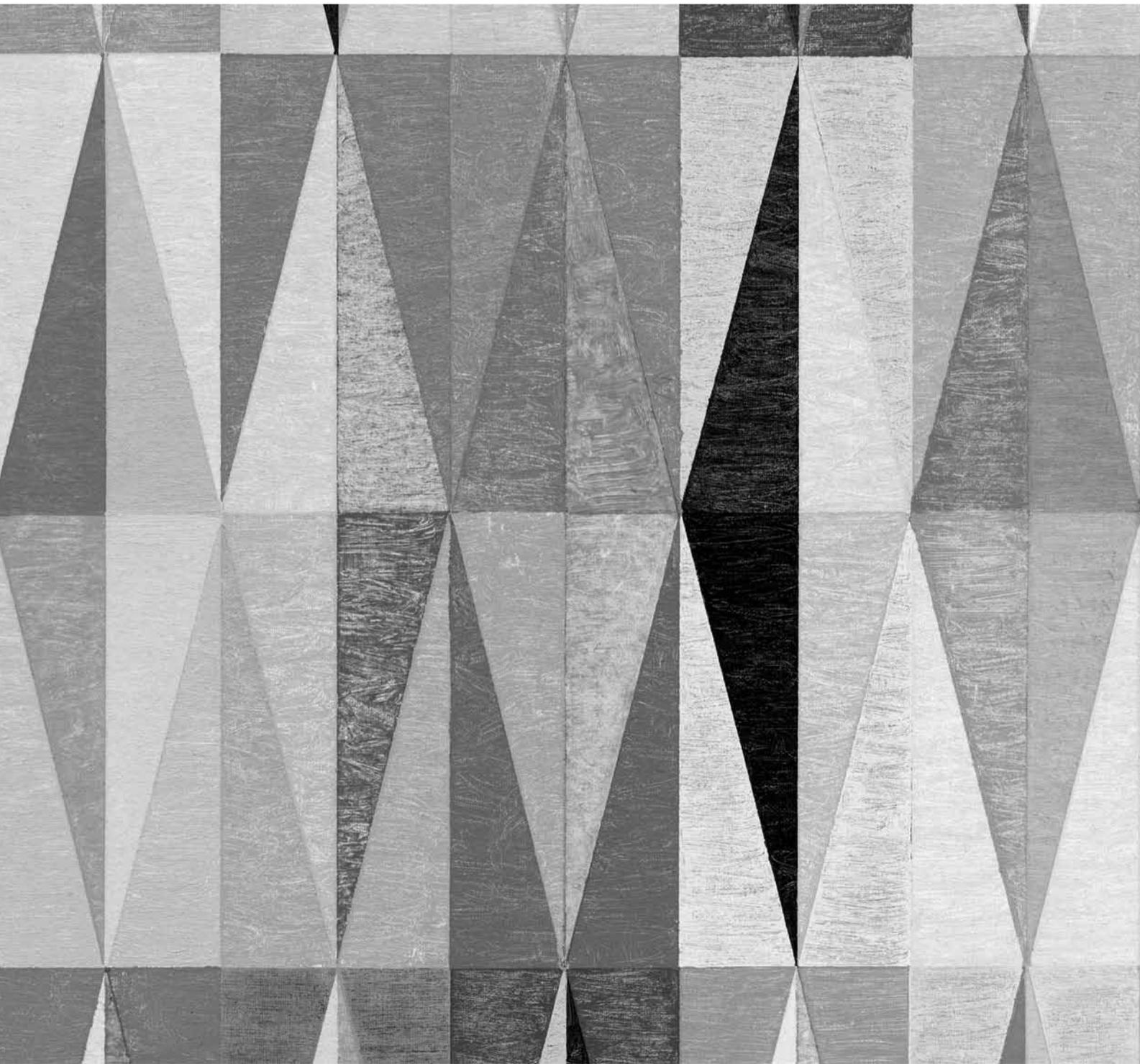


THE WHOLE EARTH BIGGS & COLLINGS

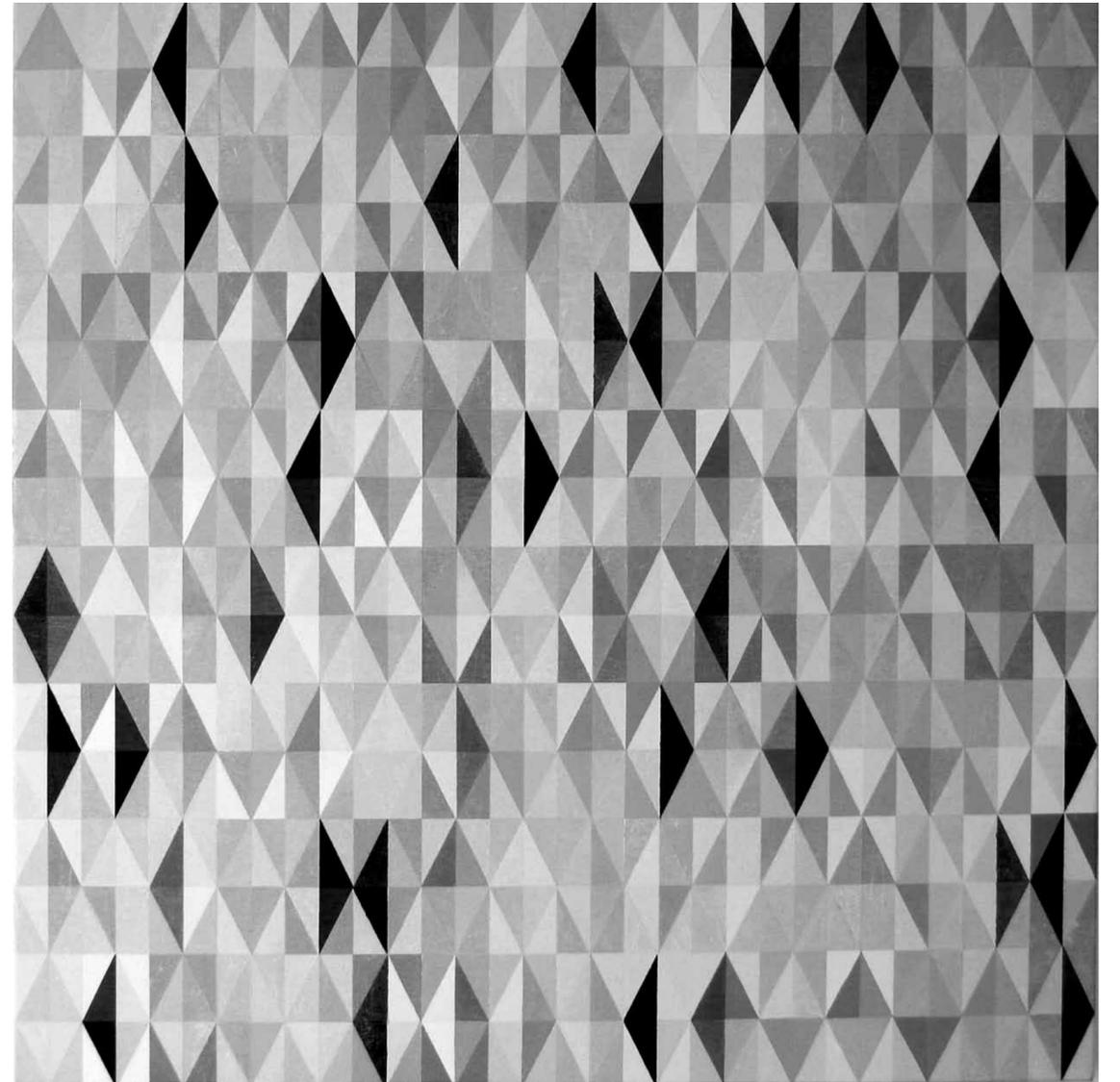
VIGO GALLERY 12. 01. – 10. 02. 2012



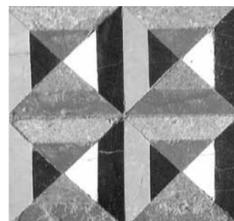
colour, pattern and repetition to create complex images that seem to us to be truthful about the sensation of seeing.

Biggs & Collings

Our paintings connect to the physical, sensual world. We believe colour and form can produce a structural space that is like observable reality. Instead of depicting recognizable objects we use



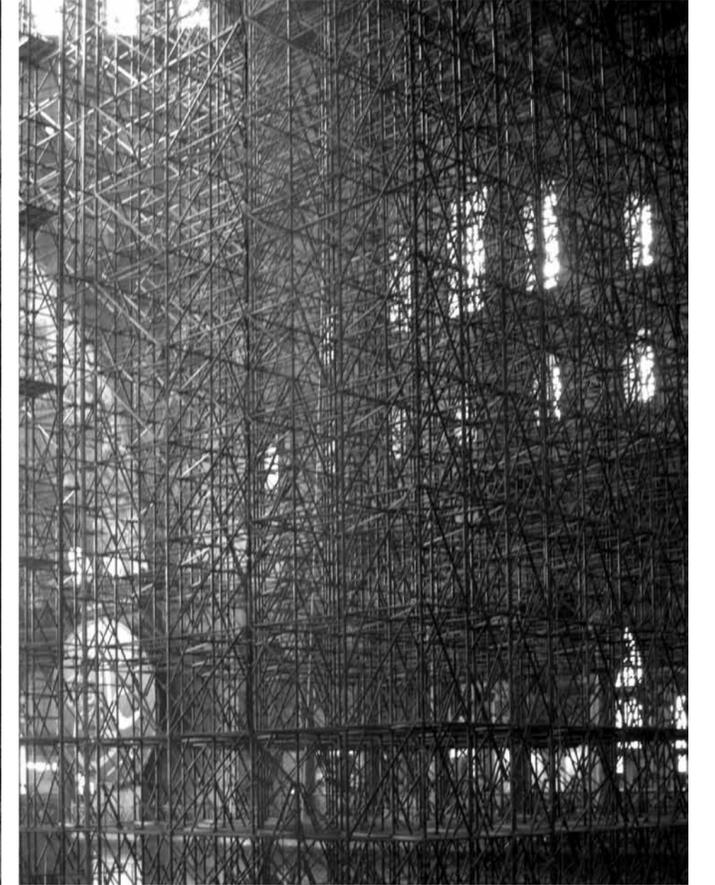
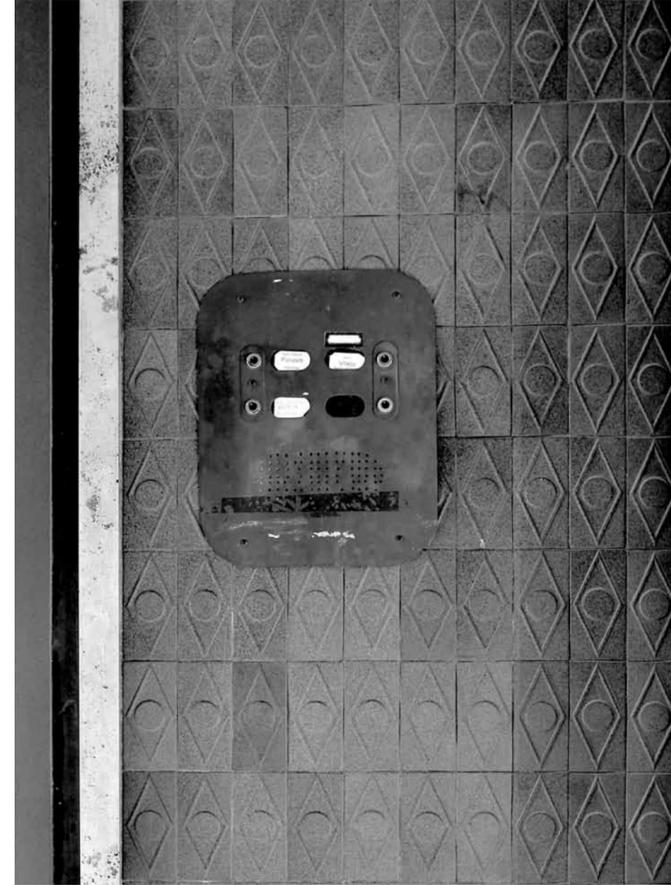
Mudlark, 2010, Biggs & Collings, Oil on Canvas, 40x40 in.



West Wittering

Genoa
Venice

The paintings are intensely visual so they can be effectively metaphorical. These photos are a clue to how we look. We're fascinated by patterns and structures in the things we see around us, every day, all the time. But when we see works of art we're amazed by their power to communicate. We think it comes from impressions and ideas finding a compressed visual form. The difference with artworks in galleries is that the job of arranging has already been done by an artist, whereas when we're taking photos of floors or doors or whatever, we're doing that work of looking ourselves, finding visual organisation in the world. This is what we aim to translate in our paintings – our own compression of reality.

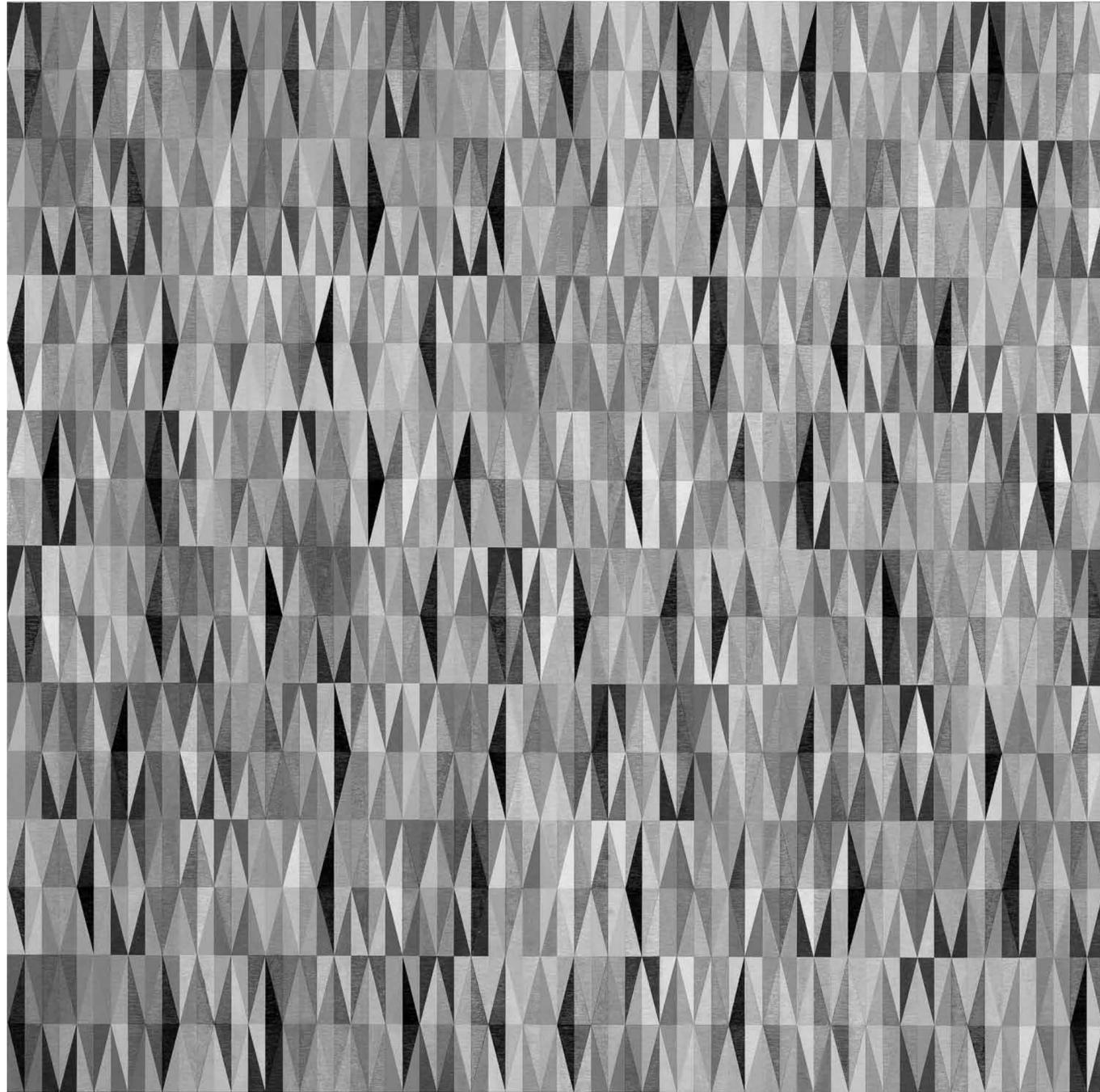


Our titles come from Genesis, which is about origins. We're interested in forms in visual art going back a long time. In the Middle Ages decoration in churches and mosques responded to the building's architecture. In the first case it was elaborated into sign-like representations distributed around the place, and in the second it took the form of pure pattern (derived from three sources: script, stylised foliage and pure geometry). The shapes of arches, domes and pillars generated the rhythms, divisions and incidents of the art. Worshippers expected an

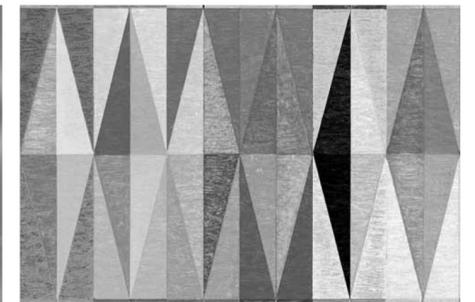
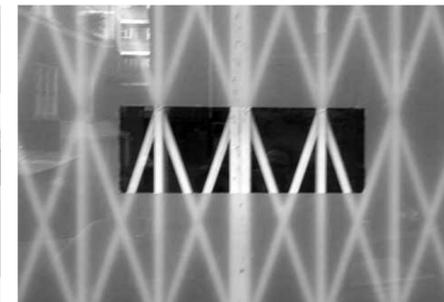
appropriate visual environment, one that at the same time had its own internal reality, pulsing and vibrating, repeating and varying, arriving at a symmetry full of unpredictable richness, so it appeared to shift and break down and re-order itself as you looked. (No doubt Solomon's temple in Jerusalem a thousand years before Christ was just as good.) Theosophical abstracts by Mondrian are as ambitious as this, and Paul Klee discovered his sense of visual musicality by painting watercolours of a mosque: we identify with these personal engagements with materials and ideas

by modernists who believed that style is just a vehicle. They put a lot of awkward labour into what they did. They placed one thing next to another, created a vibration, made it make sense, and believed it went back forever.

Marx on artistic labour:
"Really free labour, the composing of music, for example, is at the same time damned serious and demands the greatest effort."



Toil of our Hands, 2011, Biggs & Collings, Oil on Canvas, 80x80 in.



Methwold
 Lakenheath Bexwell
 Stoke-on-Trent Edware Road A Flaming Sword
 Tottenham

1. A FLAMING SWORD

Paintings of the Bible are not visual versions of what's in the Bible. Religious art comes from a visual tradition with its own rules. The look of gloriousness comes from a tradition of visual metaphors for glory, in which art provides contexts of shimmering beauty for objects, light, architecture, nature, clothing, bodies, gestures and expressions. Think of the Bible as culture generally and think of art's place in culture. There is the symbolic meaning and then there is its shimmering context. We isolate the shimmer, because it makes sense for our time to do that. There's a structure, you can't miss it, and then there's the arrangement of colours and tones that makes it up. When we're working we're not concerned with whatever else might be communicated. We feel that's for others to interpret. For us at this stage arrangement is the ultimate point. There's nowhere else to go.

5. THE PHILISTINES' LAND

The colours in our paintings aren't arrived at mechanically but through intuition. They relate to the visual environment that everyone experiences. This environment tends to be man-made and is constantly acted upon by light. We're convinced from our experience of making work that the old art school cliché "light is colour" is true (even though we never understood what it meant in a technical or scientific sense, and we fall asleep at any mention of the colour theories of Chevreul or Goethe and so on). The paintings respond to a transformation of the visible world that happens constantly through the action of light. They offer a kind of record of it, though not a slavish one.

2. TOIL OF OUR HANDS

Each colour is divided into light and dark and each recurs many times as a kind of set that is distributed at various points around the canvas so it creates a visual pulse. The final form consists of many such sets adjusted in relation to each other so there is an overall rhythmic pattern, like syncopation in music. When someone looks at it we hope they see something like the reflections on the surface of a river, unpredictable and changeable but always possessing a sense of believable order. The reason the colours are divided into different tones, and there is so much variety of colour as well as differences in handling (so surfaces can be transparent or opaque, busy or flat, scumbled, ruffled and distressed or filmy and sheer) is that we want the overall image to be restless, like life, hard to take in all in one go.

6. FIFTY RIGHTEOUS WITHIN THE CITY

It's not that a work is first imagined and then executed, like a composer who first imagines his music and then wishes to hear it performed by an orchestra. The colours weren't all thought up at once, as they appear in the finished painting, they emerged bit by bit. The tension in the final arrangement comes from accumulated individually considered relationships. To try to pre-plan the colour would certainly be boring, but in any case it would be impossible. Our procedure is that we start somewhere and then keep going with more decisions until the balance is right. (Which is only to say the making is the same as with any visually sophisticated art.) The final arrangement is reached not when every part of the canvas is covered but when there is a restlessly changing buzz of different colour vibrations with no dead notes.

3. EVERY LIVING SUBSTANCE

The paintings are nothing to do with obsession, passion or individual quirks. Each starts with a random colour, usually from whatever we were just working on. After that it's a matter of conscious relationships that seem right.

7. THE EARTH DIVIDED

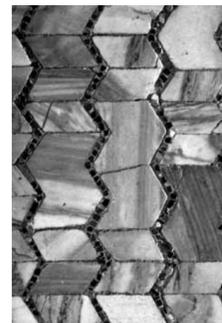
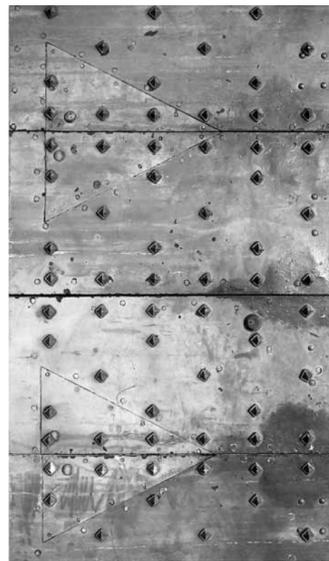
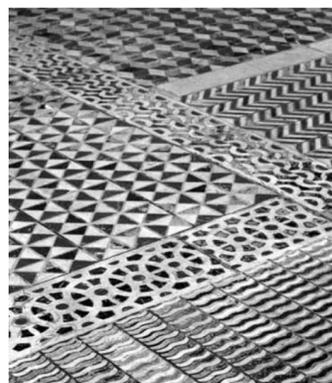
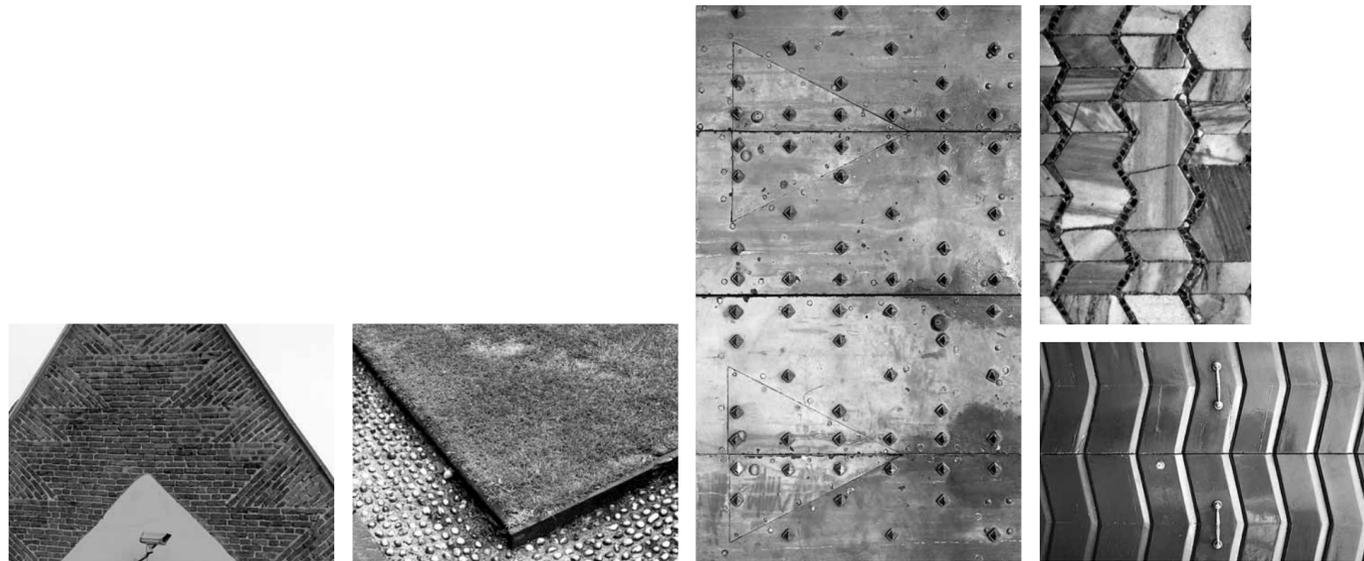
Arrangement is timeless, it is fundamental to human experience, but precisely because it's so essential it can be overlooked. When tourists are confronted by abstract patterns in a mosque, say, in which order is taken to an amazing level, they often interpret what they're seeing as merely all that can be done when depiction is forbidden. Nowadays arrangement is experienced as part of shopping. In art culture it's no longer mentioned, but with these paintings you can't avoid it. It is distilled so it becomes intense and you are forced to ask questions: what causes what, what came first?

4. INHABITANTS OF THE CITIES

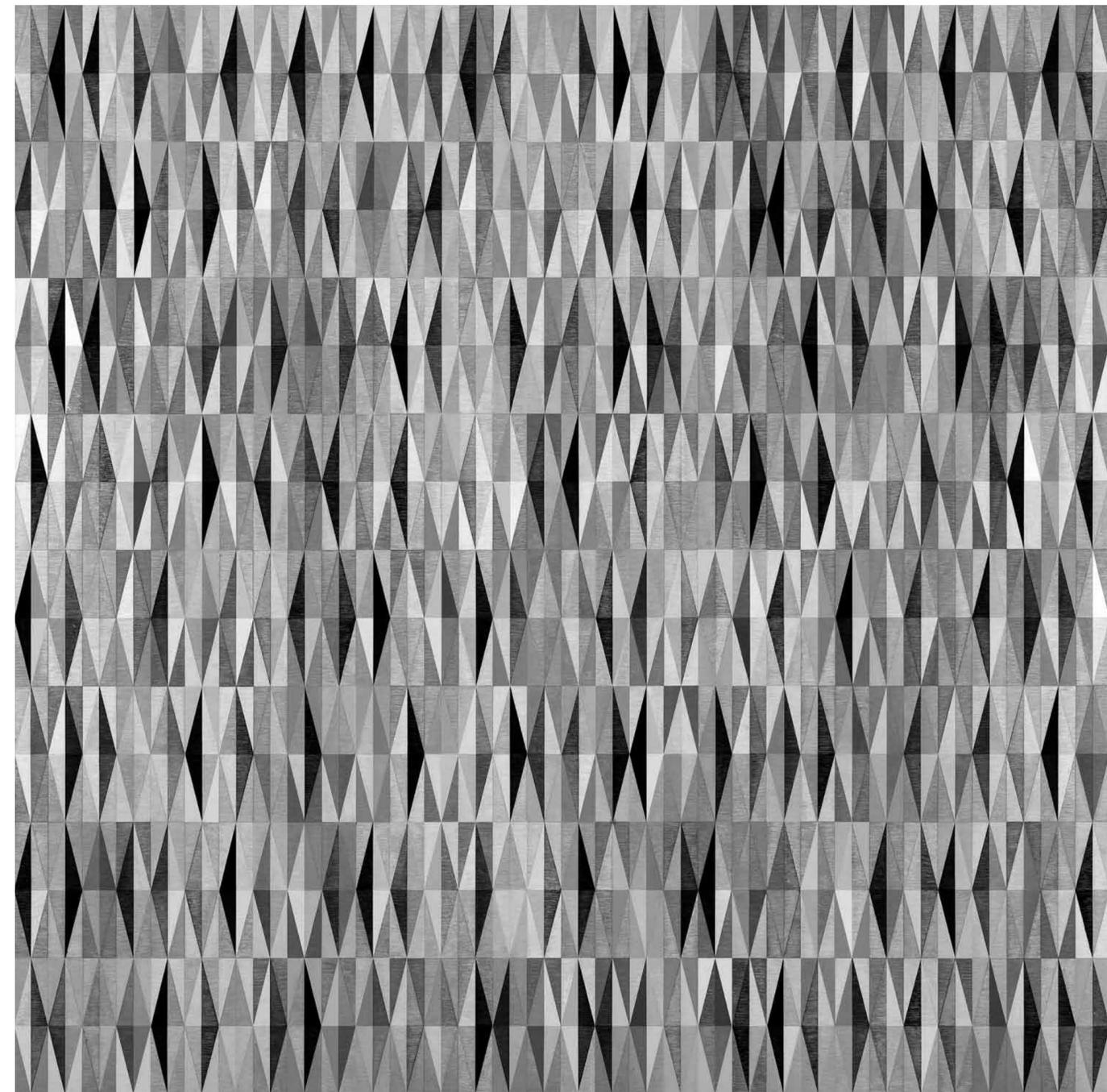
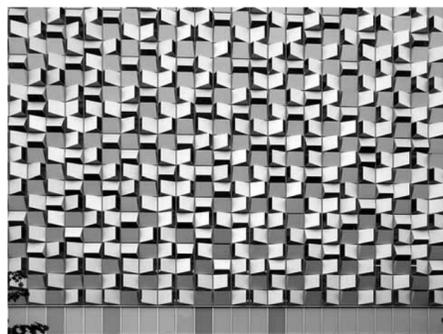
By "seem right" we mean we could imagine a relationship becoming interesting, or maybe we don't know what will happen, but it looks as if it might be promising. In our procedure not really knowing is important, and irritatingly, it sometimes seems important to put in something positively horrible in order to increase the feeling of uncertainty about what will happen.

8. DUST OF THE EARTH

Some people saw some paintings and they didn't know what to make of them, because they assumed they were looking at ironic abstracts (knowing that the fashion for that went out several years ago). They couldn't see they were looking at real ones, because they'd long ago forgotten what a real one was.



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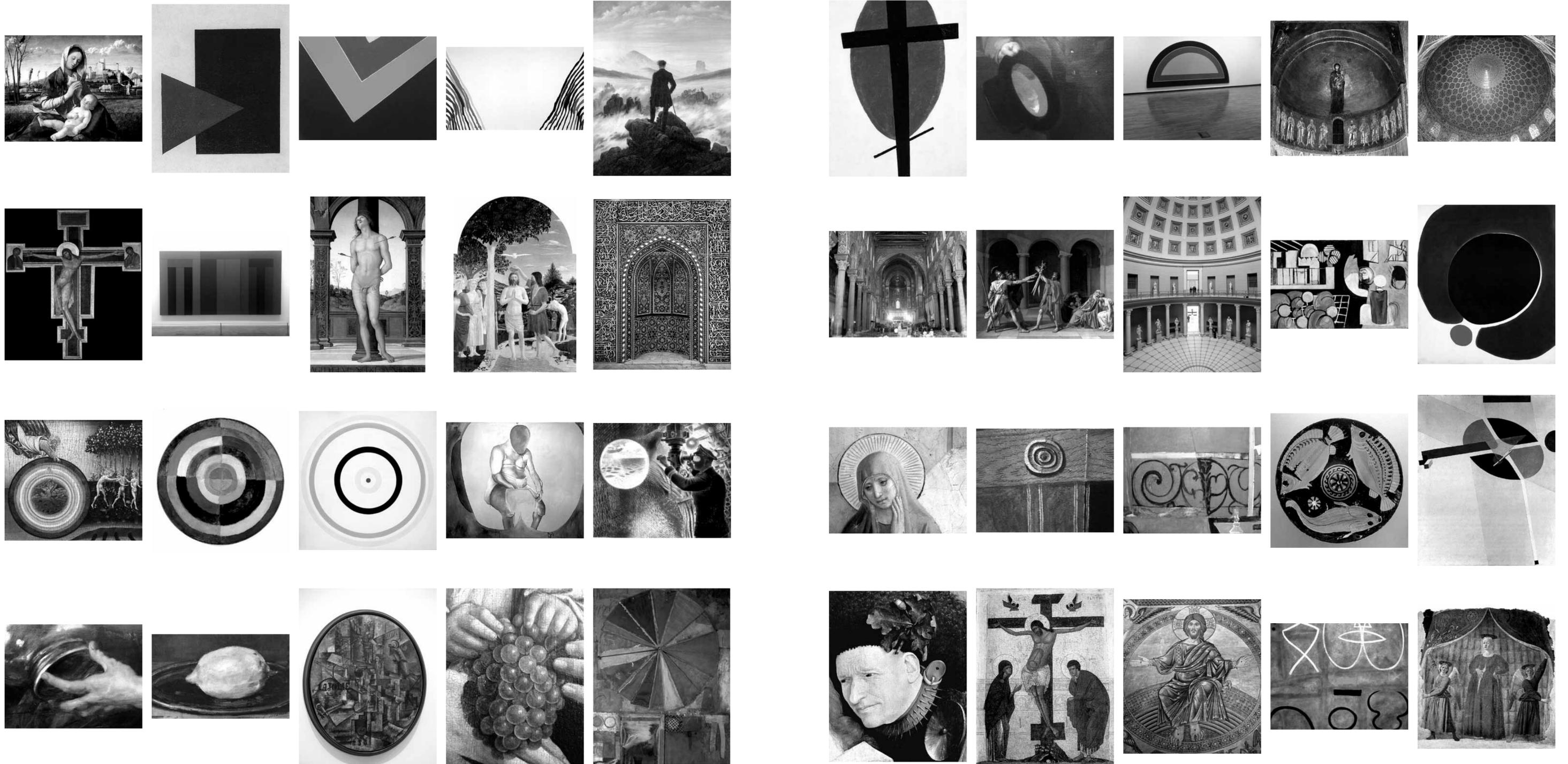


A Flaming Sword, 2011, Biggs & Collings, Oil on Canvas, 80x80 in.

Stoke Ferry Cambridge Genoa Ravenna
 Florence Classe Pietrasanta
 Sheffield

Forms in artworks everywhere from the beginning of history to the present moment are arranged in verticals, rows, tangles, pulverised networks of shimmering points of light, all sorts of different structures.

Forms continue across centuries, the same structural traditions recur. Art is only a concentrated, honed, self-conscious version of the arranging that goes on in life all the time.



Bellini 1505
Cimabue c 1265
Paulo 1445
Rubens 1630

Malevich 1915
Marden 1980
DeLaunay 1912
Manet 1880

Stella 1969
Perugino 1495
Noland 1961
Picasso 1912

Louis 1961
Piero della Francesca c 1455
Kippenberger 1988
Flemish c 1450

Friedrich 1818
Islamic c 1350
Ravillious 1941
Rauschenberg 1954

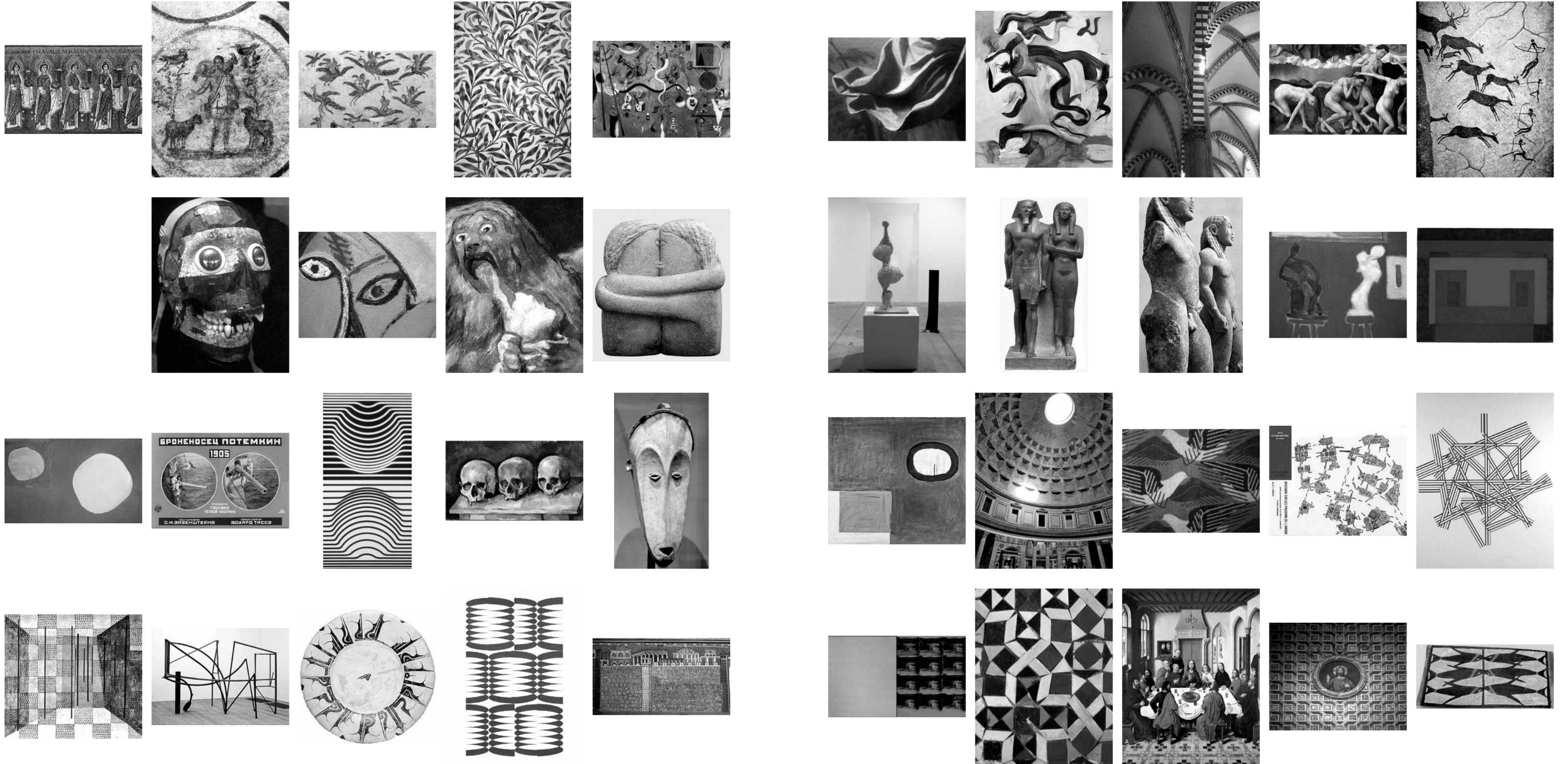
Malevich 1922
Byzantine 12th century
Fra Angelico c 1445
Bosch c 1500

Goya 1806
David 1784
Braque 1929
Byzantine

Stella 1968
Schinkel 1828
Matisse 1916
Byzantine

Byzantine 12th century
Matisse 1916
Greek c 350 BC
Gottlieb 1949

Islamic 17th century
Oliitski 1962
Lissitsky 1923
Piero della Francesca c 1455



Byzantine 15th century

Roman Christian 3rd century

Roman 3rd century

Morris 1887

Miro 1924

Poussin

De Kooning 1982

Alberti c 1469

Van der Weyden c 1500

Prehistoric c 15,000 BC

Heron 1966

Aztec c 1500

Picasso 1906

Goya 1800

Brancusi 1912

Warren 2011

Egyptian c 2000 BC

Greek c 700 BC

Matisse 1911

Albers 1947

Klee 1932

Rodchenko 1929

Vasarely 1969

Cézanne c 1900

Gambian c 1900

Rigden 2005

Pantheon c 126 AD

British 1950

Debord 1967

Martin 1982

Islamic 10th century

Harris 2011

Byzantine 6th century

Warhol 1963

Byzantine 12th century

Flemish c 1450

Gothic 14th century

Aboriginal 1976

And **the whole earth** was of one language, and of one speech.

So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a **flaming sword** which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.

He named him Noah and said, "He will comfort us in the labour and **painful toil of our hands** caused by the ground the Lord has cursed."

And every **living substance** was destroyed which was upon the face of the ground, both man, and cattle, and the creeping things, and the fowl of the heaven; and they were destroyed from the earth: and Noah only remained alive, and they that were with him in the ark.

And he overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground.

And Abraham sojourned in the **Philistines' land** many days.

Suppose there be **fifty righteous within the city**: will you also destroy and not spare the place for the fifty righteous that are there?

And unto Eber were born two sons: the name of one was Peleg; for in his days was **the earth divided**; and his brother's name was Joktan.

And the Lord God formed man of the **dust of the earth**, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.

VIGO GALLERY
1st Floor
22 Old Bond Street
London W1S 4PY

Tel +44 (0)20 7491 1485
info@vigogallery.com
www.vigogallery.com

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