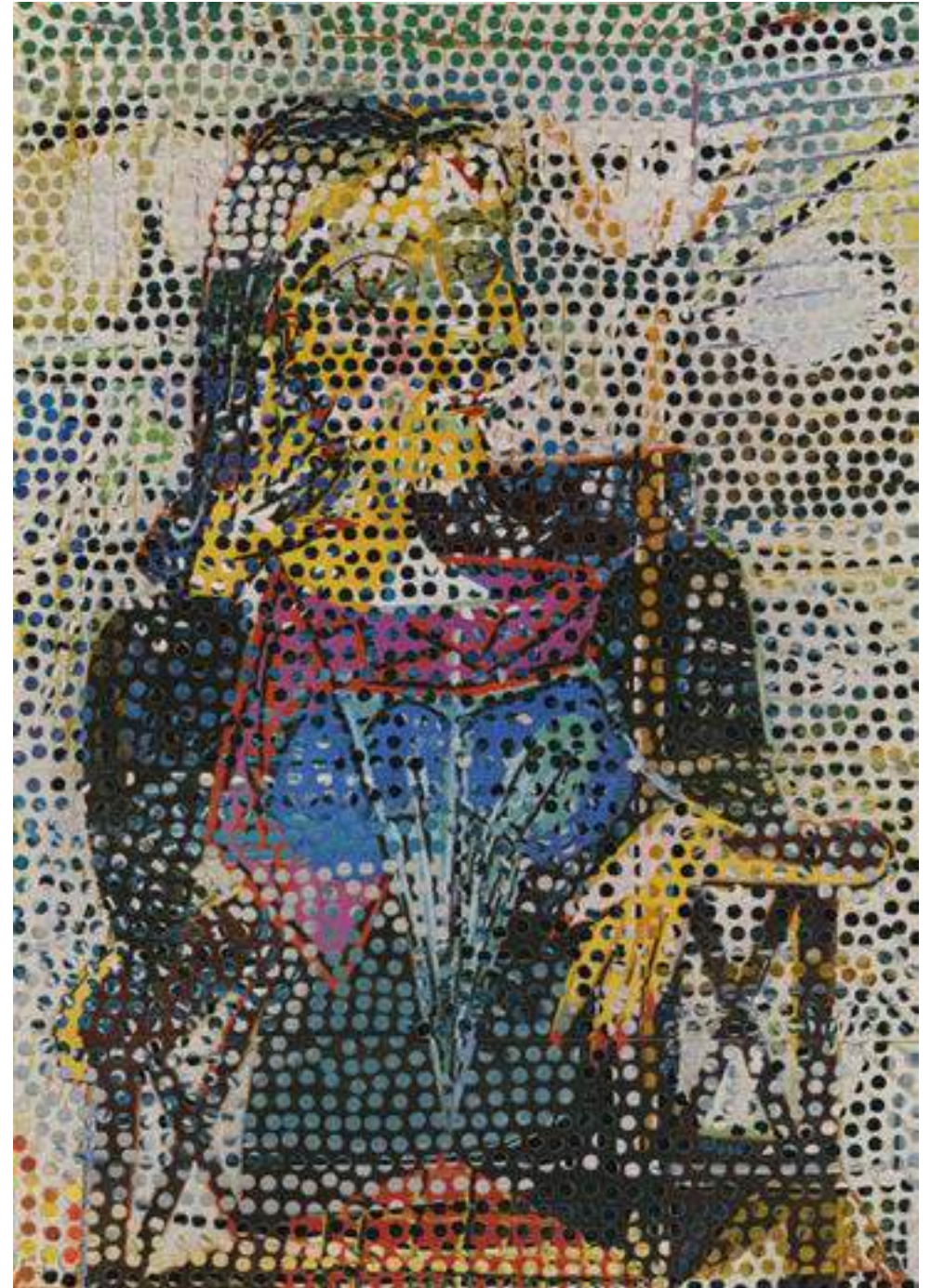
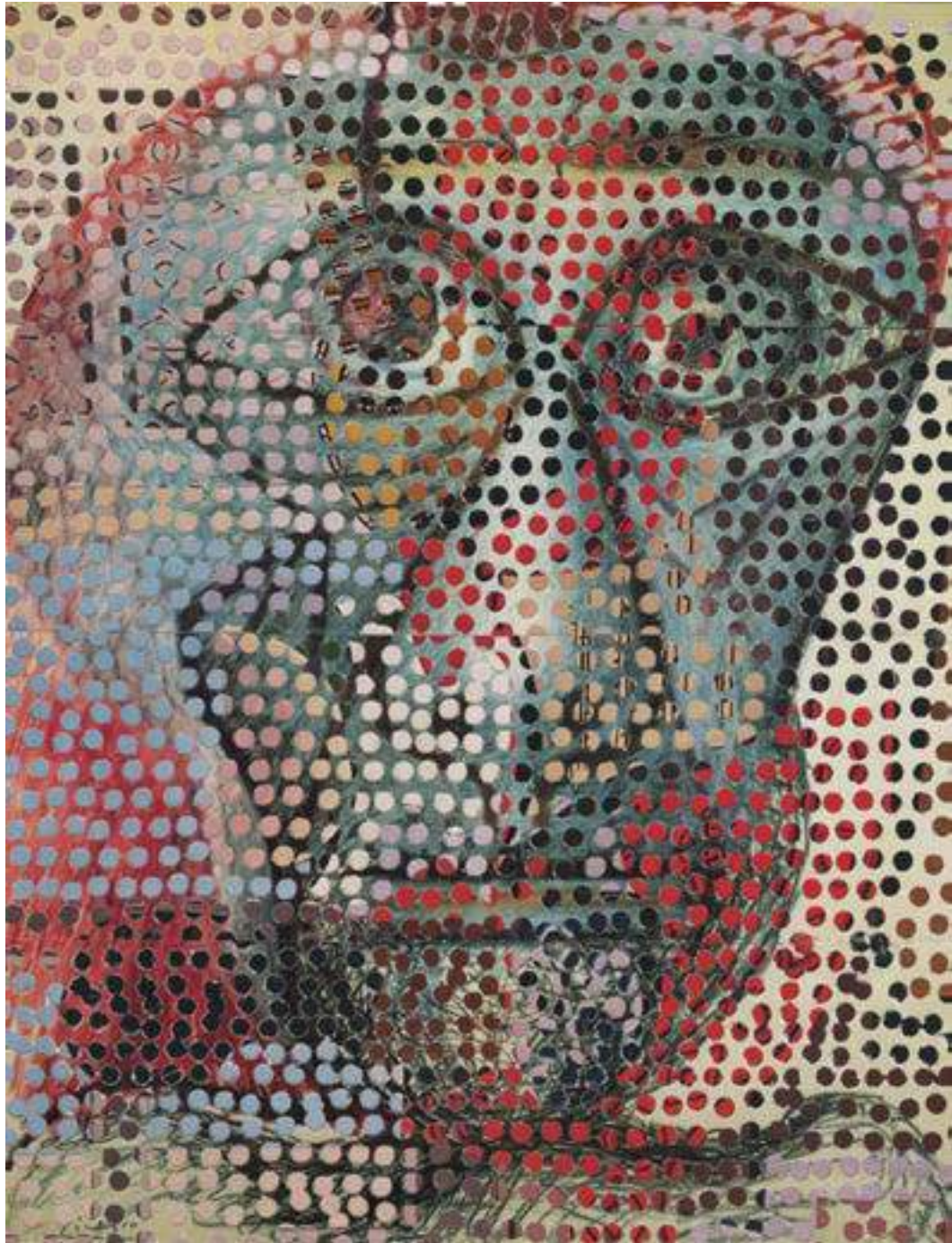




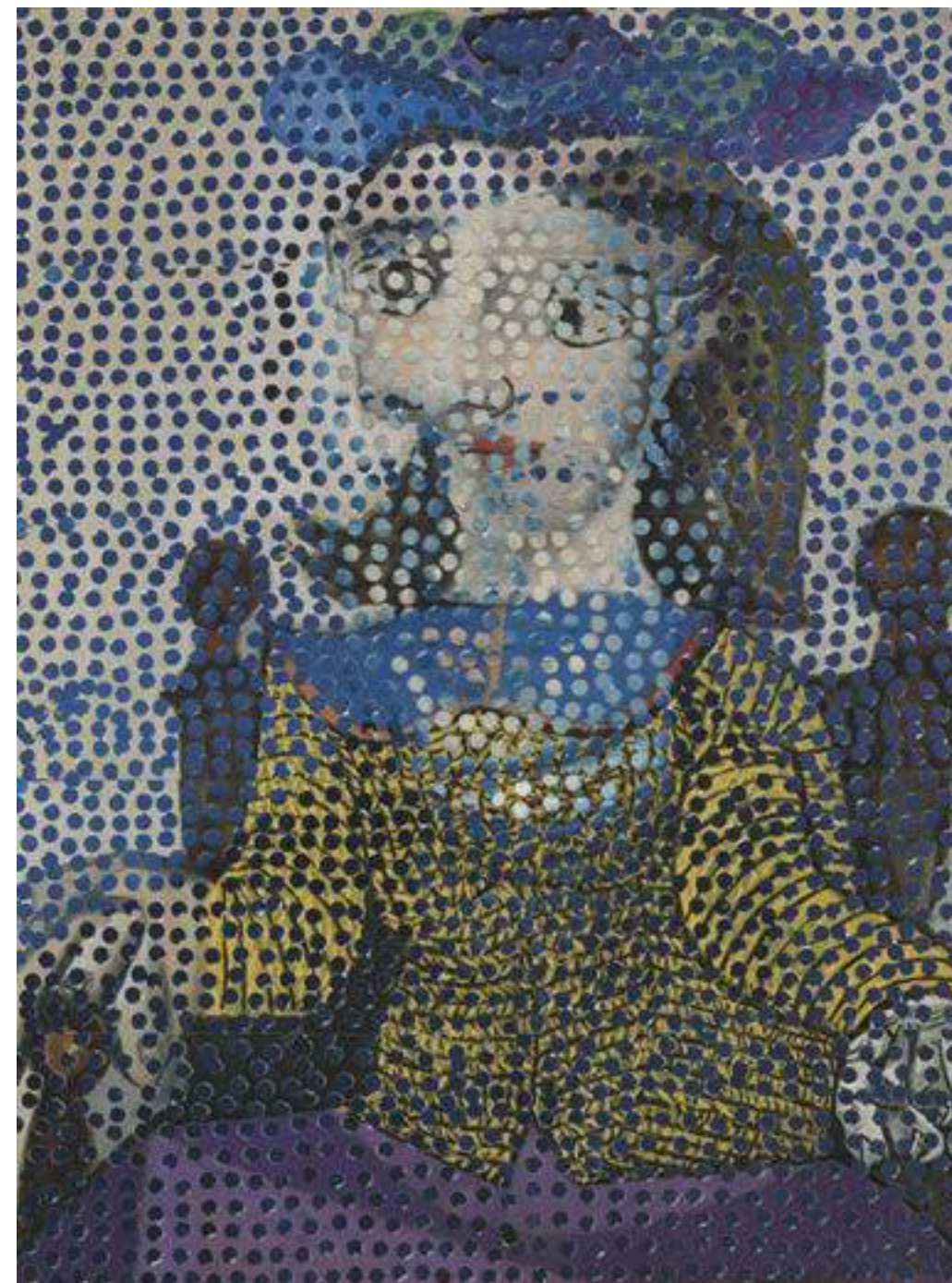


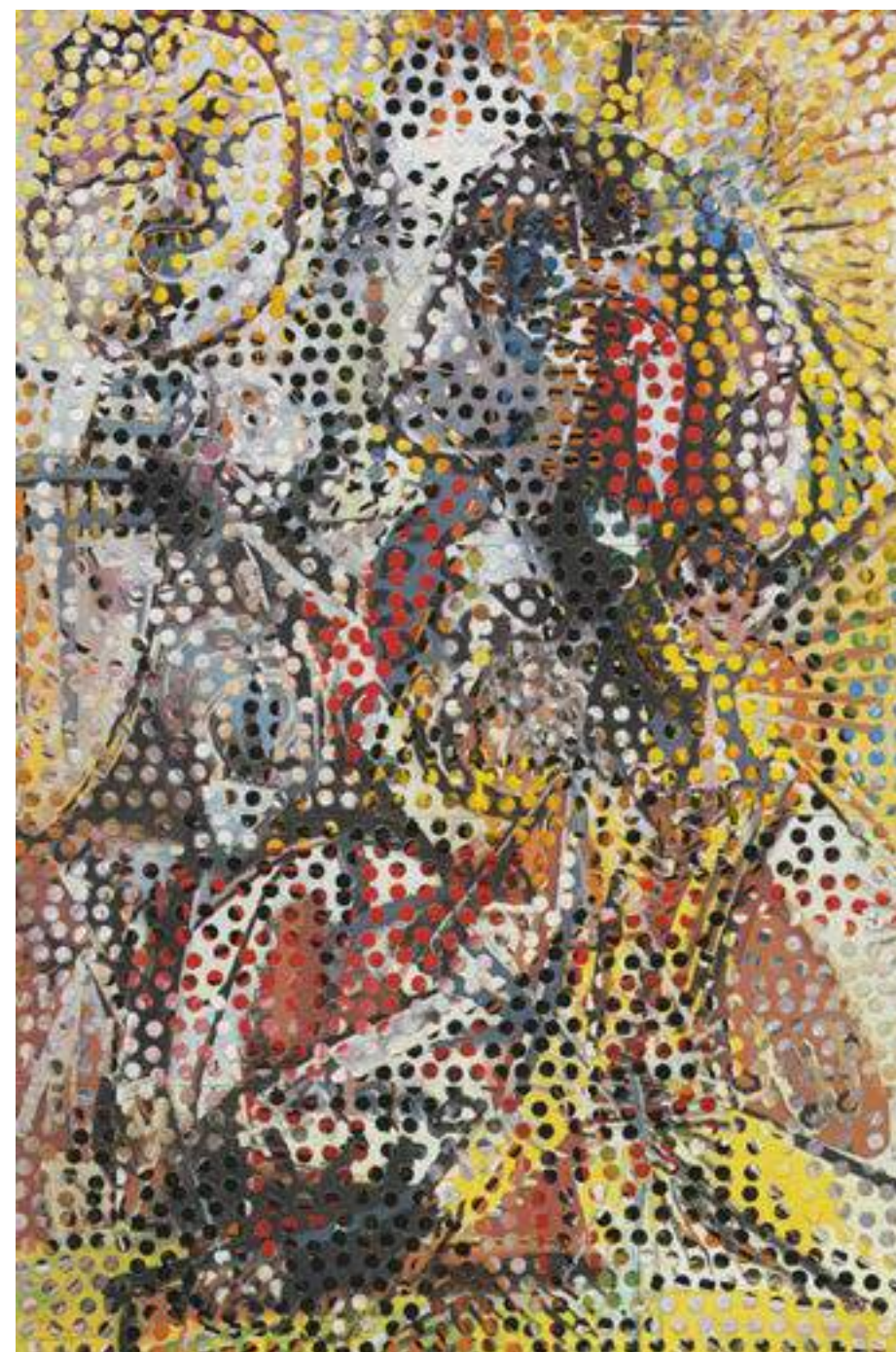


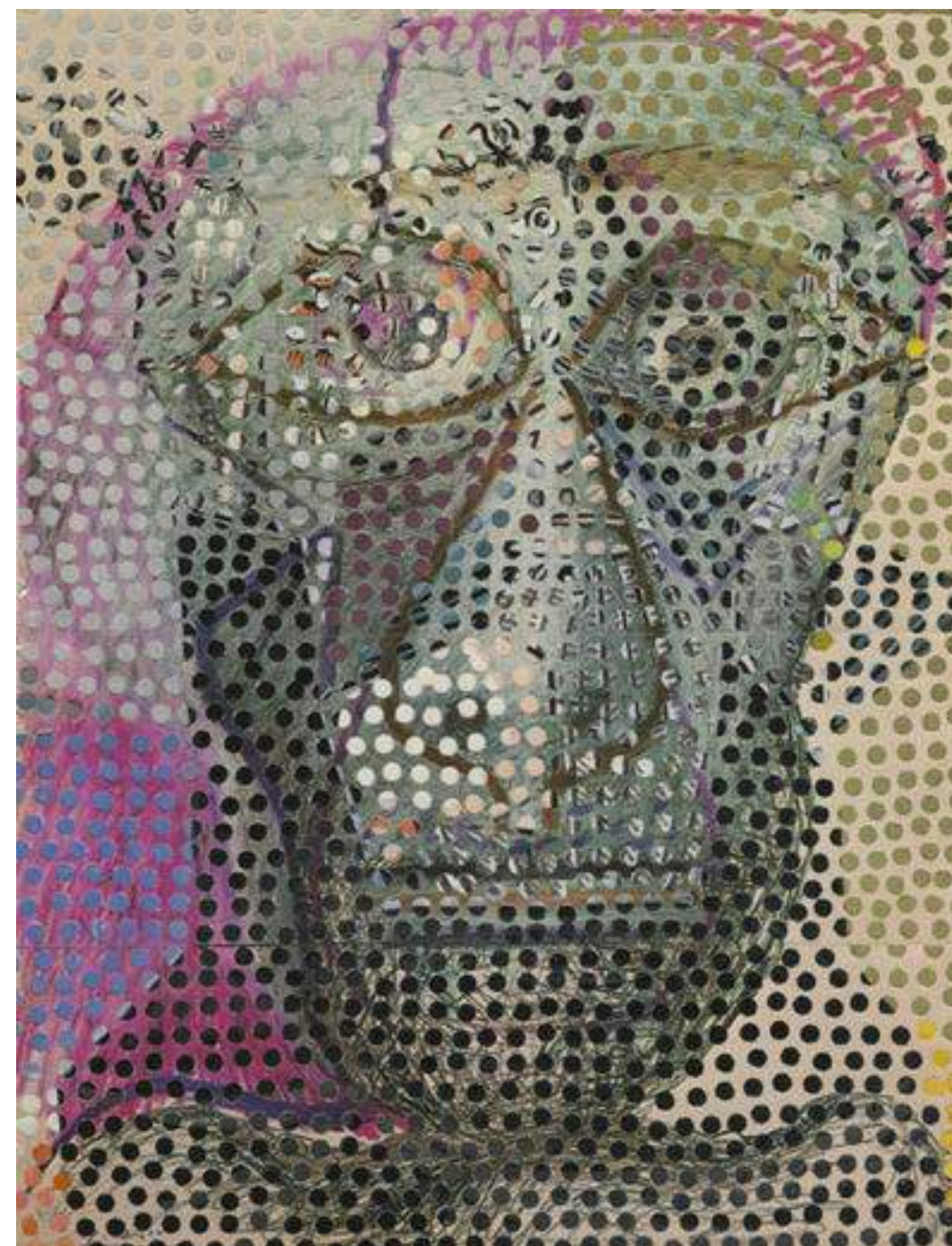
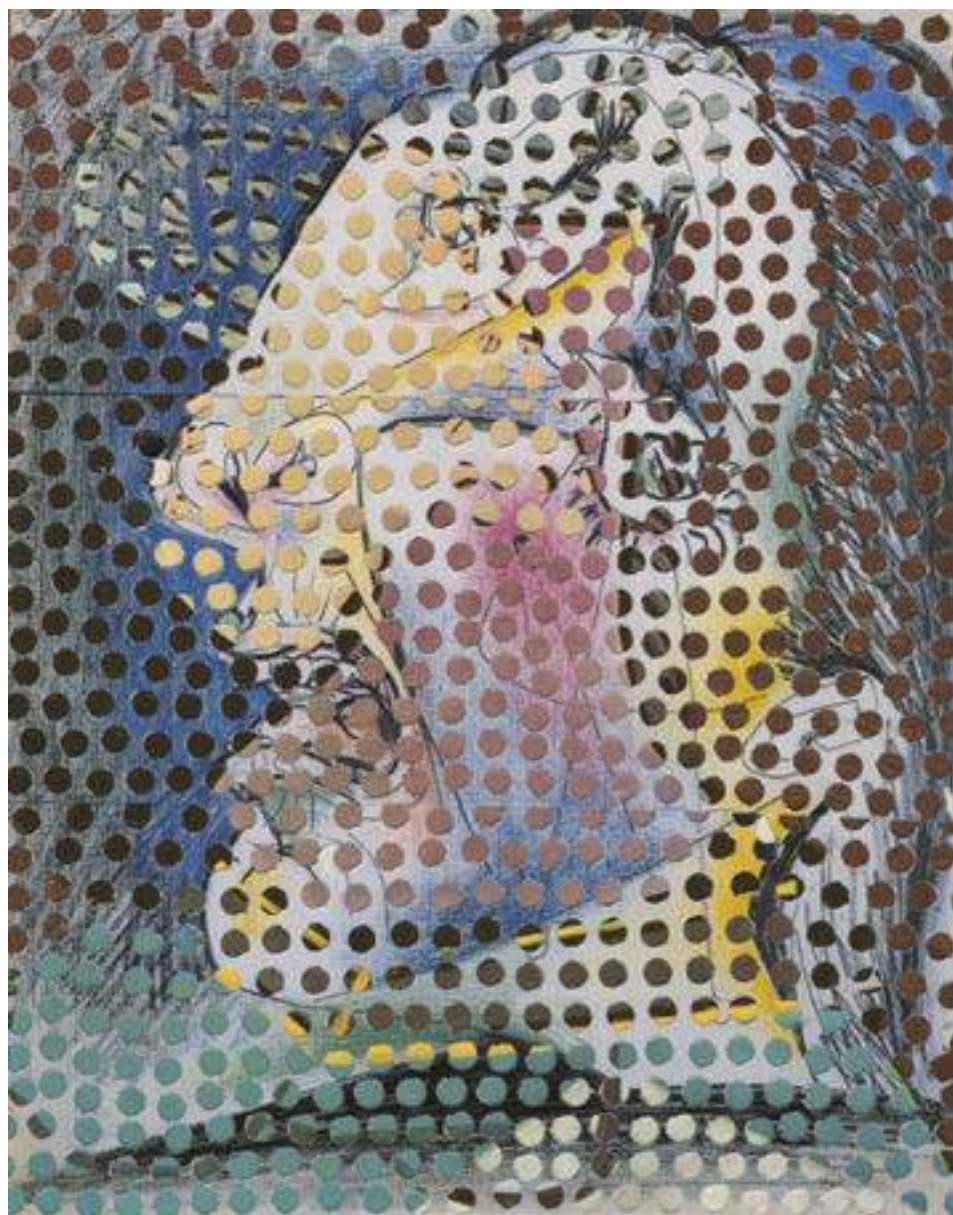


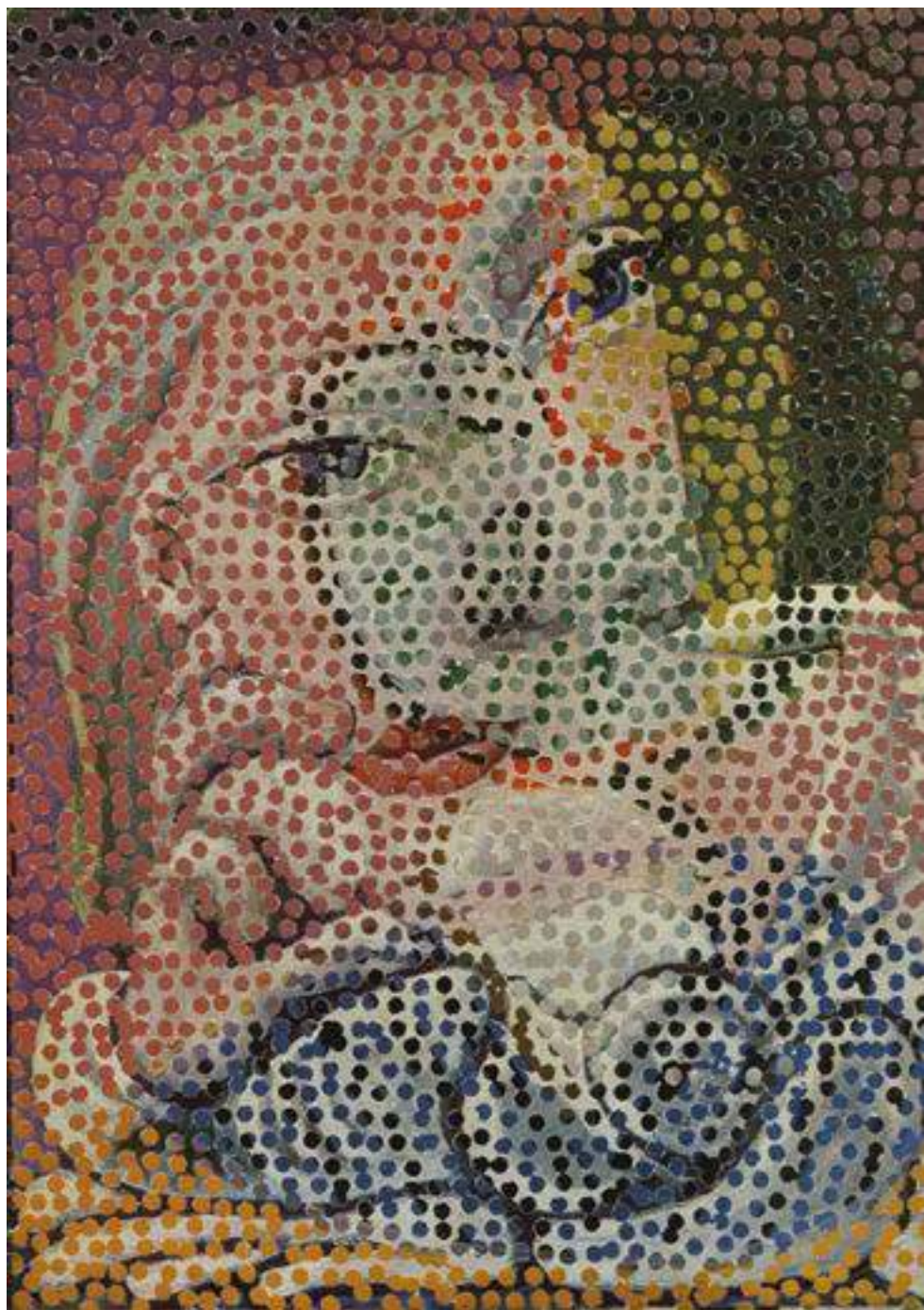


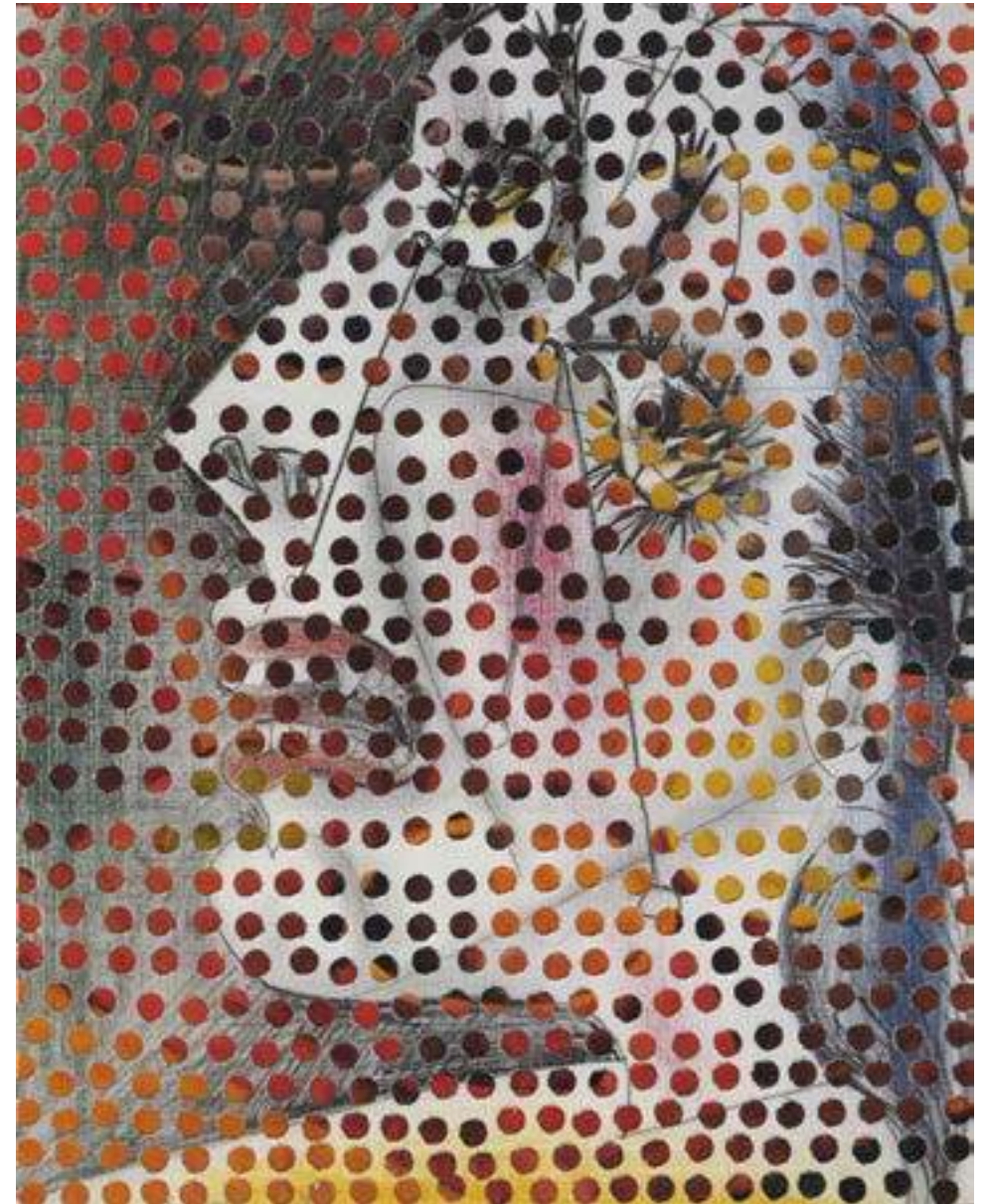


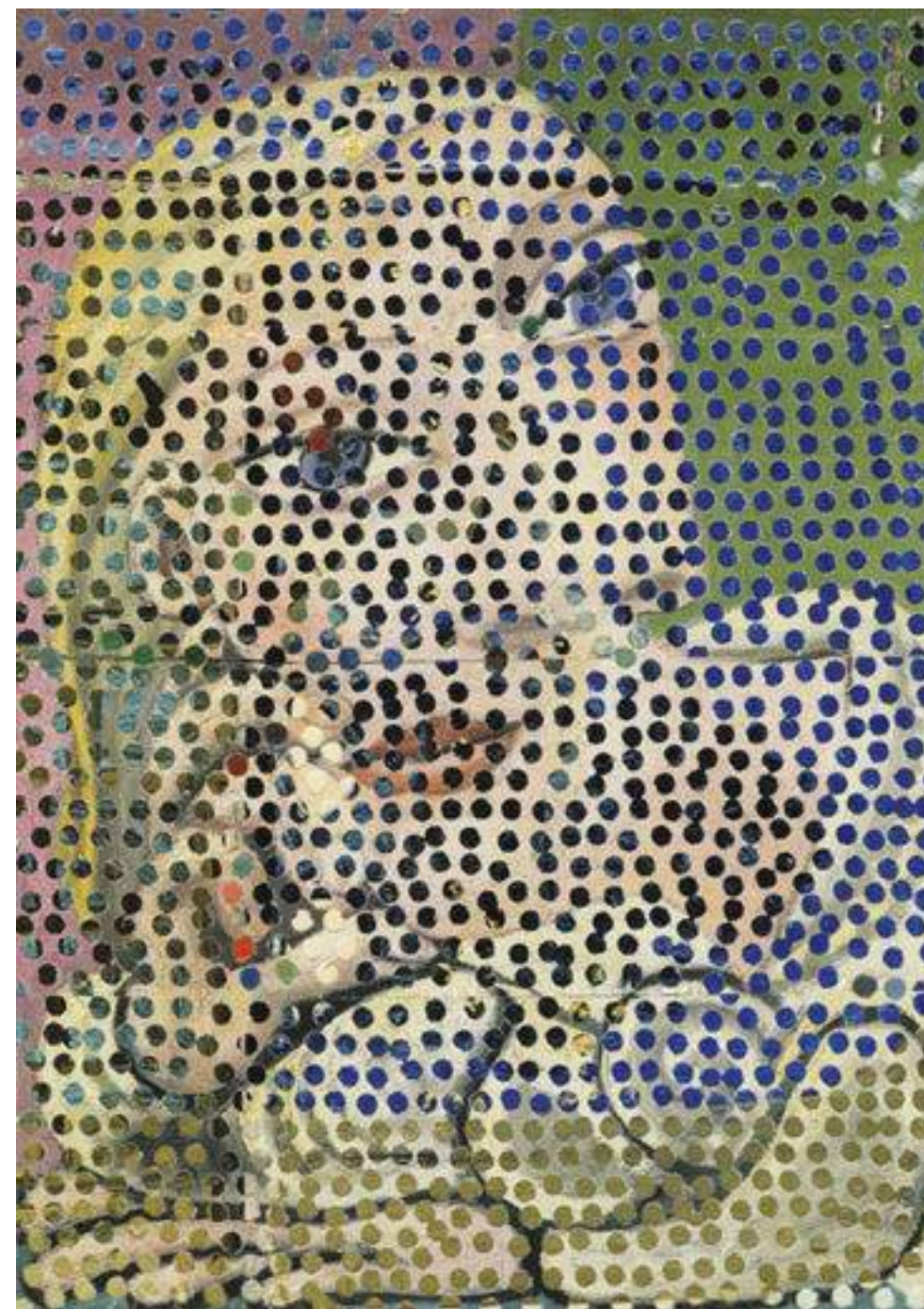


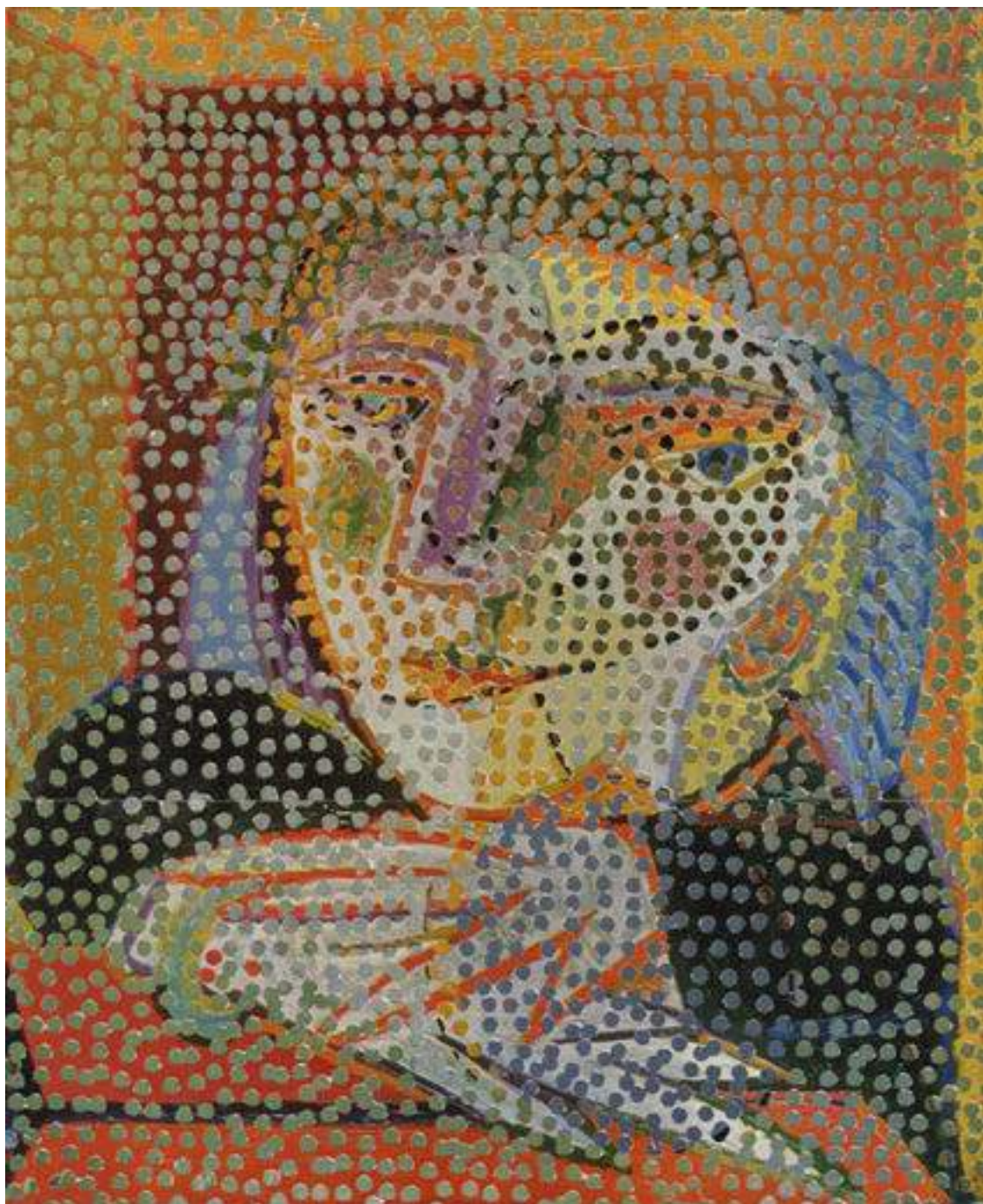


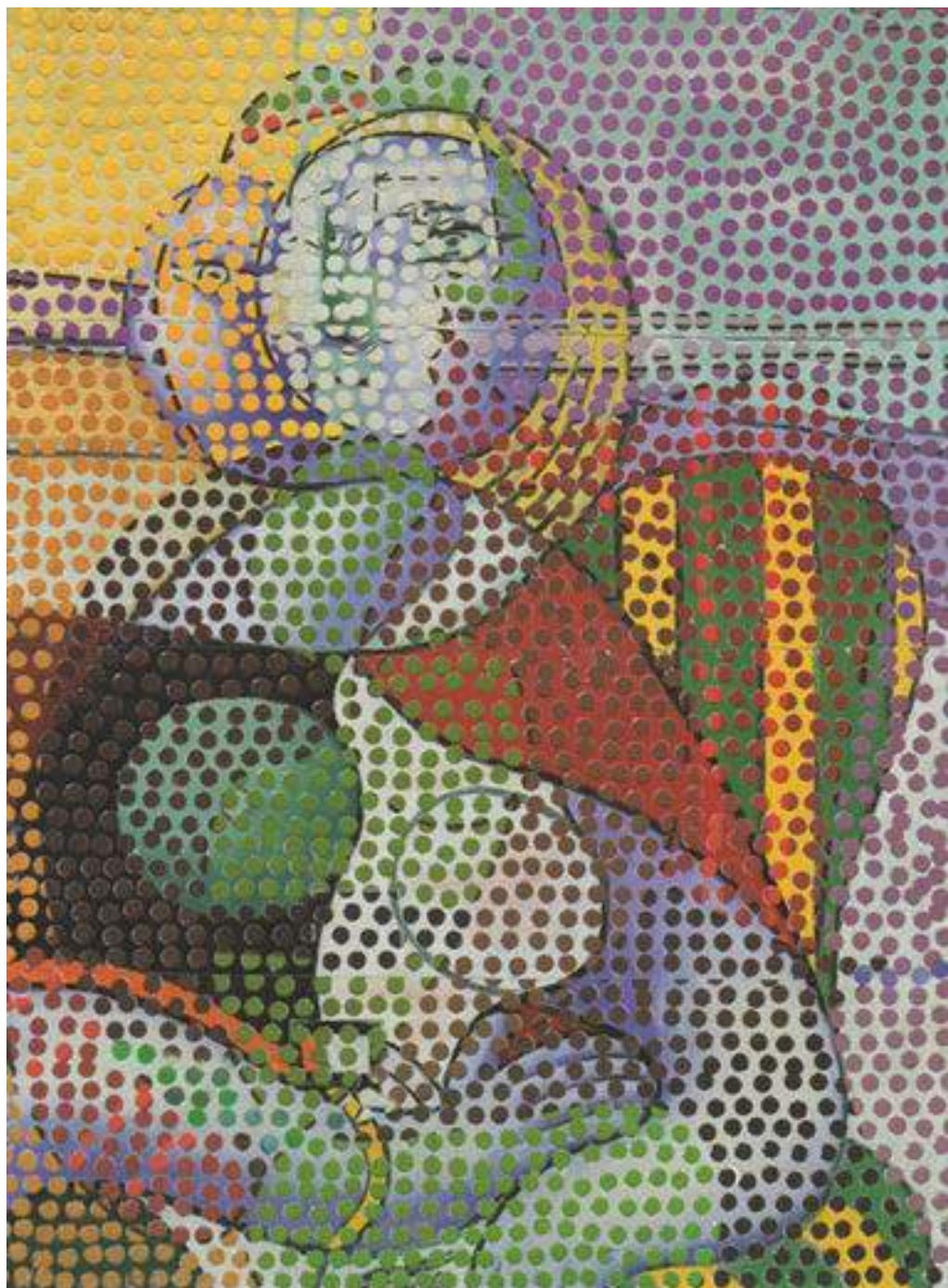


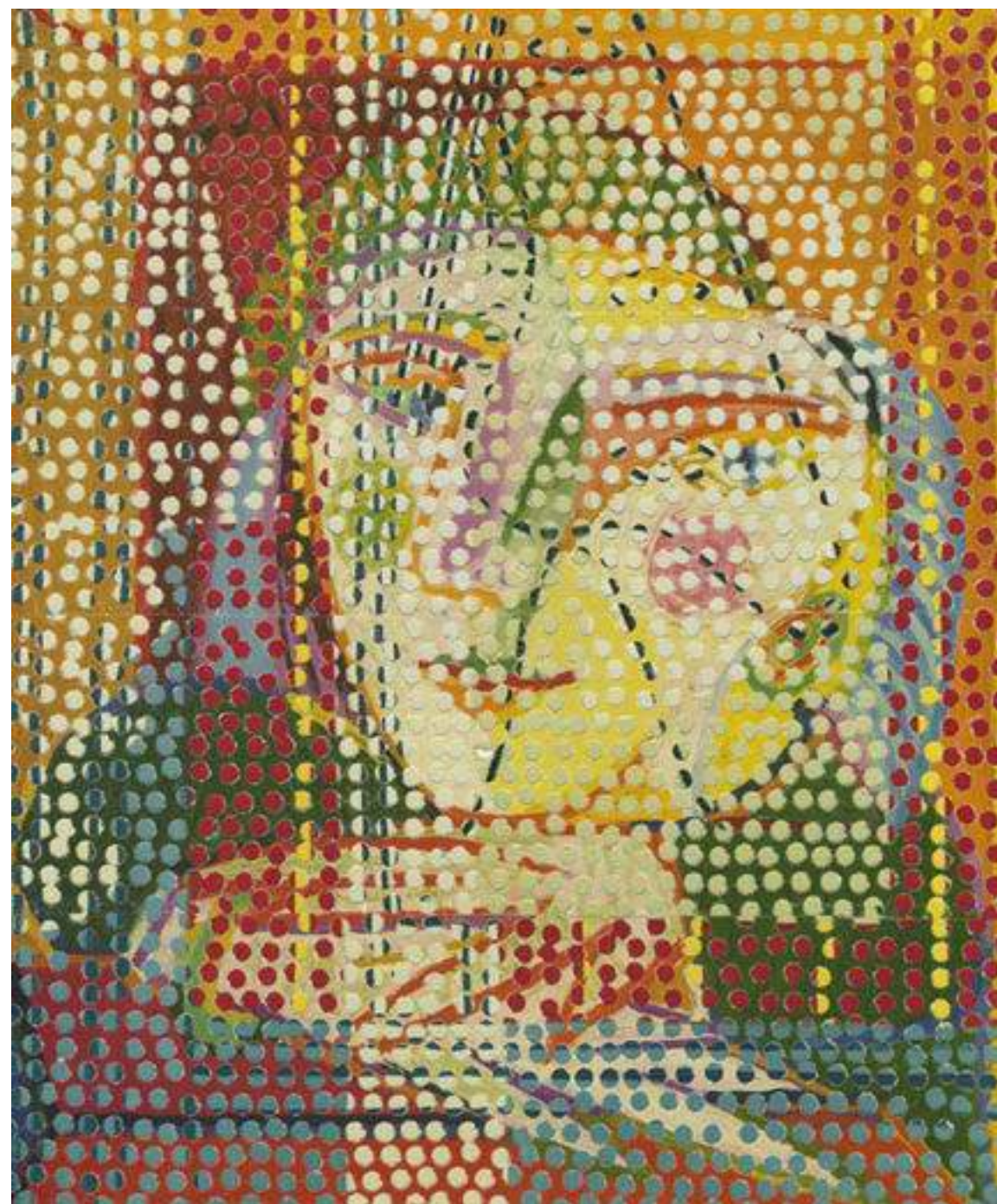
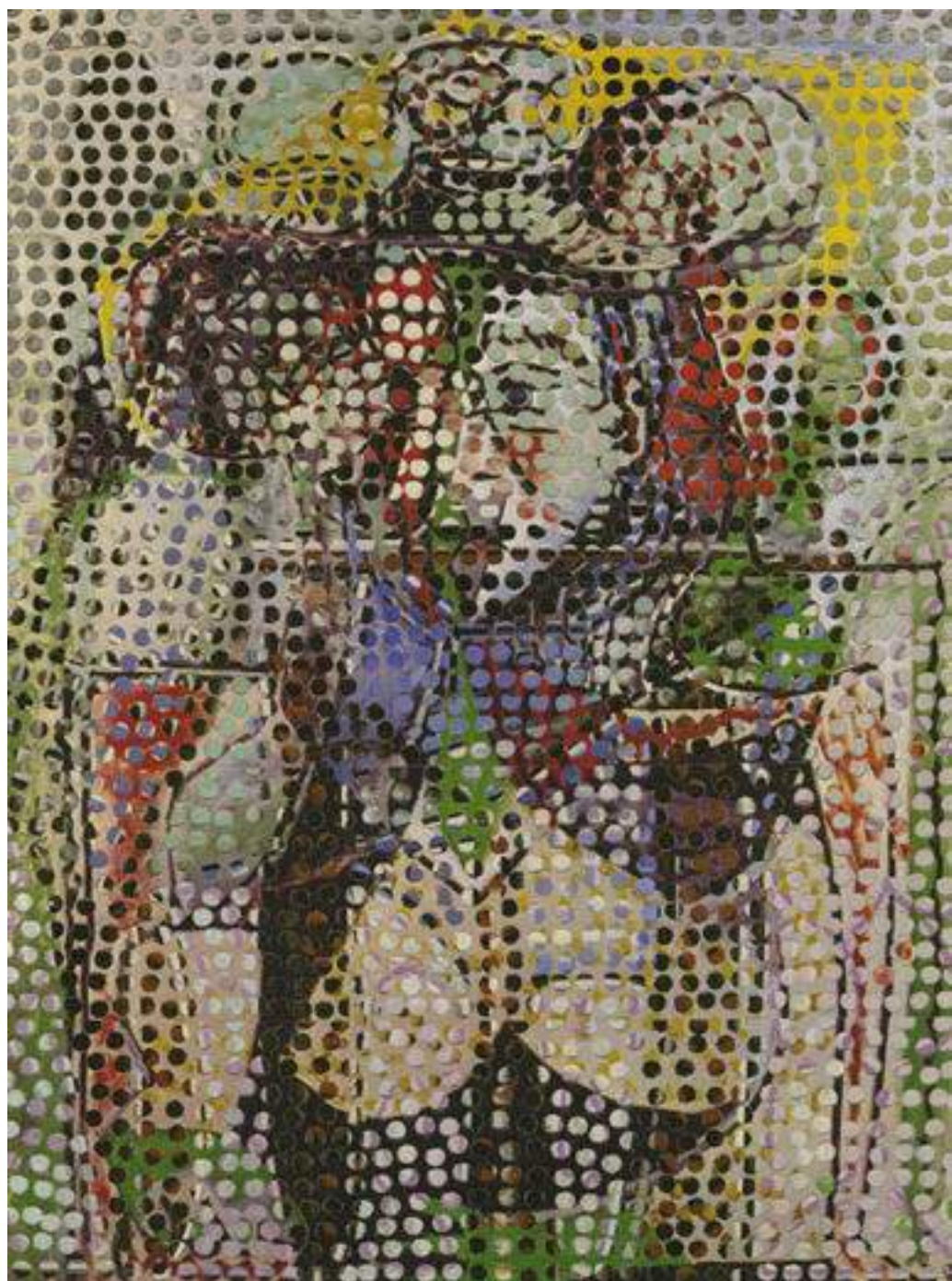


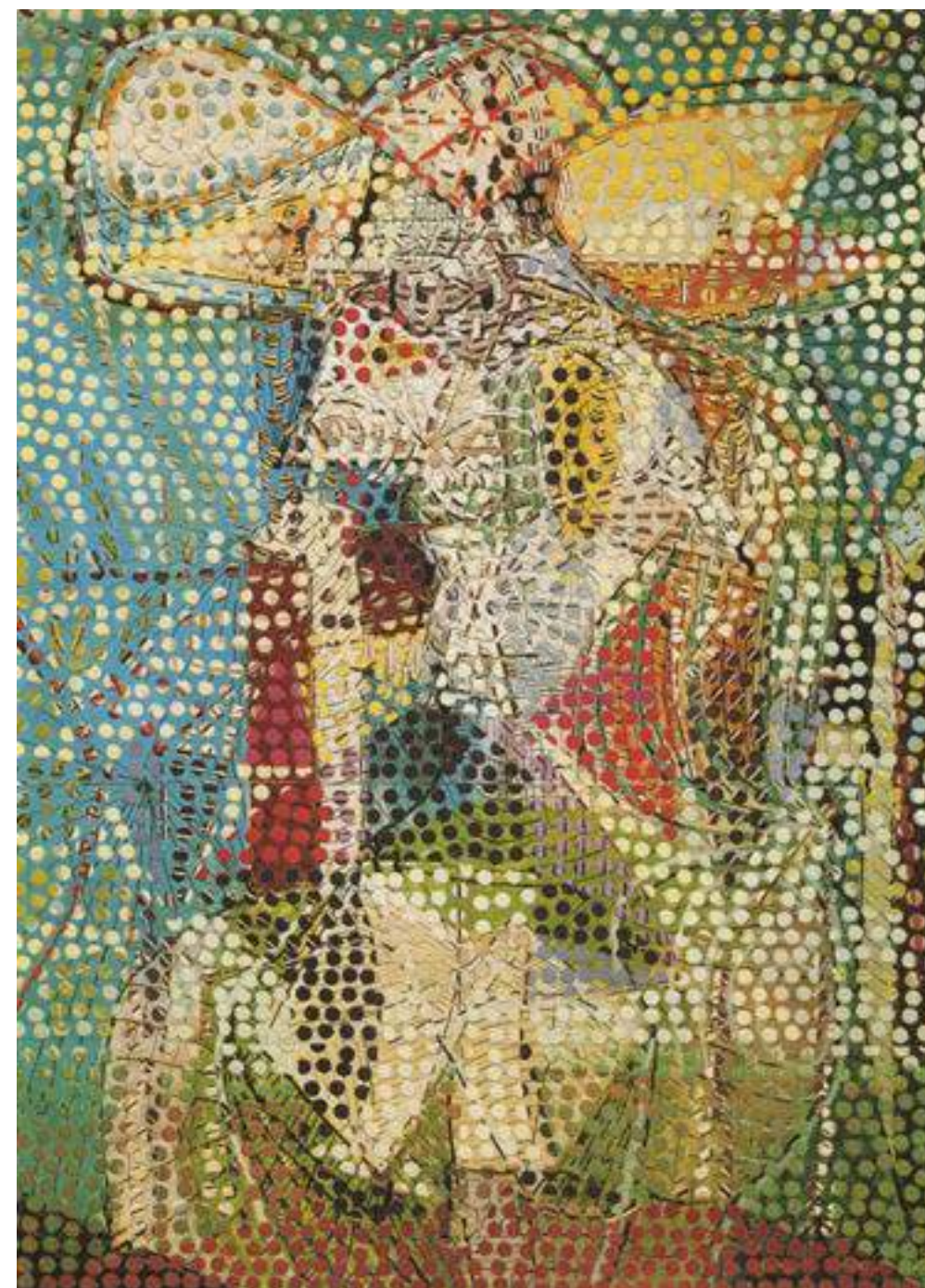
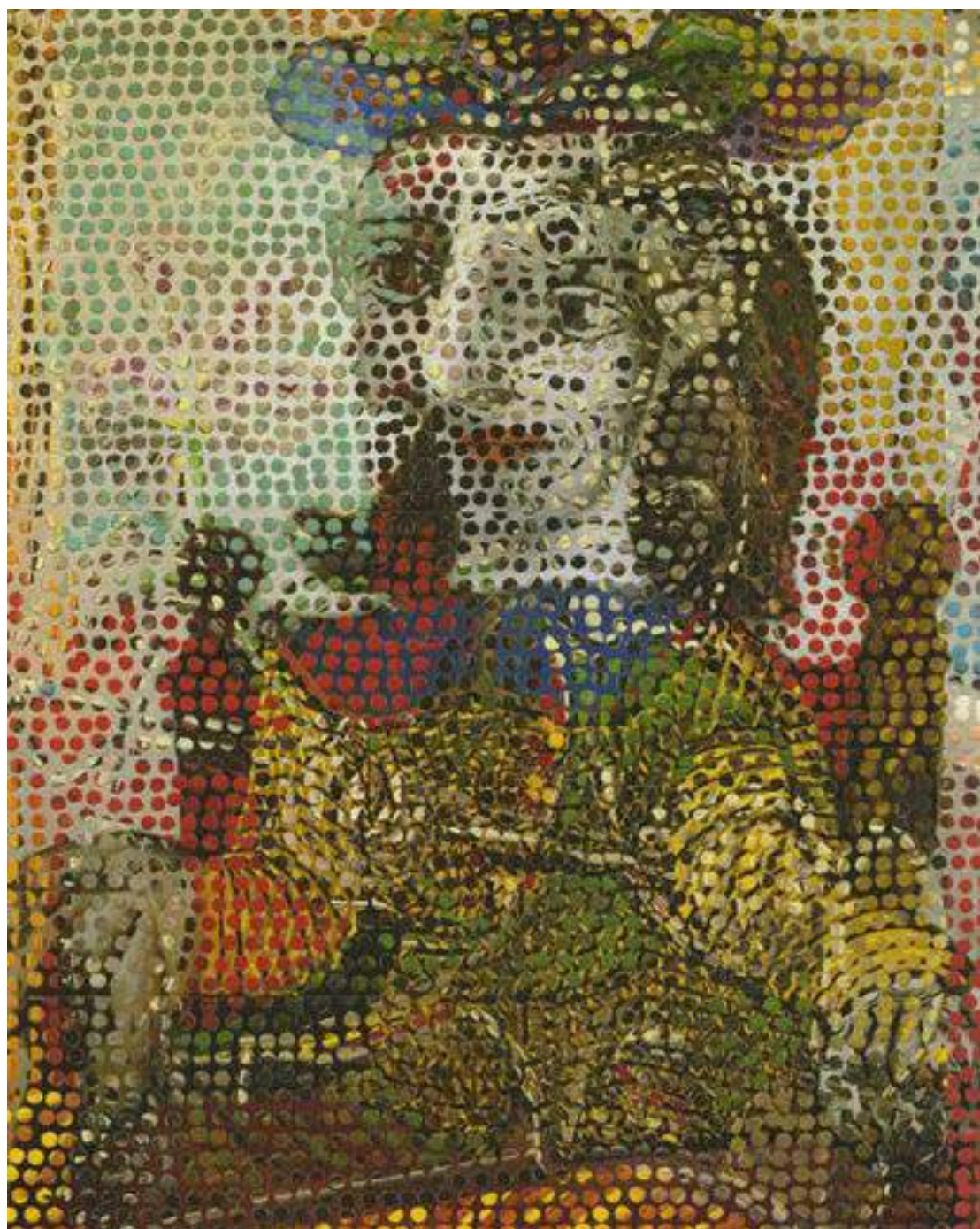


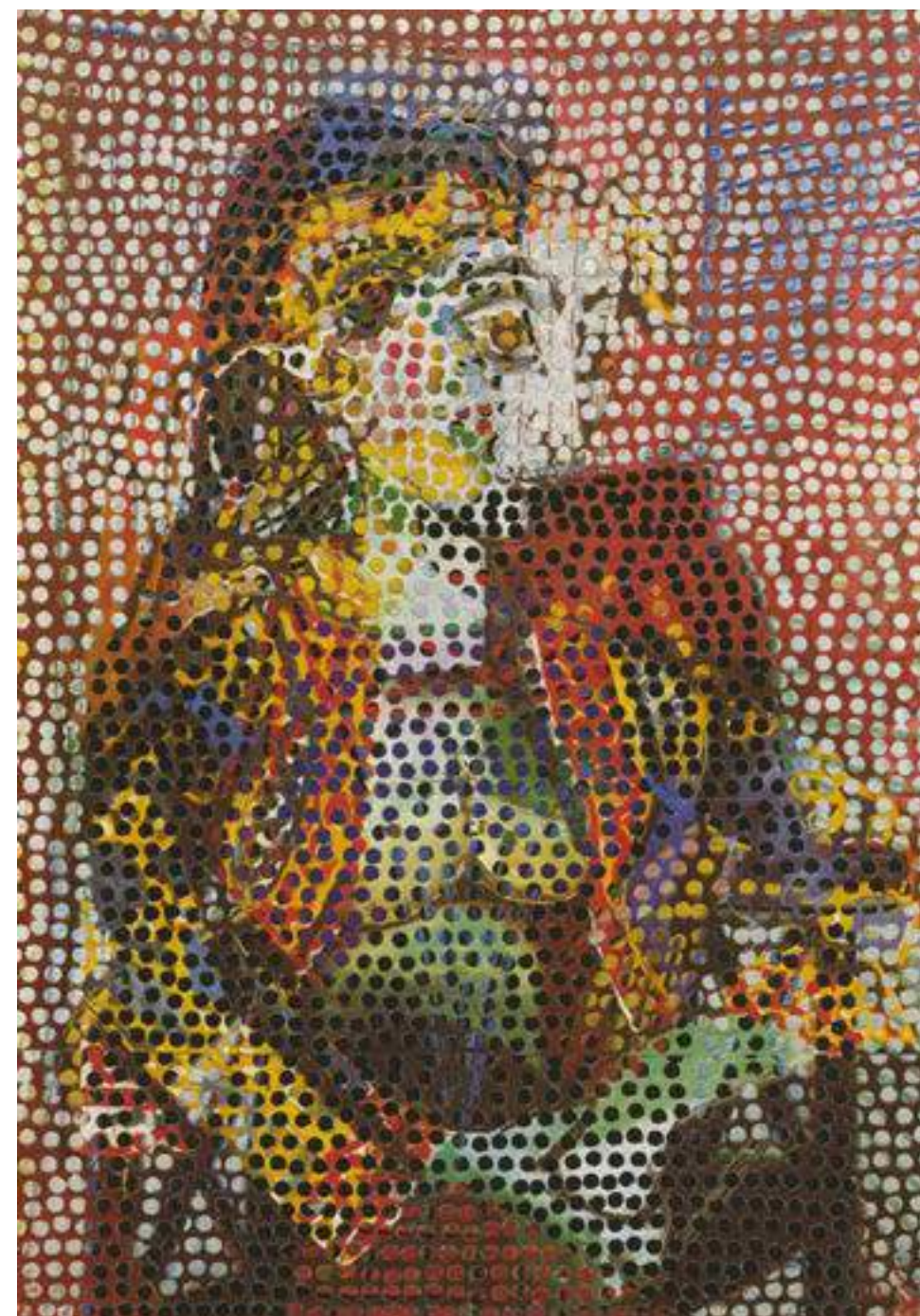


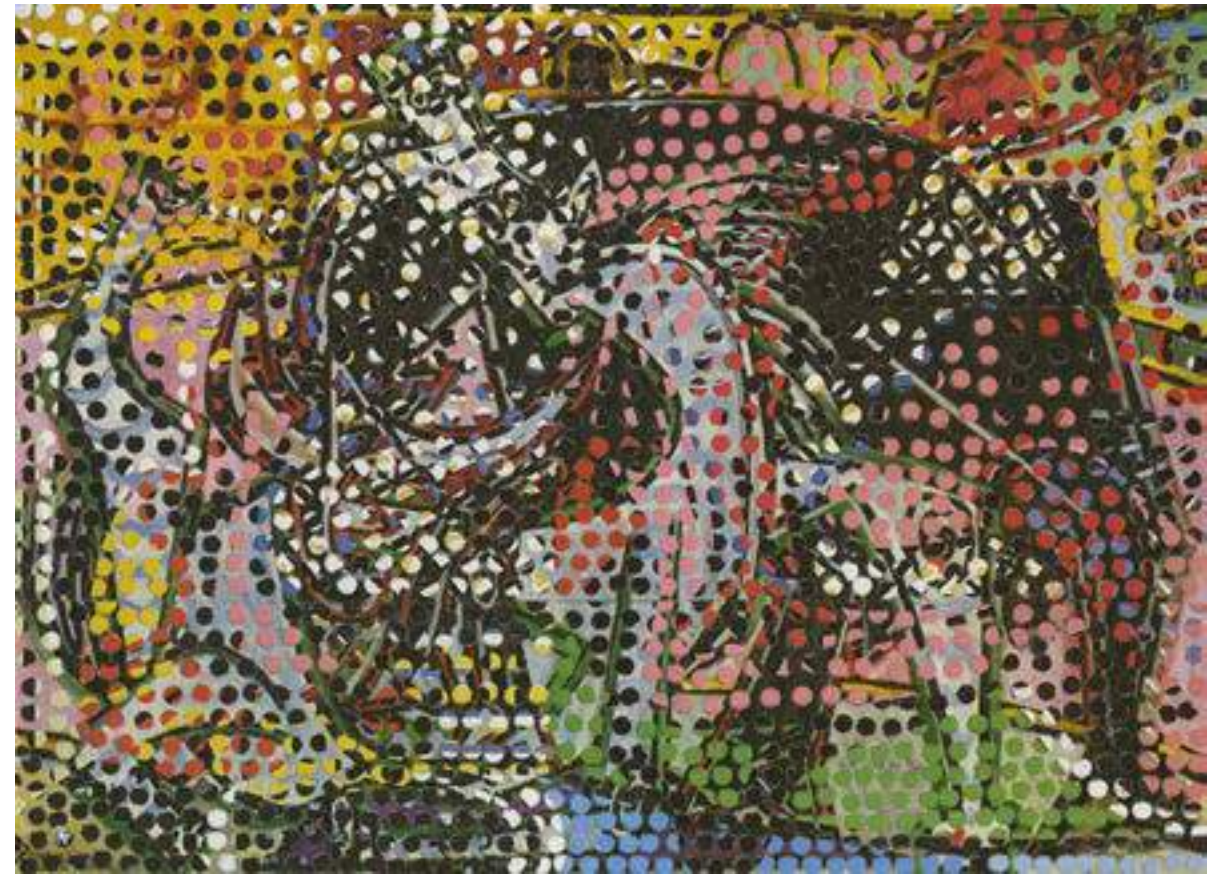
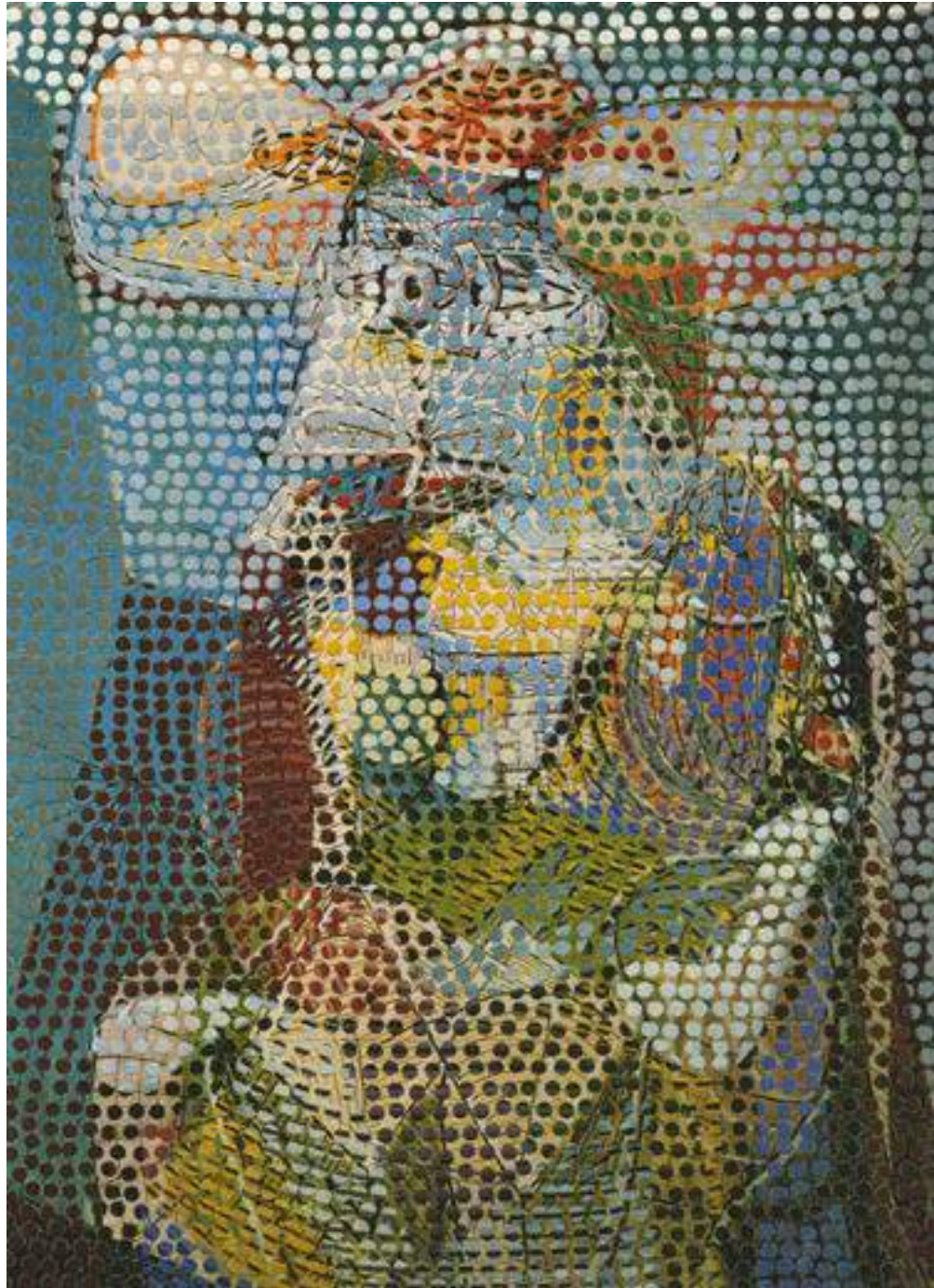






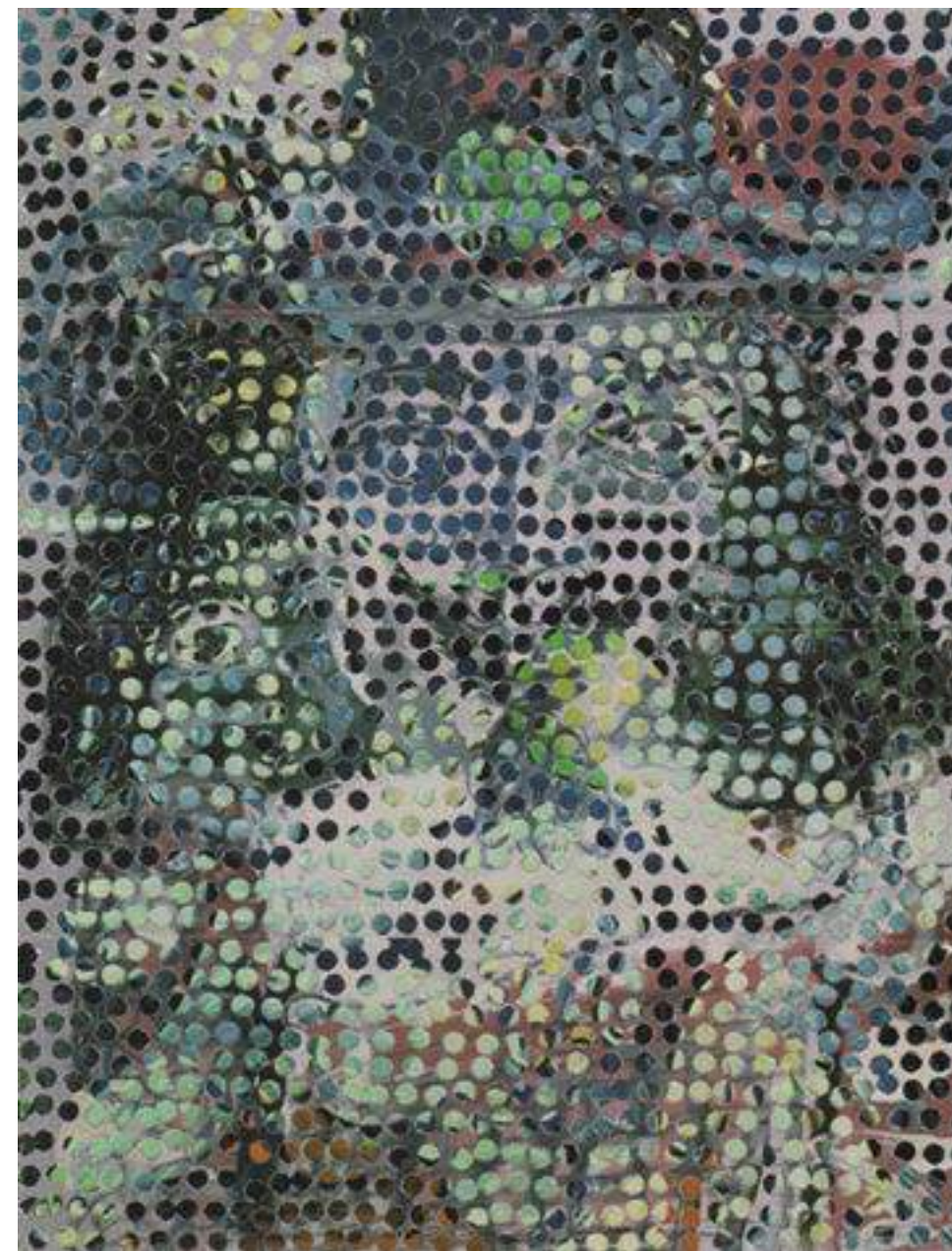












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