

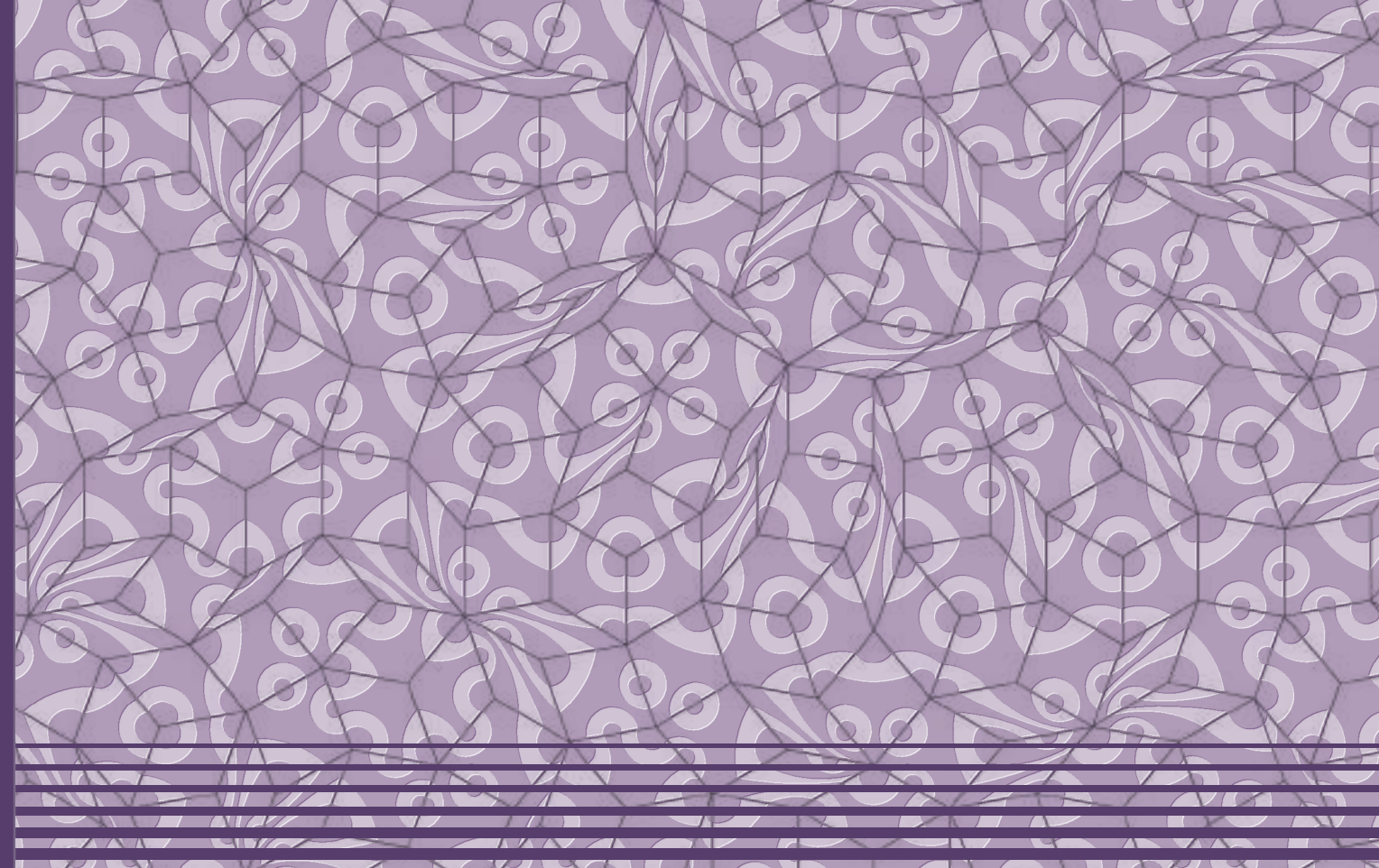


STRANGE CONNECTIONS ART AND ARCHITECTURE

Private MUSEUM

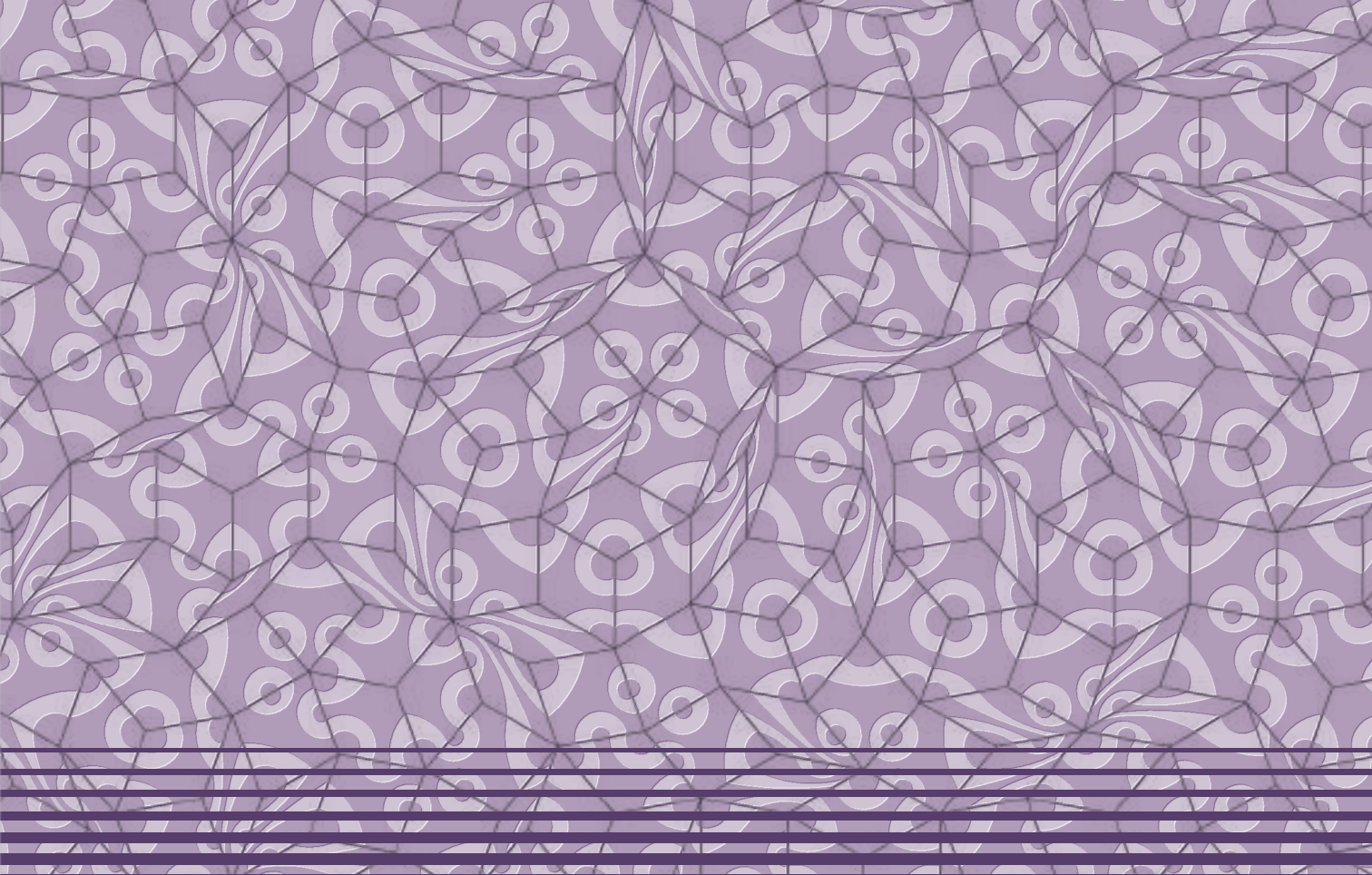
Private
MUSEUM
SINGAPORE

Private Collections
IN A PUBLIC MUSEUM



STRANGE CONNECTIONS ART AND ARCHITECTURE

RICHARD HASSELL



STRANGE CONNECTIONS ART AND ARCHITECTURE

RICHARD HASSELL



Private
MUSEUM
SINGAPORE

**STRANGE
CONNECTIONS
ART AND
ARCHITECTURE**

RICHARD HASSELL

Strange Connections: Art and Architecture

©2024, The Private Museum Ltd

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PREFACE

AARON TEO

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It is my privilege and honour to introduce *Strange Connections: Art and Architecture*, an exhibition that marks a significant milestone in the history of the museum. The exhibition celebrates our first anniversary at Osborne House, a historic building that has been revitalised through the visionary design of Richard Hassell, the co-founder of the renowned architecture firm, WOHA Architects.

The exhibition and publication invite viewers to explore the dynamic interplay between art and architecture, reflecting on both the physical and abstract, as well as the historical and contemporary. *Strange Connections* delves into the intricate relationship between these disciplines—highlighting the unique discoveries and narratives of Osborne House. The exploration is not just a celebration of artistic and architectural excellence but also an homage to the historical and cultural layers embedded within this storied building.

Our journey began in 2021 when I approached Richard Hassell with the idea of reimagining this beautiful building—initially believed to be only a century old. I vividly recall our lunch meeting, a conversation that would lay the foundation of our collaboration. We delved into discussions about philosophy, the things we cherished, and our shared visions for the future. This was a particularly poignant time, as the world was only just beginning

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to emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic. Our conversation was infused with a sense of renewal and possibility, reflecting the broader societal shift towards healing and reimagining our collective future. It felt as though the stars aligned; the timing was perfect, and the convergence of our ideas and visions seemed almost fated! Near the end of our lunch, Richard introduced me to a book titled *The Web of Meaning: Integrating Science and Traditional Wisdom to Find Our Place in the Universe* by Jeremy Lent. This book, which explores the interconnections between science and traditional wisdom, perhaps unknowingly influenced the conceptualisation of the exhibition—in a strange and profound way!

In our curatorial discussions, we discovered a profound convergence between Richard's art practice and architectural approach. This synergy became the foundation for a comprehensive survey of selected works from his three major series: *Strange Creatures*, *Emergent Nets*, and *SubTerrain*, displayed at the Emily and Sophia wings. Coming together for the first time, each series offers a distinct exploration of interconnectedness, form, and space—reflecting Richard's ongoing interests in system, pattern, and network. To further highlight this interplay, we designed a special architectural space at the Caroline Verandah. This space features selected projects from WOHA Architects that resonate with Richard's artistic process, showcasing the integration of art and architecture in his practice as a whole. By juxtaposing his artworks with these architectural projects, visitors can appreciate the underlying themes and methodologies that inform his practice across both disciplines.

Despite the uncertainties of the pandemic, Richard generously dedicated his time and expertise to researching the house's history before the project officially started. His meticulous research unveiled fascinating stories, tracing the house's origins back to the early 1820s and

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even discovering connections to his own family's history. Situated in Osborne Hall, the installation features site-specific drawings from the work *Everything Connects* and a six-metre-long table displaying selected research findings.

Upon receiving official confirmation for our move to Osborne House, Richard mobilised an exceptional team—including architects Dominic Broadhurst and Goi Yong Chern from the WOHA team—to bring the project to life. The process involved close collaboration with various government agencies such as the National Arts Council (NAC), Singapore Land Authority (SLA), and Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA). Their support was crucial in ensuring the museum's public opening in 2023. The complexity of the move was immense, requiring multi-layered coordination and commitment from all parties involved.

In May 2023, we received the keys to Osborne House at 11 Upper Wilkie Road. After two years of design process and three intensive months of renovation, this historic building was transformed into a museum dedicated to arts, culture, and heritage, opening its doors to the public in August 2023. The transformation was not just physical but also conceptual, as the design process began in tandem with the conceptualisation of this exhibition. This holistic approach is showcased through a model of Richard's artworks located in the museum wing, which provides visitors with a miniature representation of the artistic vision that now animates Osborne House.

The success of this ambitious project would not have been possible without the unwavering dedication and tireless efforts of our partners. We extend our heartfelt thanks to the entire team from WOHA Architects, our exceptional contractor Systmz, our design team from Currency, AVS, Allegro, our arts logistic partner Helutrans, and writer Ng Hui Hsien. Their contributions have been

instrumental in realising this vision, overcoming challenges, and ensuring that every detail was meticulously executed.

On behalf of the museum's founders, Daniel and Rachel Teo, along with the board of directors, a special thank you goes to Richard Hassell for his incredible contributions. His commitment, dedication, and vision have been the driving force behind the reimagining of The Private Museum at the Osborne House. Without his unwavering support, this exhibition and the museum's new chapter would not have been possible. Richard's ability to blend historical research with contemporary design has given Osborne House a new lease on life, creating a space where art, culture, and heritage can coexist harmoniously.

This publication aims to provide a deeper understanding of the exhibition and the remarkable journey of The Private Museum. It is a testament to the collaborative spirit, creative vision, and relentless pursuit of excellence that have brought us to this momentous occasion. I hope that as you read through these pages, you will gain insight into the intricate processes and passionate efforts that have shaped this extraordinary project.

Thank you for joining us in celebrating this significant milestone.

Aaron Teo

Associate Director
The Private Museum Singapore

FOREWORD

RICHARD HASSELL

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Here are four quotes from four books which inspired this exhibition; they explain the exhibition more succinctly than I can.

“The Buddha said: “As a net is made up of a series of ties, so everything in this world is connected by a series of ties. If anyone thinks that the mesh of a net is an independent, isolated thing, he is mistaken. It is called a net because it is made up of a series of interconnected meshes, and each mesh has its place and responsibility in relation to the other meshes.””

—Gautama Buddha, quoted by Gary William Flake, *The Computational Beauty of Nature*, 2000

“What is the pattern which connects all the living creatures? ... The pattern which connects is a metapattern. It is a pattern of patterns. It is that metapattern which defines the vast generalization that, indeed, it is patterns which connect.”

—Geoffrey Bateson, *Mind and Nature: A Necessary Unity*, 2002

“The study of matter begins with the question, “What is it made of?” This leads to the notions of fundamental elements, building blocks; to measuring and quantifying. The study of form asks, “What is the pattern?”

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And that leads to the notions of order, organization, and relationships. Instead of quantity, it involves quality; instead of measuring, it involves mapping. These are two very different lines of investigation that have been in competition with one another throughout our scientific and philosophical tradition. For most of the time, the study of matter—of quantities and constituents—has dominated. But every now and then the study of form—of patterns and relationships—came to the fore. It is also worth noting that ancient Chinese philosophy and science were always more concerned with the interrelations between things than with their reduction to a fundamental substance. In the words of the distinguished sinologist Joseph Needham (1962, p. 478), “While European philosophy tended to find reality in substance, Chinese philosophy tended to find it in relation.””

—Fritjof Capra, *The Systems View of Life: A Unifying Vision*, 2014

“We can define spirituality as seeking meaning in the coherent connections between things, rather than in the things themselves. In this sense, spirituality and systems thinking are intrinsically aligned.”

—Jeremy Lent, *The Web of Meaning: Integrating Science and Traditional Wisdom to Find Our Place in the Universe*, 2020

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WHEN ART AND ARCHITECTURE CROSS PATHS

NG HUI HSIEN

Step into the colonial building that now houses The Private Museum, and you are immediately greeted by its stately aura. Grey veins course through large marble tiles, spreading out beneath your feet. Stained-glass arched windows above doorways return your gaze. A grand timber staircase calls out while a porch—presumably used to house carriages some decades ago—quietly waits outside.

Exuding character and at almost 200 years old, the house invites contemplation of events long past. It has embraced various groups of people in its arms, from the well-heeled to the marginalised, witnessing their highs and lows across time. The Private Museum is but its latest visitor.

To commemorate their first anniversary in this graceful space, The Private Museum is holding the exhibition *Strange Connections* with Richard Hassell, the Australian-born architect behind its restoration. Known for being one of the founding directors of WOHA Architects, Richard is also an established visual artist with a deep interest in geometries and tilings. Visual translations of numerical procedures, Richard's artworks reveal the poetic, intuitive side of mathematics, running counter to the discipline's widespread reputation of being cold, difficult, and rigid.

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In Richard's artworks, the whole is at times, more than the sum of its parts. Take *SubTerrain*, a series of prints populated with colourful dots of various sizes. Influenced by Australian aboriginal art, these works are at once suggestive of aerial landscapes, vast galaxies, and miniscule cells. As I gaze at them, masses of dots gain life, shifting to form undulating slopes of gentle landforms or vibrating like busy cells communicating with one another. Through a play with scale and abstraction, these prints stir the imagination, prompting one to contemplate the parallels between the microcosm and the macrocosm. In addition, with no beginning or end, the circle is symbolic of unity and infinity in various places, as evident in cultural forms like Islamic art. With such connotations, the use of the shape in *SubTerrain* further conjures musings of the sacred or the cosmos, and how we may all be part of a greater whole.

Another of Richard's works that explores the theme of interconnectivity—albeit arguably in a more direct manner—is *Indra's Net*. In some of his prints in this series, various knots are portrayed. Dangling threads at the bottom of these images hint at the fact that these knots are formed by one long, single strand repeatedly going over and under itself. They hang loosely—looking a little out of place amid interlocking knots—as if throwing a playful challenge to audiences to visually trace their winding paths and ponder on the connections between parts.

In a way, the title of this series reflects the artist's desire for the works to be interpreted in a spiritual or philosophical manner. In both Buddhism and Hinduism, Indra's Net refers to an infinite net woven by the deity Indra. Accordingly, a sparkling jewel hangs at each node of the vast, beautiful net, so arranged that it reflects all the other jewels on its polished surface. A metaphor for the universe, Indra's Net is frequently evoked to attest to the inseparability between the whole and parts. More than simply asserting interdependence between distinct

entities, it suggests how each individual component also contains the entirety within itself. With everything connected to—and its existence contingent on—everything else, isolation is but an illusion. This bears similarities to what Vietnamese monk and peace activist Thích Nhất Hạnh termed as interbeing. Or as the Sufi mystic and poet Rumi deftly put it, "You are not a drop in the ocean. You are the entire ocean in a drop."

Placed in the context of this allegory, Richard's prints prompt musings about our relationships to one another and the non-human world. While it is less obvious to me how parts contain the whole in his series, the strength of *Indra's Net* lies in its potent reminder of how our every action—no matter how trivial—comes with consequences both intended and unintended. When one little node moves, the larger web trembles in response. As mathematician and meteorologist Edward Norton Lorenz suggested in his concept of the butterfly effect, the flapping of a butterfly's wings could theoretically contribute to the onset of distant weather events, such as a tornado in Texas. And in a tapestry where well-being is inextricably stitched, appreciating the threads weaving between lives and occurrences also means responding to a call to be more conscious of our every deed and thought.

Besides interconnectivity, another theme evident in Richard's practice relates to the limits of our perception. In several of his works, lines appear to bend, forms seem to vibrate, and colours bleed into one another. While these attest to the artist's understanding and skillful manipulation of aesthetic elements, they also point out—with good humour—how what we perceive as reality is in fact, a construction of our brains. They are akin to optical art, calling into question the veracity of our experiences and laying bare the assumptions our minds make. More than mere visual trickery, they probe us to humbly examine the stories we tell ourselves. Perhaps, in this process, we

may better comprehend the variables that shape our perception, including our bias and prejudices. And perhaps, by slyly illustrating how nothing is quite what it seems, Richard's works gently whisper to us that our strongest convictions are best held loosely.

Intrigued by Richard's artworks in *Strange Connections* and the beautiful historic house that they are now exhibited in, I sat down for a conversation with the architect-artist and The Private Museum Associate Director Aaron Teo.

IN CONVERSATION WITH AARON TEO AND RICHARD HASSELL

NG HUI HSIEN

Ng Hui Hsien (N): Aaron, The Private Museum was based in Waterloo Street, before relocating to this house at Upper Wilkie Road a year ago. Can you share a little about the work that went into the move?

Aaron (A): It was late 2021. I approached Richard to see if he was keen to design and guide us through the process of restoring this building, as we don't have the expertise. Richard was very keen when I mentioned this house. At the start, we had doubts. We were waiting for Singapore Land Authority (SLA) to finish its renovation, and there were a lot of bureaucratic negotiations involved. At one point, Richard thought we had given up on the building!

REIMAGINING THE
OSBORNE HOUSE (2022)



N: There are several renowned architectural firms in Singapore. Why did you choose Richard and WOHA?

A: Richard and I had several meetings before about an exhibition for an Indonesian artist, and he had attended The Private Museum's life drawing workshops. I was aware of his works, and I find him interesting, as not all architects present artworks. I thought he was the most fitting architect to design and reimagine The Private Museum. This is a beautiful house, but it was so neglected! It needed someone to restore it with care.

The reimagination process started with Richard's sketches. After the design was done, we called a tender for a contractor to execute the work. We found a contractor who worked closely with Richard on art projects before.

Richard (R): It was a contractor firm run by Ng Joo Kok, who was a President's Design Award (PDA) winner because of his industrial design. He is more than a contractor. He is also a good industrial designer, which made a difference.



RICHARD HASSELL AND
NG JOO KOK DURING
RENOVATION WORKS (2022)

N: How long did the renovation take, and how did the idea of working on an exhibition together come about?

A: We managed to execute the renovation in slightly less than three months, from May to August 2023. When what was envisioned was coming into reality, I asked Richard, "Can we do an anniversary show in May 2024, if all goes well?"



RICHARD HASSELL AND
WOHA ARCHITECTS DURING
RENOVATION WORKS (2022)

R: At that time, it seemed like a long way away!

A: The title of this exhibition is *Strange Connections*, as I think Richard has been spending his whole life articulating the links between all of us, whether through art, architecture, or research. I thought an exhibition like this would be the best manifestation of his ideas.

And a little more about Richard's design approach, it was fundamentally driven by history and heritage. He dug up a lot of materials from archives—both local and British—and anywhere else online. Speaking of strange connections, he also found out that his grandma was connected to one of the Prinseps!

R: What happened was, Henry Prinsep, the son of Charles Prinsep, was sent to Australia to breed horses and extend the empire. He married into the Bussell family and ended up near Busselton where my paternal grandmother was from. Busselton is a small town, especially at that time. I discovered that Henry and his wife held a big party for their 50th or 60th wedding anniversary there, and my grandmother was one of the attendees! That was a strange connection, where a key player in this house connected with my family back in Australia. It's also an example of six degrees of separation. We have interconnecting lives, and you can find meaningful connections if you look hard enough.

The history of this house is interesting. After researching more, I think this house is possibly from the 1830s. I found an 1839 reference of someone visiting the property saying there was a bungalow. And when I look at its style more closely, it is very much Anglo-Indian. If you look at Suffolk house in Penang, it is very similar in terms of its big roofs and arched windows. This would mean this is one of Singapore's oldest buildings. I have proof that this house existed in 1859 because it was on the survey plans then.

I think Charles Prinsep built this house. He bought Mount Emily and the Sophia estate, and by the time he sold these, this house was here. Dr J. H. Robertson—from which Robertson Quay was named after—owned the house after Prinsep. Then it was Katz Brothers. The house stayed in their family for a long time, but they rented it out to various people.

The house was constantly in the newspapers. One of the directors of Katz Brothers threw himself out of the window and died. It was later sold to the Sultan of Siak too. Then there was St V. B. Down, who lived in the house and was constantly suing people! Like, someone stole a padlock, and he took them to court. He also put in a patent

for inventing the trishaw. When the Registrar of Vehicles tested his trishaw, however, the municipal official was so fat that the trishaw was wobbly and difficult to steer. He ended up not approving it, so the trishaw was banned in Singapore from 1912 to 1930.

There are all these interesting stories related to the people in this house. Also, one of Prinsep's groundskeepers was Lawrence Niven, whom Niven Road was named after. He set up the Botanic Gardens.

The house was also the Japanese Consulate before the Second World War. It was later transferred to the government's hands. That was when it started its career as a home for prostitutes. In the '80s, it was a children's home. Then it was a drug counselling centre before it became part of Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts (NAFA).

A: After NAFA moved, the house was left vacant for a while before Emily Hill Enterprise took over. The main person spearheading that was artist Sun Yu-li. The house was his studio for 15 years or so before we took over. He used the attic as his storage space, which was forbidden. The attic was not in SLA's floor plans.

R: I think the reason why the attic was taken off the plans when the house was part of NAFA, was because it was impossible to make it comply with the current fire code. That's why SLA probably just said it cannot be used. But it was certainly in the original house from the very beginning.

It is interesting that this is one of Singapore's oldest buildings, and that it survived. To go through that many changes of ownership and end up intact is extraordinary. It was a nightmare when we got it.

A: It was very beaten up.

N: With so much history behind this house, how did that influence the design process?

R: We had to treat the house with respect. We wanted to strip away the things that harmed its dignity and as much as possible, and restore its simplicity and beauty. We built new walls that feel detached from the old ones, so you can see the shape of the old building. This also allows The Private Museum to install artworks without affecting the house's structure.

A: This intention extends beyond the walls to other key elements of the house as well. Like the arches. A lot of the arches on the second floor were covered by previous tenants. We exposed that. Richard was trying to restore and re-dignify this house, and to do that, we went back to its original floor plan. Or what we call the original floor plan, which is the earliest plan we found.

R: The earliest plan we found was from a dentist in the 1930s.

A: Previous tenants had built partitions on the second floor too. They divided the rooms into smaller rooms, which were not part of the original design. We took these down. We did not replace the tiles of this house as well but tried to preserve them as much as possible. Even the verandah had nasty lights and a low, false ceiling when we saw it. We stripped all of that.

Apart from the floating walls, we didn't build anything. We were mainly taking things away.

R: The Private Museum is a fantastic use for the building because it is open to the public. Anyone can come and experience this space. Because of how we renovated it, you can experience the old building in its original state.

If you look at the history of the house, there was a slow decline from it being a prominent building. Its low point was possibly, as a drug counselling centre. Judging from the photos I have seen, the whole place was

collapsing and not looked after at all. This might be the first time that it is being looked after with love since the Second World War.



BOARD MEMBERS IN FRONT OF THE NEWLY RENOVATED OSBORNE HOUSE (2023)

N: Being in this house, I sense its classic elegance and beauty. Listening to the stories that you both described, I am also intrigued by how intertwined the house is with larger historical events and social forces. The fact that it was used as a girls' home, for example, was probably in part due to the anti-yellow campaign led by the state from the '50s to '80s. These stories suggest how the lives of individuals in this house are shaped by—and in turn, gave shape to—broader forces at work.

In a way, Richard, your artworks mirror such interconnections, even though they feature quite a bit of nature. Can you share more about that?

R: Emergent phenomena and system effects are things I've always been interested in. It's like we can see nature as an emergent system. Out of all the principles of biology, chemistry, and physics, we end up with this amazing and beautiful phenomenon that is nature.

Even humans are part of nature, and our cultures are patterns that arise out of all our interactions. They are bigger phenomena that come out of small actions that we are all taking.

My family is quite maths and physics-oriented, and I like patterns that come through the principles in these disciplines. Developing systems is something I do in tessellations; they are playful, but they embody these principles.

N: Speaking of tessellations, I find *Strange Creatures* fascinating. They are made up of animals that are fun and whimsical, and as I look at them, larger patterns emerge and seem to move, enhancing the playful quality of the works. Can you share more about the impetus behind the series?

R: I have liked M. C. Escher since I was a kid. He stood outside the art movements. He was slightly connected to the surrealist movement when he was younger, but he got obsessed with tessellations. He was deeply unfashionable—art critics hated him. He didn't fit into a nice story arc about abstraction or anything like that. He was more into mathematics and patterns, which weren't a focus in the 20th century.

As an architect, I care a lot about organisation and geometry. Escher made some artworks about perception and space that are very architectural too. I got interested when I realised there was a lot of tiling research around the 1970s. There is something called the 17 wallpaper groups, which refers to the 17 ways of repeating patterns on a plane. Escher did them to death. Just as he died in 1972, some unusual tilings that didn't follow the rules of these wallpaper groups were discovered.

UK mathematician Roger Penrose—who is still alive—developed some of these strange tilings. He published Penrose Tiling, which is an aperiodic tiling where you can never map one region of the tiling to another.

Just as a fun exercise, I thought I would tessellate some of these tilings, and I started around 2004.

Tessellations are like puzzles. They are visual games. They come from science and have always been slightly outside the fine art world. I enjoy doing them—it gives me some kind of serotonin drip!

But I do think that these patterns are at the edge of what we can grasp. The tessellations in *Strange Creatures* are incredibly simple. Yet already, we can grasp that there is order, but we can't understand it completely. I think that means as humans, even though we are proud of our brains, it doesn't take a lot to get beyond our understanding.

About the creatures in the tessellations, I like that they are friendly, fun, quirky, and whimsical. They embody big ideas, but they are very accessible. In some ways, architecture can be like that. We have big concepts in our architecture at WOHA, but we also want them to be delightful spaces. Someone in a space may uncover more layers of meaning, but the litmus test is whether they feel good in it.

A: That's similar to our exhibitions. We don't favour incorporating too much academic research. The experience of an exhibition has to be first and foremost, enjoyable. It should spark curiosity. It should excite visually, and not in an intimidating way. Shows that are too driven by academic research can be aesthetically and experientially stifling. We always try to strike a balance in our programming. There has to be a certain level of substance and context, but these should not sacrifice the nature of a show as an experience.

N: An engaging exhibition experience is important, and one work that is immersive and visually arresting in this exhibition is *Everything Connects* at Osborne Hall.

R: *Everything Connects* is related to the idea of an architectural projection. It's like you are

looking through the walls into adjoining spaces. You are also looking through time. The work is about the house as a locus of history.

The figures in *Everything Connects* include a mother and kids, who were taken from her and placed in the house when it was an orphanage. You also see Charles Prinsep, who built the house, and a young prostitute from the Red Butterfly Gang. There is Hoo Ah Kay, or Whampoa, who was a neighbour and who gave the land for Singapore Botanic Gardens, which was later laid out by Lawrence Niven. There is a trishaw prototype patented by St V. B. Down, who is shown here inspecting his invention. There is also a Japanese soldier from the war, Mamuro Shinozaki (nicknamed “Singapore’s Schindler”), who lived here when he was arrested for spying. And there is Heinrich Bock—a director of Katz Brothers—who threw himself out of the window to his death while delirious with fever.

These figures are life-like, as if they are in the space. I want audiences to recognise that these are people who walked through that room, and that they are only the latest ones. It is almost as if audiences are taking their place in history as it unravels.

A: This work gives me goosebumps. Just to add, *Everything Connects* is a commission for this show. The work sits in the centre of the second floor, with Richard’s tessellations in the surrounding rooms. There is also a timeline of historical events related to this house because, without this house, we wouldn’t have worked with Richard. Without The Private Museum, this house wouldn’t be what it is today as well.

N: That takes us back to the theme of interconnections.

R: Yes. You can’t separate them; the parts and the whole make each other, really.

Ng Hui Hsien

E-Publication Contributor

Ng Hui Hsien (b. 1982, Singapore) is a multifaceted artist, writer, and researcher whose artistic journey traverses themes of perception, (im)materiality, and interconnectivity through the lens of photography. Her works serve as spaces where the subconscious can subtly or directly manifest itself.

With an extensive exhibition history, Ng’s art has graced international platforms such as Comma Space in Singapore, the Martin Parr Foundation in the UK, and the Reykjavík Museum of Photography in Iceland, among others. She has also been showcased at renowned festivals like Photo Bangkok in Thailand and the Dali International Photography Festival in China.

Her artistic prowess has garnered attention from various publications and platforms worldwide, including Photomonitor, PHmuseum, and The Reykjavík Grapevine. Notably, her self-published artist book, “The Weight of Air,” has earned a place in esteemed collections such as the New York Public Library and the Asia Pacific Photobook Archive. Additionally, it has been recognised in publications like “How We See: Photobooks by Women.”

"ARCHITECTURE IS LIKE A CAMERA THAT
CAPTURES STORIES OVER TIME. SOMETHING
PROFOUND ABOUT TIME, SPACE, AND LOCALITY
EMERGES FROM REVEALING THE NARRATIVES
THAT INTERSECT IN A SINGLE ROOM."

RICHARD HASSELL
FOUNDING DIRECTOR OF WOHA ARCHITECTS





INSTALLATION VIEW OF *STRANGE CONNECTIONS: ART AND ARCHITECTURE*

CAROLINE VERANDAH



INSTALLATION VIEW OF *STRANGE CONNECTIONS: ART AND ARCHITECTURE*

CAROLINE VERANDAH



INSTALLATION VIEW OF *STRANGE CONNECTIONS: ART AND ARCHITECTURE*

CAROLINE VERANDAH



INSTALLATION VIEW OF STRANGE CONNECTIONS: ART AND ARCHITECTURE

ARRIVAL HALL



INSTALLATION VIEW OF STRANGE CONNECTIONS: ART AND ARCHITECTURE

ARRIVAL HALL



THE FIVE STELAE OF SYSTEM 7 (2022)

72 X 112 X 3 CM
MILLED SOLID ALUMINIUM WITH
BRONZE LACQUER FINISH



THE FIVE STELAE OF SYSTEM 7 (2022)

46 X 44 X 3 CM
MILLED SOLID ALUMINIUM WITH
BRONZE LACQUER FINISH



THE FIVE STELAE OF SYSTEM 7 (2022)

71 X 108 X 3 CM
MILLED SOLID ALUMINIUM WITH
BRONZE LACQUER FINISH



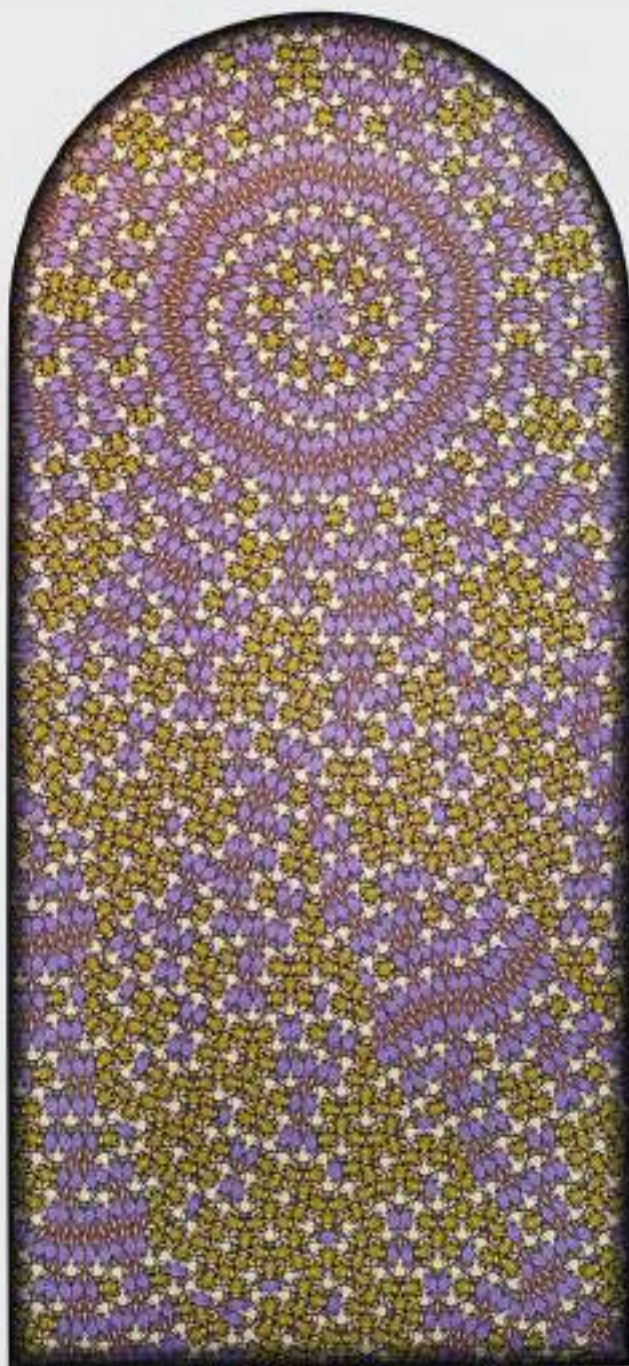
THE FIVE STELAE OF SYSTEM 7 (2022)

116 X 107 X 3 CM
MILLED SOLID ALUMINIUM WITH
BRONZE LACQUER FINISH



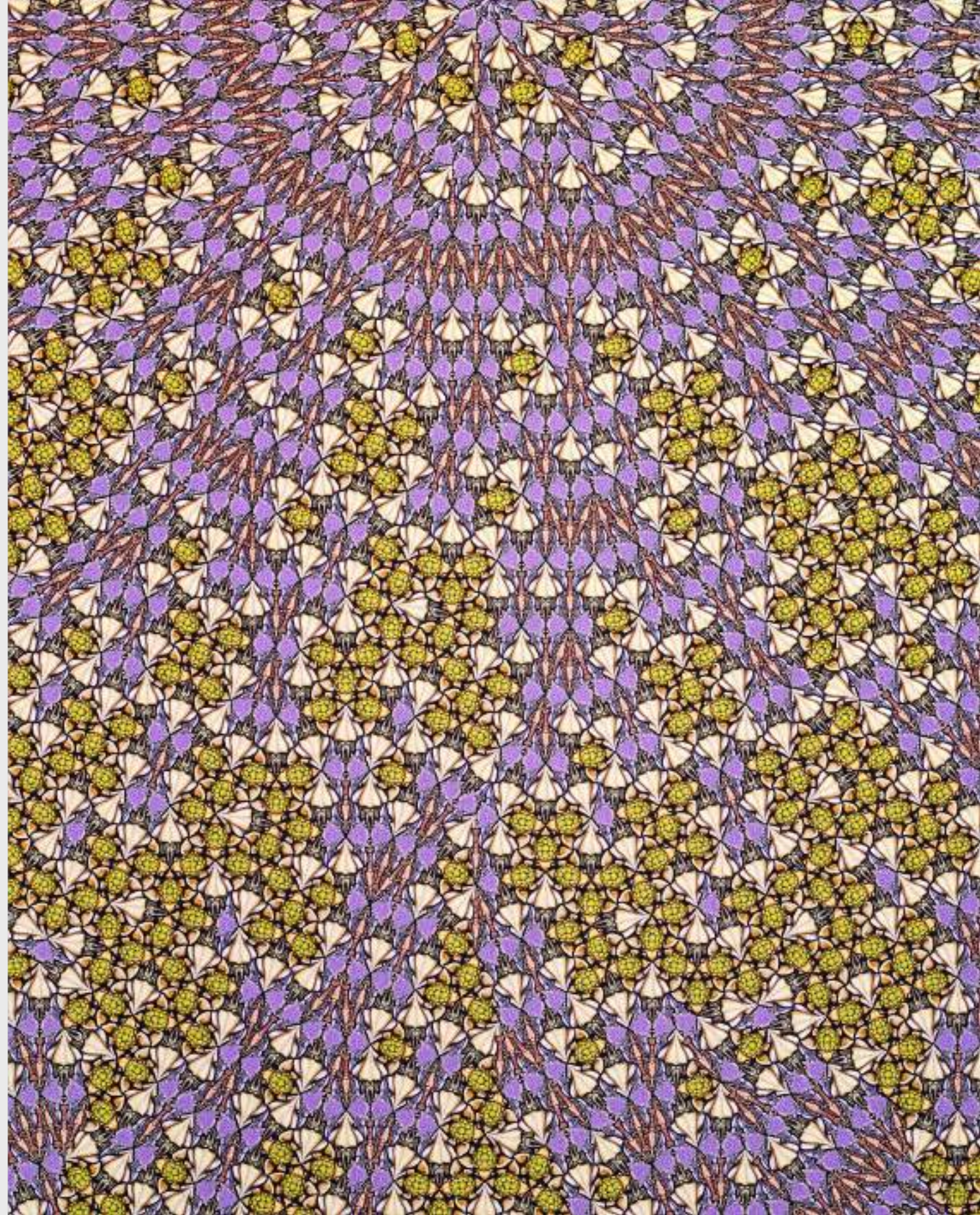
THE FIVE STELAE OF SYSTEM 7 (2022)

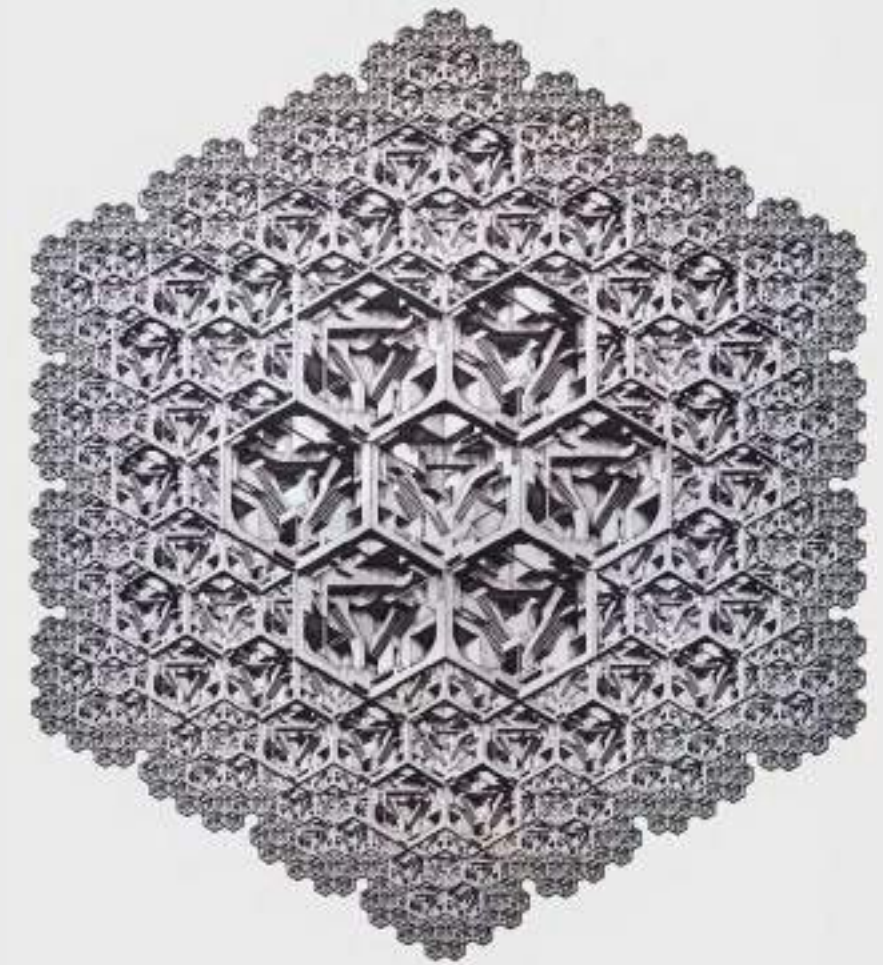
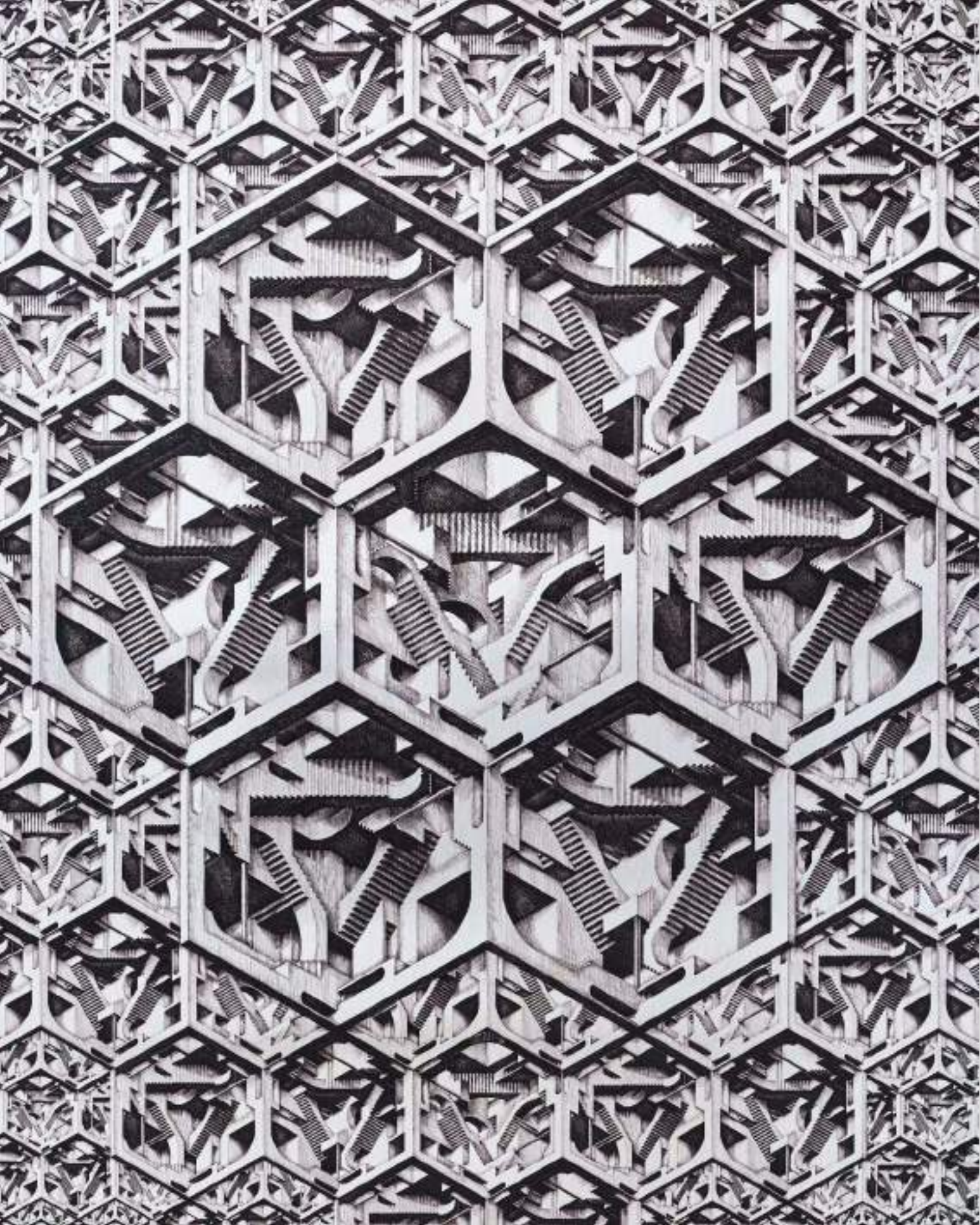
104 X 89 X 3 CM
MILLED SOLID ALUMINIUM WITH
BRONZE LACQUER FINISH



FRITTO MISTO (2020/2024)
211 X 97 X 3 CM
UV INK ON BRUSHED ALUMINIUM DIBOND PANEL

STRANGE CONNECTIONS





FRACTAL RELATIVITY (2018)

125 X 109 X 3 CM
UV INK ON BRUSHED ALUMINIUM DIBOND PANEL

ART AND ARCHITECTURE



INSTALLATION VIEW OF *STRANGE CONNECTIONS: ART AND ARCHITECTURE*

SOPHIA STAIRS



Osborne Hall

Sophia Gallery

INSTALLATION VIEW OF STRANGE CONNECTIONS: ART AND ARCHITECTURE

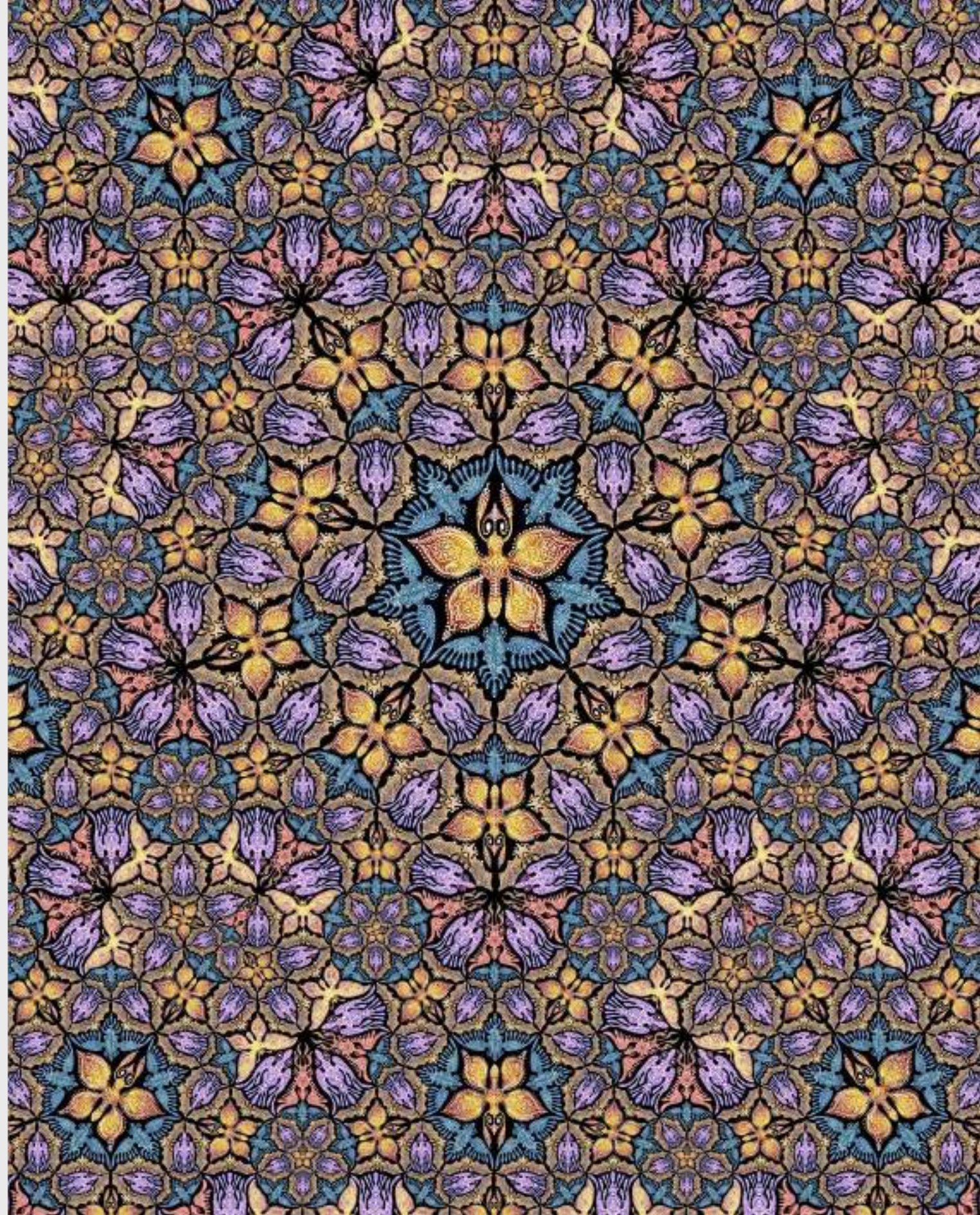
SOPHIA STAIRS

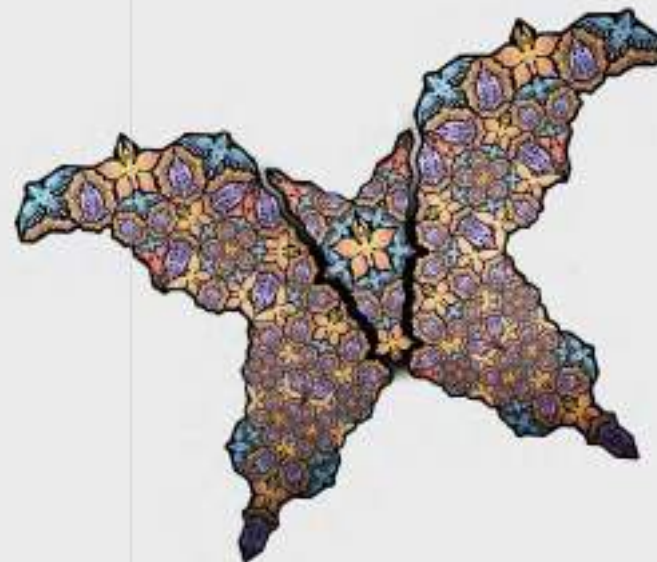
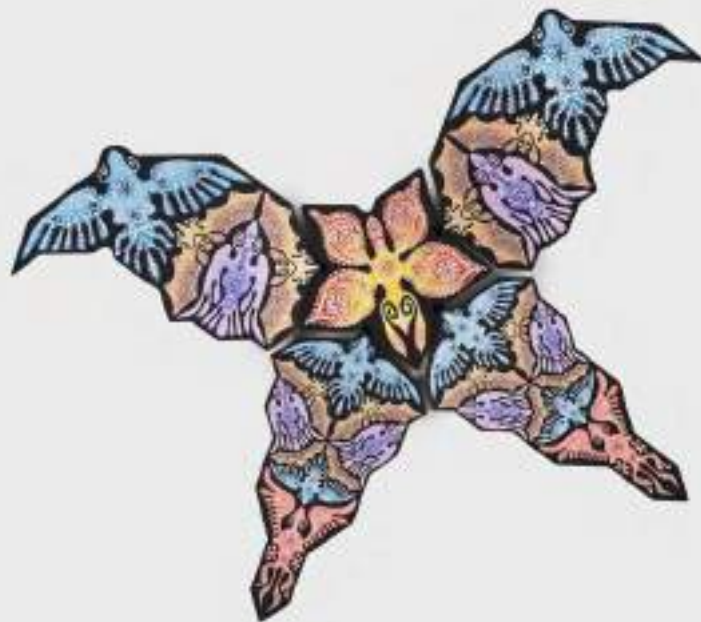


BATS, BIRDS AND BUTTERFLIES (2018)

121 X 117 X 87 CM
ARCHIVAL PIGMENT PRINT ON
BAMBOO AWAGAMI WASHI PAPER

STRANGE CONNECTIONS





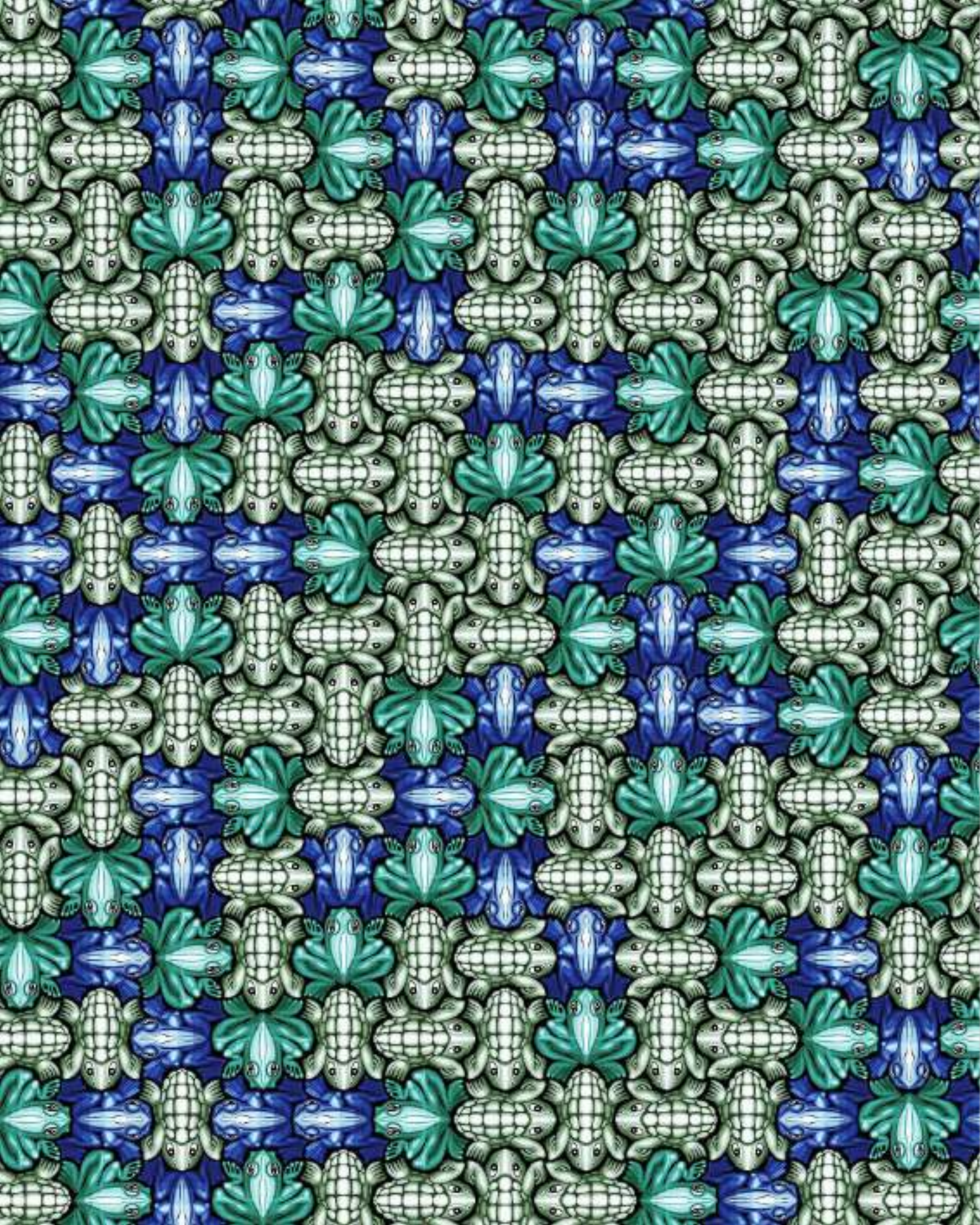
BATS, BIRDS AND BUTTERFLIES IV (2018/2024)
DIMENSIONS VARIABLE
UV PRINTED BRUSHED ALUMINIUM DIBOND PANELS
MOUNTED ON BLACK-PAINTED PLYWOOD ARMATURE

STRANGE CREATURES

Richard Hassell was fascinated by the work of Dutch artist M.C.Escher (1898–1972) during his schooldays. Escher’s work was so comprehensive that he left the field of tessellated tiling complete, producing tessellations for all regular symmetry groups known since ancient times. However, just as Escher died in 1972, the mathematical field of tiling was opening up again with the discovery of strange aperiodic and complex tilings such as the Penrose Tiles and Ammann Tiles, that were part of the dawn of computational mathematics and the Complexity Theory.

Hassell realised that these new tilings could be tessellated. The resulting designs gave unique insights into these new classes of tilings, in a series he titled *Strange Creatures*. Whereas Escher’s tessellations are “Wallpaper Tilings” with simple repeats (known as translational symmetry), Hassell’s tessellations are based on substitution tilings, which are aperiodic and have a fractal, multi-scalar quality. The tilings are highly ordered yet their complexity defies our ability to understand their embedded patterns.





ARCHIMEDES' AQUATICS SCROLL 1 (2019)

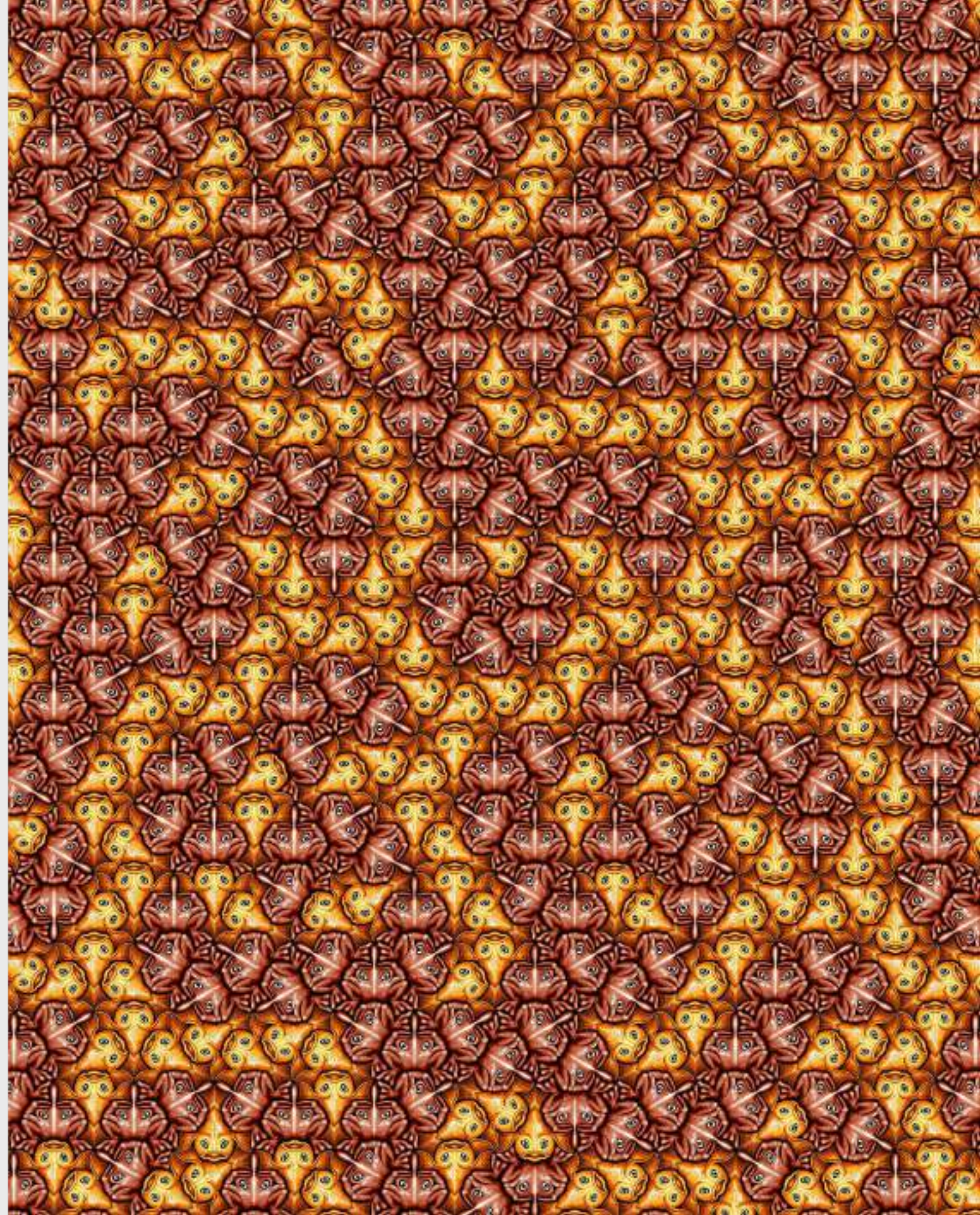
199 X 71 X 3 CM
ARCHIVAL PIGMENT INK ON KOZO WASHI PAPER
MOUNTED ON SILK SCROLL WITH
PAULOWNIA WOODEN STORAGE BOX

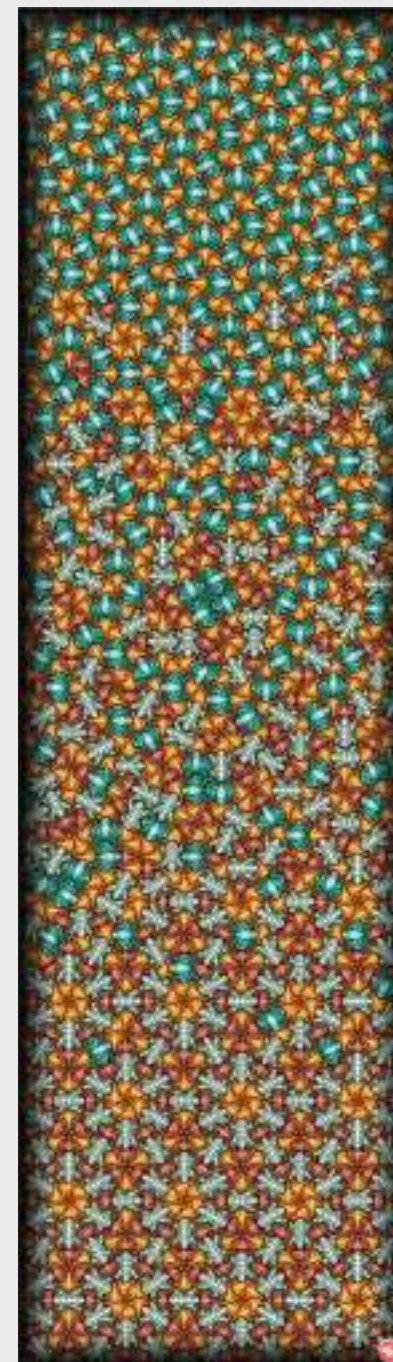
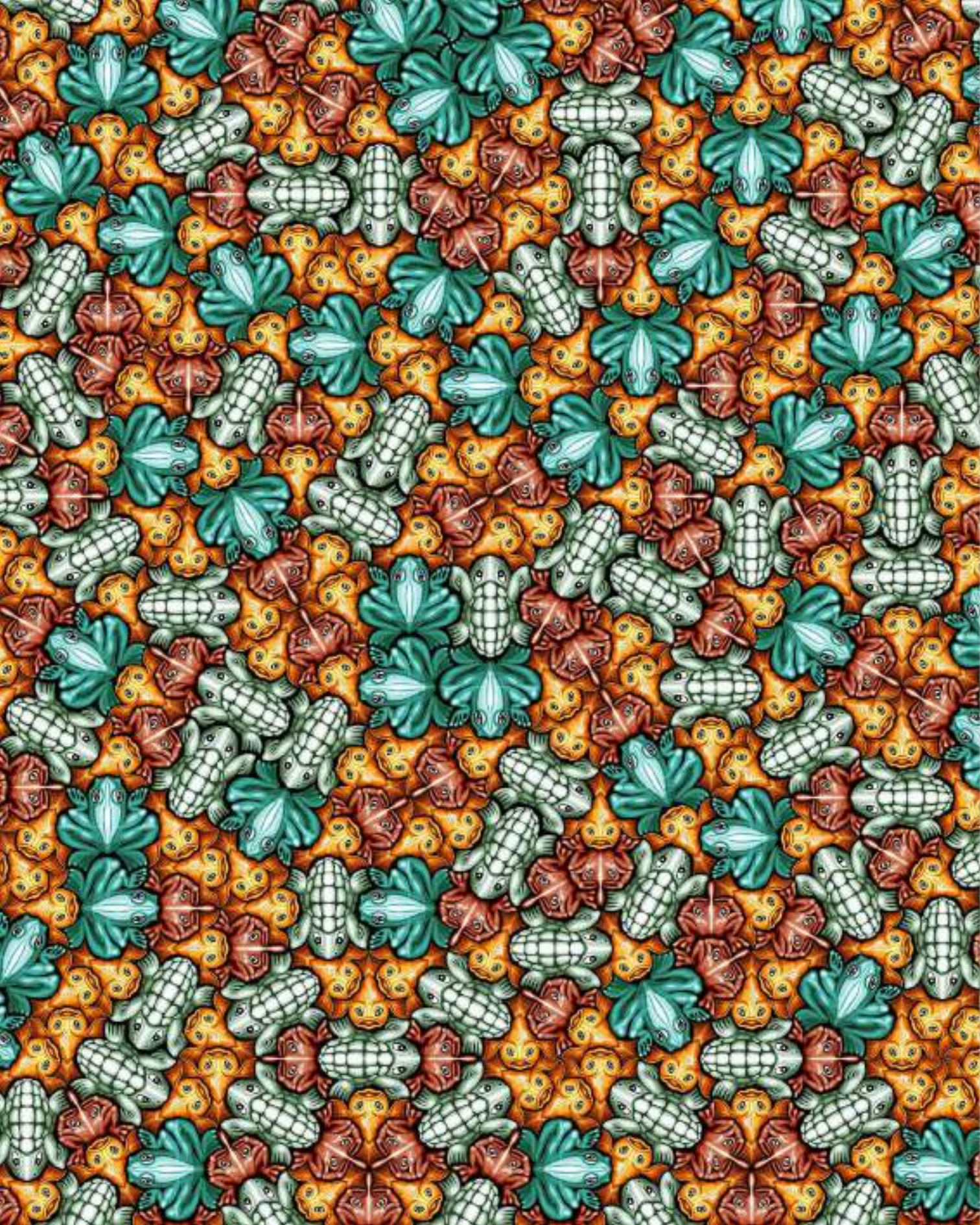


ARCHIMEDES' AQUATICS SCROLL 2 (2019)

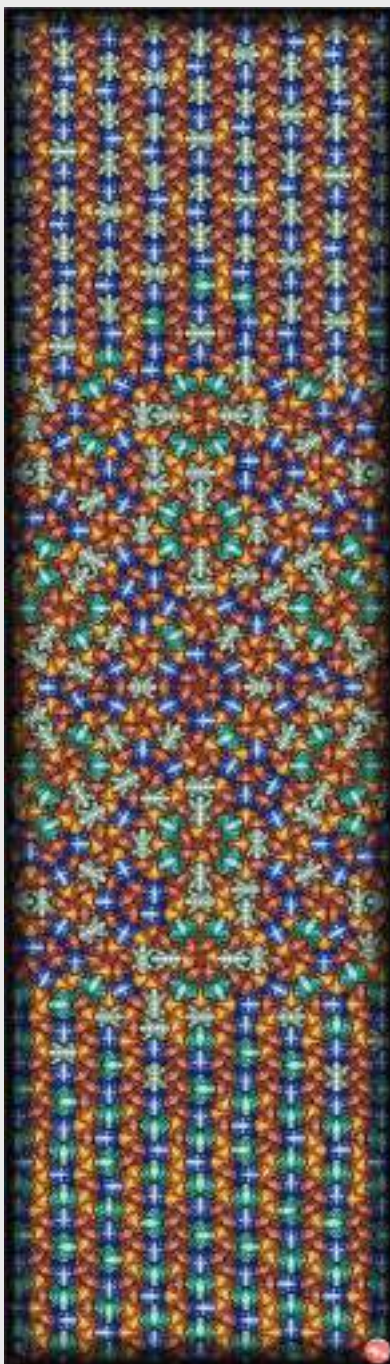
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 ARCHIVAL PIGMENT INK ON KOZO WASHI PAPER
 MOUNTED ON SILK SCROLL WITH
 PAULOWNIA WOODEN STORAGE BOX

STRANGE CONNECTIONS



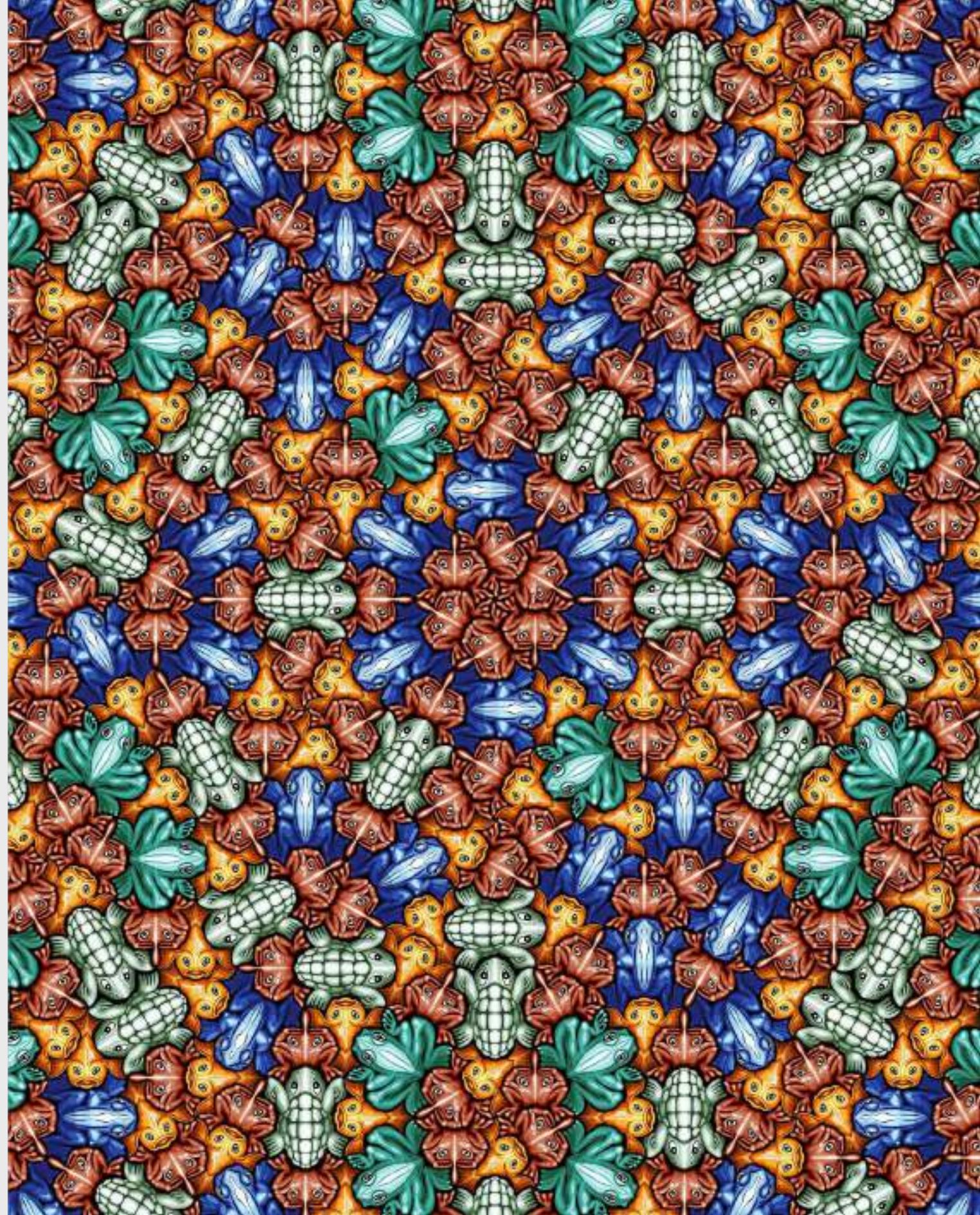


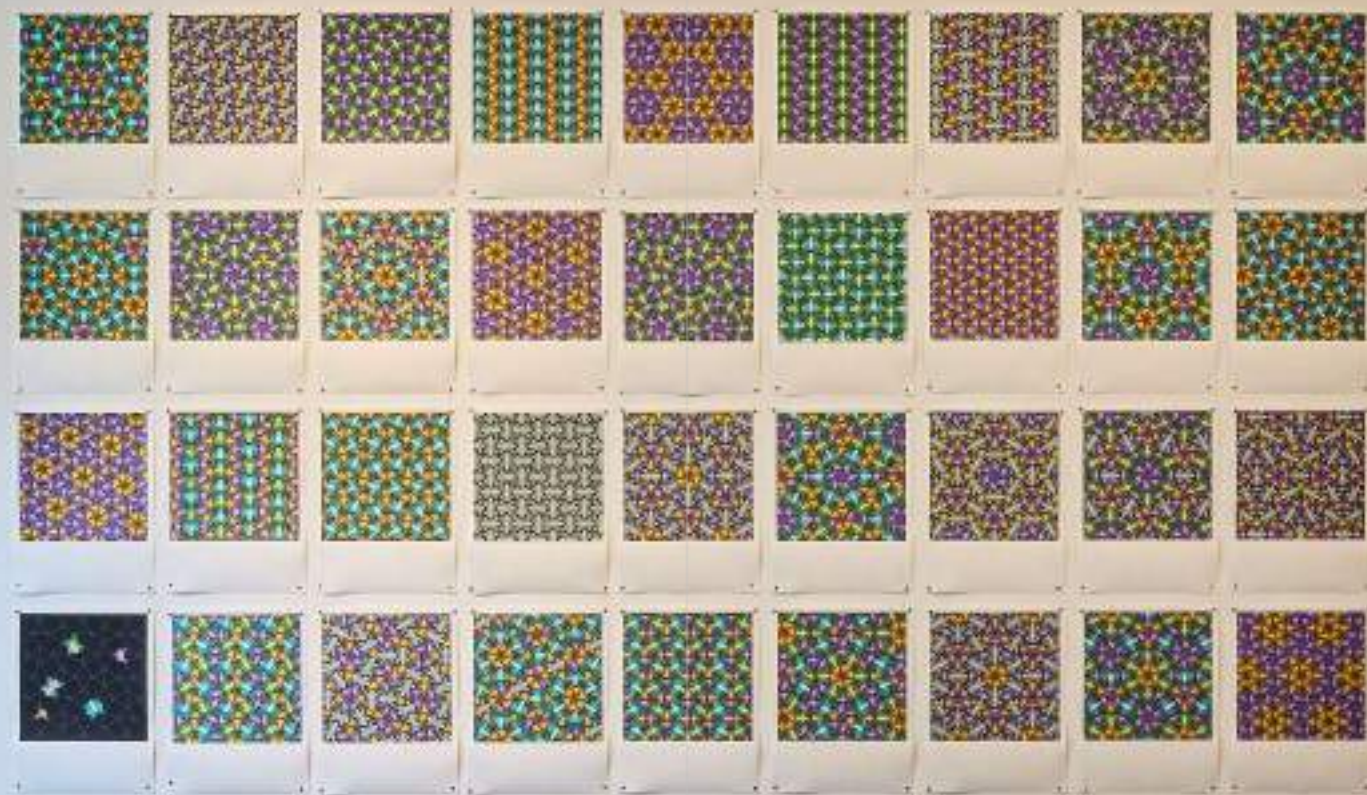
ARCHIMEDES' AQUATICS SCROLL 3 (2019)
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ARCHIVAL PIGMENT INK ON KOZO WASHI PAPER
MOUNTED ON SILK SCROLL WITH
PAULOWNIA WOODEN STORAGE BOX



ARCHIMEDES' AQUATICS SCROLL 4 (2019)
 199 X 71 X 3 CM
 ARCHIVAL PIGMENT INK ON KOZO WASHI PAPER
 MOUNTED ON SILK SCROLL WITH
 PAULOWNIA WOODEN STORAGE BOX

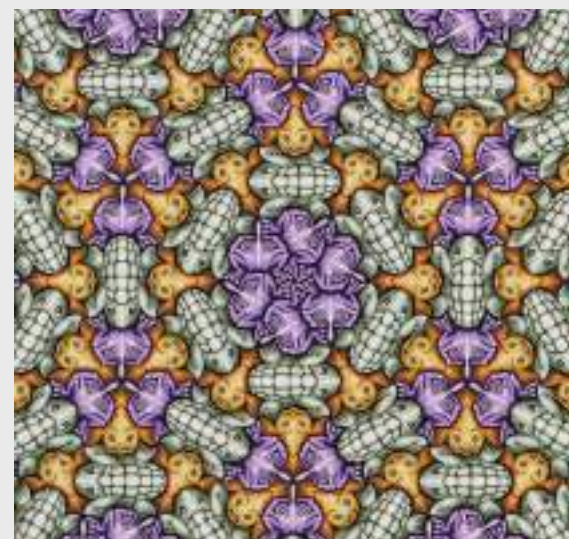
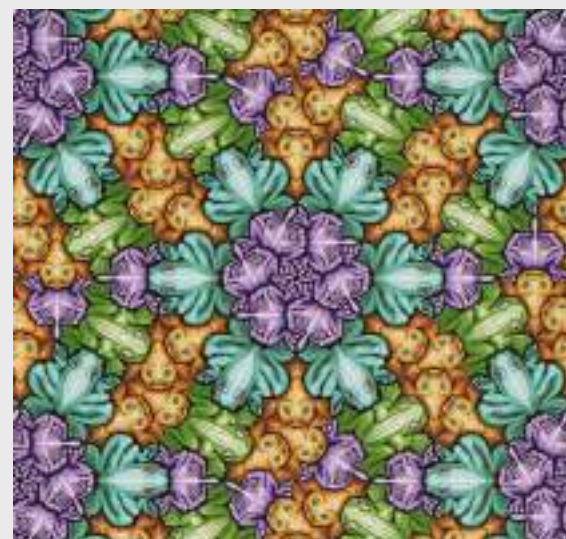
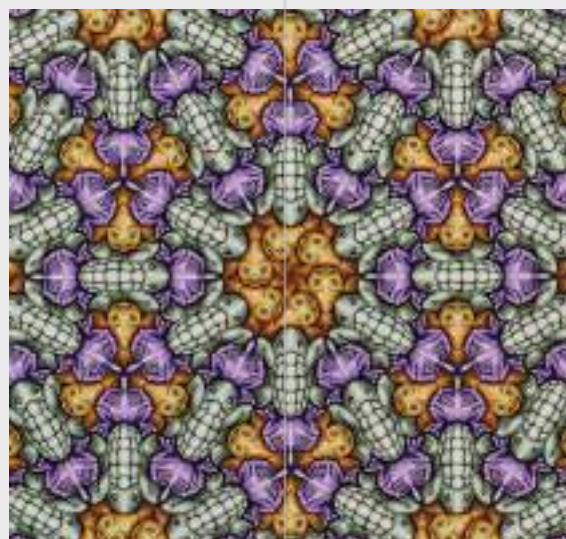
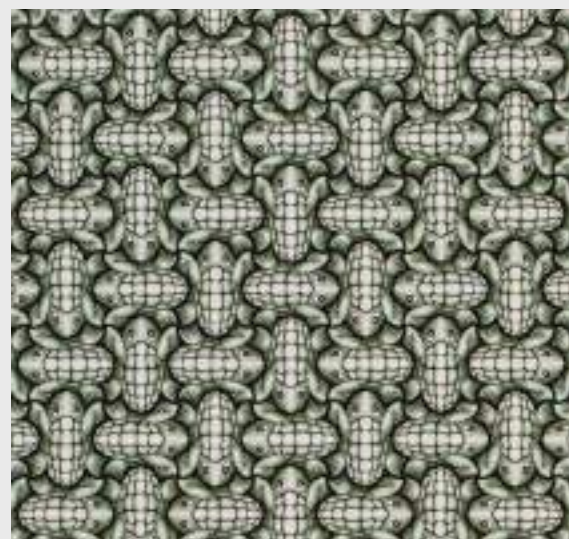
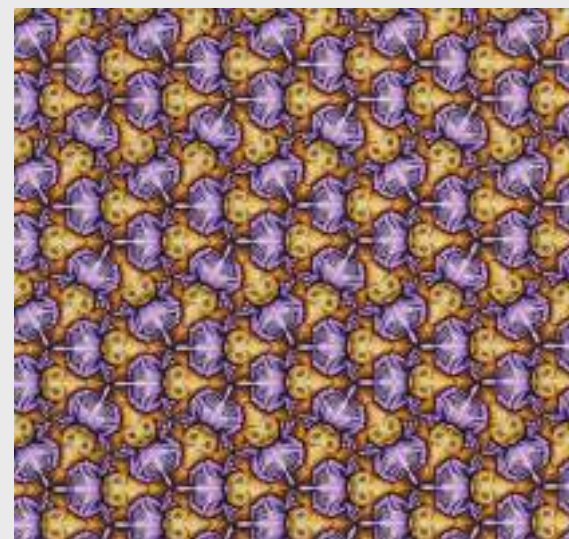
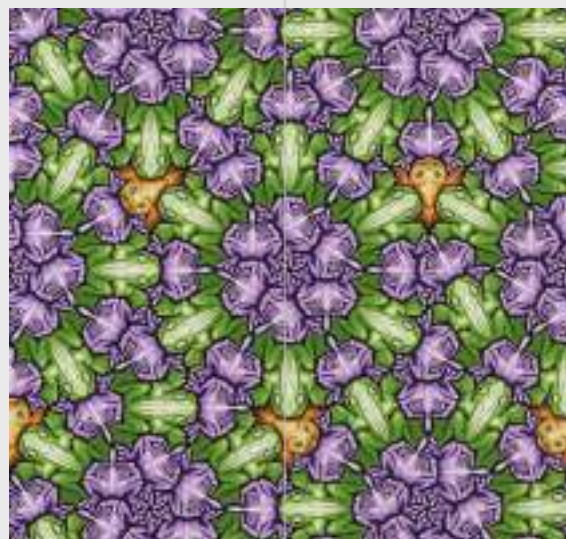
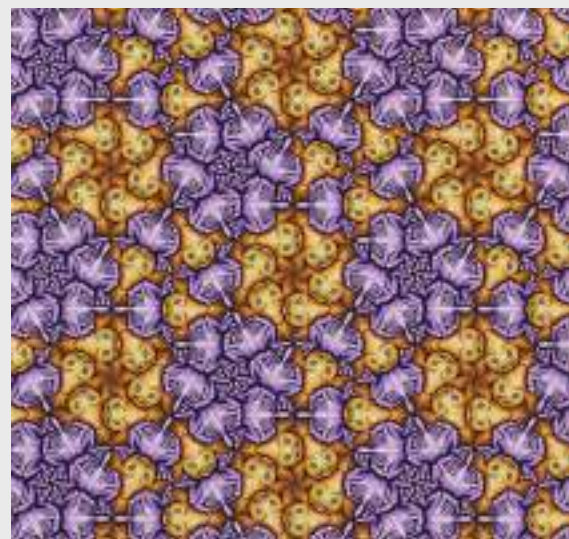
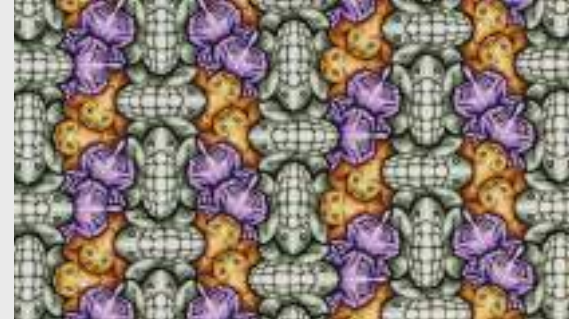
STRANGE CONNECTIONS

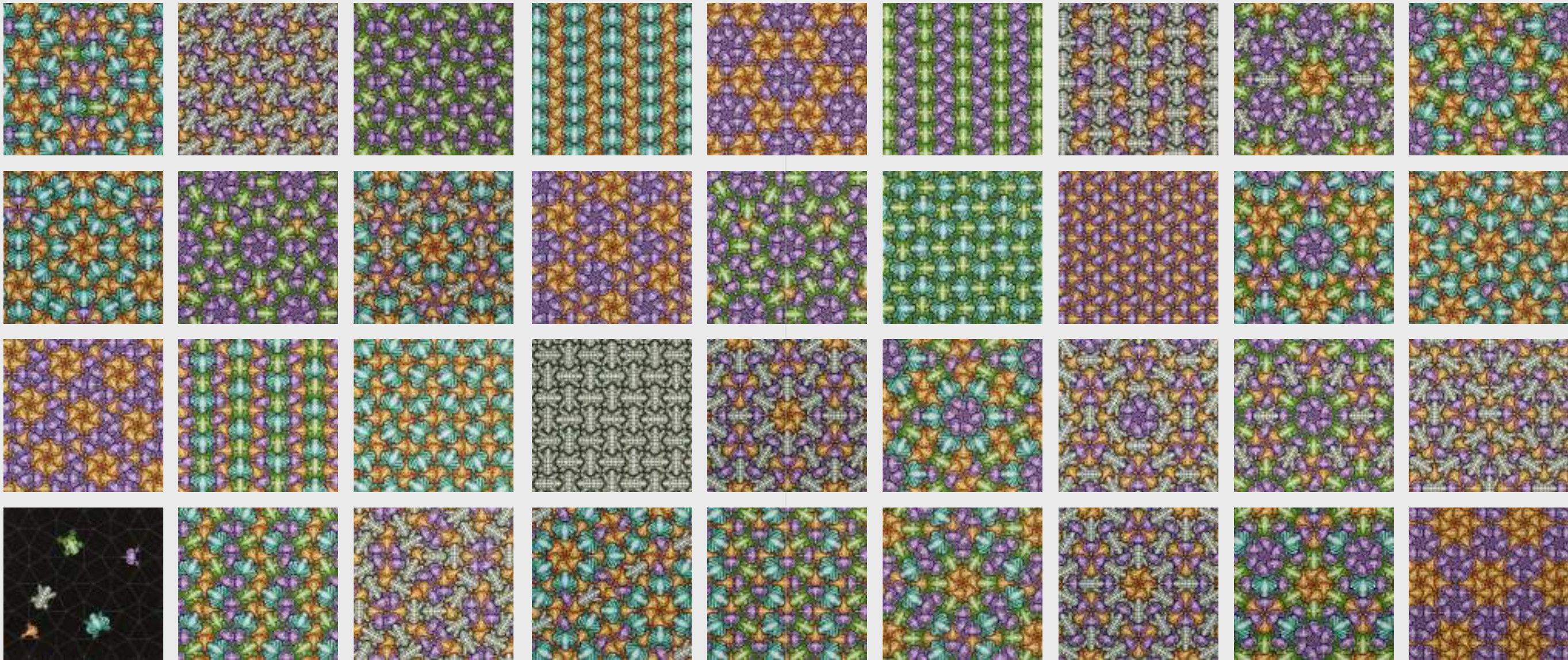




Small informational label on the left wall.







ARCHIMEDES' AQUATICS SYMMETRY DRAWINGS (2019)
 36 X 26 CM (EACH)
 PIGMENT INK ON SUSTAINABLE BAMBOO
 AWAGAMI WASHI PAPER

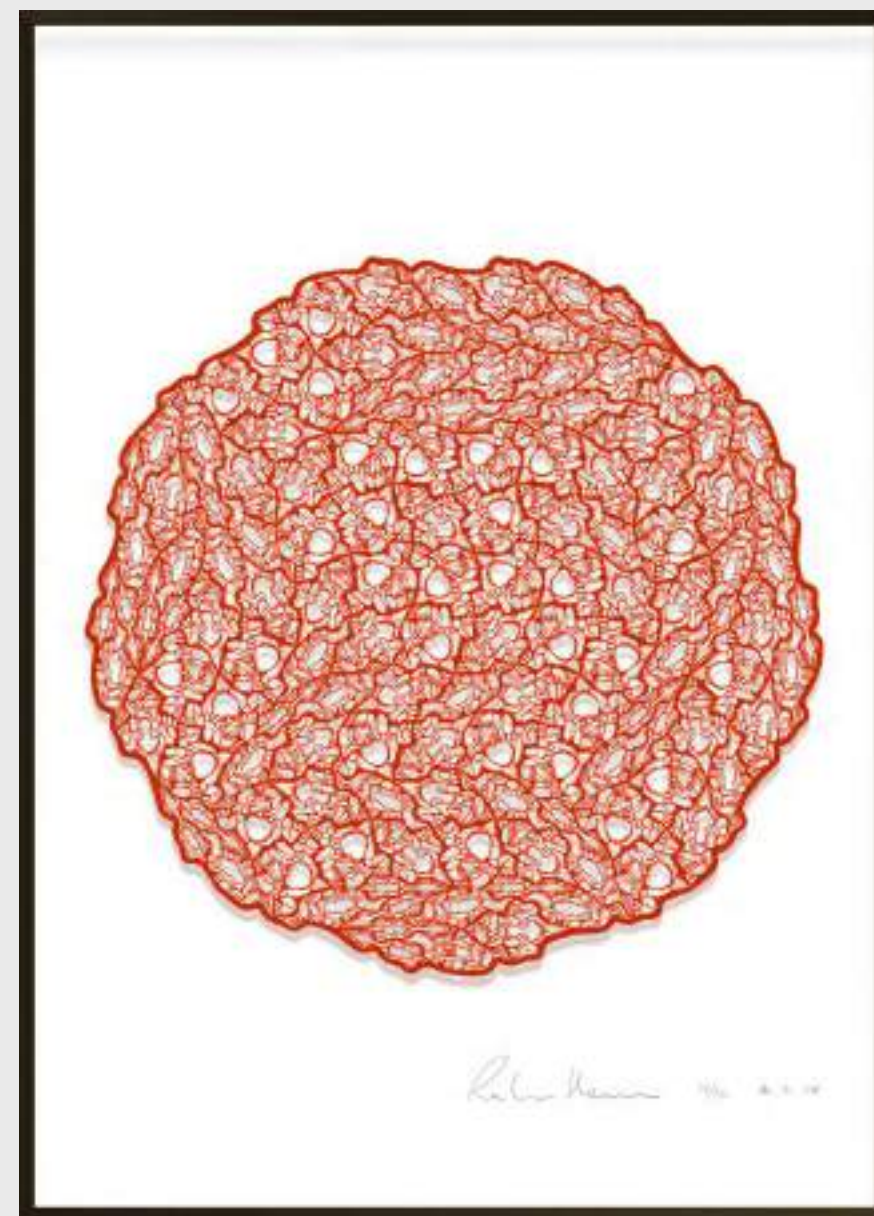




***FIRE ROOSTERS I* (2017)**
121 X 87 X 3 CM
ARCHIVAL PIGMENT PRINT ON
BAMBOO AWAGAMI WASHI PAPER

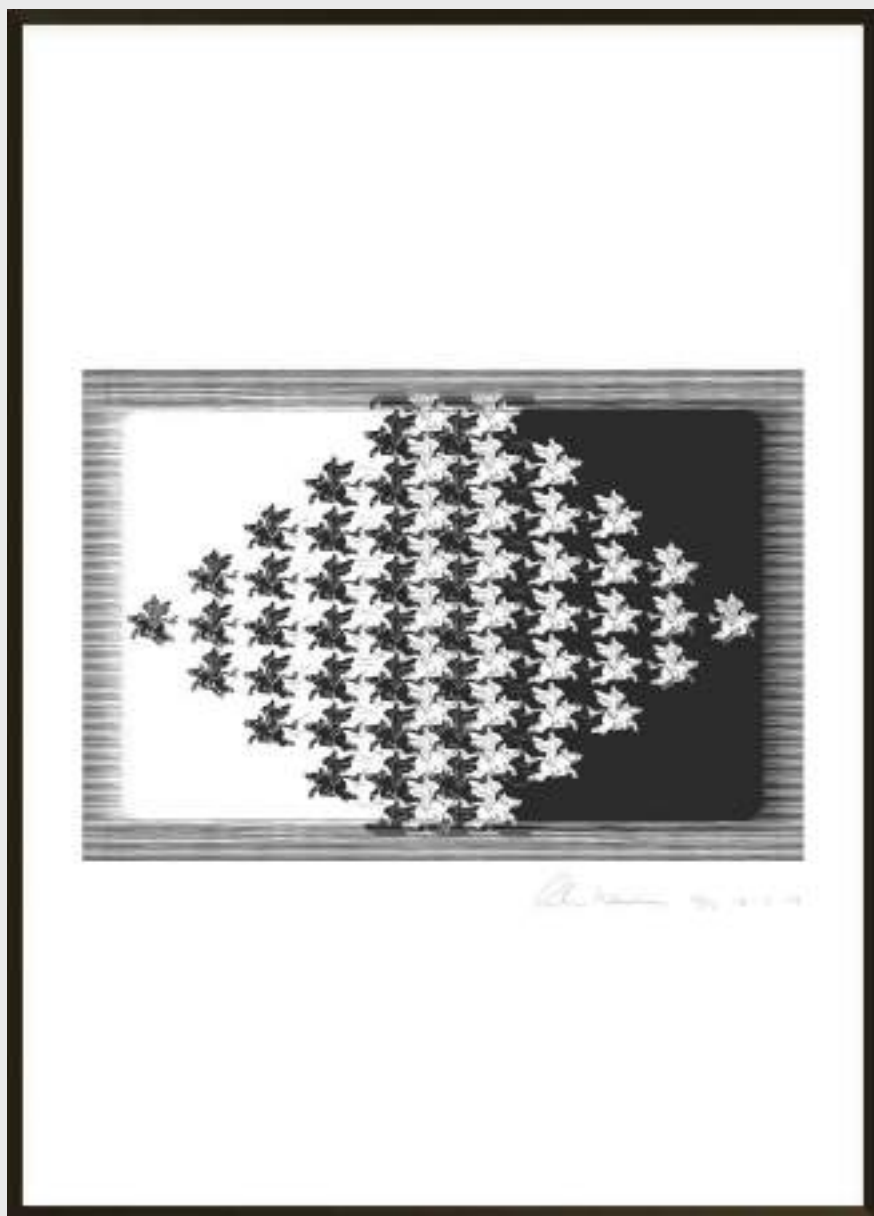
STRANGE CONNECTIONS





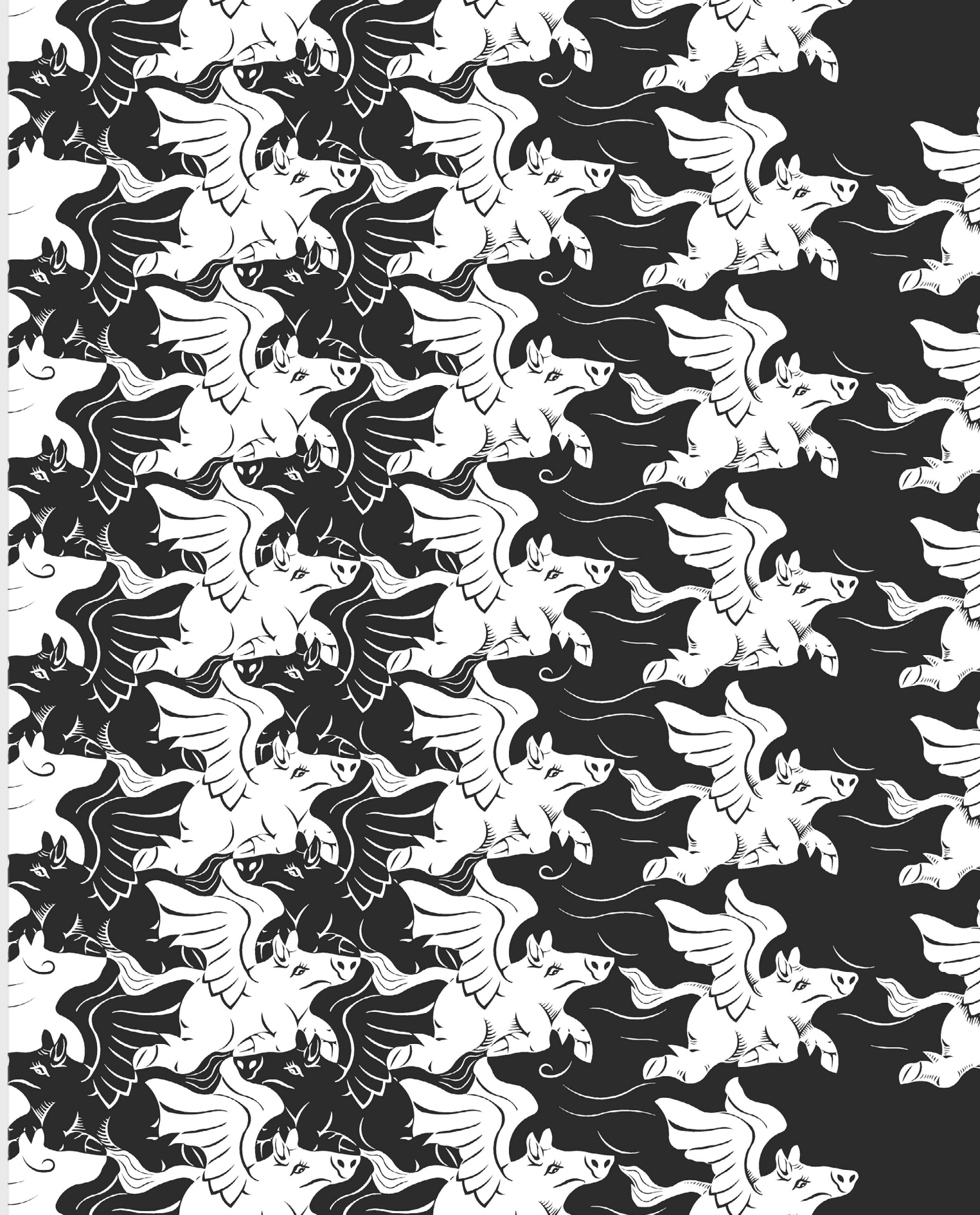
121 X 87 X 3 CM
ARCHIVAL PIGMENT PRINT ON
BAMBOO AWAGAMI WASHI PAPER

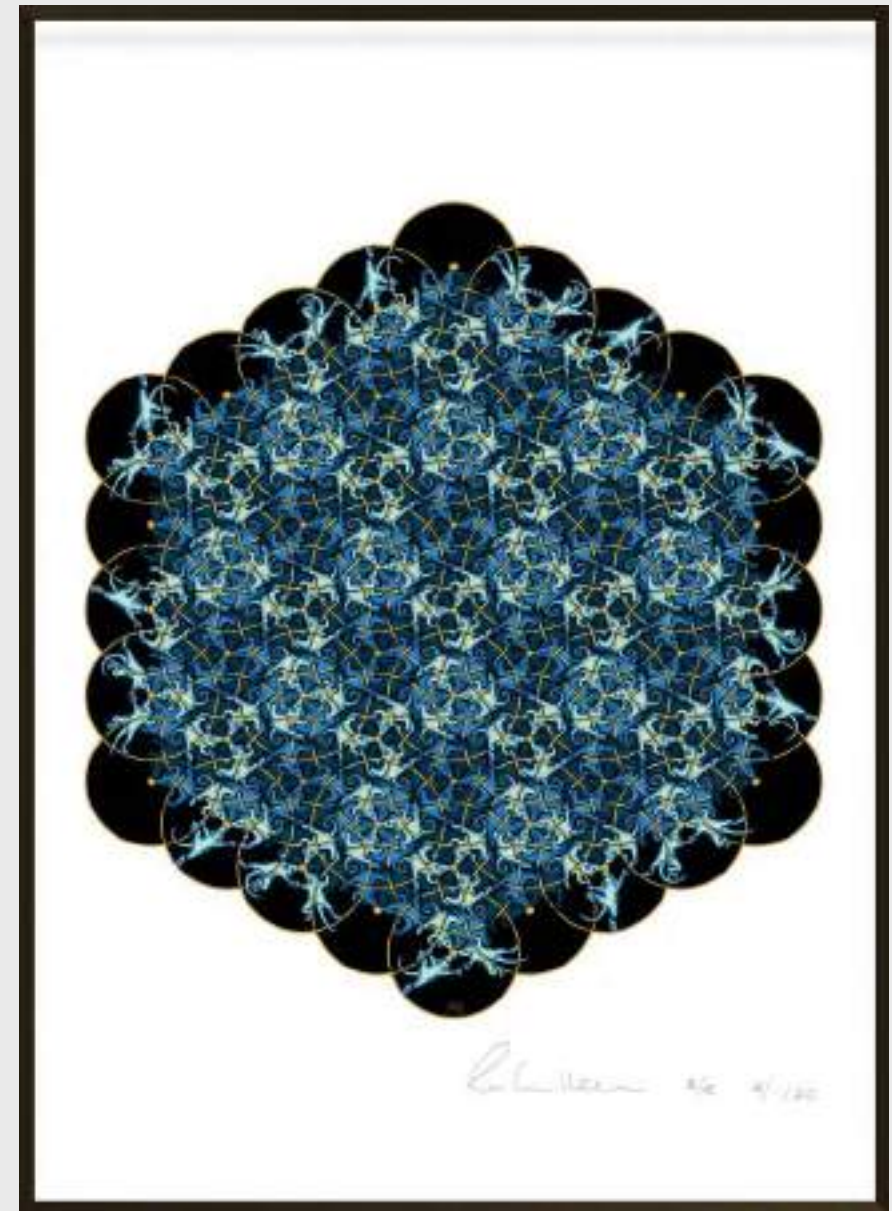
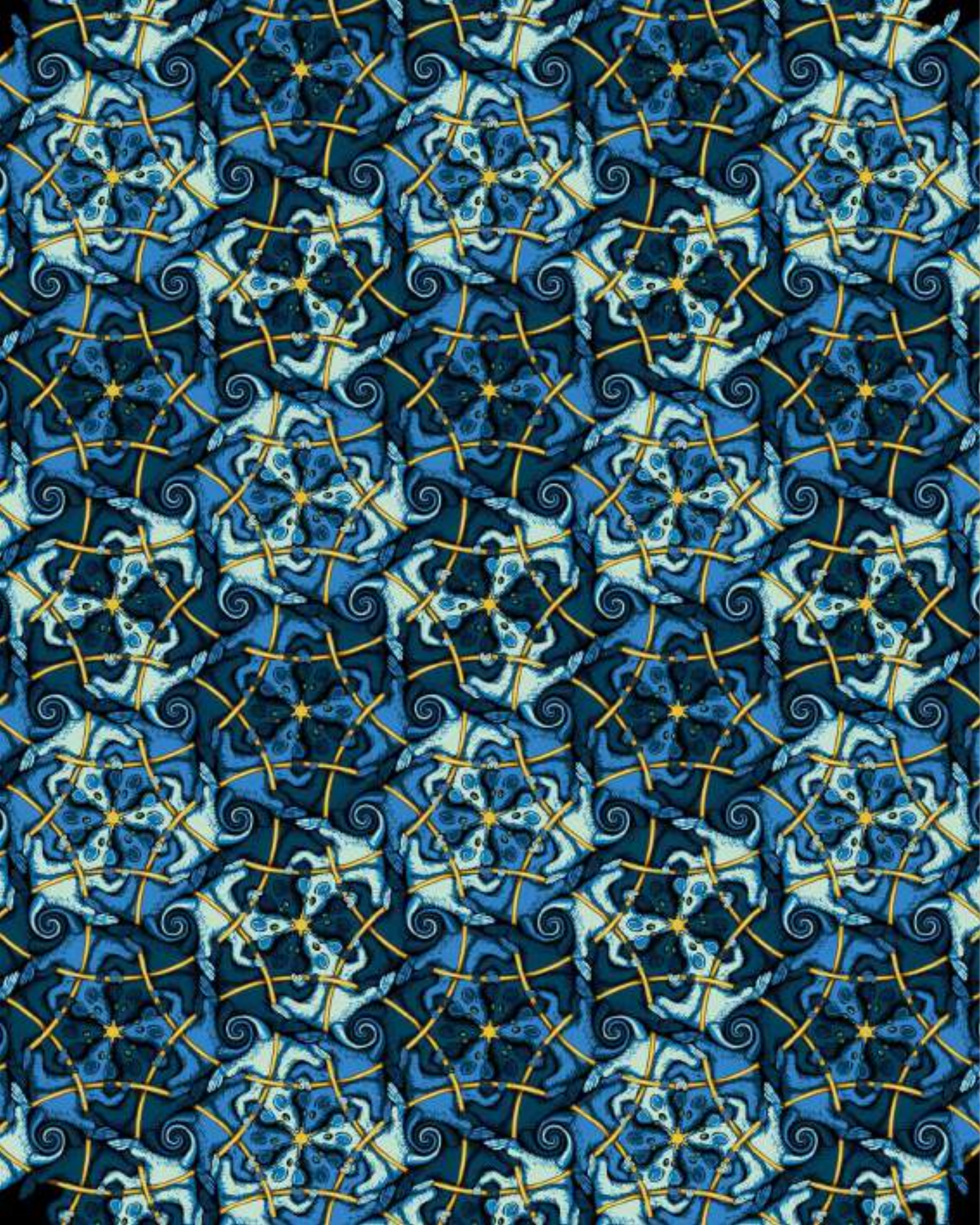
ART AND ARCHITECTURE



PIGS MIGHT FLY I (2019)
121 X 87 X 3 CM
ARCHIVAL PIGMENT PRINT ON
BAMBOO AWAGAMI WASHI PAPER

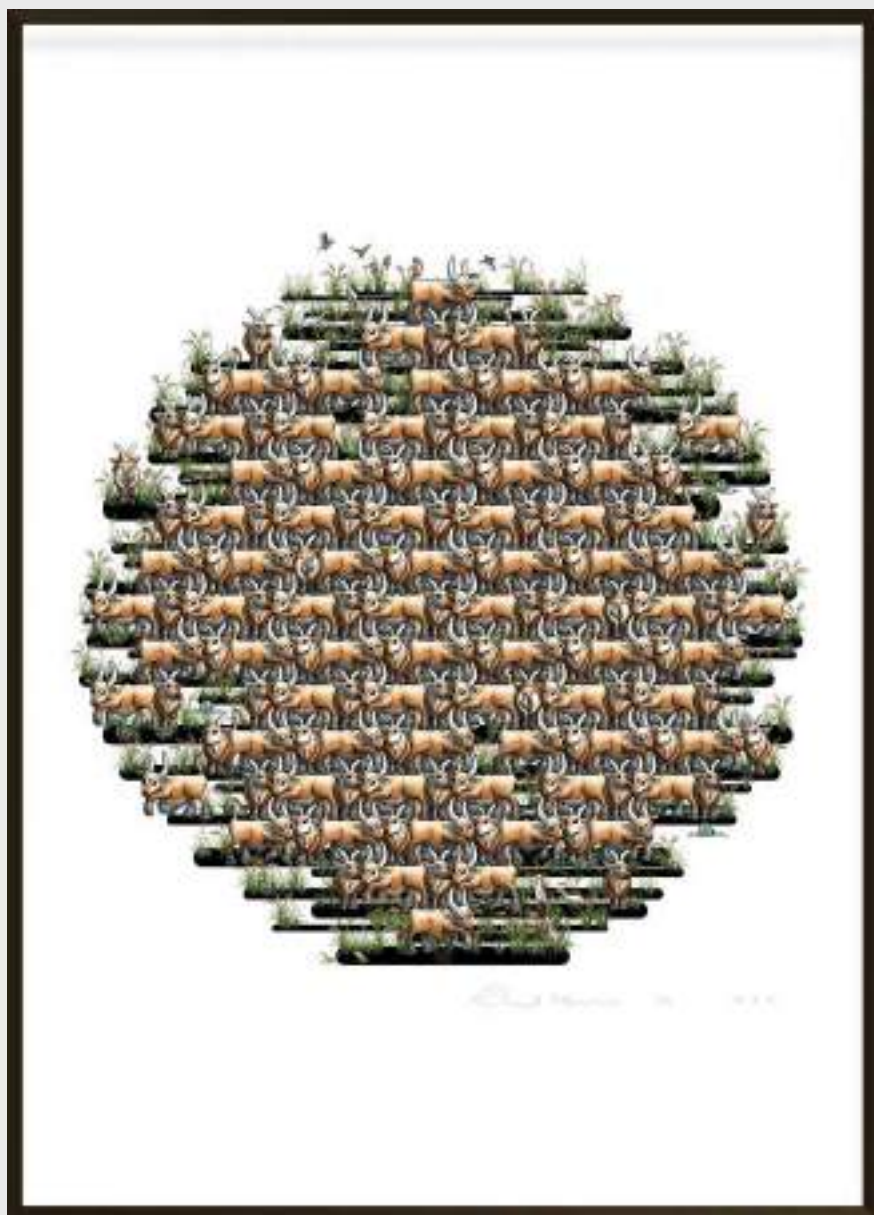
STRANGE CONNECTIONS





THE ACROBATS I (2020)

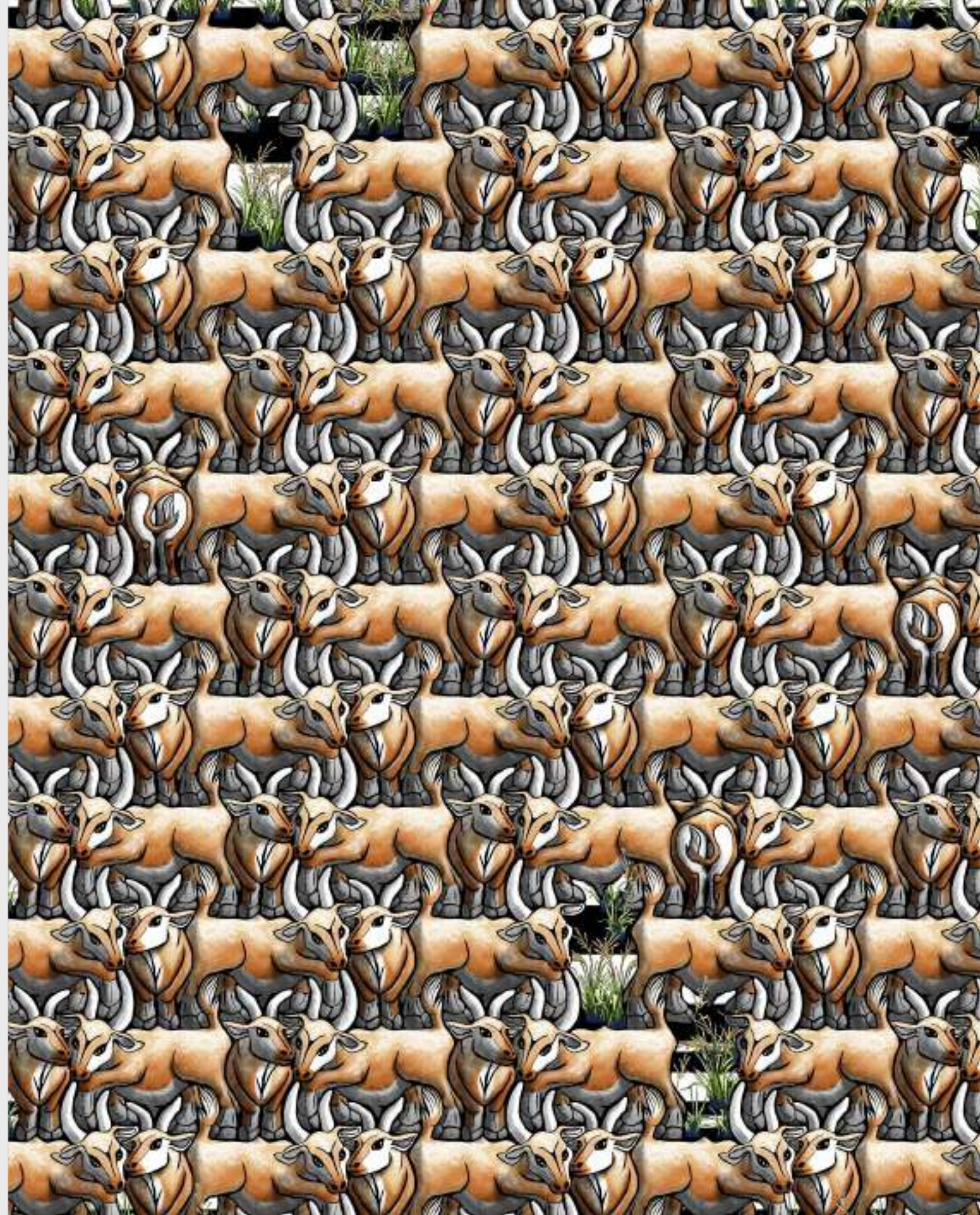
121 X 87 X 3 CM
ARCHIVAL PIGMENT PRINT ON
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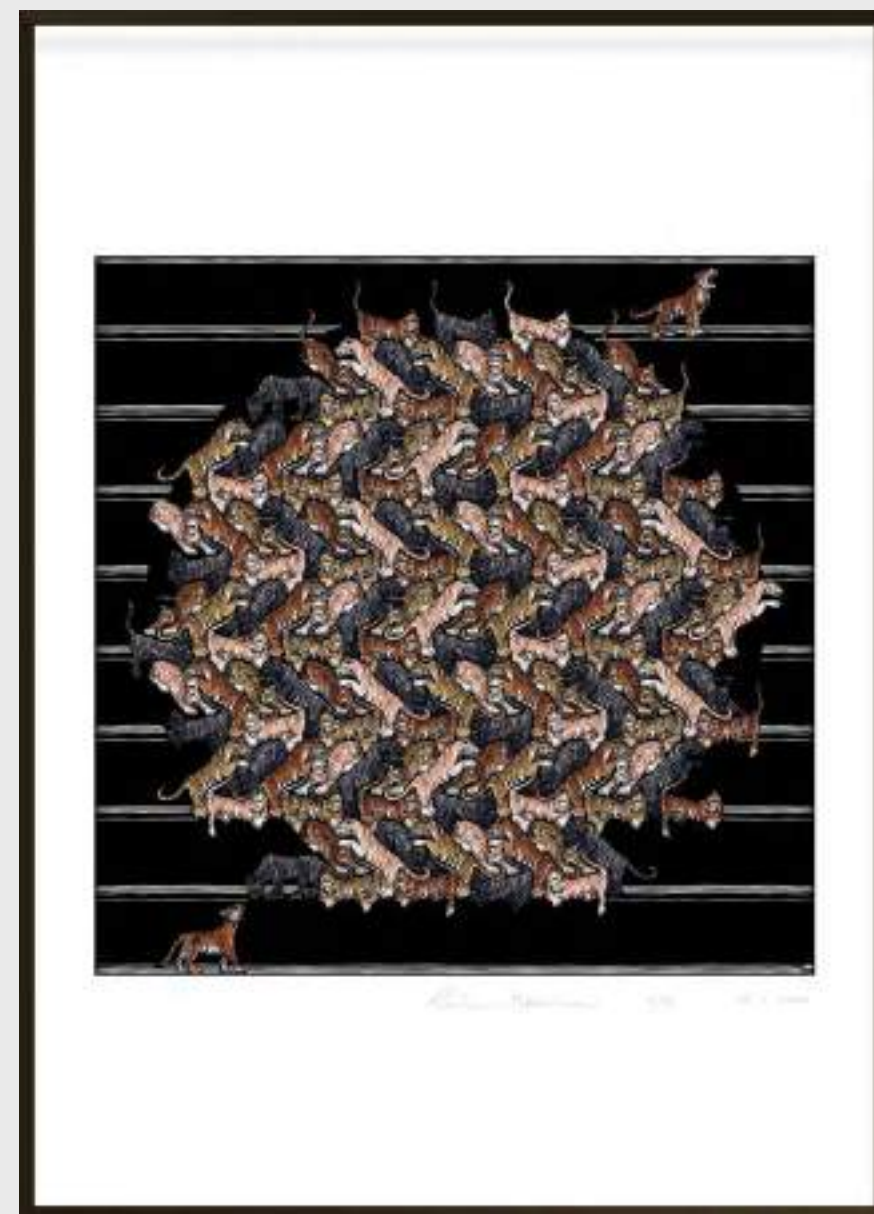


HEKATOMBE OXEN I (2021)

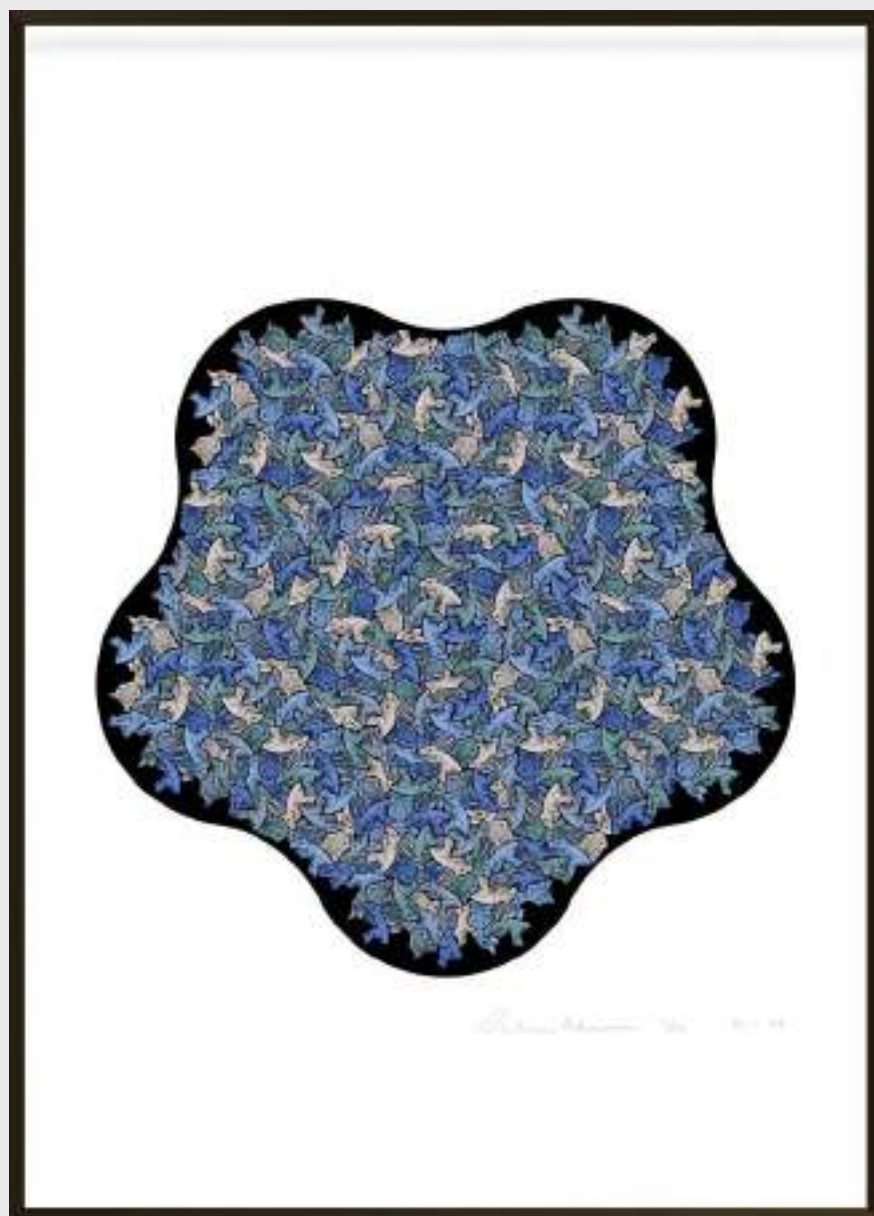
121 X 87 X 3 CM
ARCHIVAL PIGMENT PRINT ON
BAMBOO AWAGAMI WASHI PAPER

STRANGE CONNECTIONS



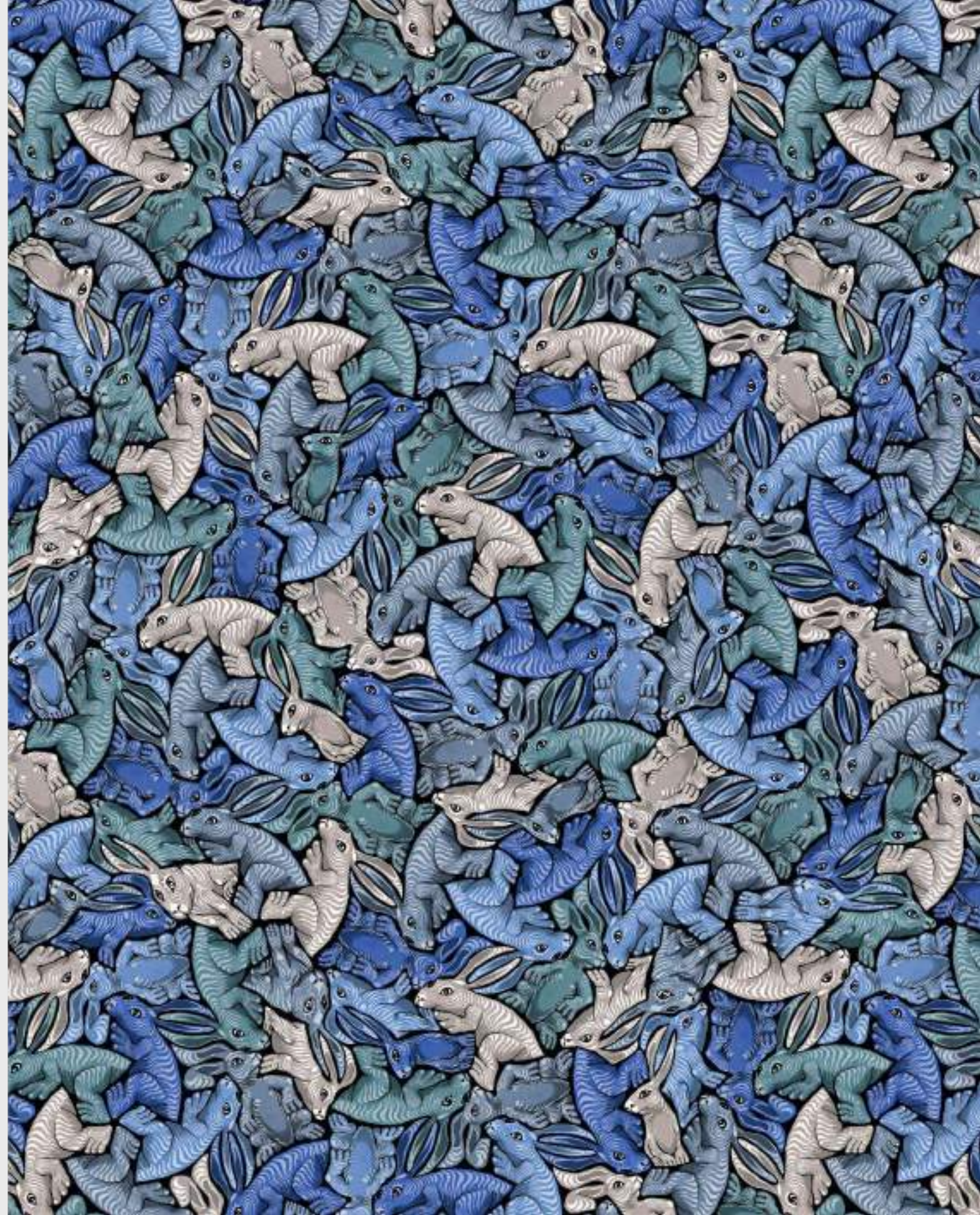


TYGER TYGER I (2022)
121 X 87 X 3 CM
ARCHIVAL PIGMENT PRINT ON
BAMBOO AWAGAMI WASHI PAPER



WATER RABBITS I (2023)
121 X 87 X 3 CM
ARCHIVAL PIGMENT PRINT ON
BAMBOO AWAGAMI WASHI PAPER

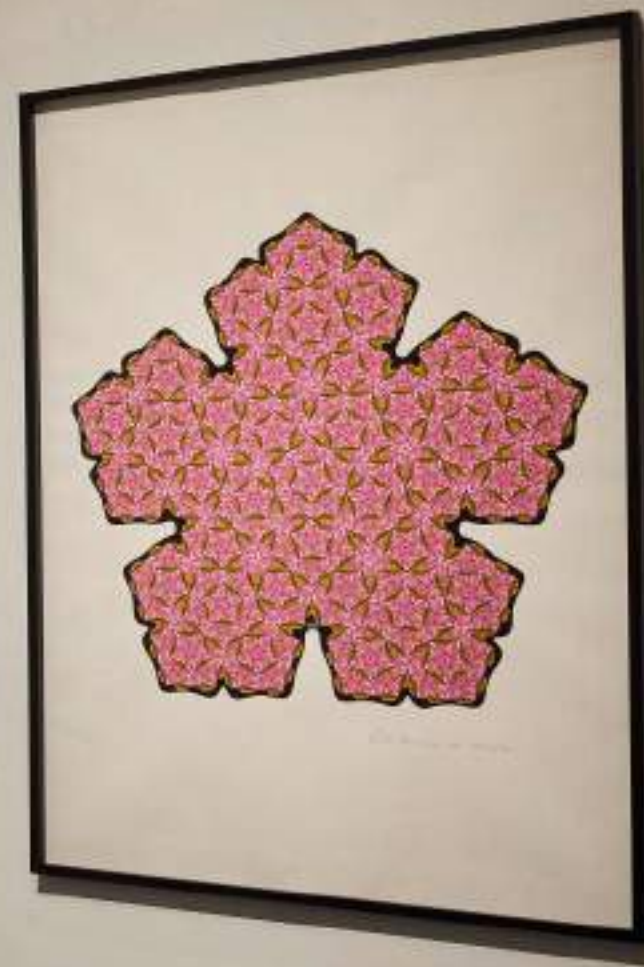
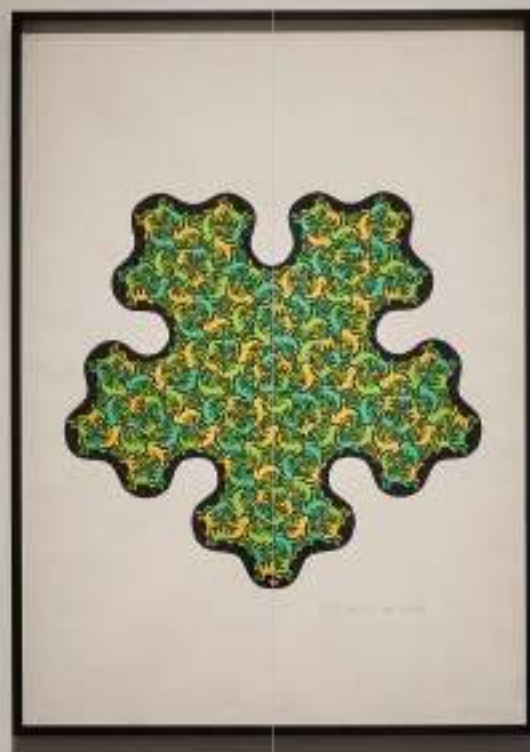
STRANGE CONNECTIONS

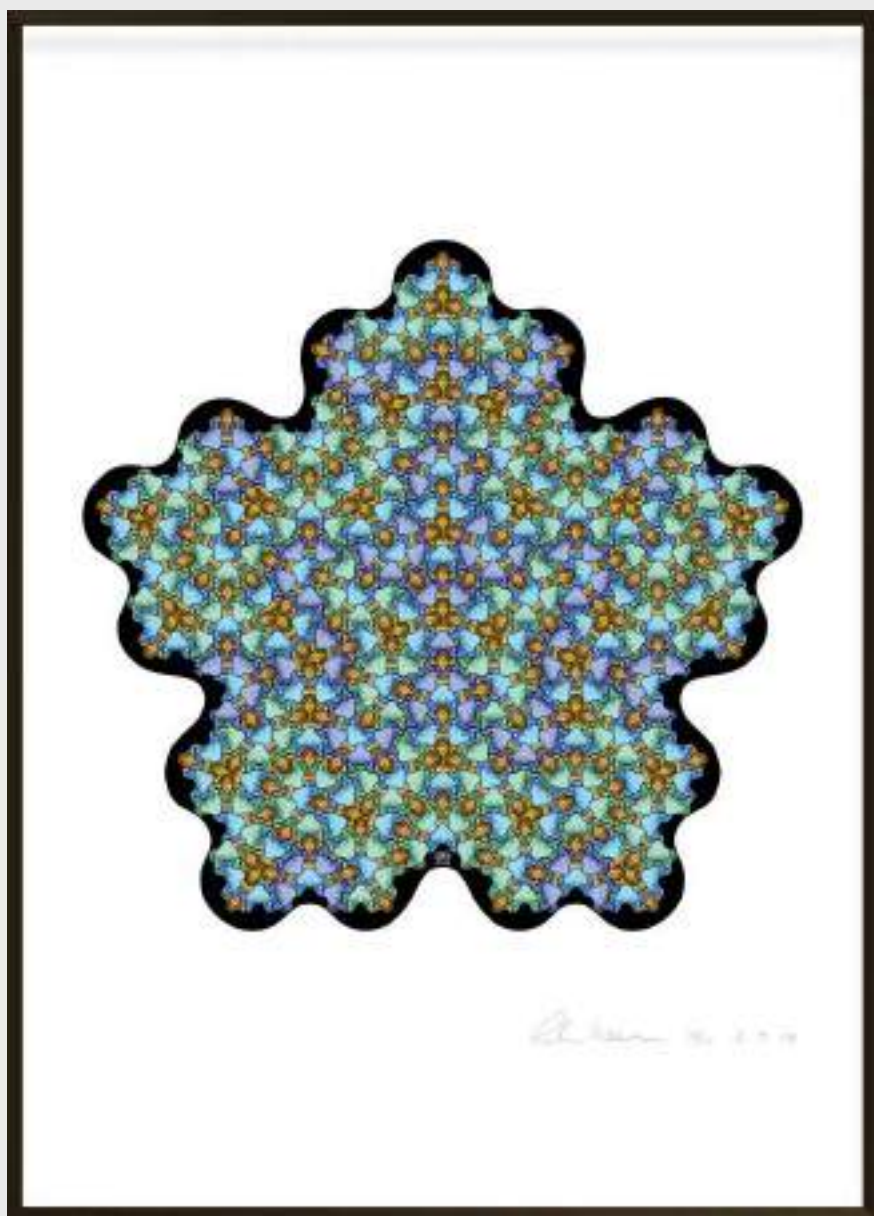




SUN DRAGONS I (2024)

121 X 87 X 3 CM
ARCHIVAL PIGMENT PRINT ON
BAMBOO AWAGAMI WASHI PAPER

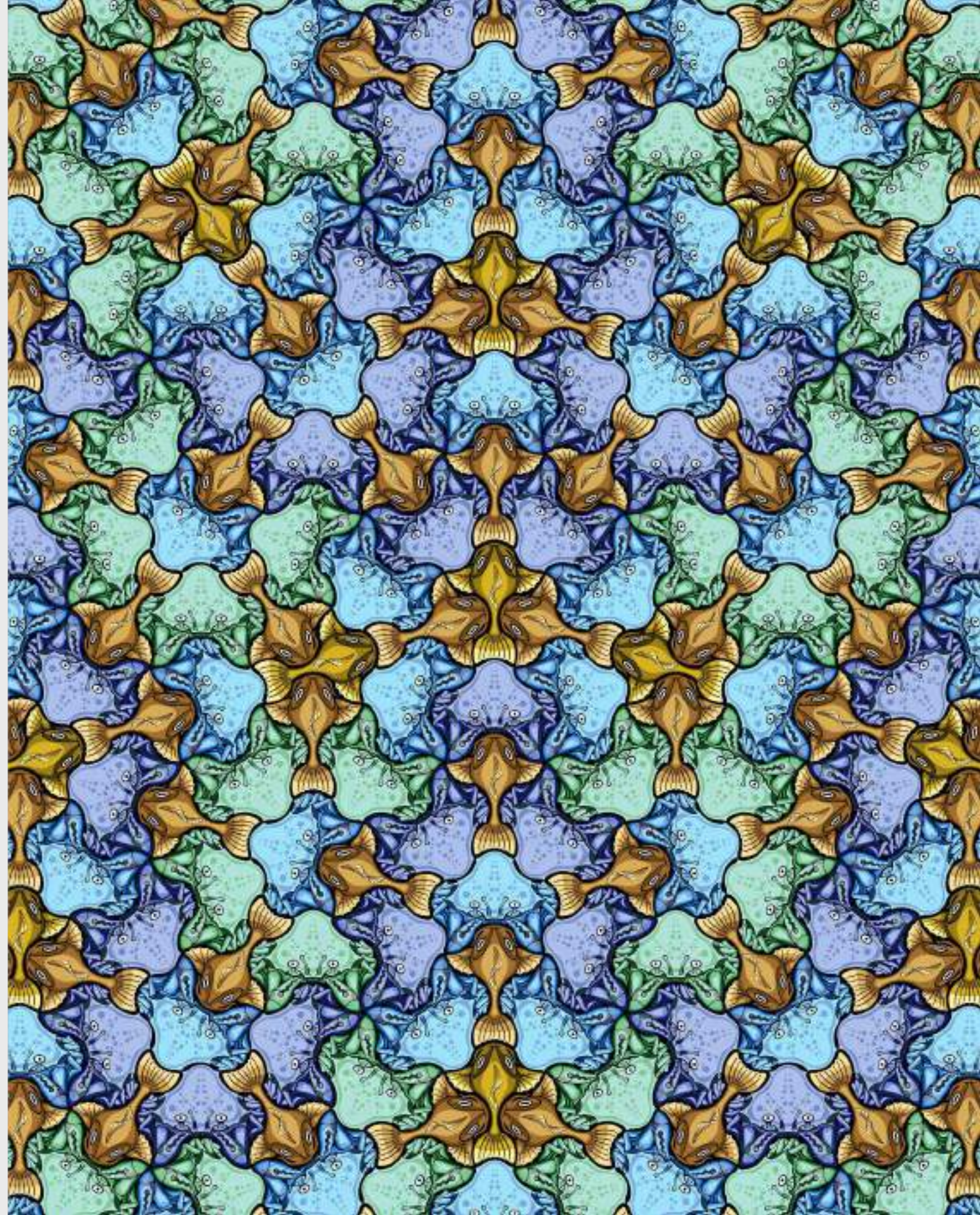


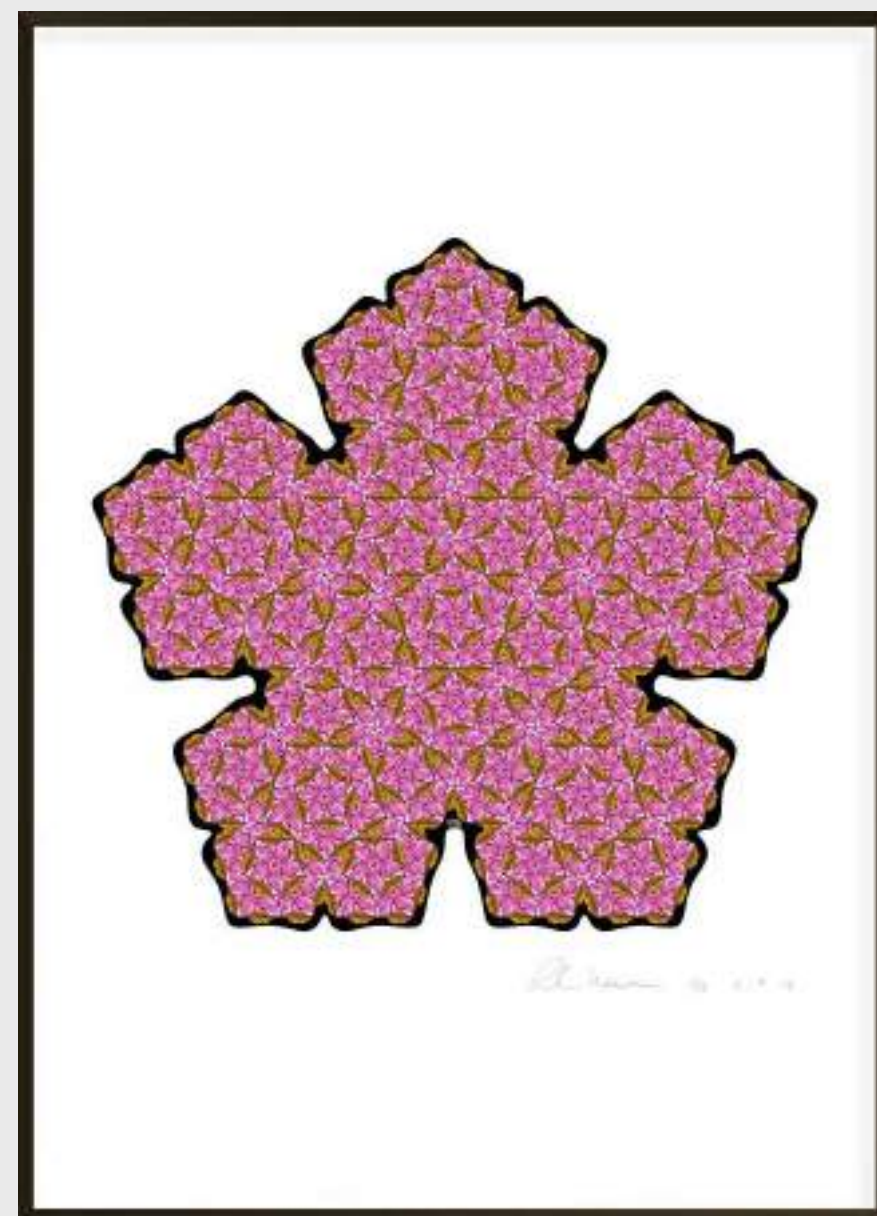
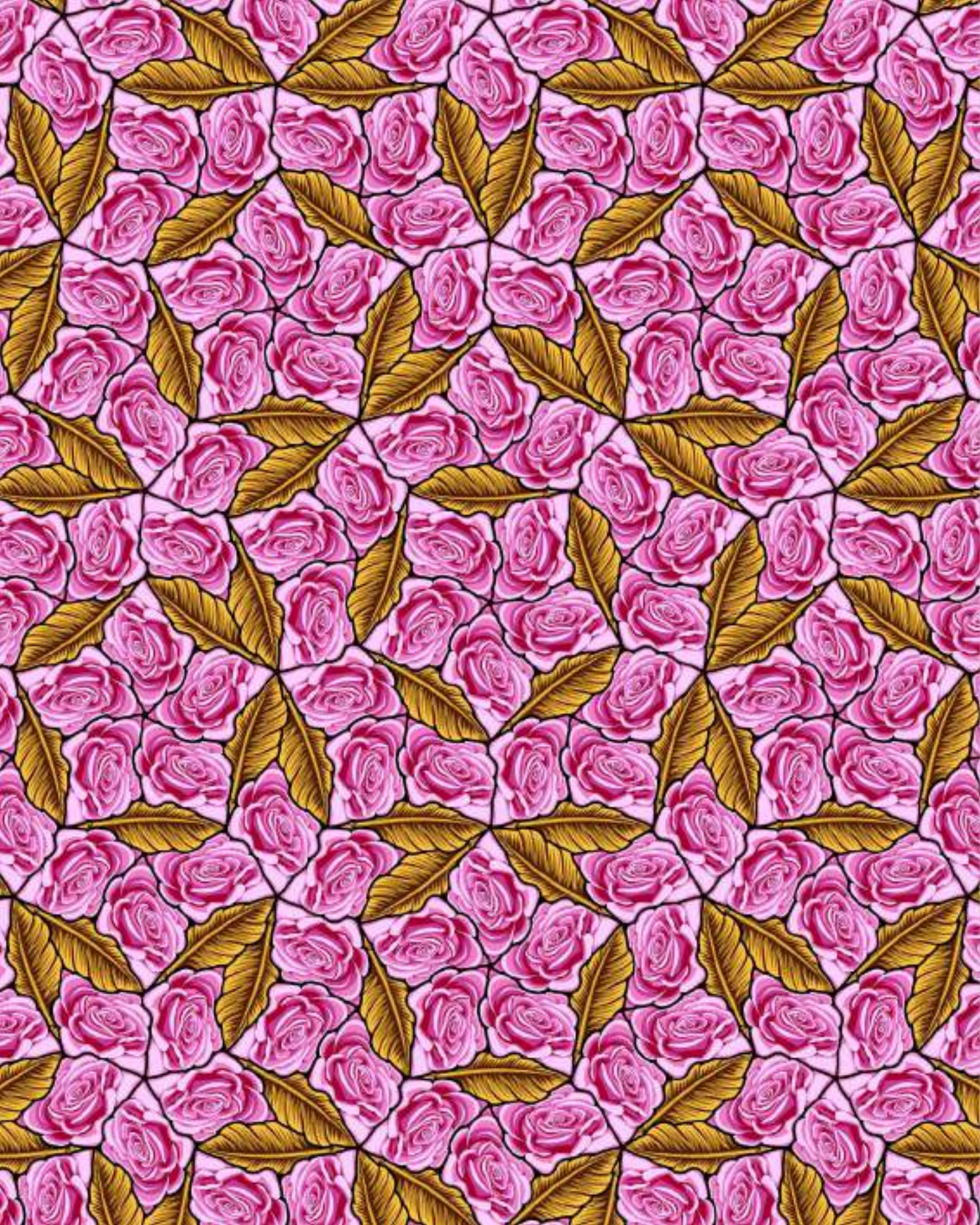


CRAB CANNON I (2016)

118 X 85 X 3 CM
ARCHIVAL PIGMENT PRINT ON
BAMBOO AWAGAMI WASHI PAPER

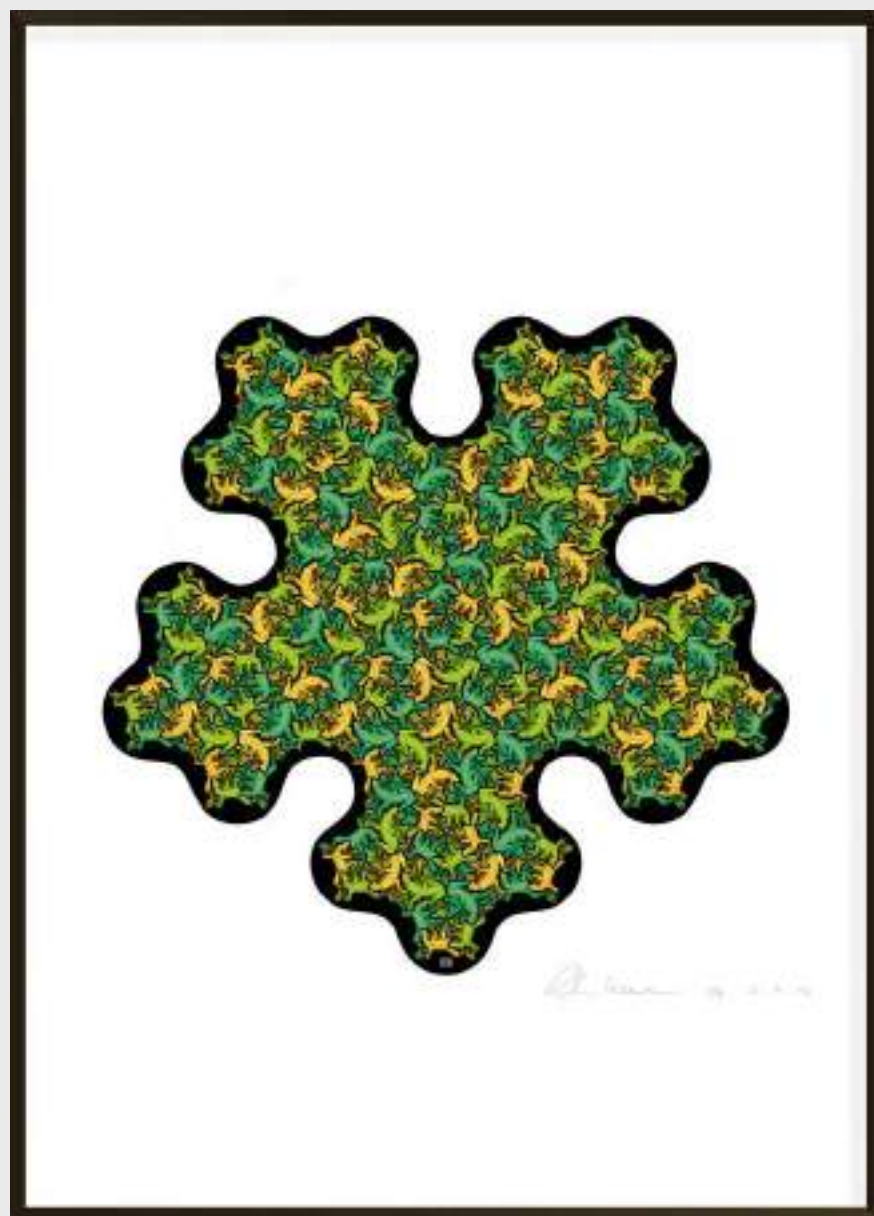
STRANGE CONNECTIONS





PEN-ROSE TILING I (2016)

118 X 85 X 3 CM
ARCHIVAL PIGMENT PRINT ON
BAMBOO AWAGAMI WASHI PAPER



FROGSTAR II (2016)

118 X 85 X 3 CM
ARCHIVAL PIGMENT PRINT ON
BAMBOO AWAGAMI WASHI PAPER

STRANGE CONNECTIONS



SUB - TERRAIN

The *Sub-Terrain* series of artworks expresses the complexity of substitutional tilings as abstract aerial landscapes. Hassell realised that the fractal nature of many tilings could not be expressed at the scale of tessellations or nets, as these visual devices impose a restricted scale on the artworks. The *Sub-Terrain* series uses the device of dots to map a much larger portion of tiles. The dots are expressed at two scales in the artworks, creating depth in the visual field.

The artworks reveal resonances with Australian first nation art, where patterns in the landscape are likewise expressed with concentric dots, as well as aerial photos of Australian desert landscapes, where sparse bushes mark the flows of water and wind in the eroded landscape. This resonance is not coincidental, but rather a shared property of complex iterative systems, revealed in the process of mapping.

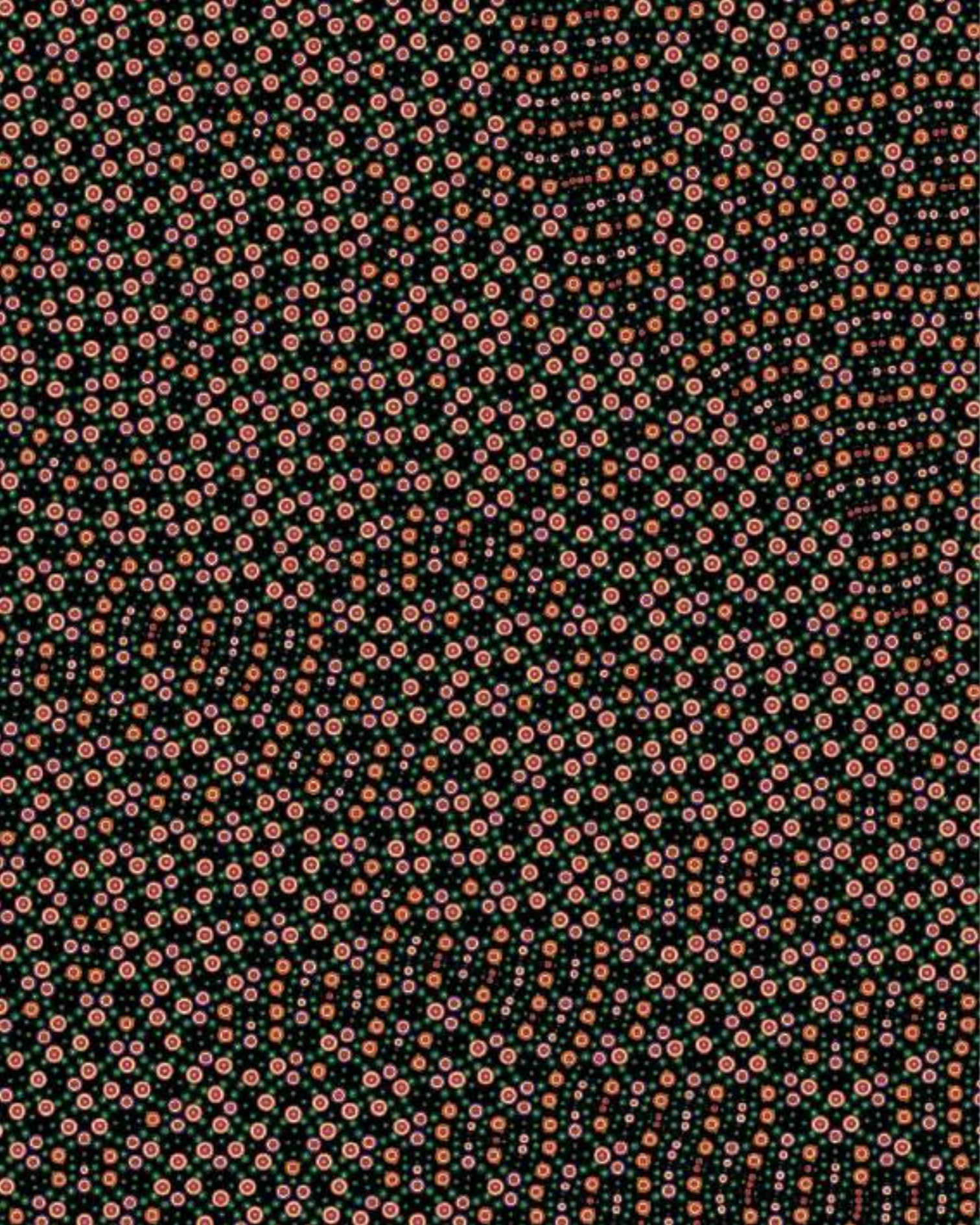
Each artwork is only a fragment of the terrain, and each artwork can be infinitely extended in any direction without repetition.



INSTALLATION VIEW OF *STRANGE CONNECTIONS: ART AND ARCHITECTURE*



EMILY ARCADE



SUBTERRAIN 11 FOLD I PEACH-PINK VARIANT (2021)

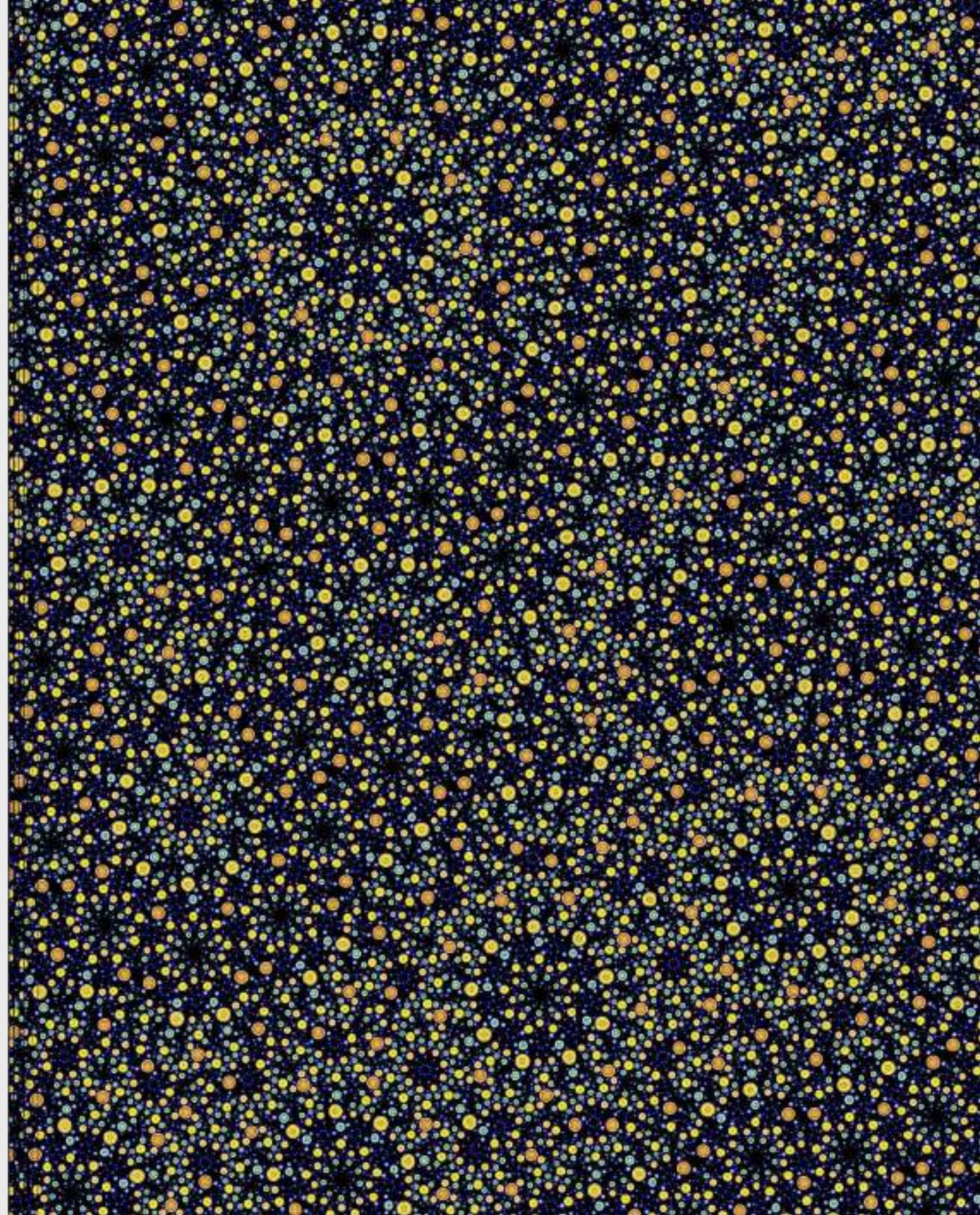
199 X 72 X 3 CM
ARCHIVAL PIGMENT INK ON
KOZO WASHI PAPER MOUNTED ON SILK SCROLL
WITH PAULOWNIA WOODEN STORAGE BOX

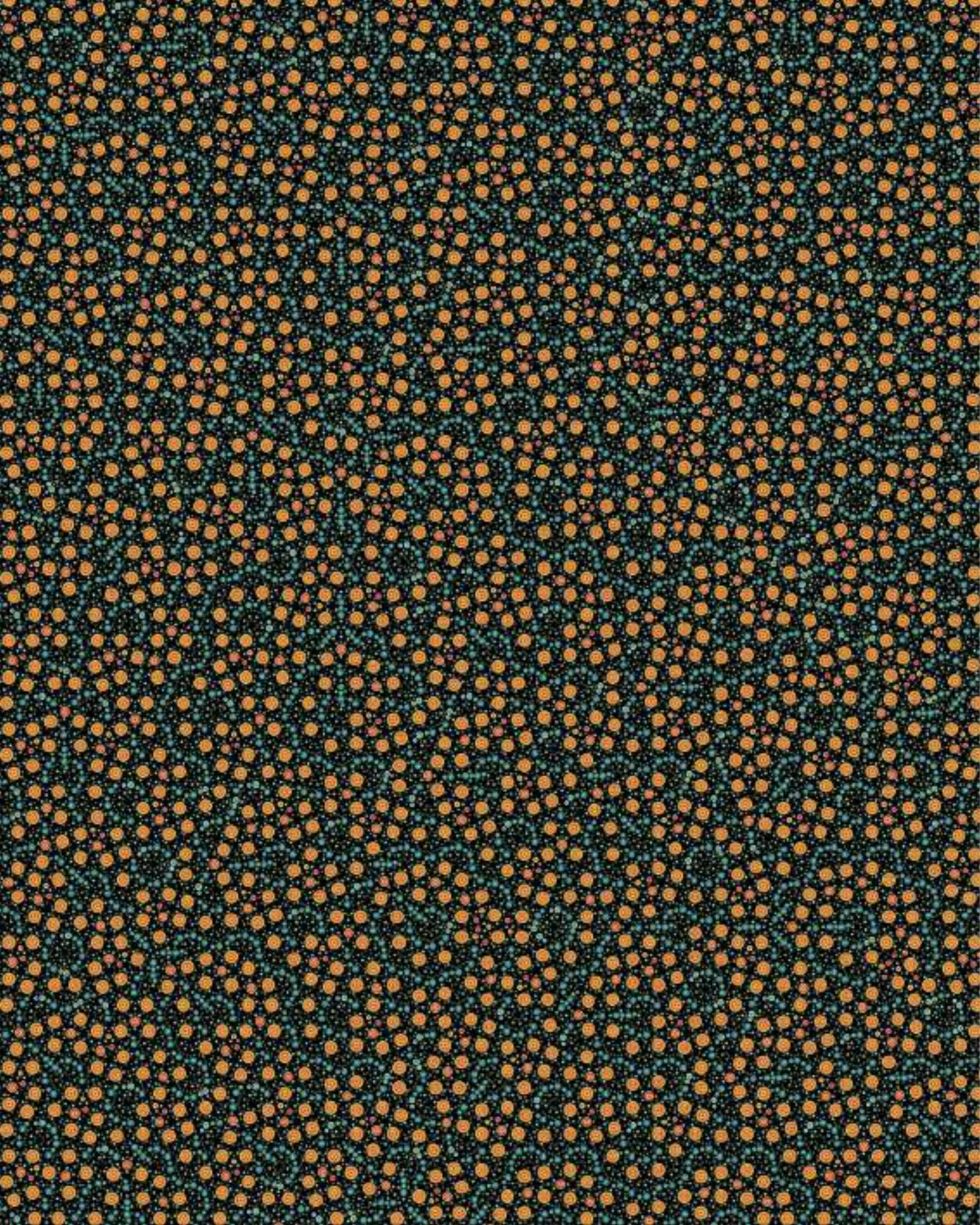


SUBTERRAIN 9 FOLD GREEN-GOLD VARIANT (2021)

199 X 72 X 3 CM
ARCHIVAL PIGMENT INK ON
KOZO WASHI PAPER MOUNTED ON SILK SCROLL
WITH PAULOWNIA WOODEN STORAGE BOX

STRANGE CONNECTIONS





SUBTERRAIN 11 FOLD I AQUA-ORANGE VARIANT (2021)

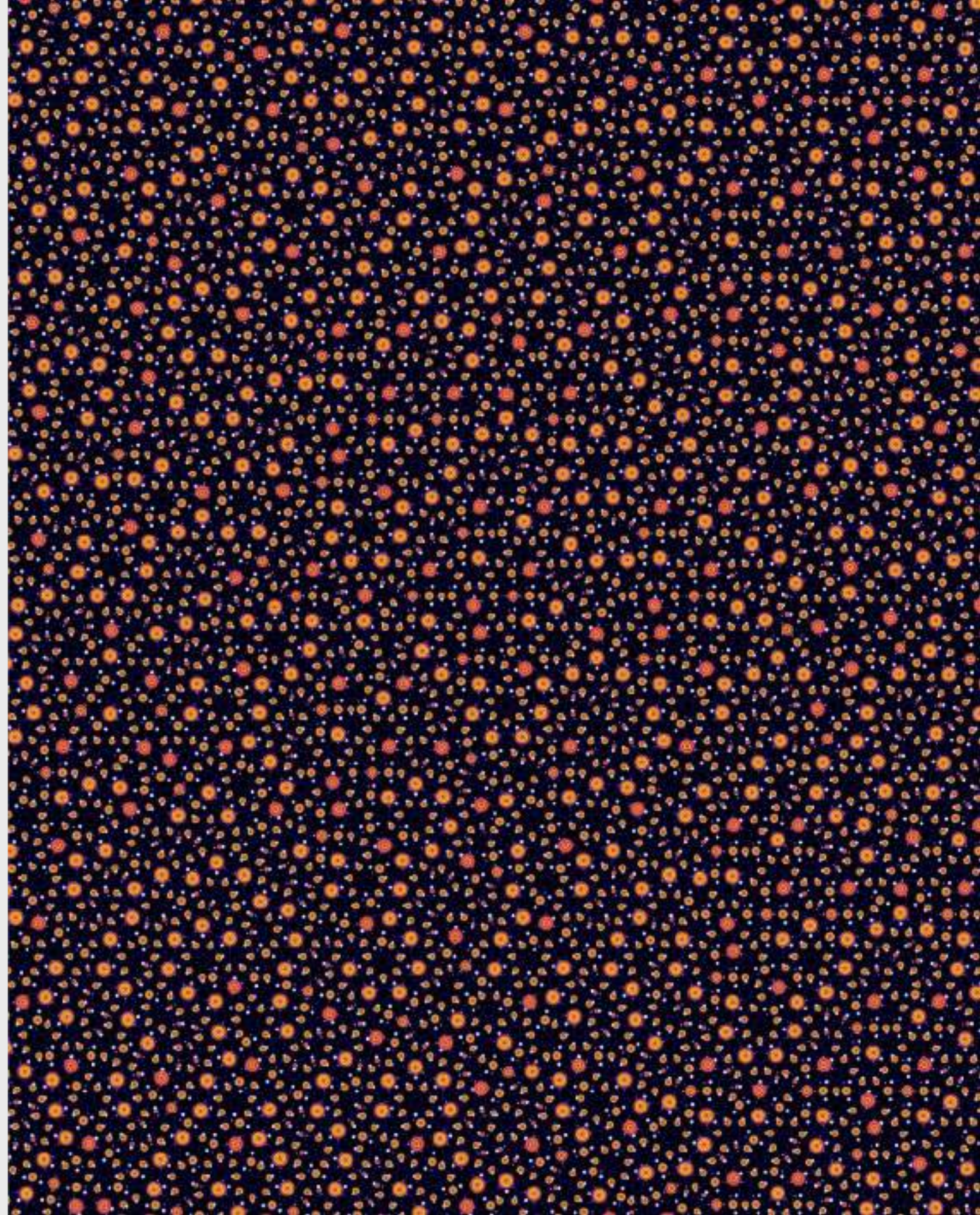
199 X 72 X 3 CM
ARCHIVAL PIGMENT INK ON
KOZO WASHI PAPER MOUNTED ON SILK SCROLL
WITH PAULOWNIA WOODEN STORAGE BOX

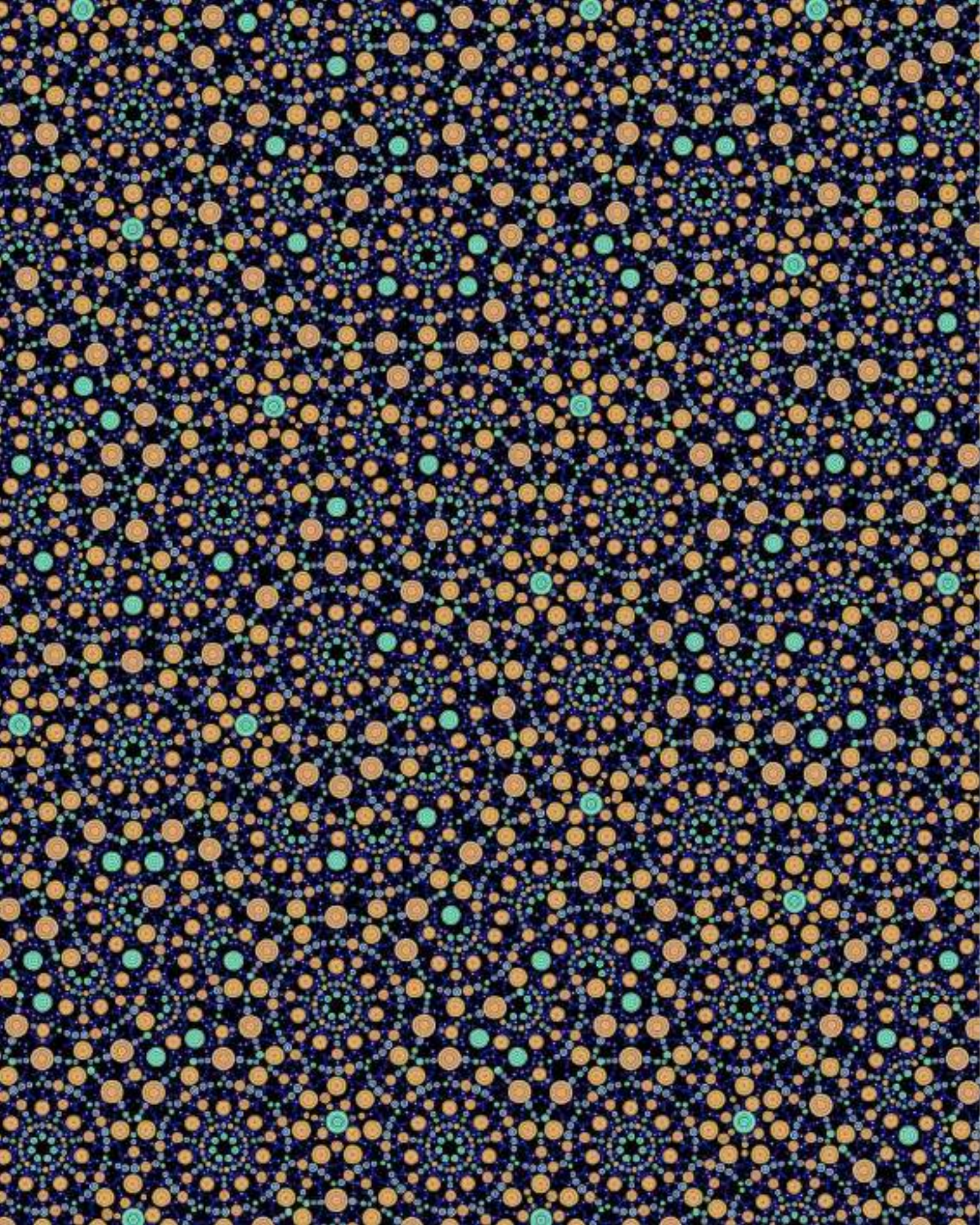


SUBTERRAIN 7 FOLD I ORANGE-CORAL VARIANT (2021)

199 X 72 X 3 CM
ARCHIVAL PIGMENT INK ON
KOZO WASHI PAPER MOUNTED ON SILK SCROLL
WITH PAULOWNIA WOODEN STORAGE BOX

STRANGE CONNECTIONS





SUBTERRAIN 7 FOLD II TANGERINE-TURQUOISE VARIANT (2021)

199 X 72 X 3 CM
ARCHIVAL PIGMENT INK ON
KOZO WASHI PAPER MOUNTED ON SILK SCROLL
WITH PAULOWNIA WOODEN STORAGE BOX

ART AND ARCHITECTURE

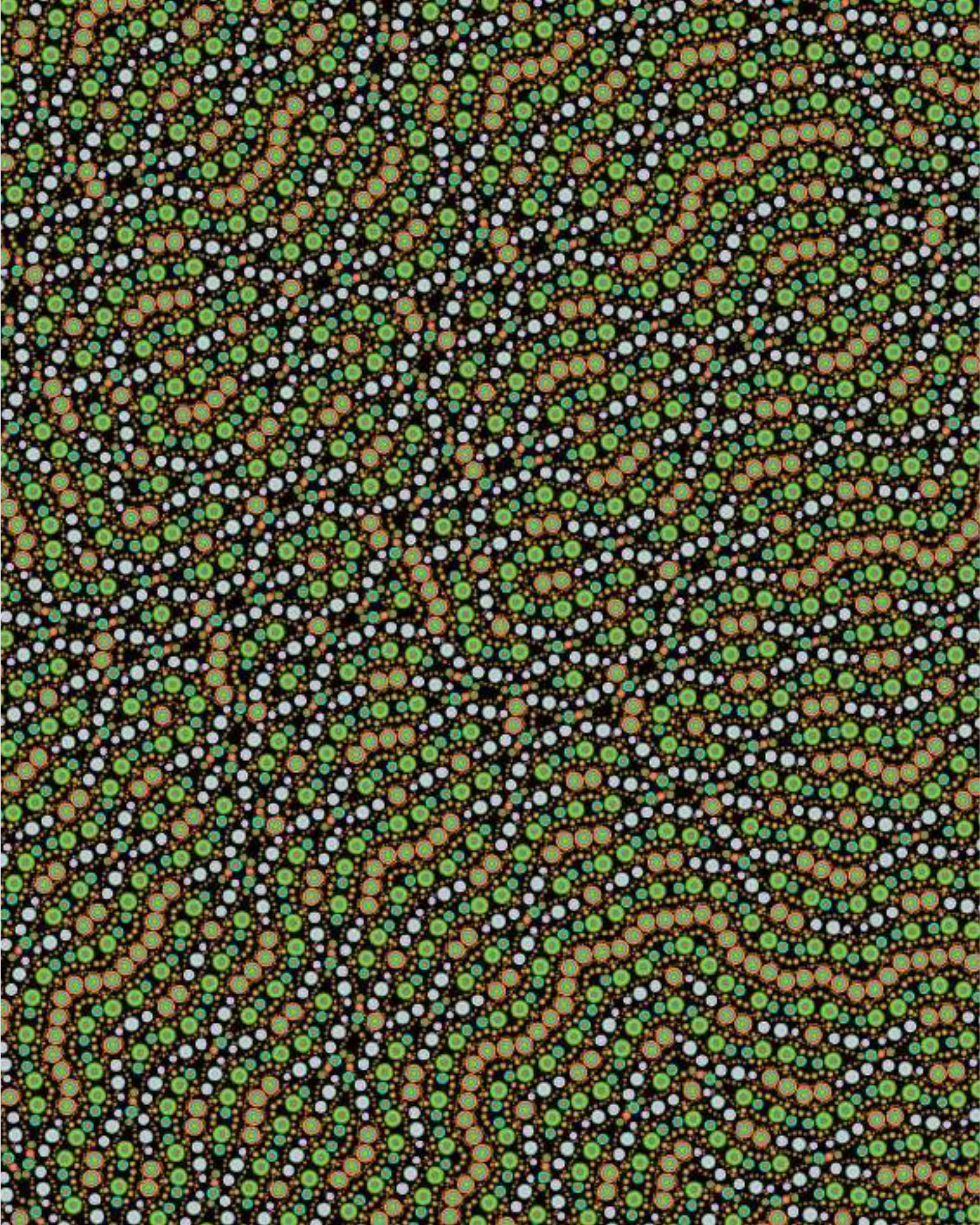


SUBTERRAIN 5 FOLD III ORANGE-PINK VARIANT (2021)

199 X 72 X 3 CM
ARCHIVAL PIGMENT INK ON
KOZO WASHI PAPER MOUNTED ON SILK SCROLL
WITH PAULOWNIA WOODEN STORAGE BOX

STRANGE CONNECTIONS





SUBTERRAIN 5 FOLD I GREEN-ORANGE VARIANT (2021)

199 X 72 X 3 CM
ARCHIVAL PIGMENT INK ON
KOZO WASHI PAPER MOUNTED ON SILK SCROLL
WITH PAULOWNIA WOODEN STORAGE BOX

EMERGENT NETS

The *Emergent Nets* series of artworks explores a particular class of fractal lines known as Space-Filling Curves, these special lines could be expressed as complex tilings marked with lines, and that there could be many more versions than the few that had been published in mathematical journals. Hassell discovered many more examples of Space-Filling Curves previously unknown.

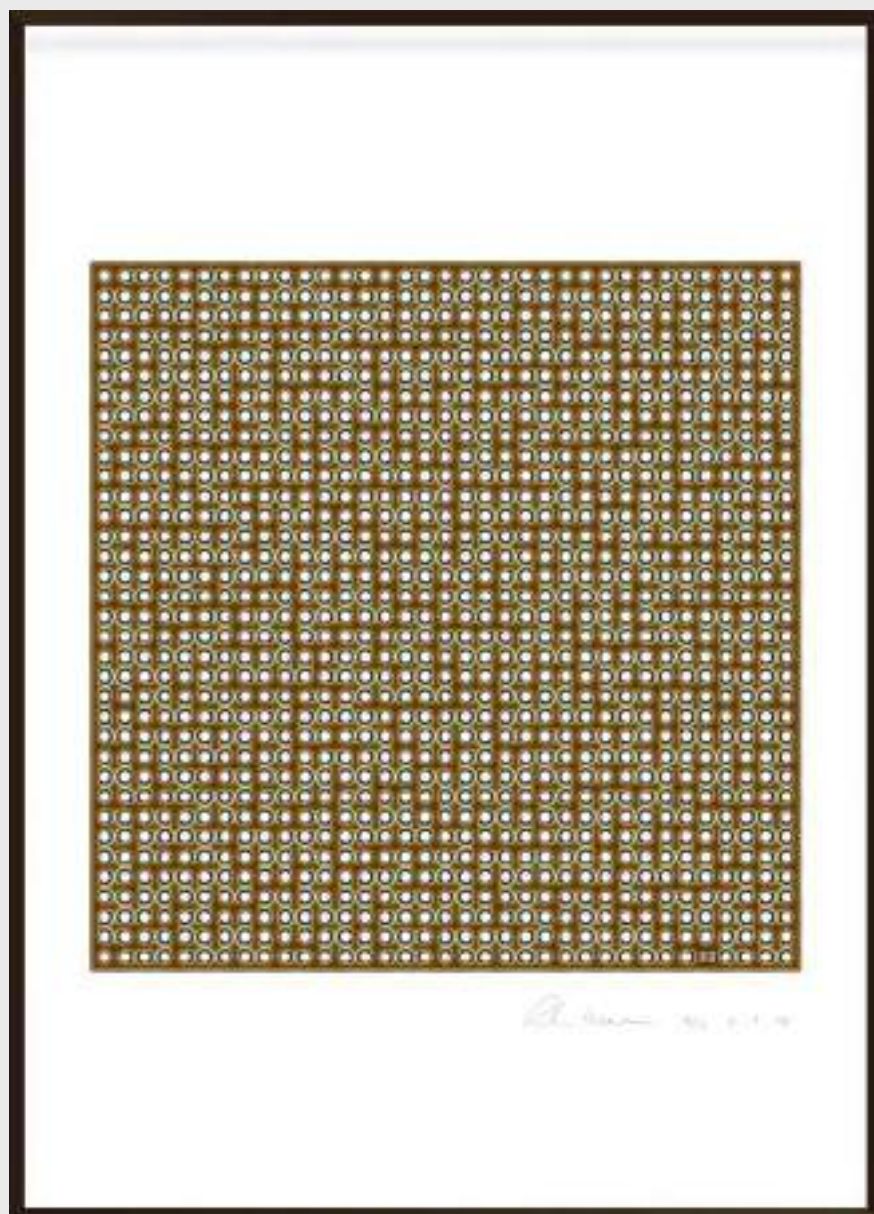
In the *Emergent Nets* series, the artworks add a further layer of complexity by twisting the lines of these new tilings into a net. The complex order within the net creates shifting perceptions of patterns and lines as our brains attempt to analyse the structure of the net, an effort ultimately fruitless as the complexity remains slightly out of reach for our inborn visual processing capabilities.

Hassell proposes that this complexity arising out of simplicity can be seen as analogous to system effects that emerge from many natural systems. The pleasurable frustration in sensing that there is order but being unable to define it is what drives our human search for knowledge and understanding of our complex world.



INSTALLATION VIEW OF *STRANGE CONNECTIONS: ART AND ARCHITECTURE*

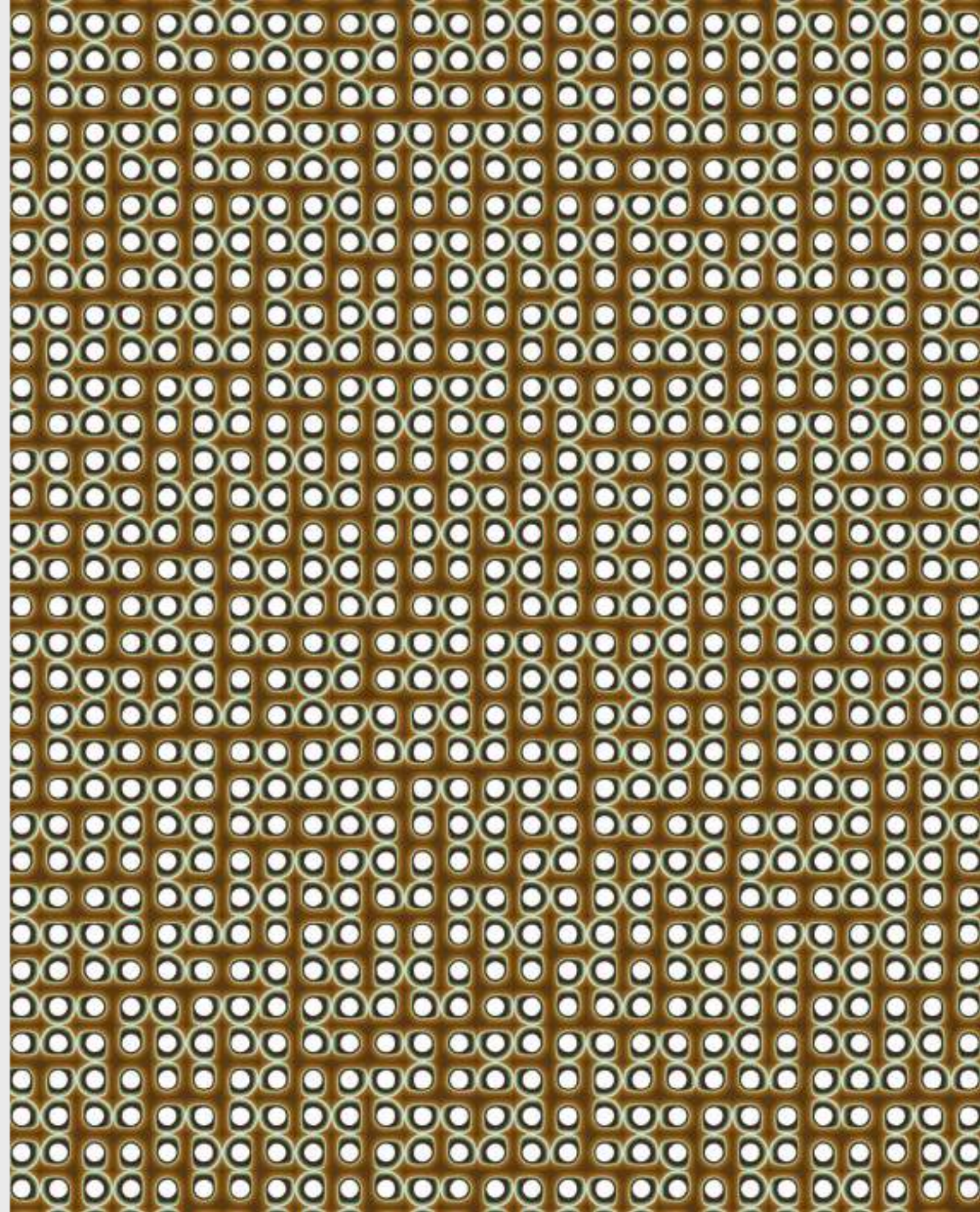
EMILY GALLERY

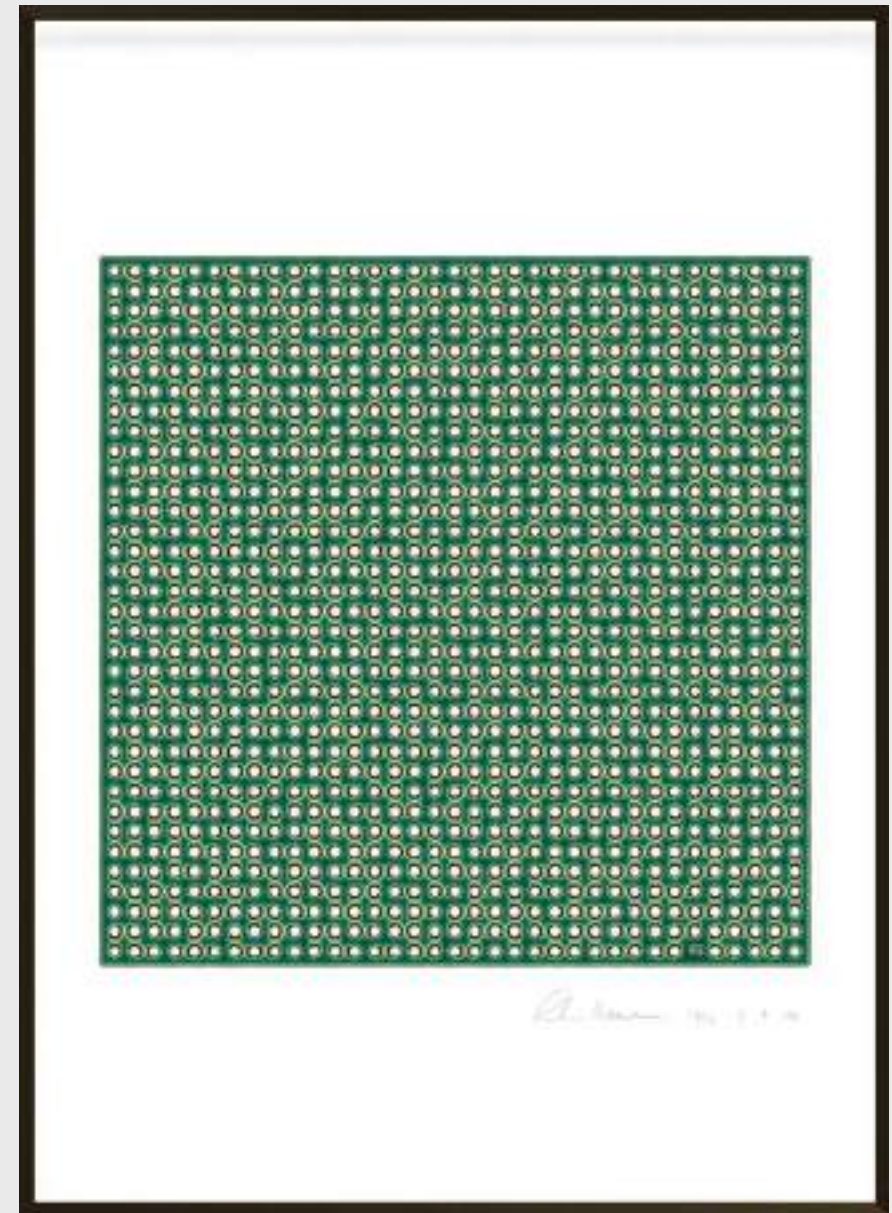
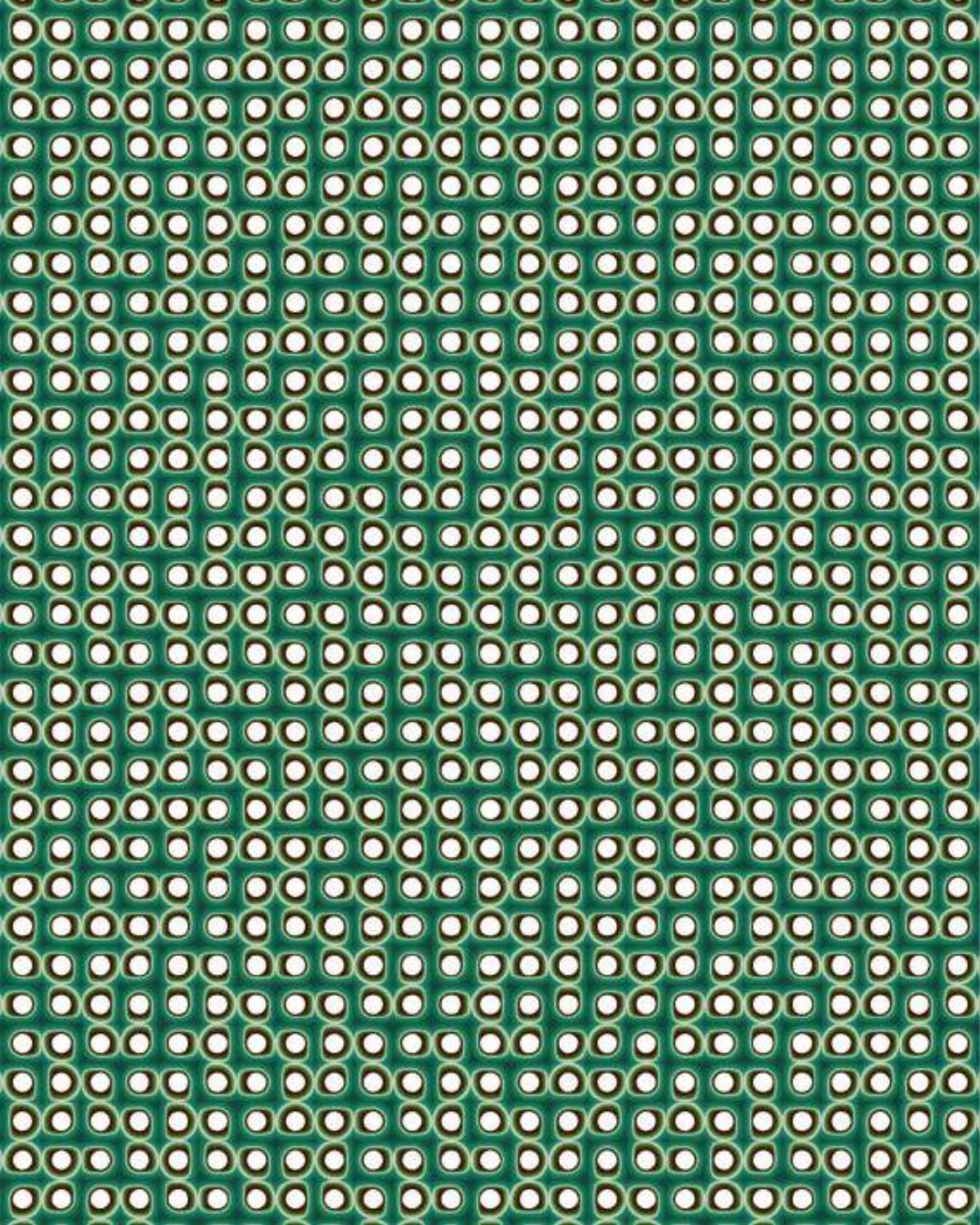


SCREEN I (2018)

120 X 87 X 3 CM
ARCHIVAL PIGMENT PRINT ON
BAMBOO AWAGAMI WASHI PAPER

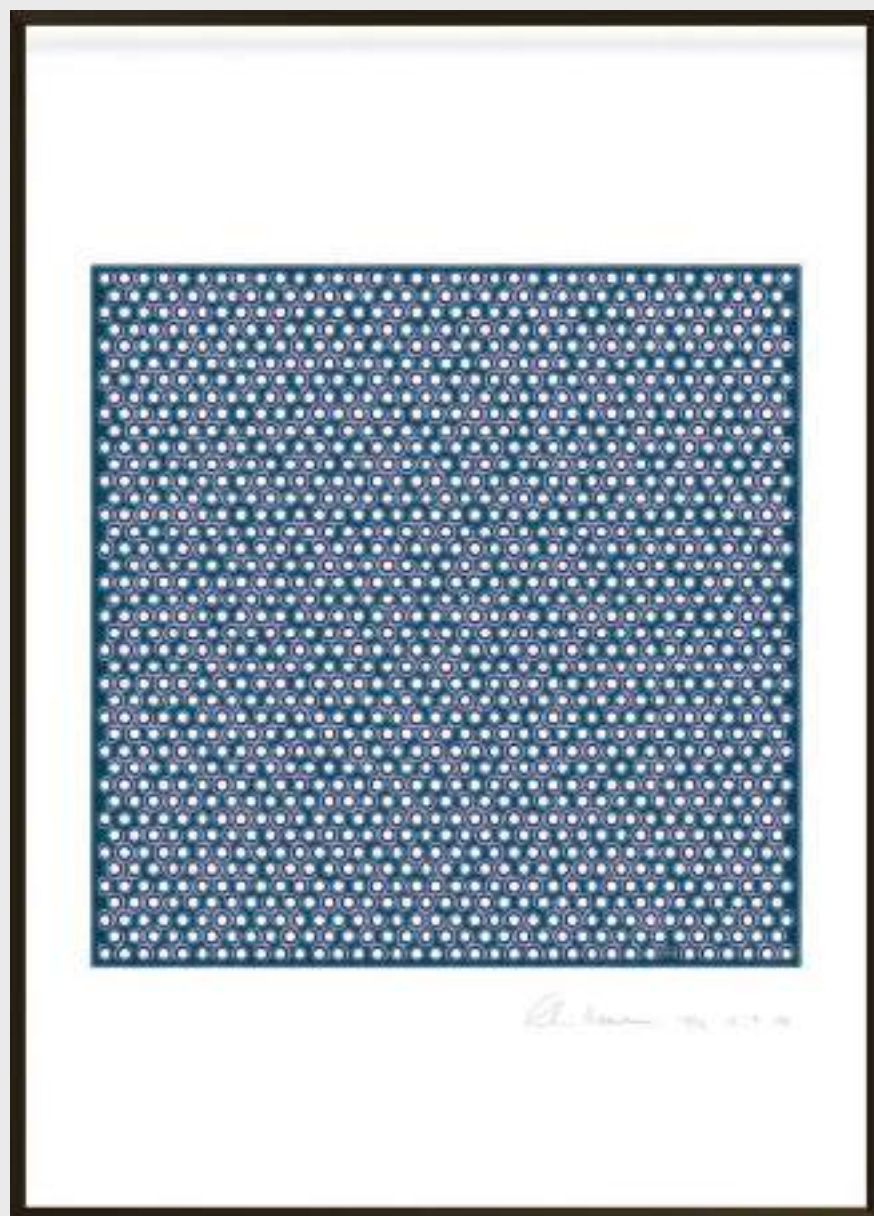
STRANGE CONNECTIONS





SCREEN IV (2018)

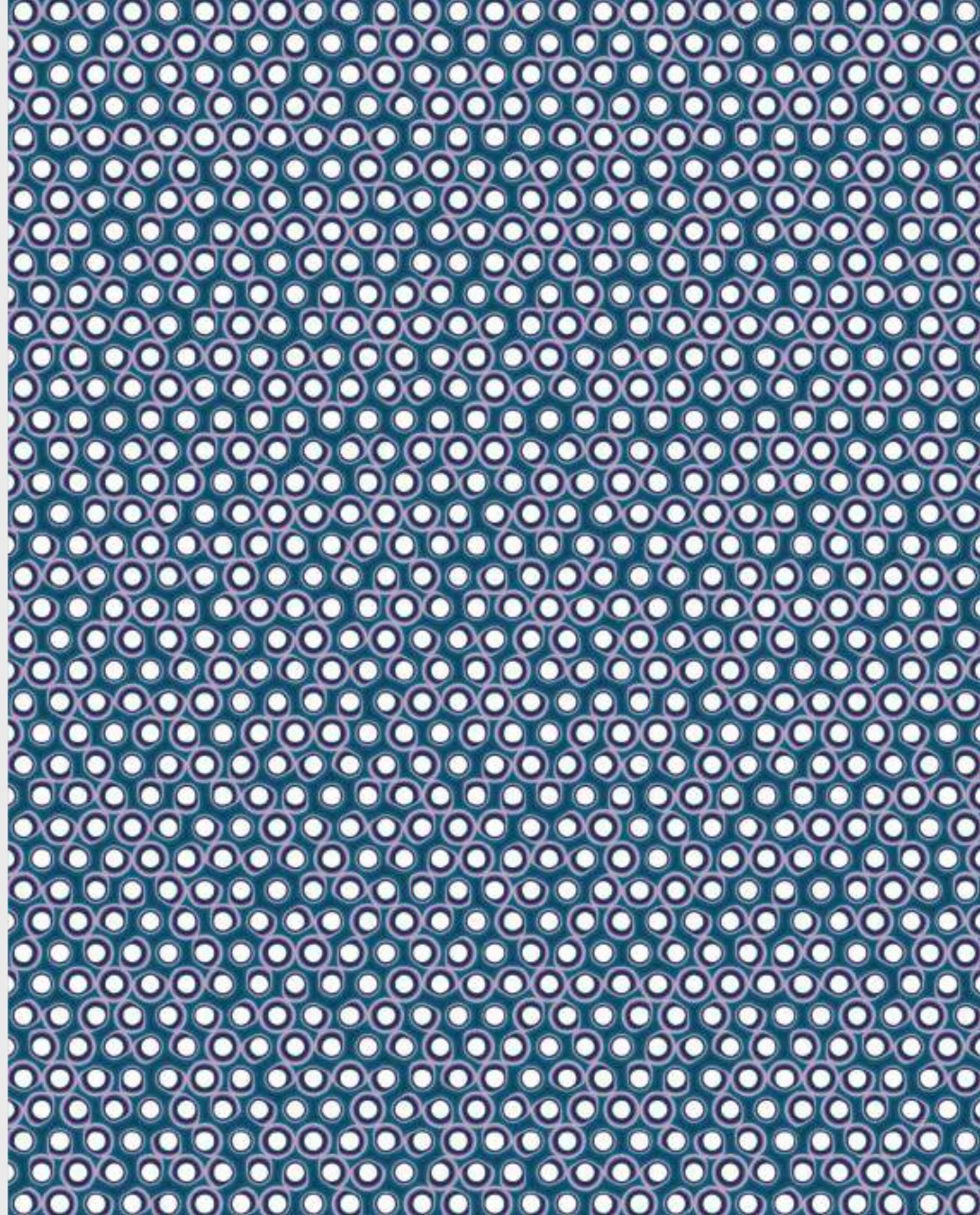
120 X 87 X 3 CM
ARCHIVAL PIGMENT PRINT ON
BAMBOO AWAGAMI WASHI PAPER

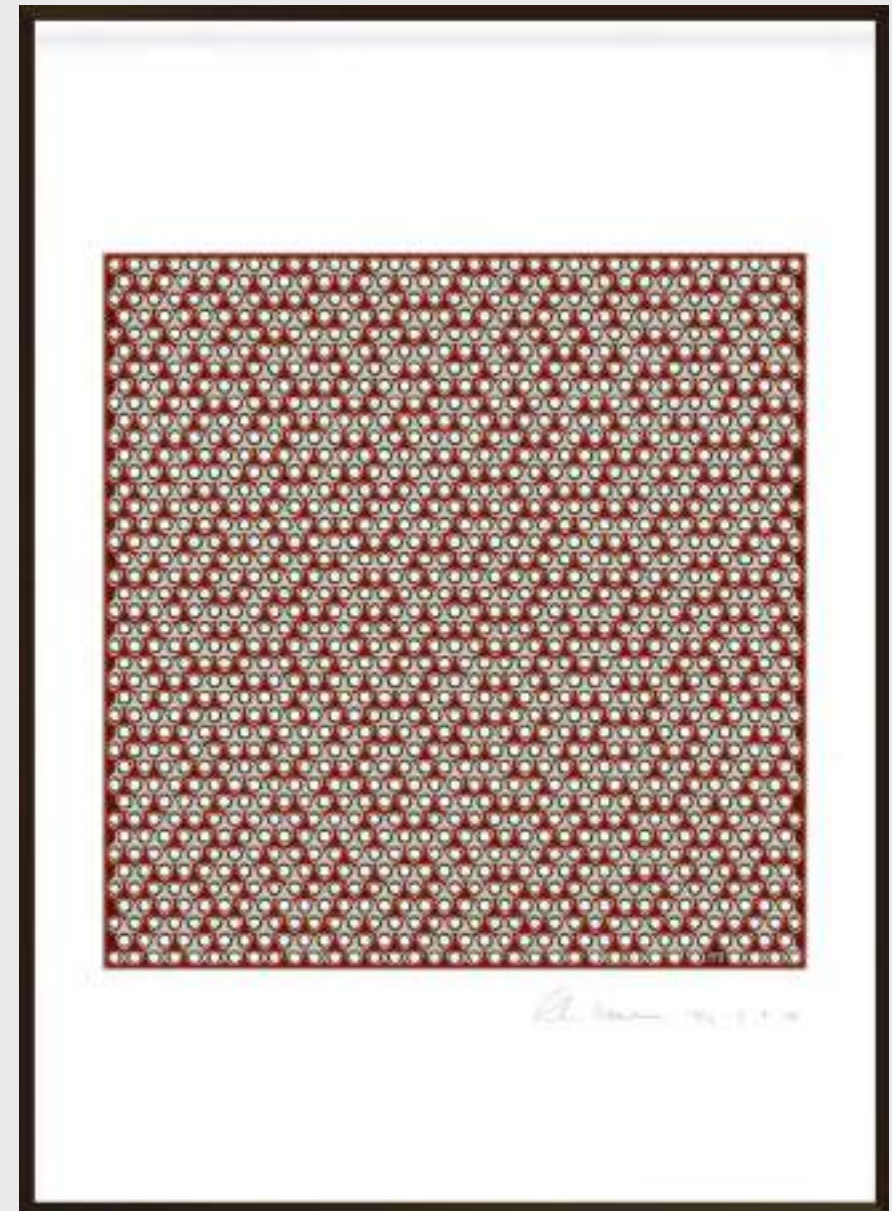
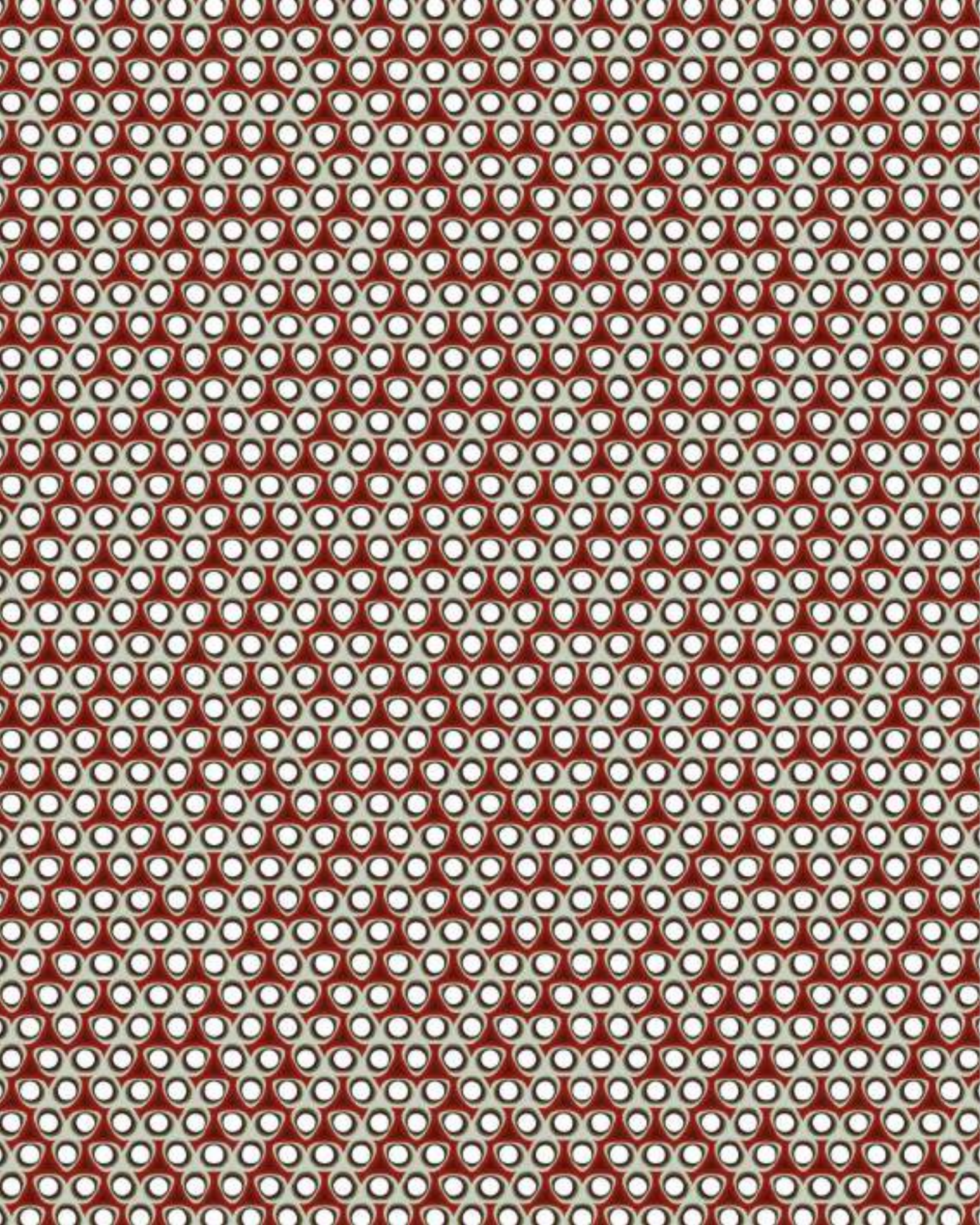


SCREEN III (2018)

120 X 87 X 3 CM
ARCHIVAL PIGMENT PRINT ON
BAMBOO AWAGAMI WASHI PAPER

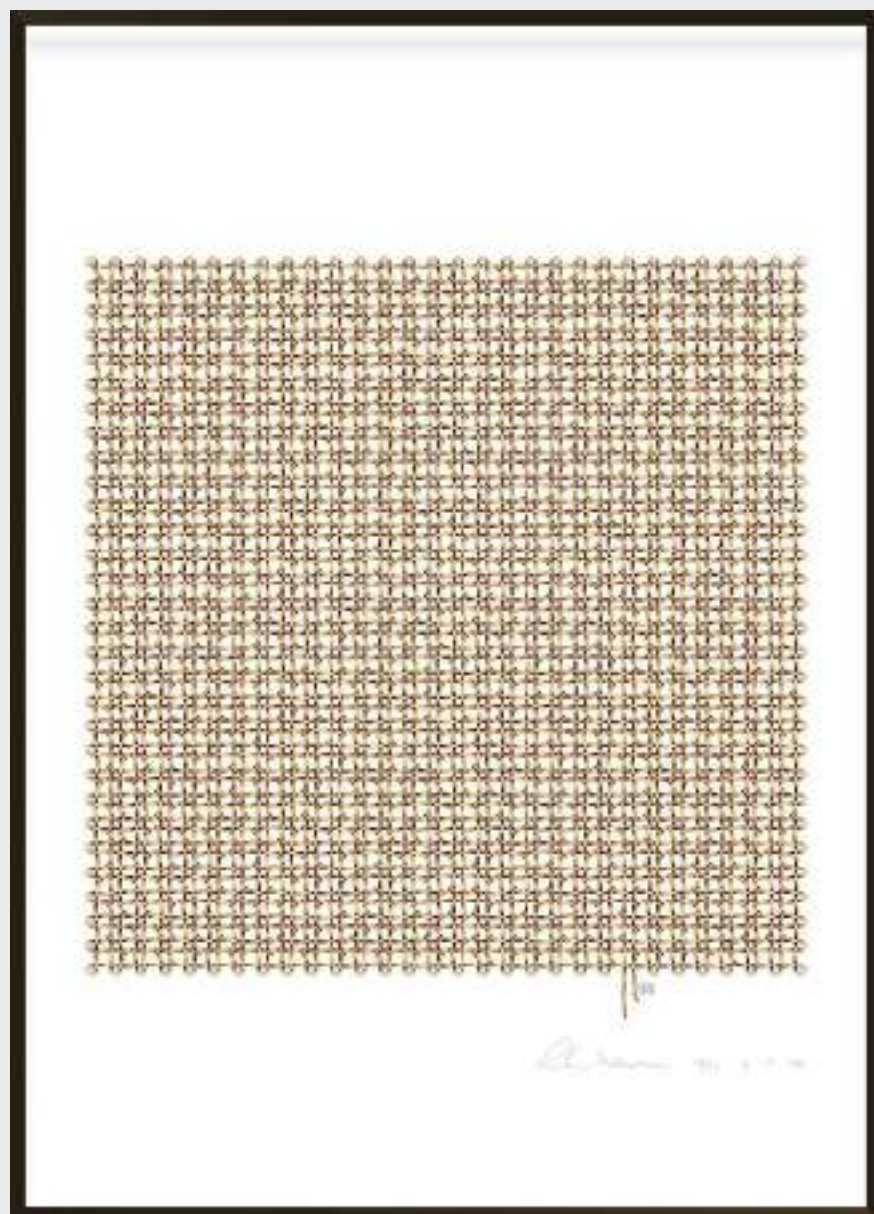
STRANGE CONNECTIONS





SCREEN II (2018)

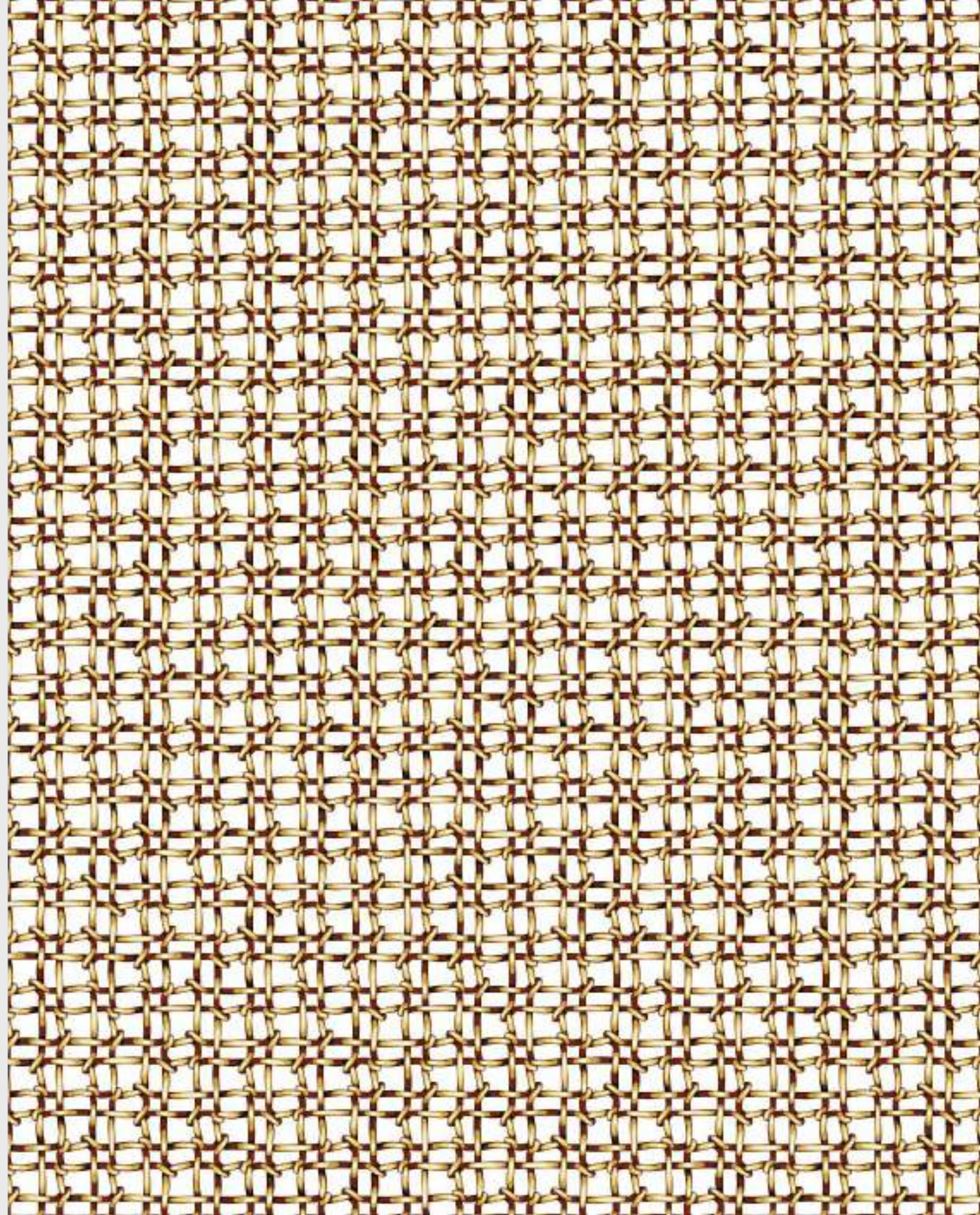
120 X 87 X 3 CM
ARCHIVAL PIGMENT PRINT ON
BAMBOO AWAGAMI WASHI PAPER

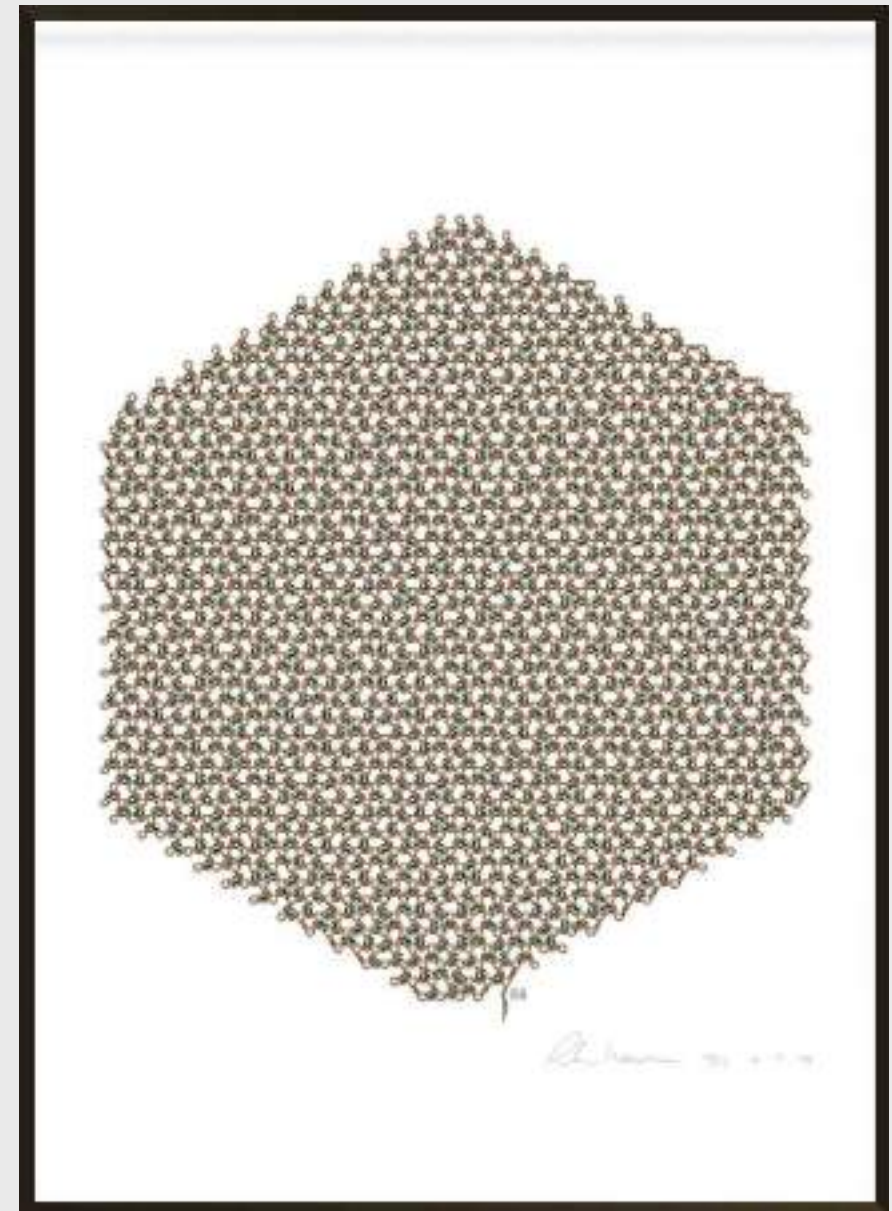
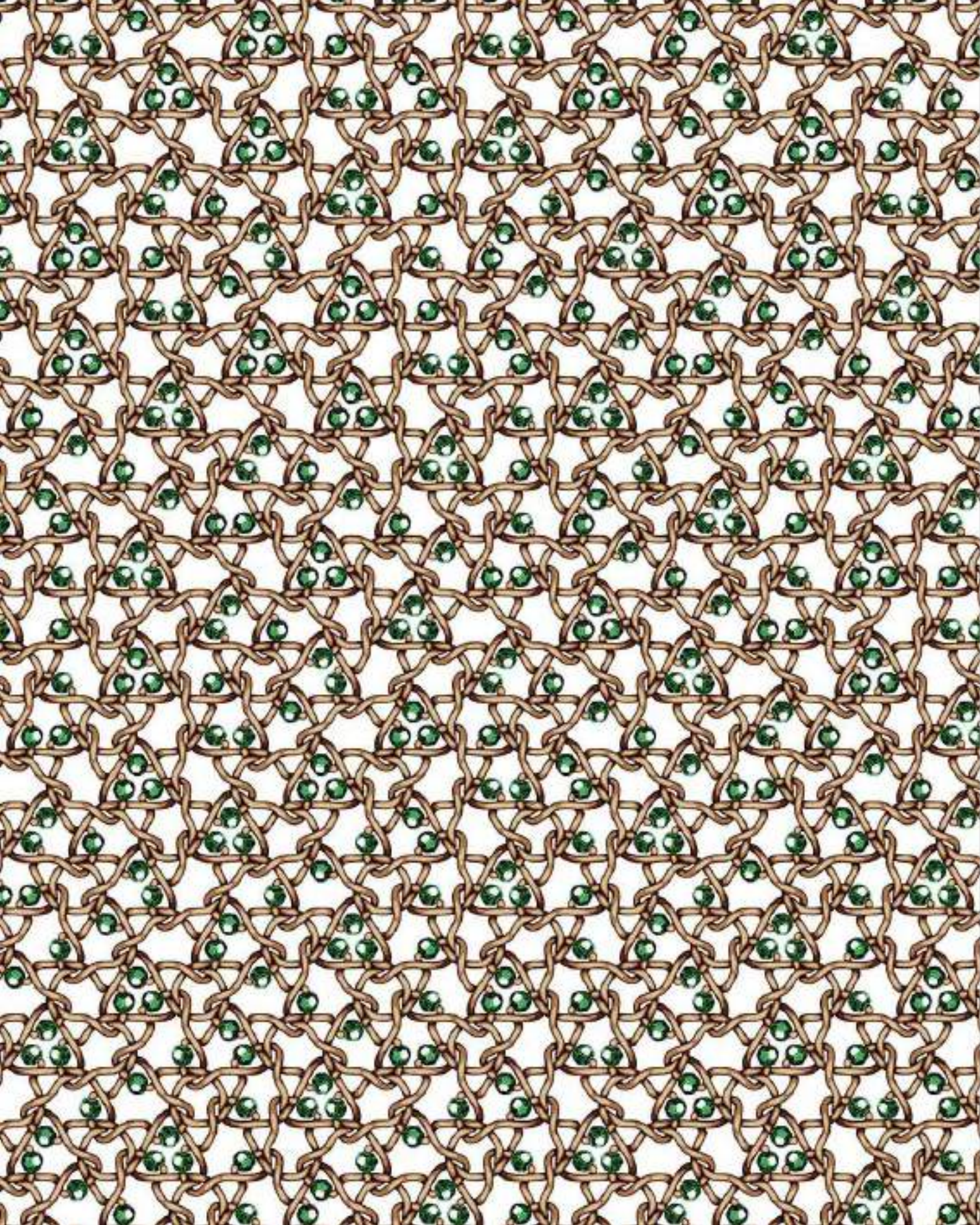


NET II (2018)

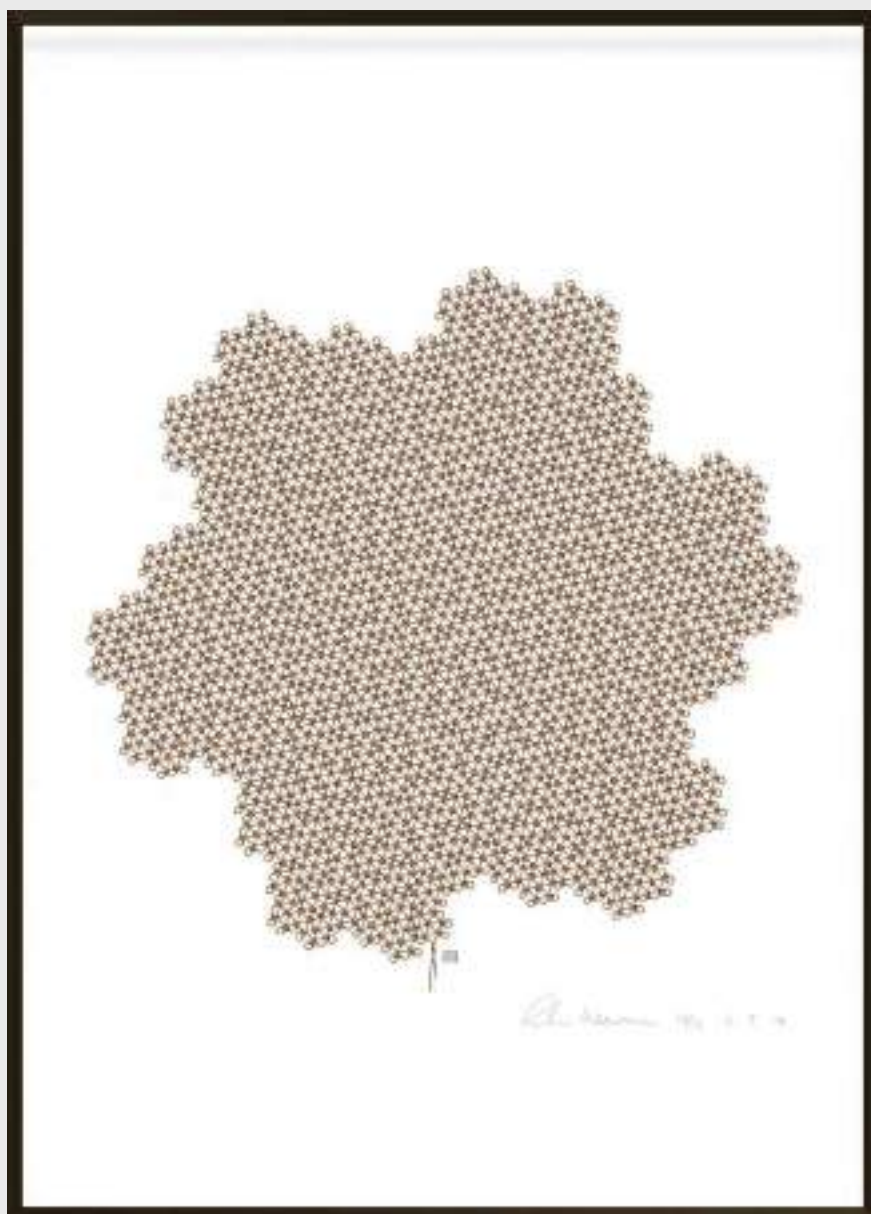
117 X 83 CM
ARCHIVAL PIGMENT PRINT ON
BAMBOO AWAGAMI WASHI PAPER
EDITION 2/12

STRANGE CONNECTIONS





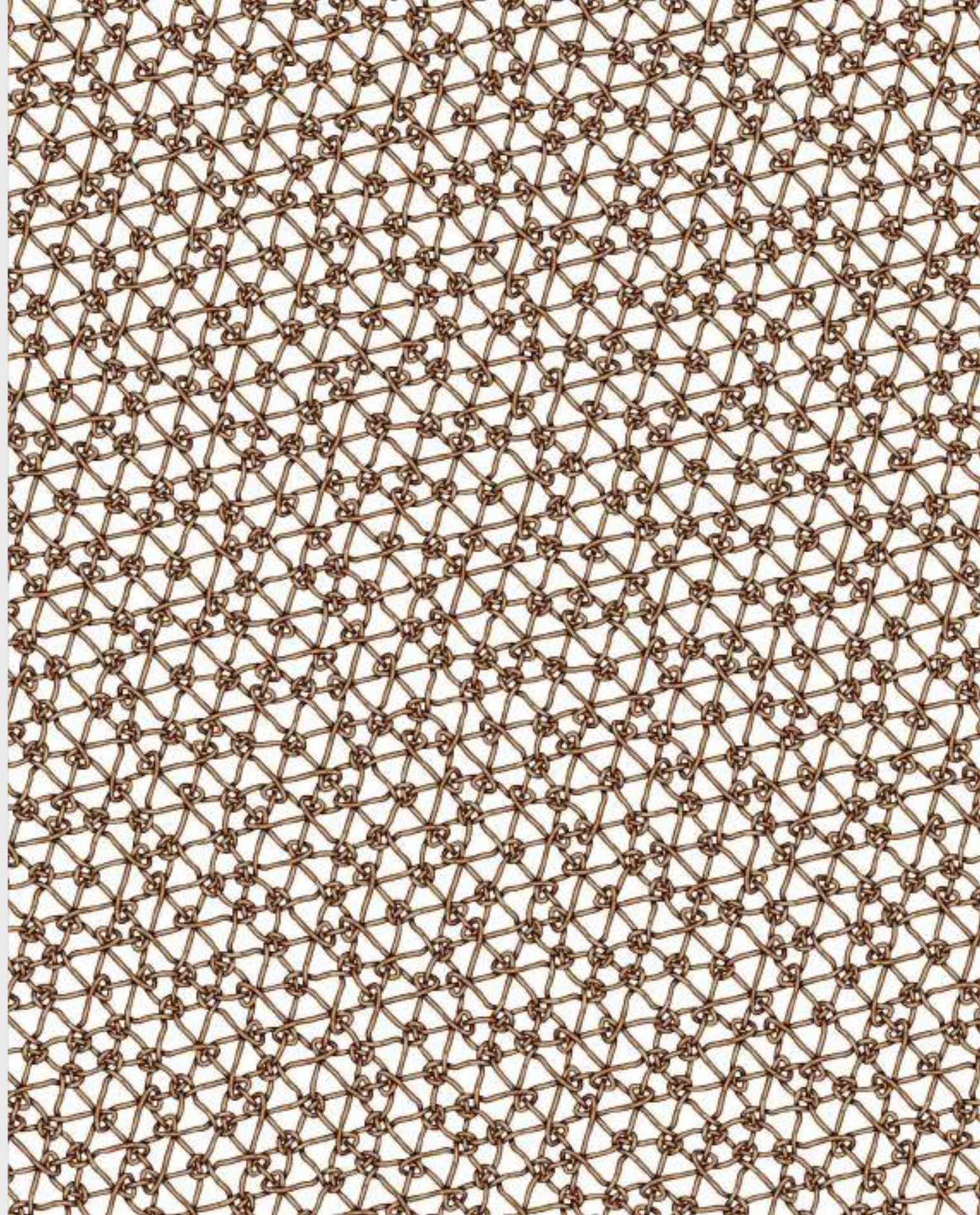
NET III (2018)
117 X 83 CM
ARCHIVAL PIGMENT PRINT ON
BAMBOO AWAGAMI WASHI PAPER
EDITION 2/12

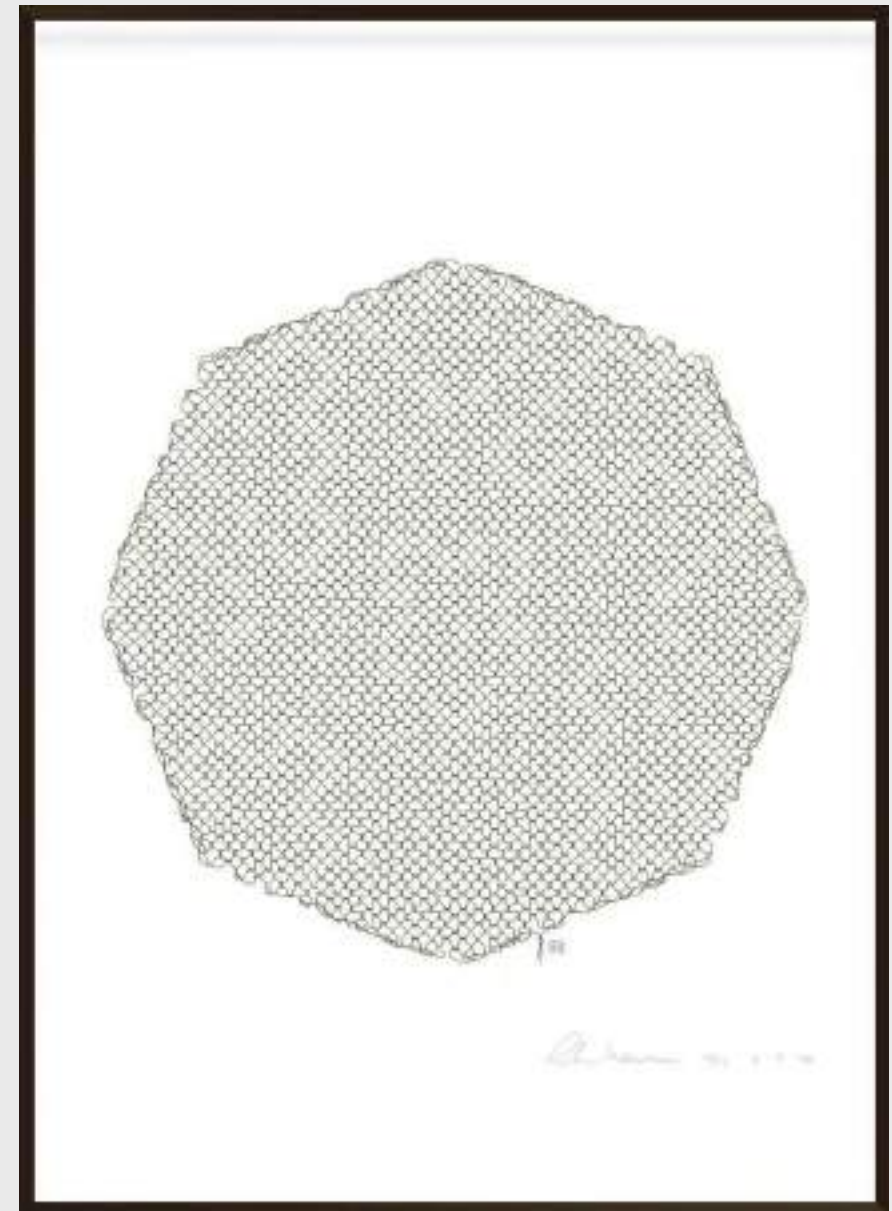
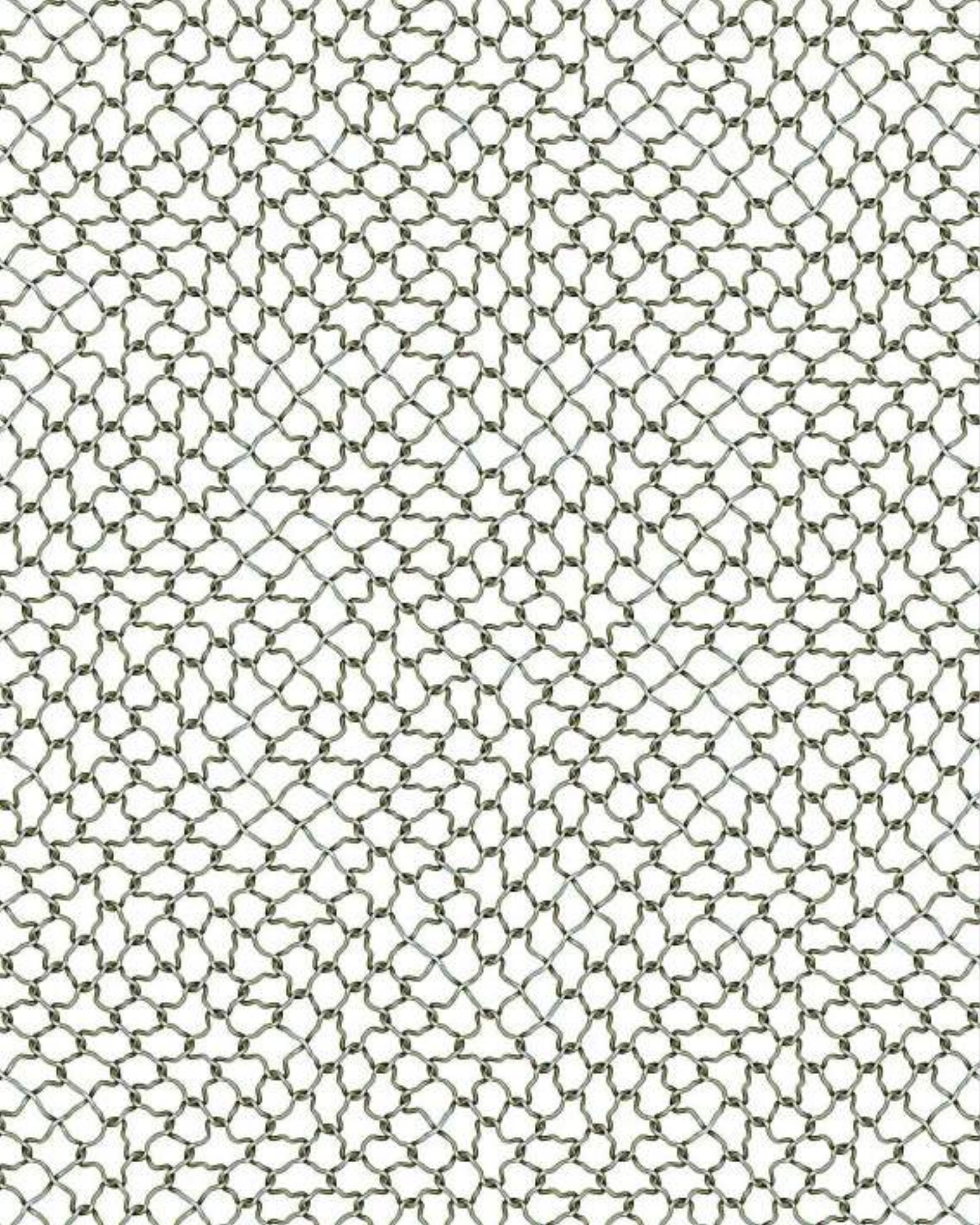


NET IV (2018)

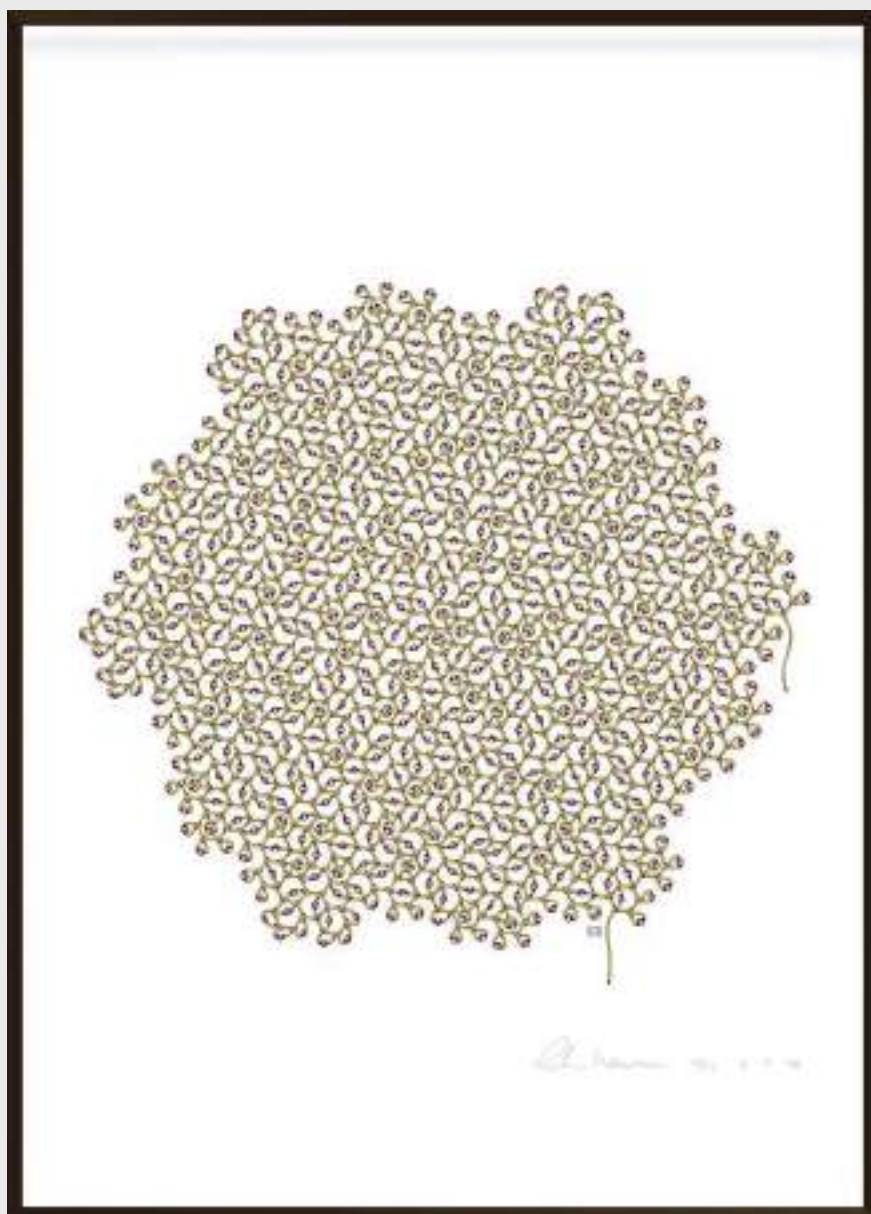
117 X 83 CM
ARCHIVAL PIGMENT PRINT ON
BAMBOO AWAGAMI WASHI PAPER
EDITION 2/12

STRANGE CONNECTIONS





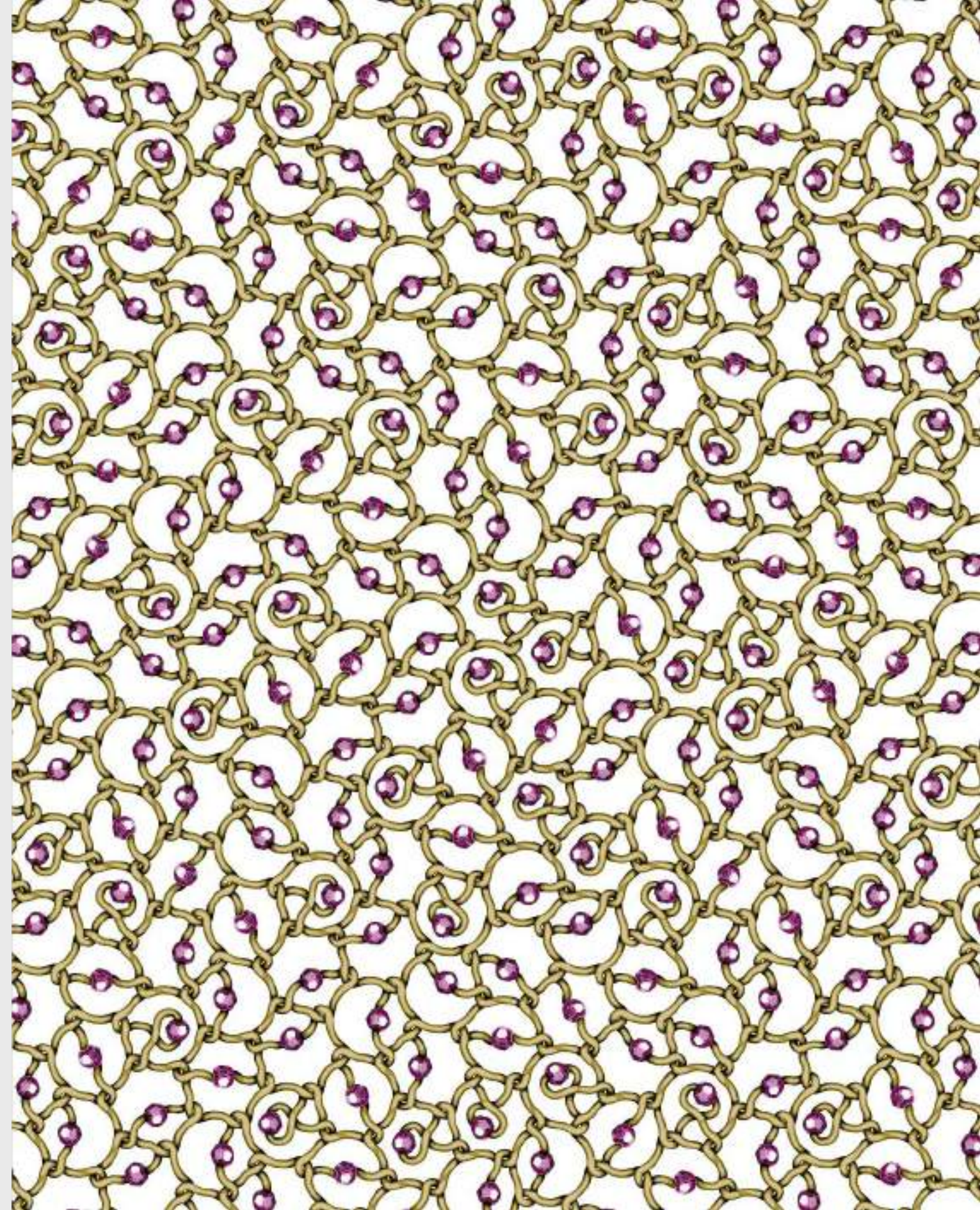
NET VI (2018)
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EDITION 2/12

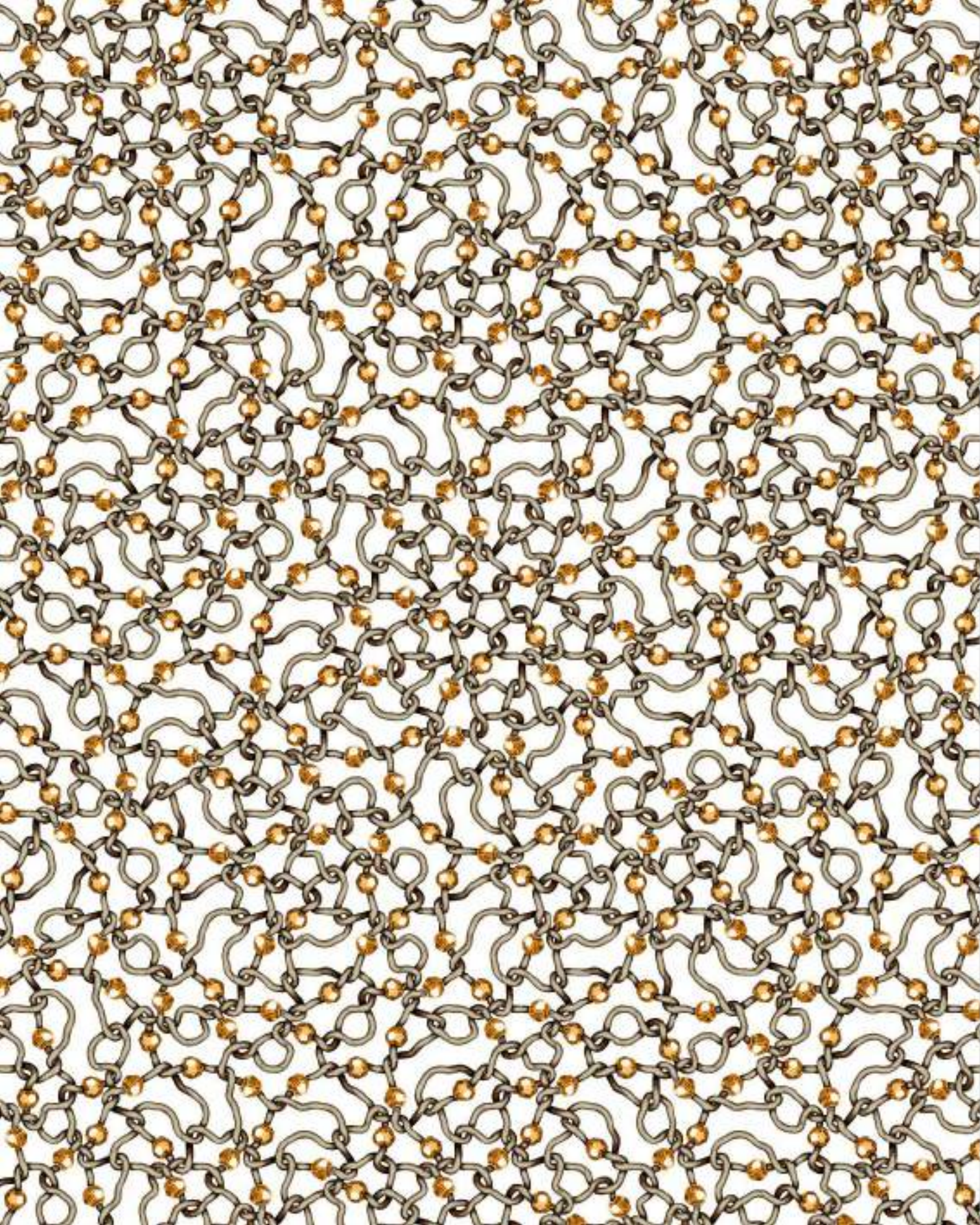


NET VII (2018)

117 X 83 CM
ARCHIVAL PIGMENT PRINT ON
BAMBOO AWAGAMI WASHI PAPER
EDITION 2/12

STRANGE CONNECTIONS





NET VIII (2018)

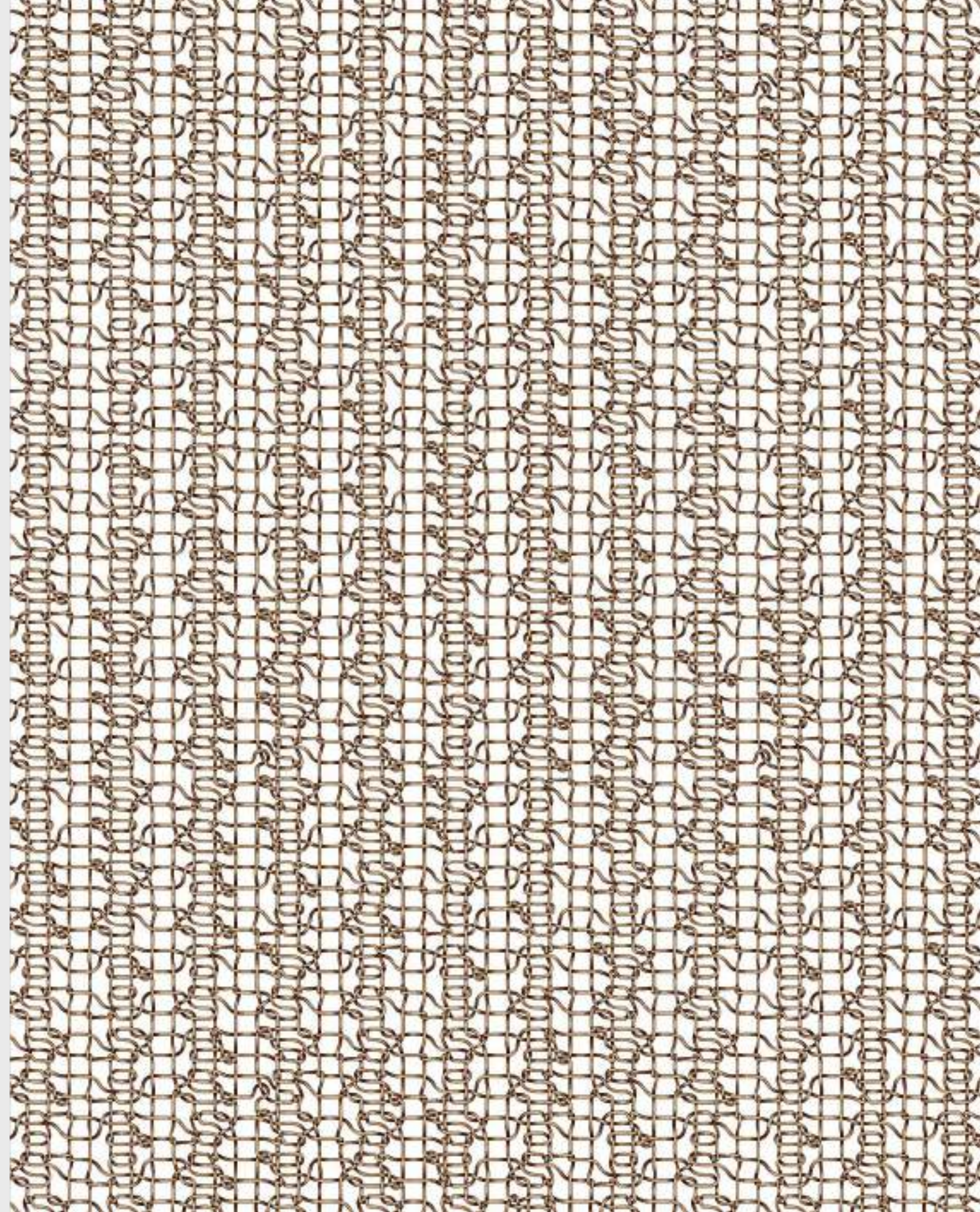
117 X 83 CM
ARCHIVAL PIGMENT PRINT ON
BAMBOO AWAGAMI WASHI PAPER
EDITION 2/12



NET V (2018)

117 X 83 CM
ARCHIVAL PIGMENT PRINT ON
BAMBOO AWAGAMI WASHI PAPER
EDITION 2/12

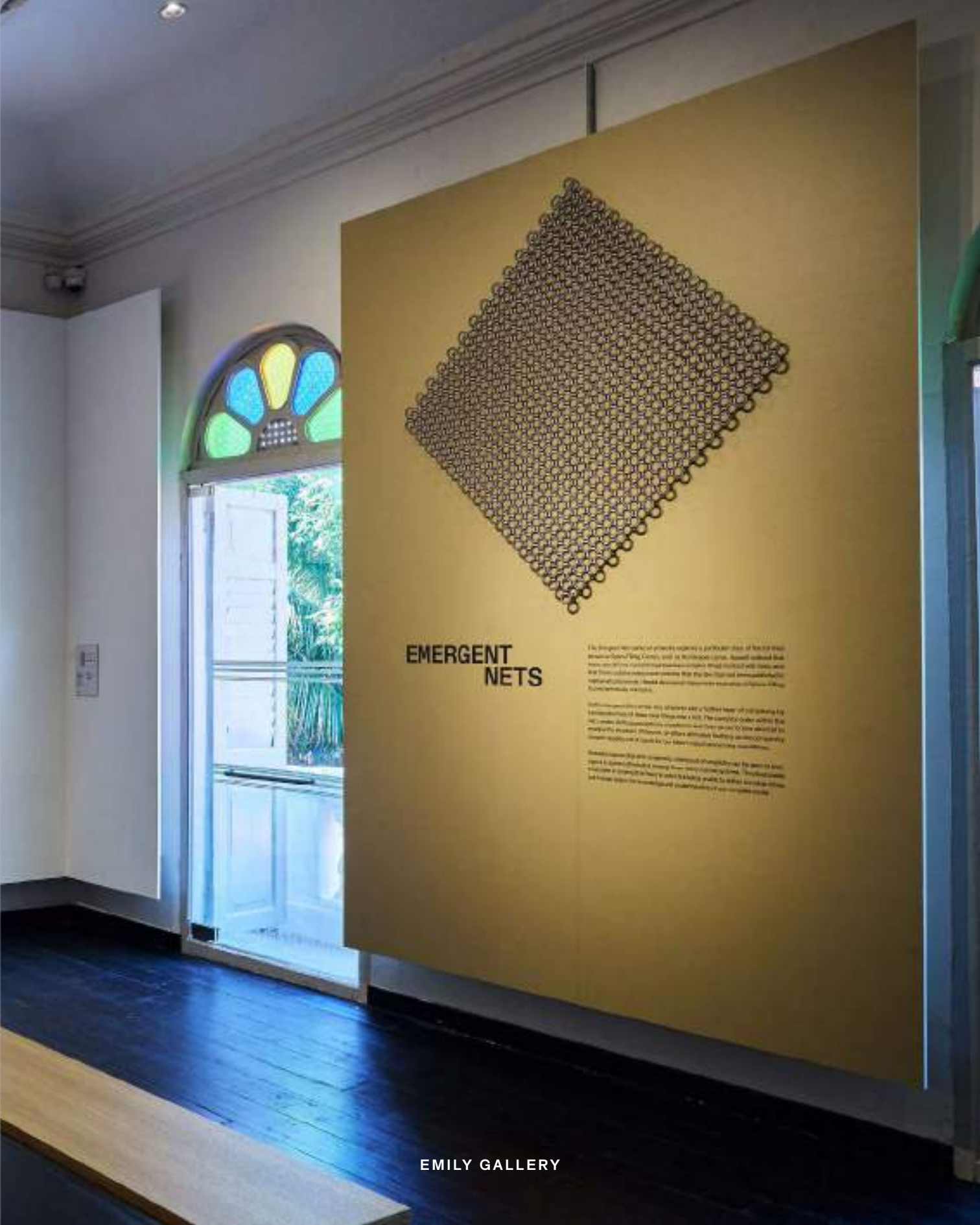
STRANGE CONNECTIONS



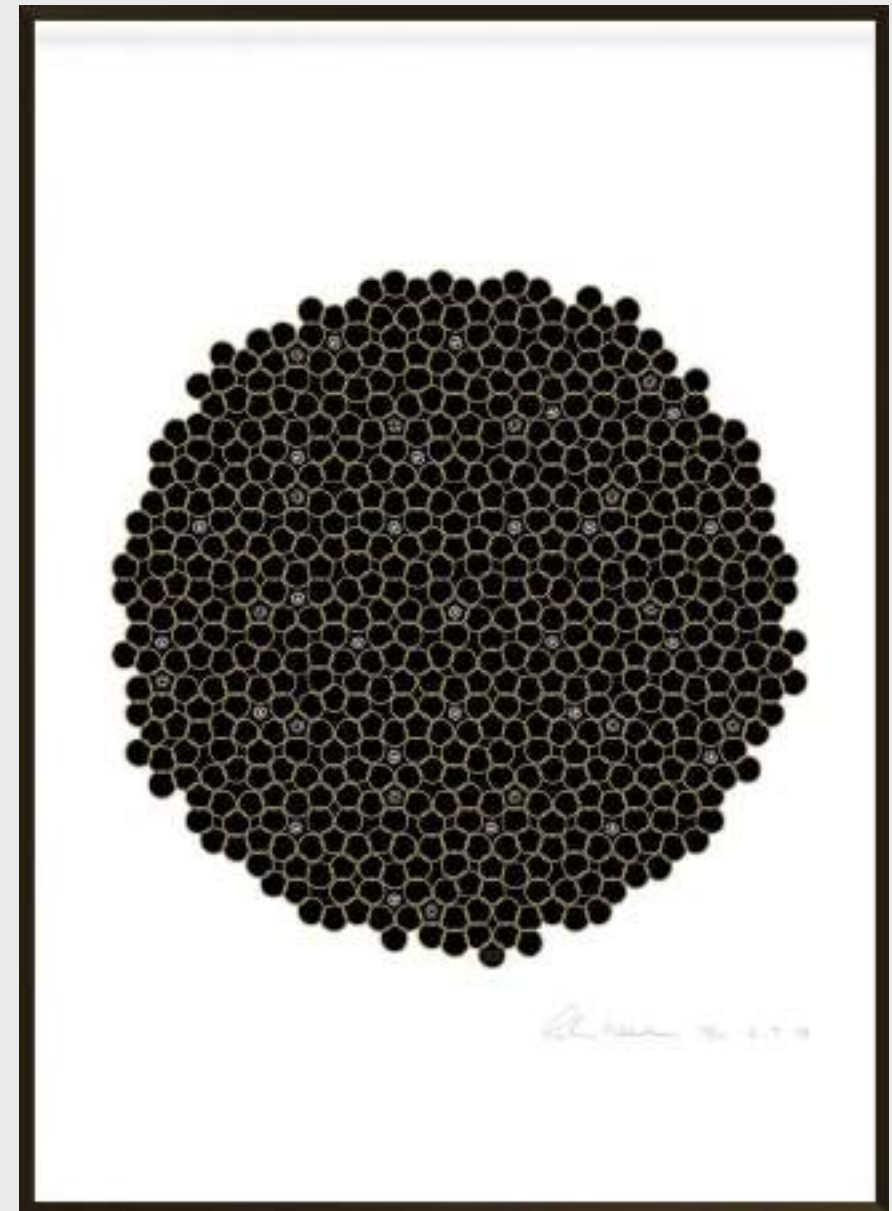
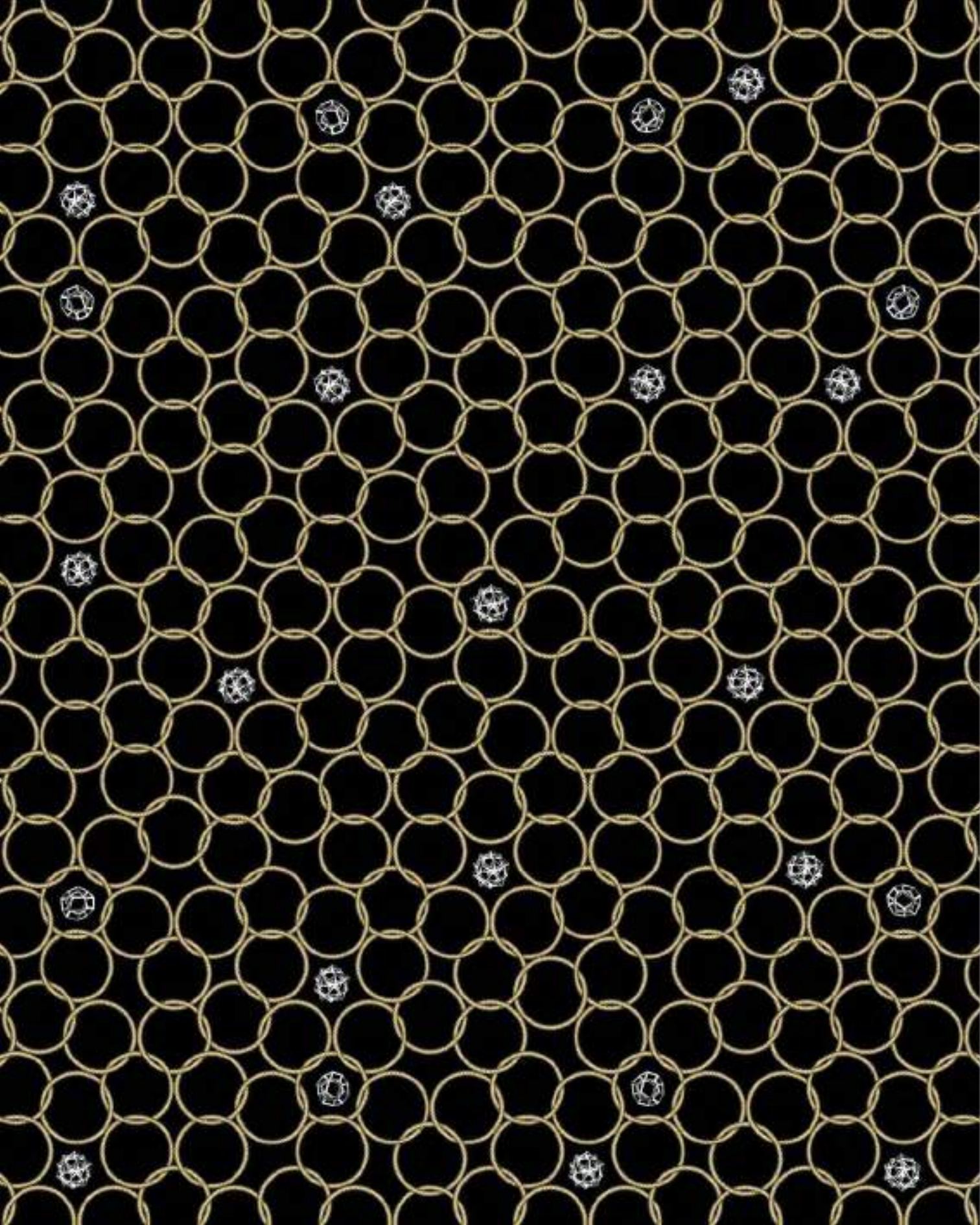


Emily Alcove

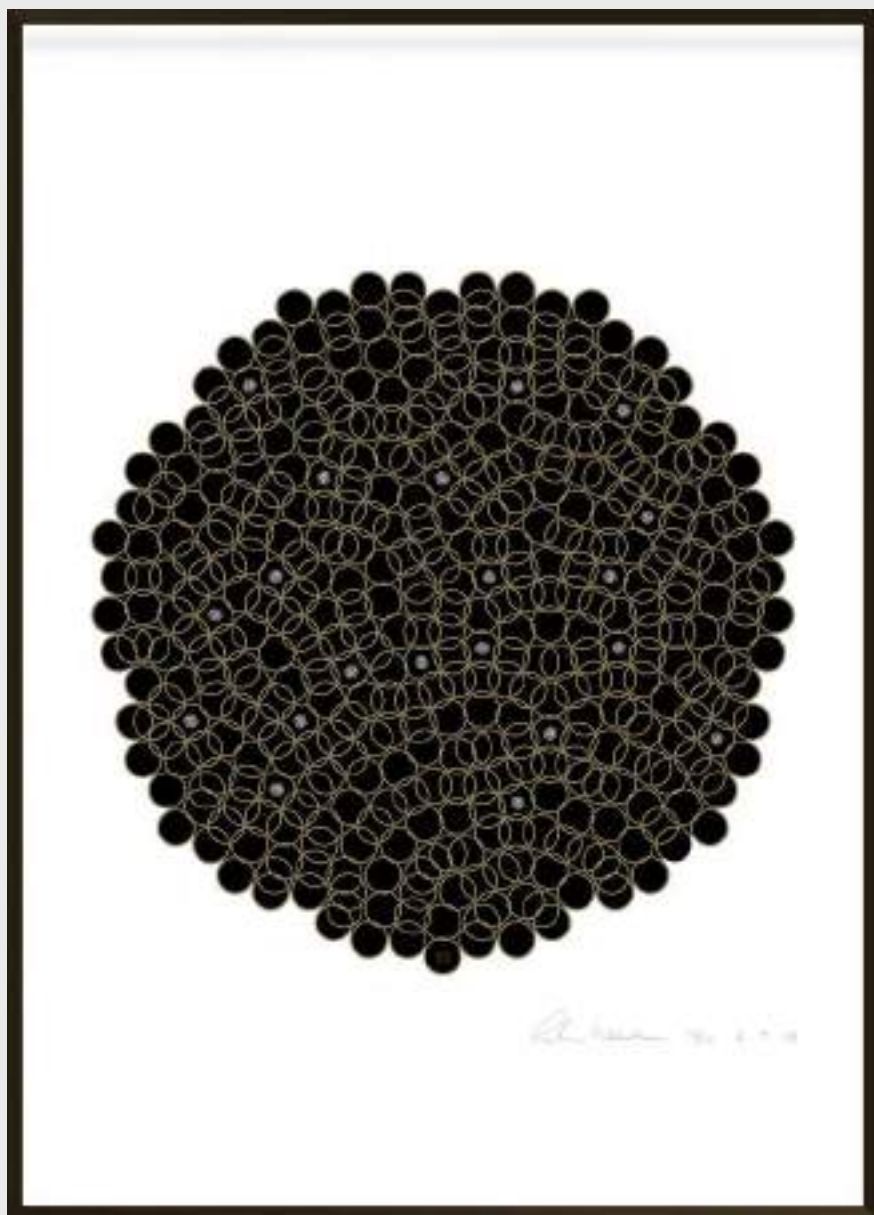
INSTALLATION VIEW OF *STRANGE CONNECTIONS: ART AND ARCHITECTURE*



EMILY GALLERY

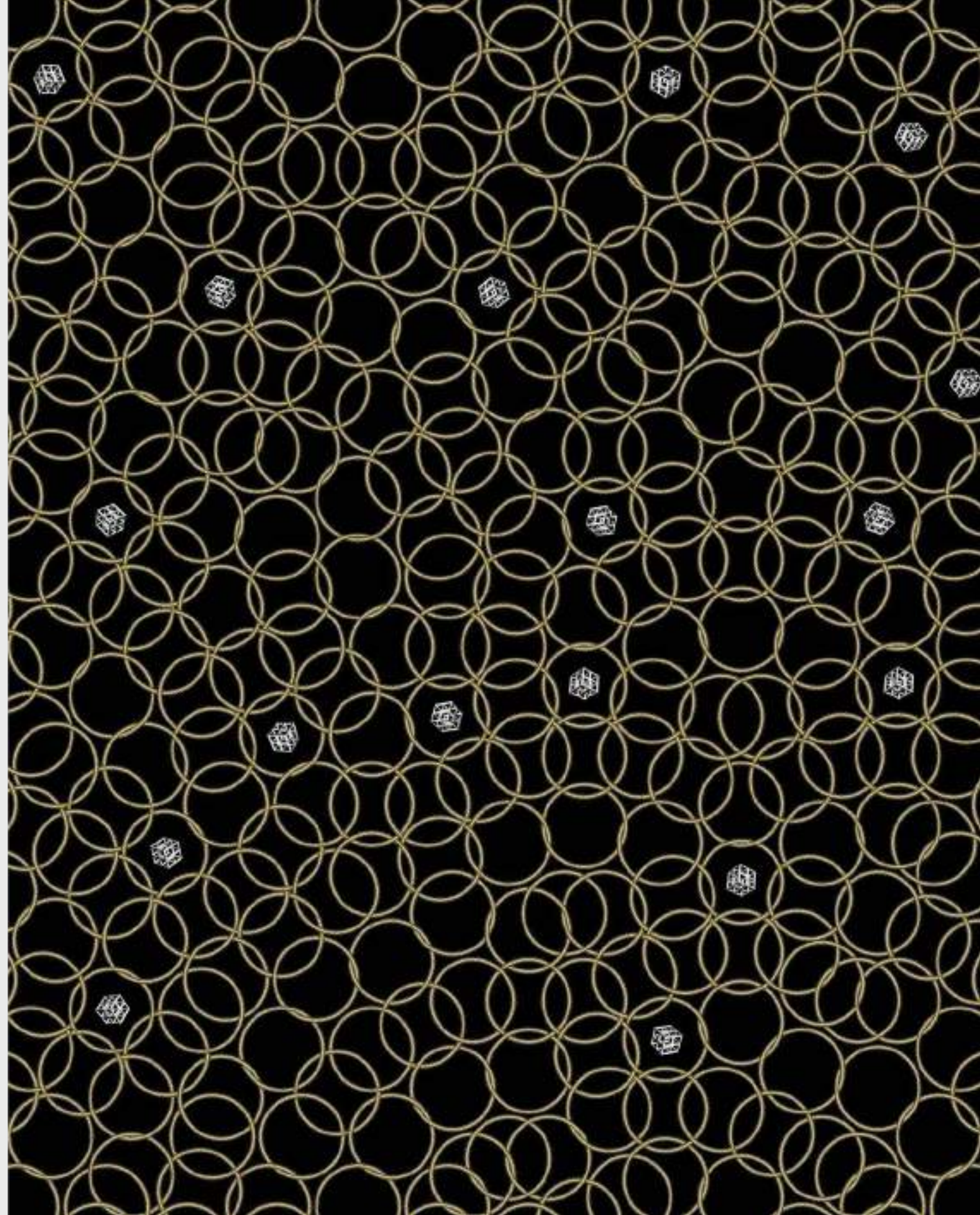


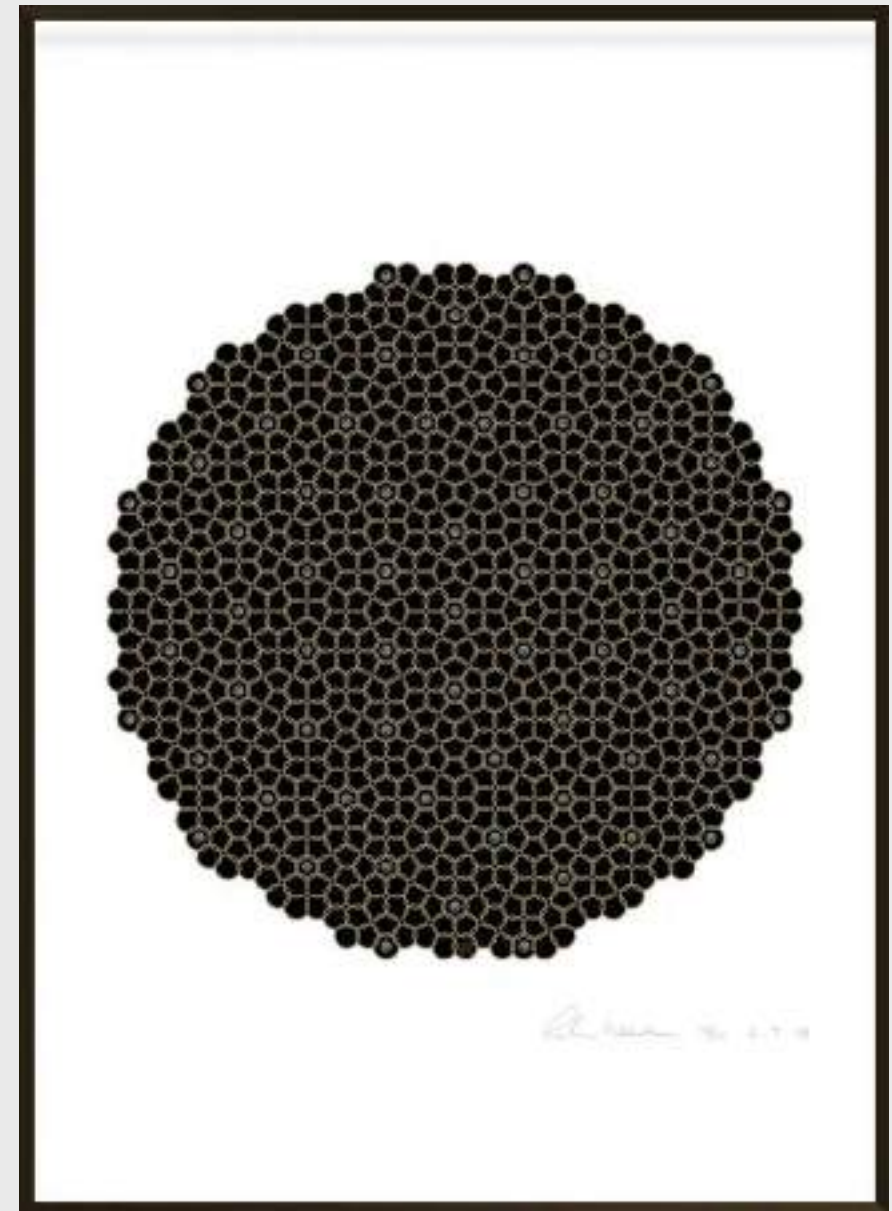
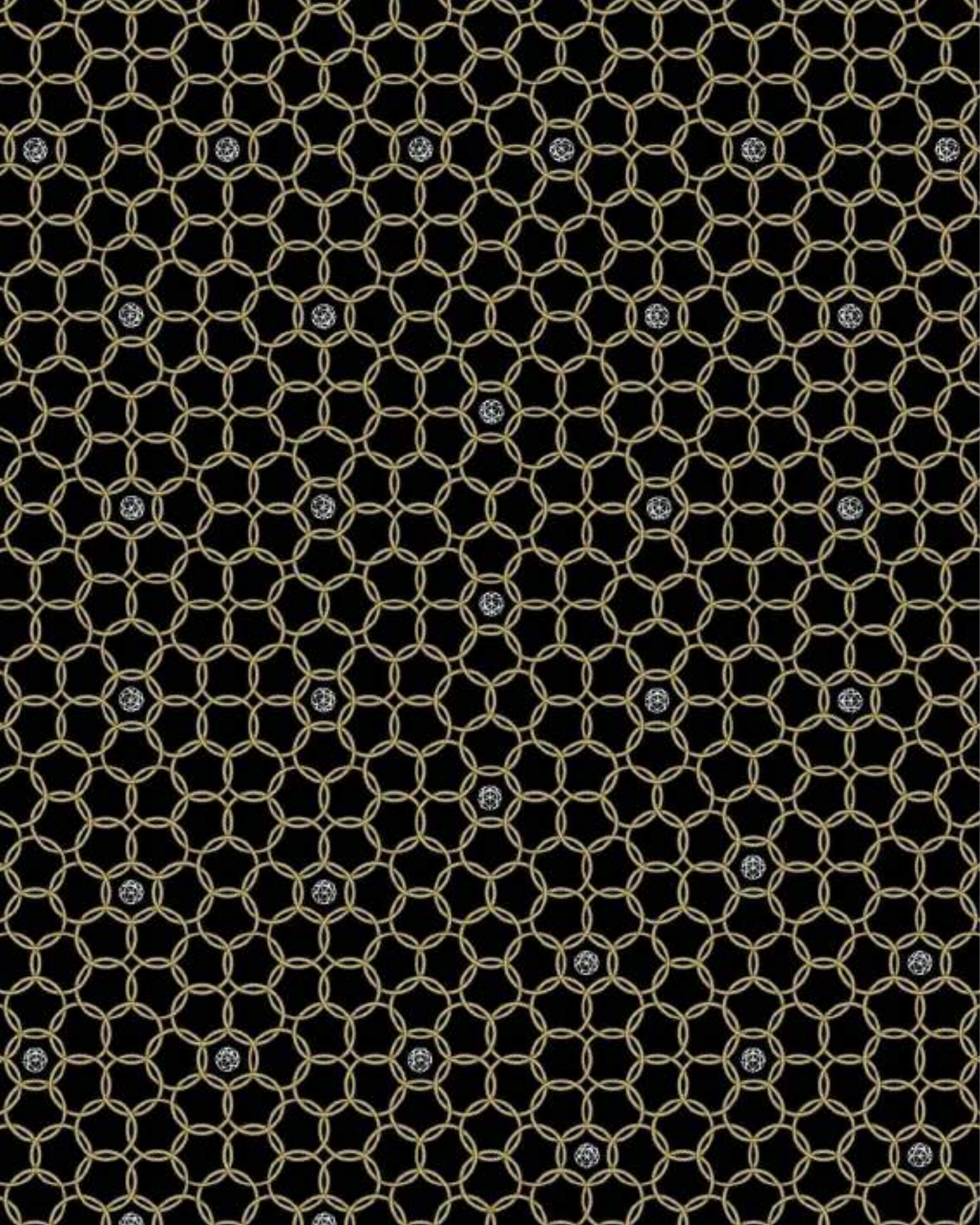
MUSIC APERIODICA I (2018)
120 X 87 X 3 CM (TRIPTYCH)
ARCHIVAL PIGMENT PRINT ON
BAMBOO AWAGAMI WASHI PAPER



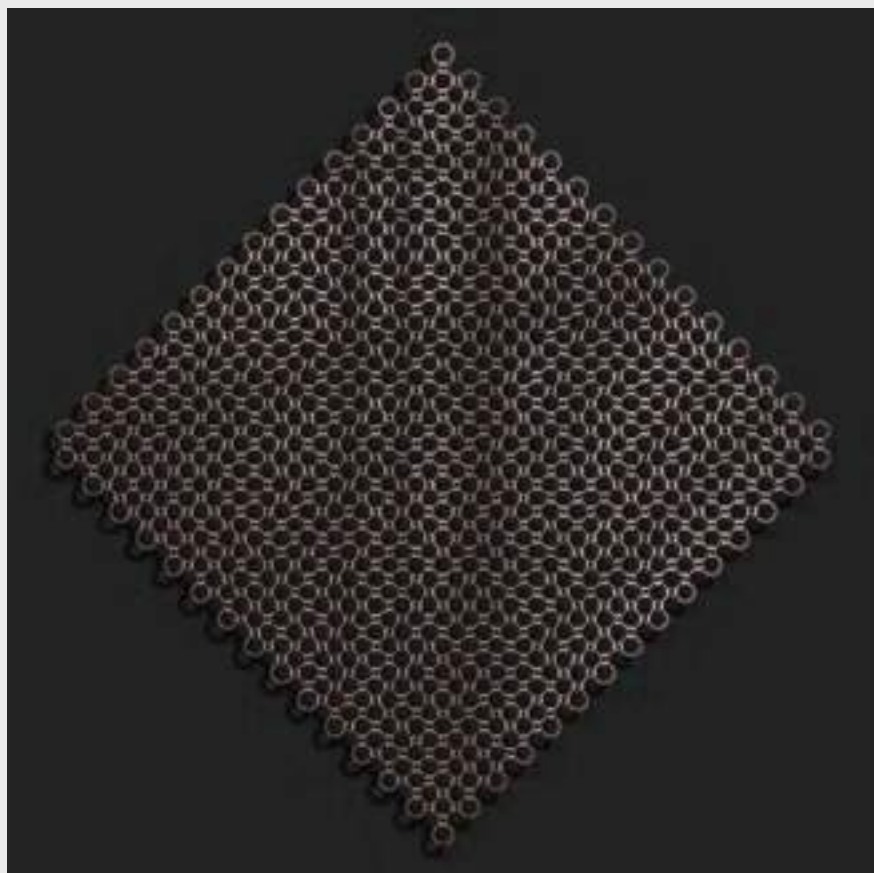
MUSIC APERIODICA II (2018)
120 X 87 X 3 CM (TRIPTYCH)
ARCHIVAL PIGMENT PRINT ON
BAMBOO AWAGAMI WASHI PAPER

STRANGE CONNECTIONS





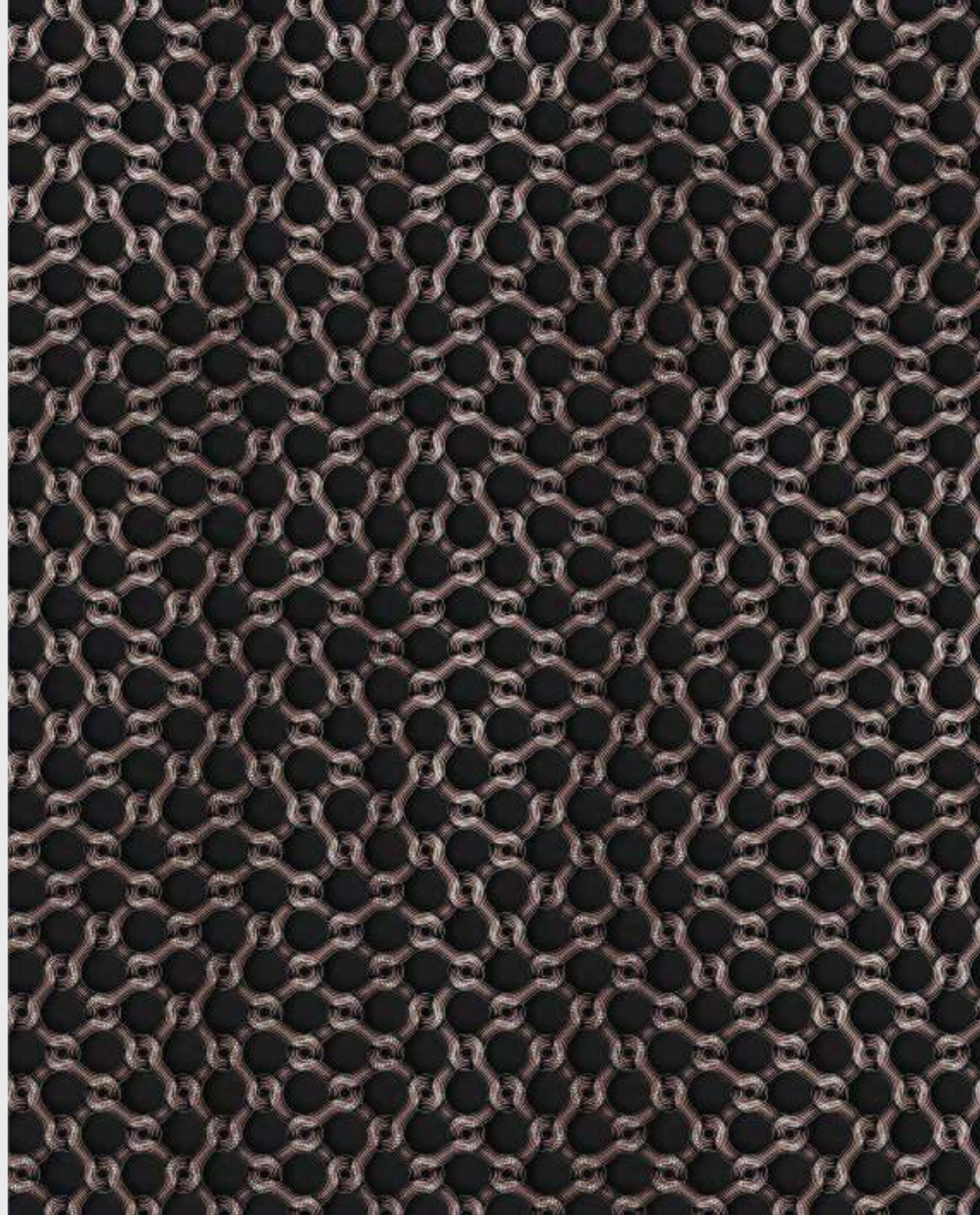
***MUSIC APERIODICA III* (2018)**
120 X 87 X 3 CM (TRIPTYCH)
ARCHIVAL PIGMENT PRINT ON
BAMBOO AWAGAMI WASHI PAPER



SNAKE KNOT II (2019)

63 X 58 X 0.3 CM
DOUBLE-SIDED UV INK ON BRUSHED ALUMINIUM DIBOND PANEL,
LASER CUT AND PERFORATED

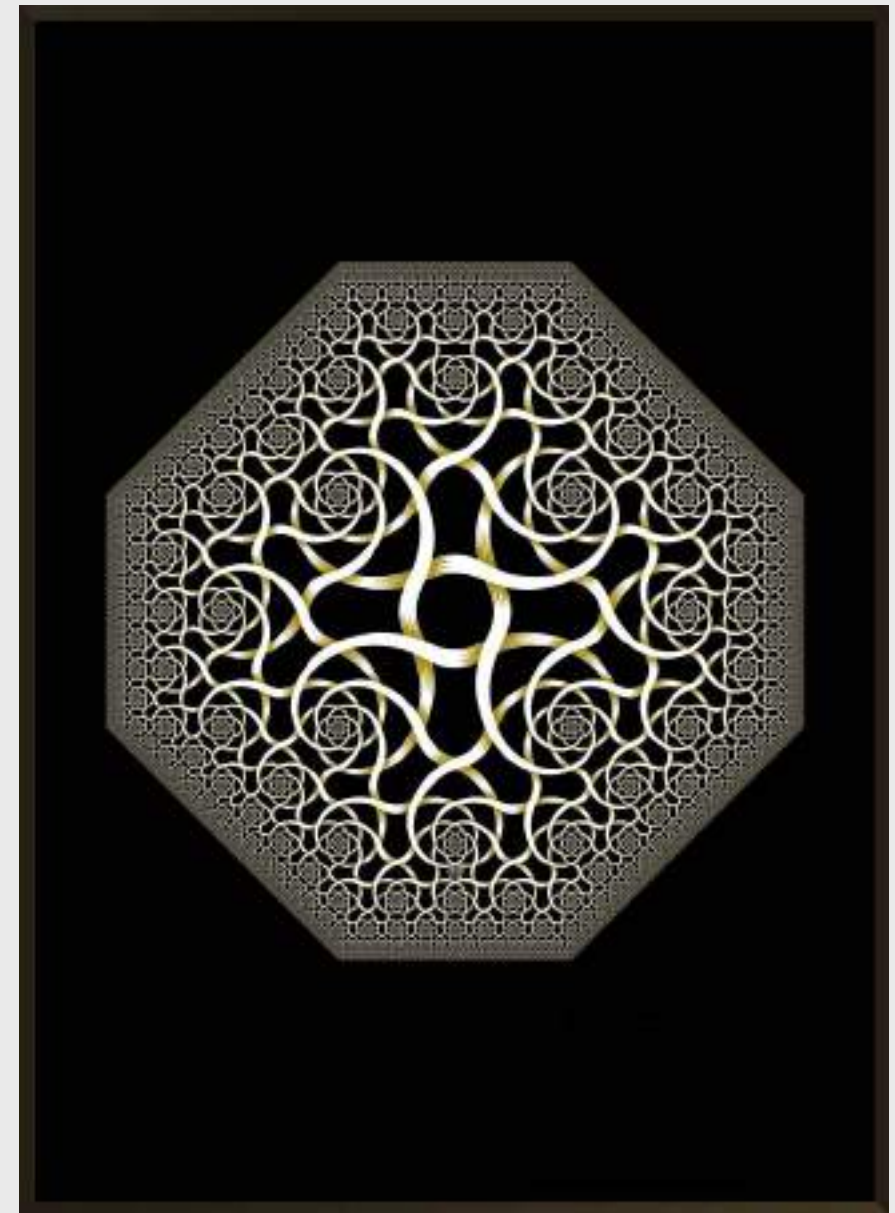
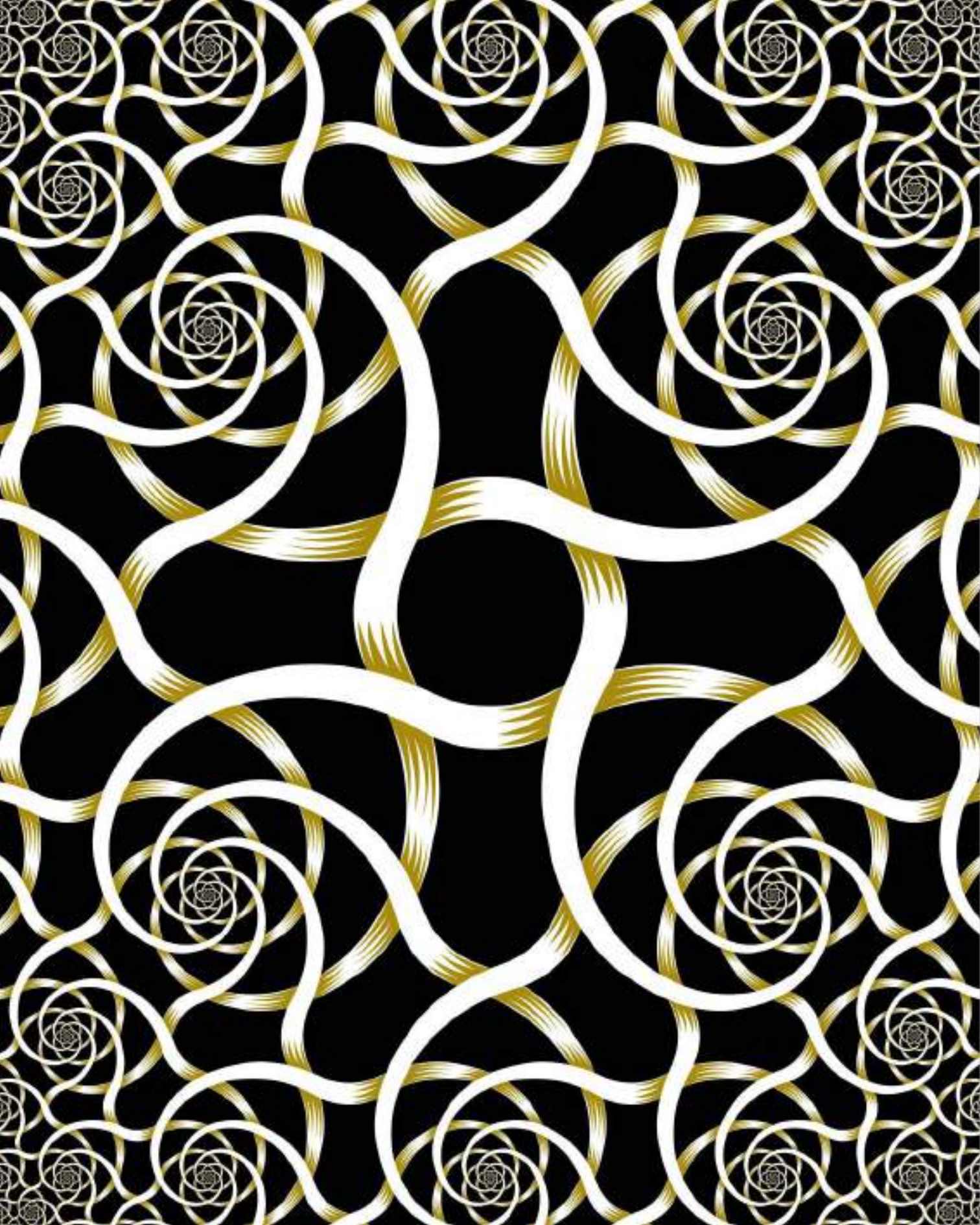
STRANGE CONNECTIONS





INSTALLATION VIEW OF *STRANGE CONNECTIONS: ART AND ARCHITECTURE*

EMILY ALCOVE



ENTANGLEMENT II (2016)

121 X 87 X 3 CM
ARCHIVAL PIGMENT PRINT ON
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EDITION 2/12

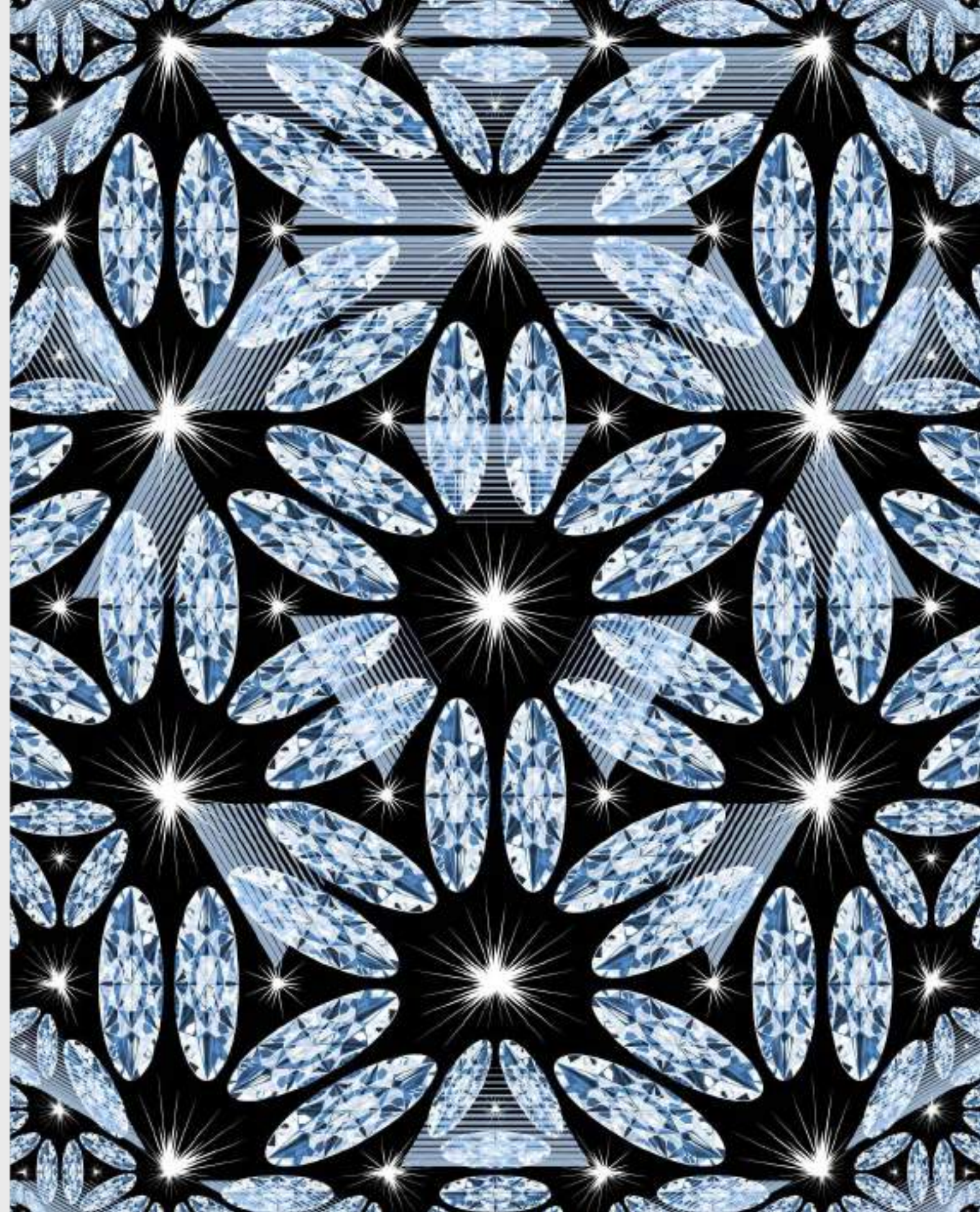
ART AND ARCHITECTURE

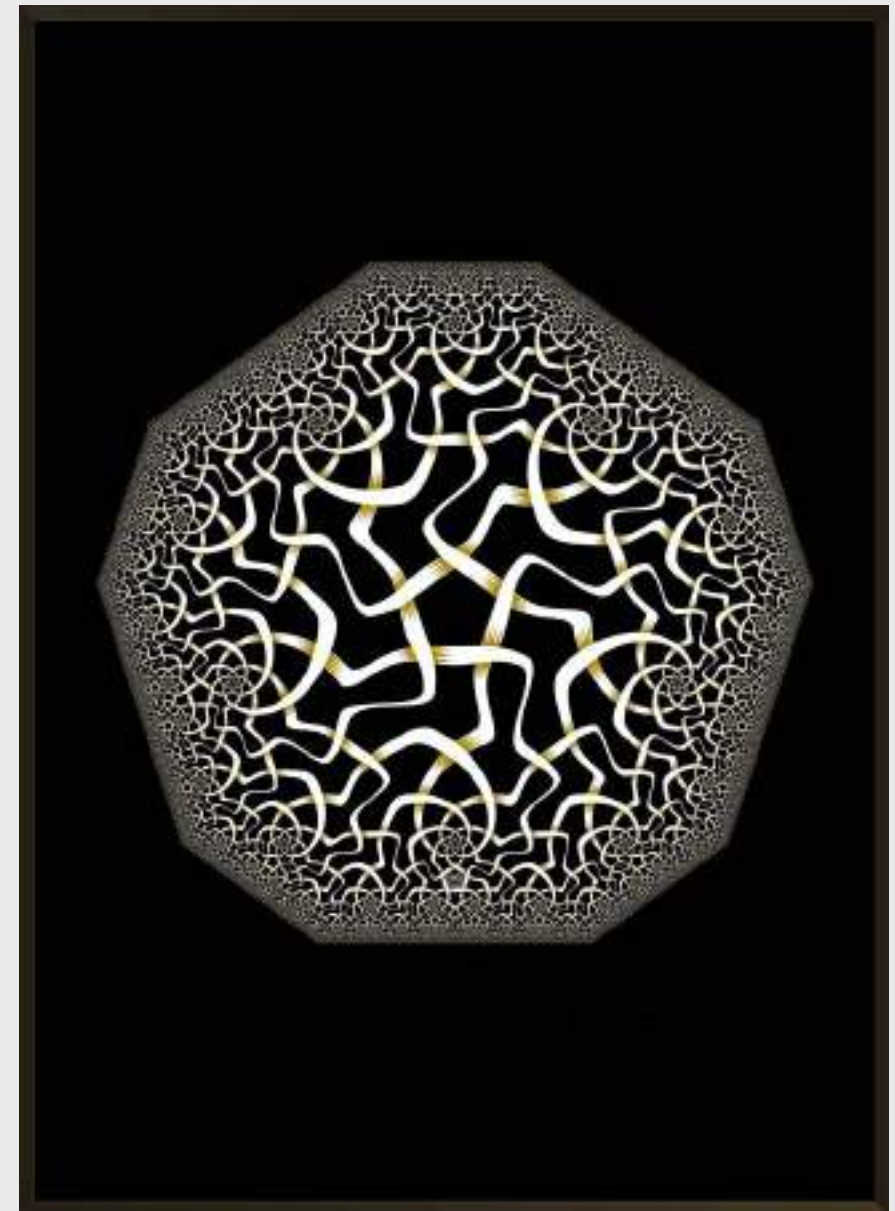
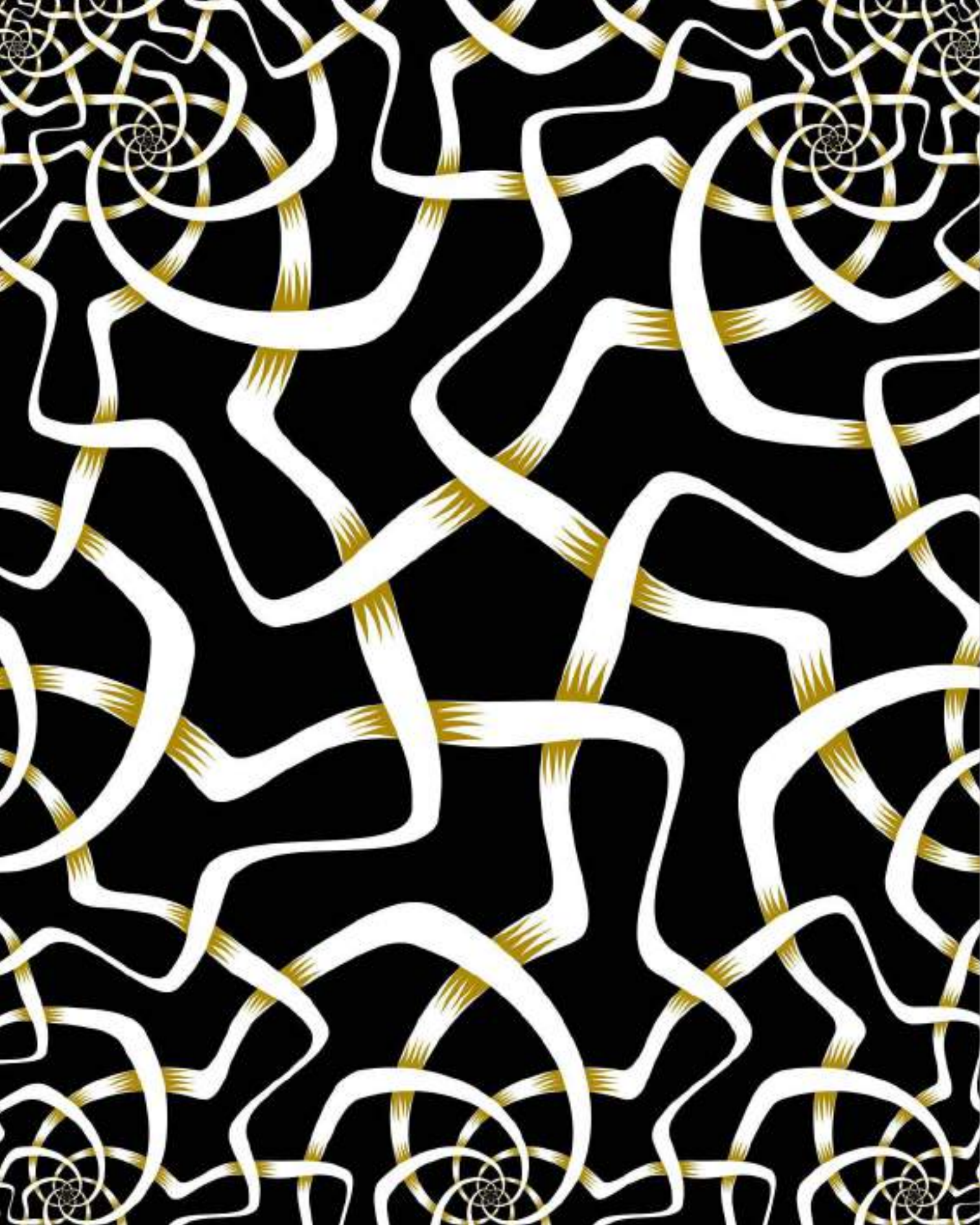


SKY DIAMONDS (2019)

121 X 87 X 3 CM
ARCHIVAL PIGMENT PRINT ON
BAMBOO AWAGAMI WASHI PAPER
EDITION 2/12

STRANGE CONNECTIONS





ENTANGLEMENT I (2016)

121 X 87 X 3 CM
ARCHIVAL PIGMENT PRINT ON
BAMBOO AWAGAMI WASHI PAPER
EDITION 2/12

ART AND ARCHITECTURE

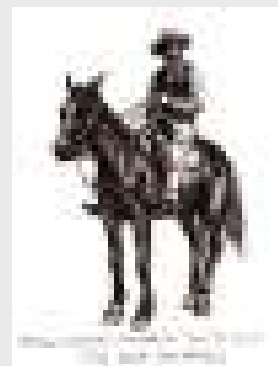
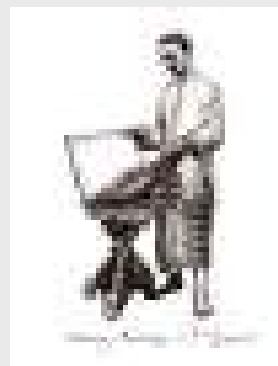
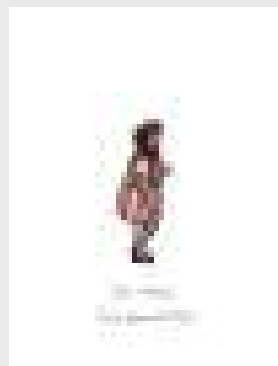
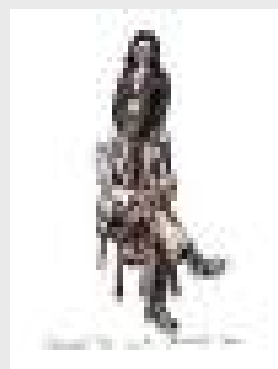
EVERYTHING CONNECTS

The journey of *Strange Connections: Art and Architecture* began with Richard Hassell's deep dive into the history of Osborne House while reimagining the building as the new home for The Private Museum. Hassell's research unearthed surprising—and sometimes uncanny—links between the Osborne House and Hassell's own history, sparking the idea for the exhibition and giving it its name. Following the same heritage approach in the museum's design, the history of the Osborne House is captured in a riveting narrative that intertwines heritage, history, culture, and humanity. The result is a captivating exploration of unexpected connections, brought to life through a series of art and architectural feats that challenge and delight the imagination.



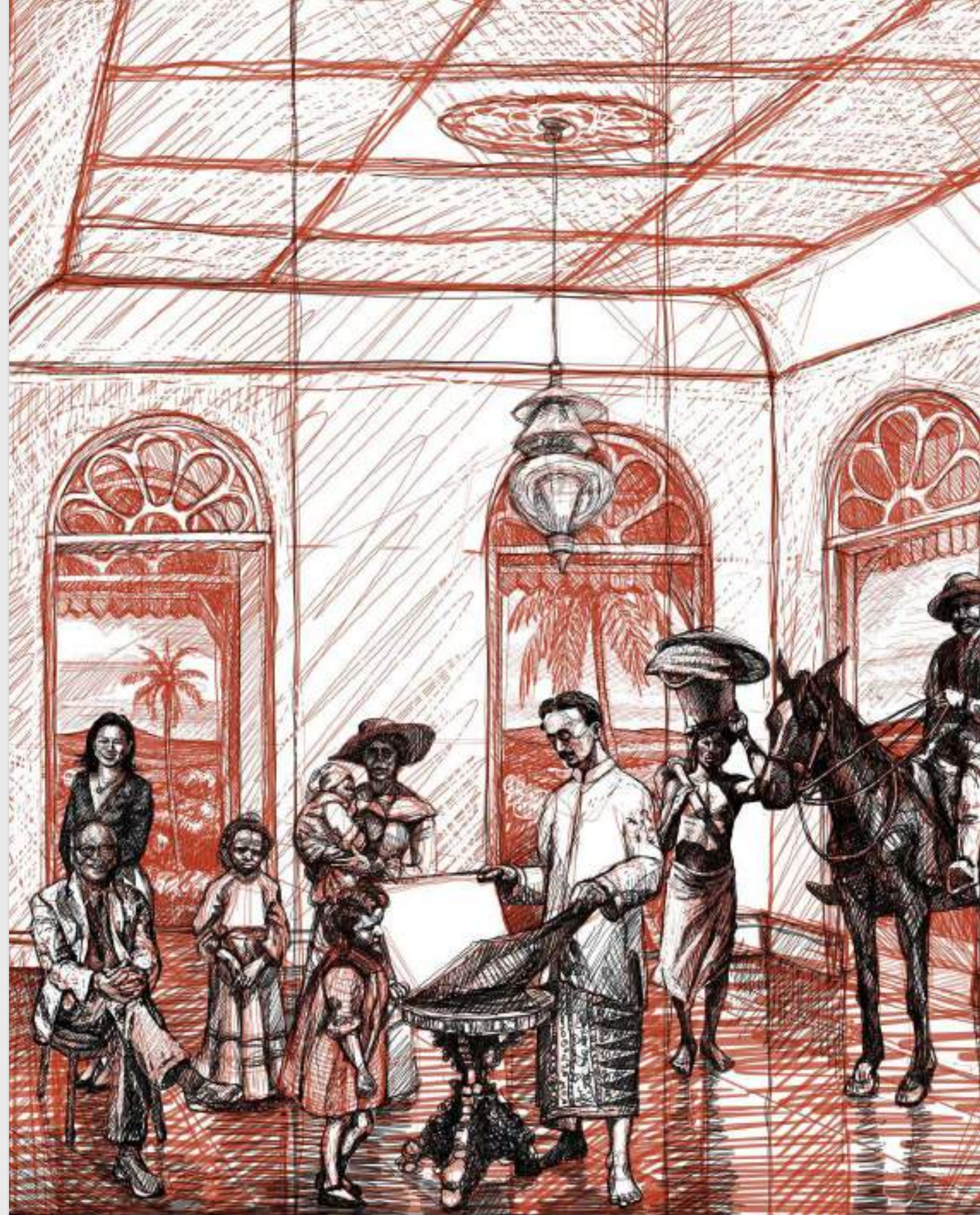
INSTALLATION VIEW OF *STRANGE CONNECTIONS: ART AND ARCHITECTURE*

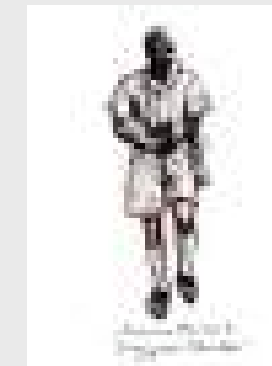
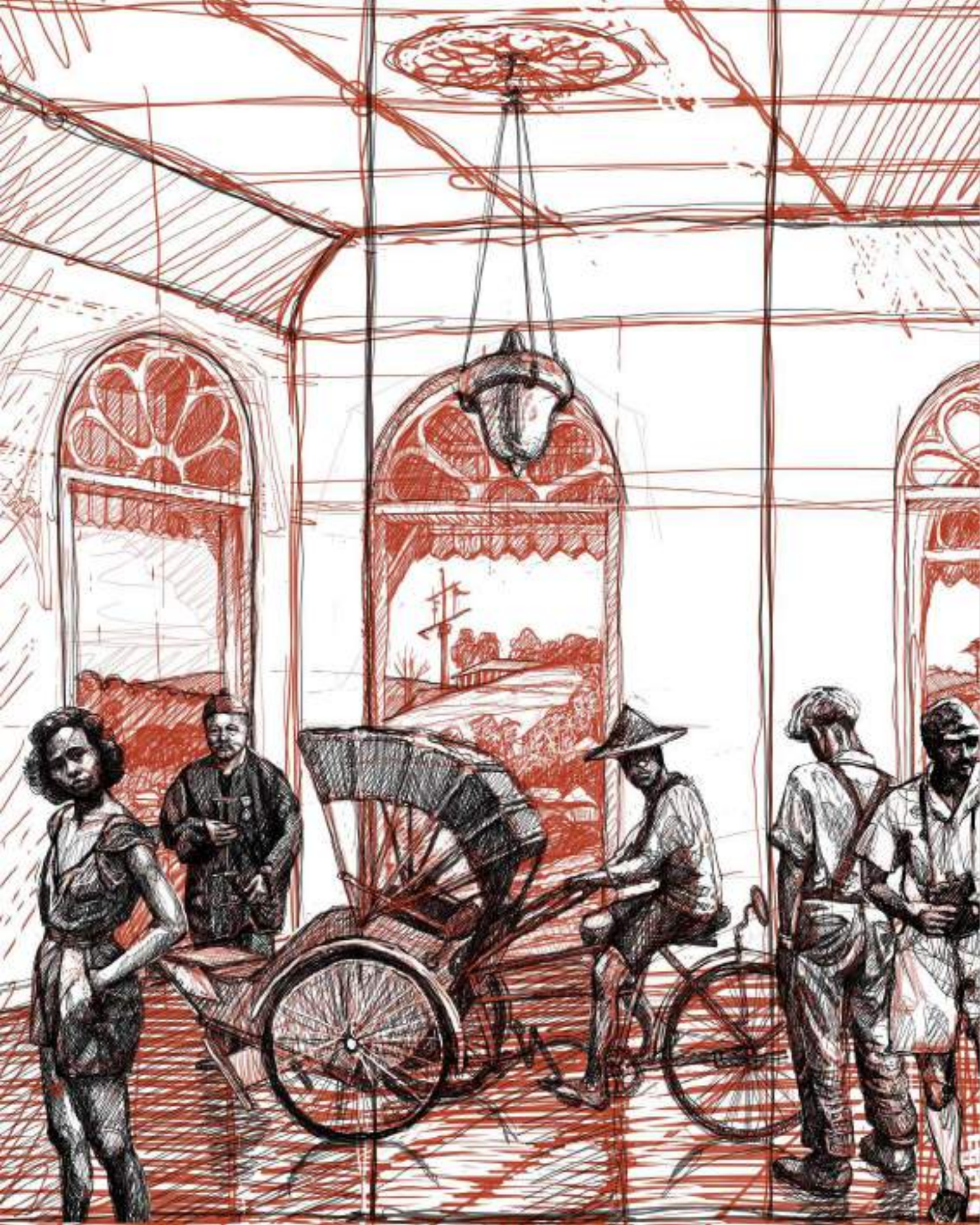
OSBORNE HALL



EVERYTHING CONNECTS (2024)
 DIMENSIONS VARIABLE
 ARCHIVAL PIGMENT INK ON
 KOZO WASHI PAPER

STRANGE CONNECTIONS





EVERYTHING CONNECTS (2024)
 DIMENSIONS VARIABLE
 ARCHIVAL PIGMENT INK ON
 KOZO WASHI PAPER



Caroline Terrace

INSTALLATION VIEW OF *STRANGE CONNECTIONS: ART AND ARCHITECTURE*

OSBORNE HALL



INSTALLATION VIEW OF *STRANGE CONNECTIONS: ART AND ARCHITECTURE*

OSBORNE HALL



RICHARD HASSELL'S BIOGRAPHY

Richard Hassell, founder of WOHA, is both an architect and artist. Previous exhibitions include *Indra's Net* (Taichung 2020), opened in Taichung, Taiwan, in 2020, *Strange Creatures*, *Emergent Nets* (Taipei, 2019), *Knots and Nets* (Taipei, 2018), and *Strange Creatures Complex Tessellations* (Singapore, 2018).

Represented by Gallery Sun in Taiwan, Arndt Fine Art in Europe, and Walker Fine Art in the USA, Hassell's artworks are in private collections worldwide, including the USA, UK, Italy, and Australia, and in the Australian National University and Queensland University collection.

His pieces have been exhibited in Art Science Museum in Singapore, Museo d'Arte Popular in Lisbon, StadtGalerie Galleriy Civica Palazzo delle Arti in Naples, Museo Maritim de Barcelona, Palazzo Ducale in Genoa, Museo degli Innocenti in Florence, Palazzo Buonoparte in Rome, and the Museum of Art in Deland, Florida.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Private Museum extends its deepest gratitude to artist Richard Hassell for his invaluable trust and unwavering dedication in the creation of this exhibition.

A special thank you goes to our esteemed exhibition partners—WOHA Architects, Systmz, Currency Design, Allegro Print, AVS Printing, Helutrans Artmove, and writer Ng Hui Hsien—for their outstanding contributions that have significantly enriched the overall experience.

Our heartfelt thanks extend to Ms Goh Swee Chen, who graciously officiated the opening reception as the Guest of Honour, bringing an added level of distinction to the event.

Once again, we warmly appreciate everyone involved for their time, dedication, and collaboration in making this exhibition a success.

Published by

The Private Museum Ltd
11 Upper Wilkie Road, Singapore 228120

Artworks by

Richard Hassell

Designed by

Currency Design

Printed by

Allegro Print

Photography by

Studio W Photography

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About The Private Museum

The Private Museum is a non-profit private museum in Singapore founded by Singaporean philanthropist, art collector and real estate developer, Daniel Teo, together with his daughter Rachel Teo in 2010. Fuelled by passionate patronage for the arts, the museum aims to be an alternative platform to bridge the gap between the private and the public. With a vision to promote art appreciation, the independent arts space engages local, regional and international audiences from all walks of life.

The Private Museum is a registered Charity and Institution of a Public Character (IPC) since 2010 and 2015 respectively.

Our Vision

To be a leading, dynamic private museum in Southeast Asia and a national model in Singapore that engages, inspires and builds communities through art.

Our Mission

To serve as an independent platform in bridging gaps between public and private spheres through the exchange of ideas across cultures, educational initiatives, and artistic and curatorial collaborations with collectors and practitioners of the arts.

Private
MUSEUM
SINGAPORE

W O H A

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Private Collections
IN A PUBLIC MUSEUM