





Aspects of recent New Zealand art

# The Grid

Lattice and Network

Auckland City Art Gallery 1983

Cover: Robert McLeod  
*Tartan Box 2 1976/1977*  
cat. No. 10

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## Foreword

by T.L. Rodney Wilson, Director  
Auckland City Art Gallery

*The Grid* is the second in the series of exhibitions entitled *Aspects of Recent New Zealand Art*. Like the *New Image* show which preceded it, it is a curatorial exhibition. By that we mean each of the exhibitions identifies a prevailing concern of a number of artists, certain shared themes, or certain stylistic affinities, and explores them. In each case the curator will have brought together the works of several artists who may be aware of each other, may even admire and have an empathy with each other's work, but who will probably not have felt themselves part of any shared concern.

The series does not set out to 'survey' New Zealand art of the 1970s. The exhibitions will not finally add up to a complete story of New Zealand art of that decade and into this. Instead they will represent certain manifestations, giving a considered account of each.

*The Grid*, curated by Andrew Bogle, typifies this approach. The show represents artists as diverse as Maddox and Walters or Killeen and Thorburn, for Bogle has seen the grid as a unifying framework drawing together artists whose imagery, gesture and paint surfaces are highly individual. He has identified others; earlier artists and the artisans of other cultures, who have subjected their vision to the discipline of the grid, and he has discussed parallel manifestations of the aesthetic of geometry, but for the purposes of this exhibition he has confined himself to painters of the 1970s working with non-figurative imagery.

We are very grateful to those who have assisted in the preparation of the exhibition; to the artists John Hurrell, Richard Killeen, Robert McLeod, Allen Maddox, Don Peebles, Ian Scott, Ray Thorburn, Geoffrey Thornley, Gordon Walters and Mervyn Williams; to the owners who so very generously have agreed to part with their works for the considerable period required for a national tour; to the New Zealand Art Gallery Directors Council as touring agent and to the Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council for its generous sponsorship.

## The Grid

### Lattice and Network

by Andrew Bogle  
Senior Curator

- grid, n. Frame of spaced parallel bars, grating; wire network between filament and plate of valve; system of numbered squares printed on military etc. map and forming basis of map references; network of lines, railways, electric-power connections, etc.
- lattice, n. Structure of cross laths with interstices serving as screen, door, etc.; (also *lattice-work*, laths so arranged; *lattice bridge*, made with lattice girders, *lattice frame* or *girder*, girder made of two flanges connected by iron lattice-work; *lattice window*, one having lattice, also one with small panes set in diagonal lead-work. Hence latticed.
- network, n. Arrangement with intersecting lines and interstices recalling those of net, complex system of railways, rivers, canals, etc., ramification.

(The Concise Oxford Dictionary)

Some months ago an Australian colleague, visiting Auckland for the first time, remarked on his rounds of galleries and private collections that the grid seemed to recur in contemporary New Zealand painting with remarkable frequency. His comment raised the question whether grid painting was more pronounced in New Zealand than in Australia, or simply part of a larger international phenomenon, given the pre-eminence of the grid in modern art since Mondrian. This led to a discussion about the origins of the grid and possible regional characteristics. It is to issues such as these that this essay and the selection of paintings in the accompanying exhibition are addressed.

The most intensive period of grid painting in this country has been the decade 1970 to 1980. Since then its role has declined. The artists who used the grid, lattice or network device during this period include John Hurrell, Paul Johns, Richard Killeen, Colin McCahon, Robert McLeod, Allen Maddox, Milan Mrkusich, Philip O'Sullivan, Don Peebles, Carl Sydow, Ray Thorburn, Geoffrey Thornley, Ian Scott, Gordon Walters and Mervyn Williams.

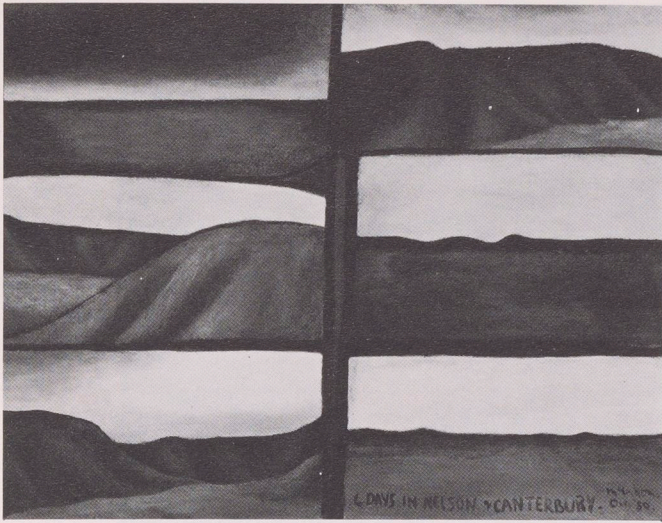
In the present context, what is meant by grid painting is works incorporating non-mimetic grids as a formal compositional device. While this category does not exclude figurative paintings, all of the works in this exhibition are in fact non-figurative. The reason is that in formal abstract paintings of the type represented here the essentially formal role of the grid is most clearly in evidence, without the confusion of any external reference. It follows that paintings of this kind are autonomous aesthetic statements and are relatively uninformed by cultural or environmental factors which are unique to the countries in which they were created. Twentieth-century grid painting is an international phenomenon.

It is almost traditional to analyse New Zealand painting in terms of special regional factors. Certainly there is much to be made of this country's geographical isolation, colonial history and unique landscape. It has even been earnestly argued that the distinctive New Zealand light has had a profound impact on a certain New Zealand hard-edged style. Our landscape has been the dominant subject in New Zealand painting since Sydney Parkinson accompanied Captain Cook on his first voyage. But examining the phenomenon of abstract grid painting in New Zealand in terms of unique cultural and geographical factors is an unrewarding exercise.

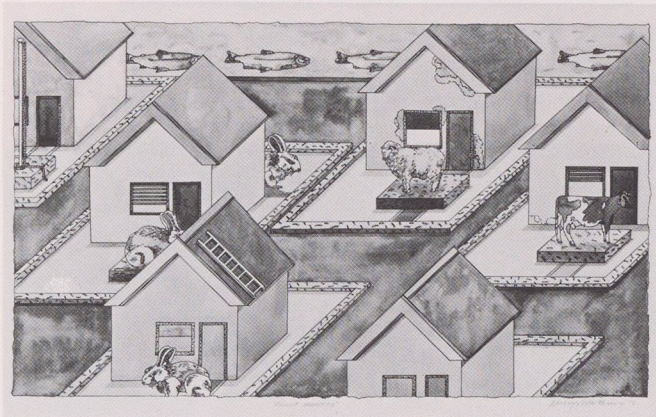


Rita Angus *Fog, Hawke's Bay* 1966/1968  
oil on hardboard 597 x 889 mm  
collection: Auckland City Art Gallery





Colin McCahon *Six Days in Nelson and Canterbury* 1950  
oil on board 875 x 1120 mm  
collection: Auckland City Art Gallery  
Presented by the artist, per the Auckland Art Gallery Associates, 1978



Denys Watkins *Fringe Benefits* 1978  
watercolour and ink 470 x 790 mm  
collection: Auckland City Art Gallery  
Presented by the Auckland Art Gallery Associates, 1979



John Johns *The Taranaki Plains, looking over the littoral to the town of Hawera and Taranaki Mountain*  
gelatin silver  
Photograph: New Zealand Aerial Mapping Ltd, Hastings  
J.H. Johns for Department of Lands and Survey

There are some New Zealand landscape paintings where the grid has been employed as a formal device and where a thematic connection can be discerned between grid and subject. Rita Angus's *Fog, Hawke's Bay* 1966 - 1968 is based upon an implicit, not explicit, grid structure. In this painting the patchwork organisation of the picture surface alludes to the patterns paddocks make in Hawke's Bay dairy farms. The picture surface has been ruled off into a grid of two-inch squares. By means of this modular system the proportion of farm buildings, telegraph poles, five-bar gates, etc. have been geometrically gauged and their positions plotted. The side of one of the farm buildings, for example, takes up the full width of one of the squares. A white five-bar gate takes up the full width of one of the squares diagonally below. A telegraph pole is aligned vertically one unit to the left of the barn, and so on. The squares have even been used to govern the application of the paint and the direction of the brush strokes.

Other examples of figurative painting incorporating formal grids are Colin McCahon's *Six Days in Nelson and Canterbury* (1950), which comprises six small landscapes set like glass panes into a painted lattice framework; Michael Illingworth's *The Golden Kiwi I* (1965), where the doll-like figures enclosed in a grid-like structure of small compartments suggest the compartmentalisation of New Zealanders' lives and thinking in quarter-acre patches of suburbia. Denys Watkins' *Fringe Benefits* (1978) depicts rows of gaily coloured 'ticky-tacky' houses, formally arranged in an isometric grid pattern, which parody the seriality of suburban architecture.

Each of the above four figurative paintings is regulated by a formal grid pattern. And, to reiterate, a thematic connection between the grid pattern and the landscape subject can be demonstrated. No such connection, however, can be made in an abstract grid painting. What one can do, however, is look at the New Zealand landscape as a convenient metaphor for the dialectical motion of human thought informing a good number of the abstract grid paintings in the present exhibition. Gunnar Olsson has described this dialectical motion as,

"... the struggle between vagueness and precization, between ambiguity and certainty, between free and structured thinking, between hermeneutic creation and objectified representation, between essence and existence, between thought imposing itself on reality and reality imposing itself on thought, between the daring groping for change and the comfortable resort to dogma, between the truth of internal negation and the inevitability of categorisation, between our need to be free like a bird and to be tied down like a kite."<sup>(1)</sup>

This dichotomy is expressed in the patterns that civilisations impose on their environments. Wherever cities stand and fields lie, mankind has impressed upon its landscape the patterns of an ordering mind. The ultimate expression of this urge to order is New York's Manhattan with its grid plan of numbered avenues and streets and perpendicular grids of glass and steel. New York's natural topography has been almost completely effaced. The New Zealand landscape reflects a compromise between man and nature.

An area such as New Plymouth, seen from the air, is a patchwork of pasture and cultivated plots, accentuated here and there by windbreaks, fences and ditches. Across this artificial pattern meander rivers in visual counterpoint to the prevailing chequered pattern. In places, where the terrain rises too steeply for cultivation, the medley of untamed nature — forest, scrub, outcrops of rock, volcanoes, gorges, etc. — disrupts the organised pattern of agriculture. In other places, bodies of water — marshes, ponds, lakes — are scattered about the terrain in an apparently haphazard fashion. Where agriculture extends to the coastline the patchwork pattern terminates irregularly. This, then, is the formal interface of man and nature, as seen from an aircraft — the geometry of man measured against the medley of nature.

It has been argued by some historians that Mondrian's use of the grid was conditioned by the unique Dutch landscape — flat pastureland dominated by the horizon and the vertical axes of trees. But Mondrian's involvement with the grid was also influenced by his study of architectural facades. In spite of this, he felt that Cubism was not fulfilling its potential for abstraction, being too involved with natural subject matter. The task of the new art, he believed, was not to analyse our perceptions of the real world but to investigate the essence of reality itself — what he called "pure reality". For him, this began by comprehending the interrelationships of polarities in nature and the conflict of opposites — male and female, vertical and horizontal, black and white, warm and cool. Mondrian saw horizontals and verticals as fundamental to all forms — the horizon versus gravity.

Under the influence of mystic theosophist doctrine, Mondrian abandoned any reference to natural subject matter. He now saw the natural forms of the world in terms of shifting dominance of one polarity over another. He envisaged "pure reality" as a perfect equilibrium of polarities.

Mondrian's mystical approach to the grid was shared by a number of his contemporaries such as Kasimir Malevich and the De Stijl painters — Theo van Doesburg, Vilmos Huszar and Bart van der Leck — although for van Doesburg and Huszar the experience of using grid supports in their earlier stained-glass work was fundamental to the use of the motif in their painting. An important aspect of De Stijl painting was the arrival at formal relations not by a series of abstractions from a physical model, such as a bowl of fruit or a guitar, but from an intellectual construct. But Cubism paved the way to pure formal abstraction by promoting increasingly geometric images. Dissatisfied with Cubism, some artists saw a need to develop a type of painting which stood on its own terms, free from any symbolic, narrative or historical iconography. The De Stijl artists strove to express the universal aspect of nature, not just its incidentals. They sought a balance in their compositions which would not suffer the loss of a single element. What's more, they adhered to Maurice Denis's precept, "A painting, before it is a horse, a nude or some sort of anecdote, is essentially a flat surface covered with colours in a certain order."

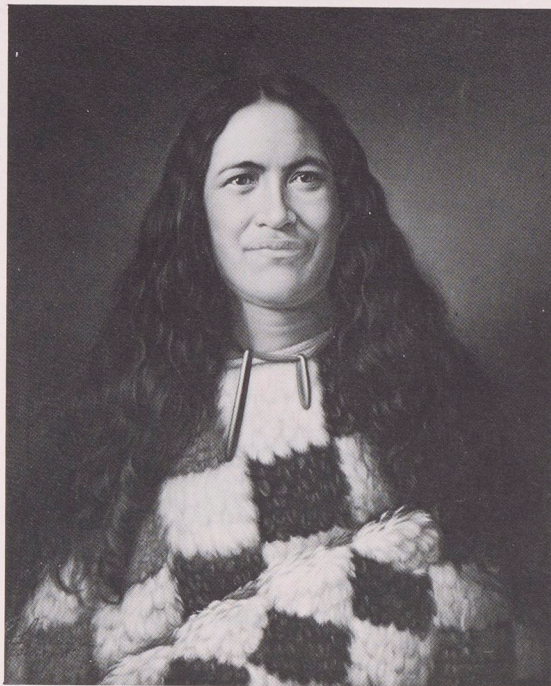
One of the primary attributes of the grid is its flatness; it maps a surface. Imposed on any painting it asserts its flatness. The grid is an organising structure, a system of repeating units extending logically in all planar directions, infinitely. The grid is non-symbolic. It has no physical denotations. On the contrary, all grid-type patterns and objects refer back to an ideal. When we see a grid we are not reminded of, for example, a waffle iron; but inevitably, when we look at the coffered surface of a waffle iron we will see a grid. The essential monothematic grid is a symmetrical non-mimetic, non-hierarchical construct.

Geometric images are inherent in many decorative and applied arts such as plaiting, weaving, tile work, fabric-printing and patchwork. The warp and weft of weaving or plaiting is more sympathetic to a rectilinear form than a curvilinear one, which accounts for the universality of the lozenge, triangle, star, cross and grid in the applied arts of diverse cultures through the ages. The shapes which fit together best and have the advantage of being interchangeable are simple geometric ones which, when assembled in a regular pattern, automatically generate grids.

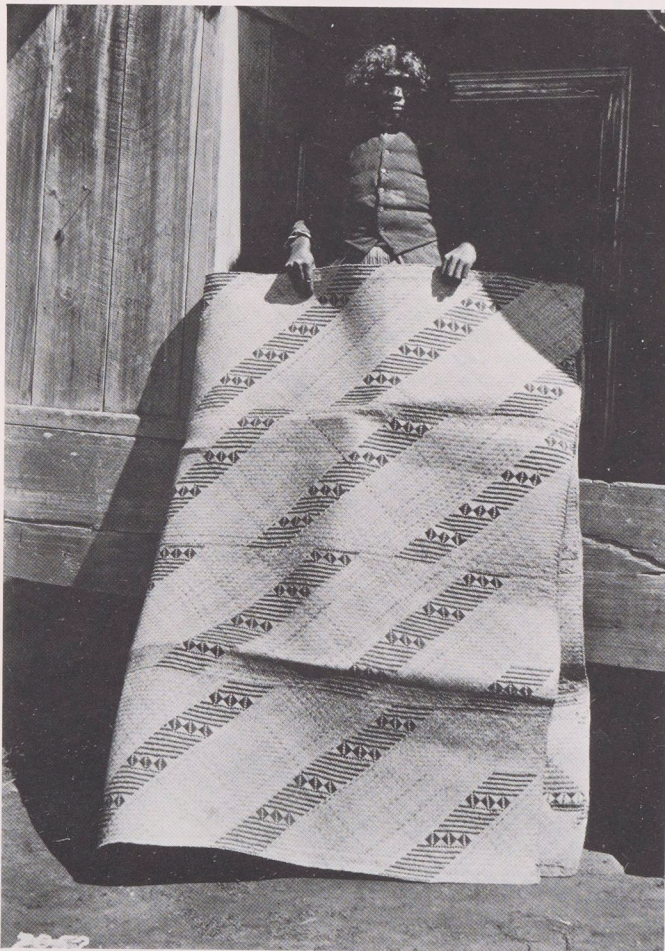
The grid has a long history in the art of tribal cultures. In E. H. Gombrich's opinion the reason geometric patterns occur so frequently in tribal art can be attributed to their infrequent occurrence in nature:

"The human mind has chosen those manifestations of regularity which are recognisably a product of a controlling mind, and this stands out against the random medley of nature."(2)

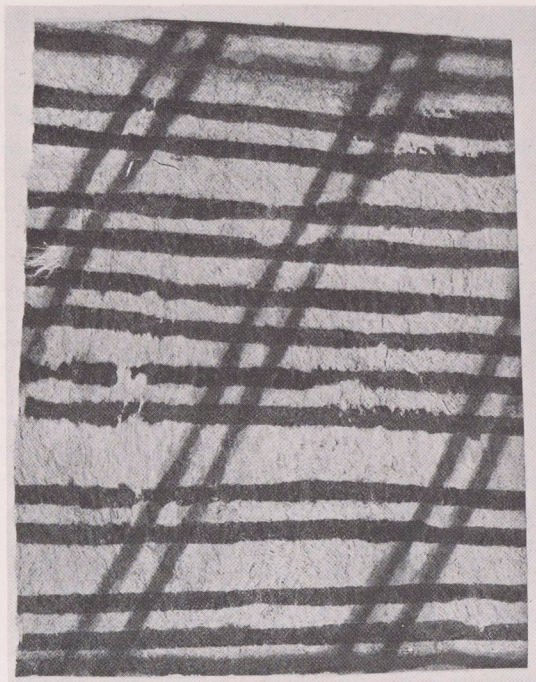
Although the grid might seem to occur infrequently in nature



Gottfried Lindauer *Julia Martin in Whakapueka pa near Nelson*  
1874  
oil on canvas 808 x 692 mm  
collection: Auckland City Art Gallery

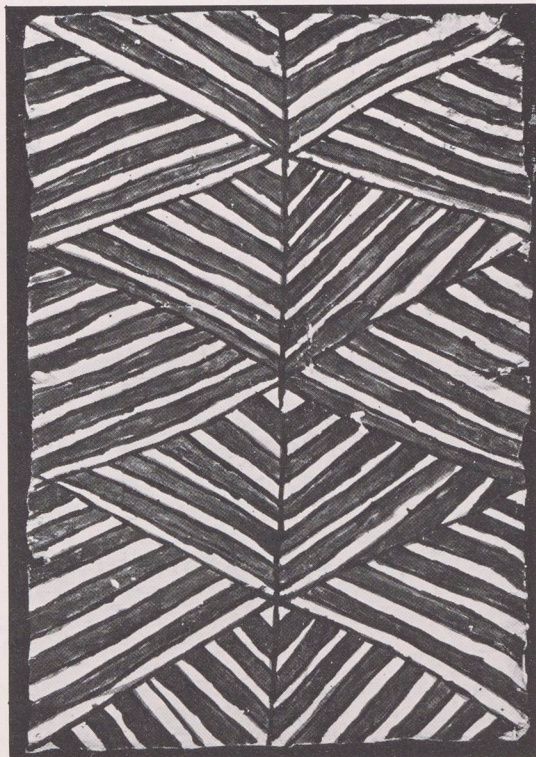


James MacDonald *Takapau made by Mrs Pokai* c.1900  
gelatin silver (reprint from original negative;  
National Museum of New Zealand B919)  
collection: Auckland City Art Gallery



Specimen 3 *tapa ahu* from Oahu, Hawaiian Islands in: A Catalogue of the Different Specimens of Cloth Collected in the Three Voyages of Captain Cook to the Southern Hemisphere: with a Particular Account of the Manner of the Manufacturing the Same in the various Islands of the South Seas: Partly Extracted from Mr Anderson and Reinhold Forster's Observations, And the Verbal Account of some of the most knowing of the Navigators: With Some Anecdotes that Happened to them Among the Natives. London 1787

Collection: Auckland Public Library  
Presented by James Tannock Mackelvie  
Photograph: Ronald Brownson



*Tapa ngatu tahina* from Tonga (c.1970)  
Private collection, Auckland

it is by no means absent. In the world of insects and spiders the honeycomb and the cobweb are instances of order based upon the grid pattern. In the organic world, where it is more common but usually invisible to the human eye, the grid regulates the articulation of plant cells — in grass-stalks for example, like bricks in a chimney. The maize cob is an instance of a macroscopic grid in the organic world.

As in nature so in artifice, efficient assembly favours standardisation of components, whether the task should be the construction of a brick wall, the laying of a tile or parquet floor, or the stitching of a patchwork quilt. Among the islands of the Pacific region various tribal cultures have employed the grid in their decorative arts. New Zealanders do not have to look far to find examples — the lattice work of *tukutuku* panels, the decorative borders of *taniko* cloaks, the overall geometric patterns of some kinds of feather cloaks, and the intricate latticework of plaited flax baskets and mats, are a few of the examples from traditional Maori art which come to mind. The Polynesian arts of carving, *tapa* and tattooing also feature geometric patterns using the grid.

There seems to be some correlation between ease of assembly and ease of perception in grid patterns, since we can easily grasp the laws underlying grid structures. Once one has grasped how a few of the units interconnect, one has comprehended the articulation of the whole surface; which is why Polynesian and also Islamic craftsmen have traditionally incorporated deliberate irregularities in their designs, by way of an alien colour or geometric mutation somewhere in an overall pattern, to relieve monotony.

The tradition, among Afghani artisans, of incorporating intrusive elements into a repeating pattern, stems from their belief that only God is perfect. P. Weiss has provided a secular explanation for the aesthetic principle underlying this practice:

"Observation of nature ... justifies our instinctive rebellion against the stereotype, against a concept of order so mechanised and rigid as to make no allowance for some degree of latitude for the individual elements within it."<sup>(3)</sup>

For Morse Peckham it is also a sociological issue:

"The drive to order is also a drive to get stuck in the mud."<sup>(4)</sup>

Peckham sees the disjunctive qualities of art as an expression of the human need to counter the rage for order by raising the level of tolerance of discontinuity:

"Art, as an adaptional mechanism, is reinforcement of the ability to be aware of the disparity between behavioural patterns and the demands consequent upon the interaction with the environment."<sup>(5)</sup>

In the present context, Peckham's argument — if we accept it — goes a long way to accounting for the many instances in which painted grids are beset with all sorts of deliberate inconsistencies or disruptions. Further, it helps explain the temporality of the grid vogue in New Zealand art in the 1970s in terms of a need by artists who had used the grid to probe new and more profound levels of discontinuity. From this position one could surmise many of the artists to have progressed from grids to less structured, more open methods of composition. And in fact this assumption is verified by a comparison of a number of the artists' early grid paintings with whatever paintings the 'grids' were succeeded by.

Robert McLeod, for example, abandoned all compositional props after his "Grids and Tartans" series, adopting instead a pointillist splatter technique. Richard Killeen progressed from hard-edge grid paintings with unmodulated colour to figurative cut-outs, the units of which are mutually independent and can be arranged in new compositions each time the work is hung. Mervyn Williams passed from the grid to a more minimal triangular motif and finally to unstructured colour fields. Gordon Walters flirted briefly with the grid but

was committed to the *koru*; over the years the disposition of *koru* elements has become increasingly complex and asymmetric. John Hurrell's "Dice Pieces", although based on a grid, incorporate a high degree of informality by way of chance composition. His subsequent "Map" works dispense with the rigidity of the grid, but with nothing of the "Dice Pieces" fortuitous quality. Within Ian Scott's lattice series the colour schemes become increasingly complex until the variegation of the bands and the field contradicts a logical reading. Don Peebles' grids were at their most formal in his 'letter rack' paintings of the early seventies; later, they became increasingly gestural, finally being succeeded by his "Canvas Reliefs", the flexible canvas strips of which compose themselves differently each time the work is hung. In some of Maddox's recent paintings, the grid, though still present after all these years, has become almost effaced by the looseness and violence of the execution. Thorburn, following his "Modular Series", produced a group of works based on considerably less formal patterns of densely hatched lines. Thornley has not used the grid in an explicit way since his "A" series and "Albus" series of 1974.

It would be facile to assume that the grid is all there is to grid painting. Clearly in many of the works in the present exhibition the grid acts as a rallying device, a prop for expressive or emotive content. Colour may be the expressive vehicle. If the primary concern of these images is structural, and the grid is after all a structural device, then colour would presumably play a minor role.

Obviously colour is a vitally important element in many of the works. Some of Ian Scott's lattice paintings are identical in every respect except in their colour, which leads one to conclude that the lattice is a vehicle for colour, rather than vice versa. Often the colour values of the bands in Scott's lattices condition the proportions of the bands. In McLeod's "Grids and Tartans" the grid is an excuse from having to consciously compose an image, so that the work evolves in an immediate, unselfconscious way. The grid serves to rally a great deal of chromatic and textural incident that otherwise could overwhelm his composition. In Thornley's "Albus" paintings the grid is not an end in itself, but a means of relating what the artist calls the "discrete parts" of the painting, which are the vehicle for the expressive content of the work. For Maddox the grid is a framework to support gestural expression. In Hurrell's "Dice Pieces" it is a way of limiting an otherwise impossibly complex system of variable compositional elements. In Thorburn's "Modular" paintings the grid is often a corollary of the game structure, rather than an explicit motif. For Williams it is a 'springboard' for leaps into the unexpected.

In spite of the one obvious quality that all the works in this exhibition have in common, they are highly individual. Among them are delicate filigrees, dripping tartans, technicolour lattices, undulating scaffoldings, monochromatic grids, kaleidoscopic grids, grids of modular units, silhouetted grids, pastel grids, minimal grids, letter-rack grids, tactile grids, chunky grids, high-tech grids, maze-like grids, severe grids, serene grids, teasing grids, aleatoric grids, even a grid with an affixed butterfly.

January 1983

## John Hurrell

Hurrell's grid paintings possess an erratic aspect which belies their otherwise uncompromising formality. Nowhere is this more pronounced than in the so-called 'dice piece' paintings, which are composed of dice selected variables, coloured lozenges, triangles and bars within a tightly regulated grid or lattice structure. There is an obvious casualness about any composition involving an arbitrary disposition of elements; but in this case it is a far cry from the slap-dash casualness that Francis Bacon had in mind when he asserted that "painting today is pure intuition and luck and taking advantage of what happens when you splash the stuff down".(6) Rather, it is a contrived casualness within a tightly controlled programme of the kind practised by the major contemporary exponent of change in art, John Cage: "I use chance as a discipline."(7)

Hurrell's *Dice Piece I* (cat. No. 2) for example, began as a small lattice sketch on paper. This diagram was then duplicated to obtain a series of score sheets upon which dice decisions were recorded, and selected variable elements and colours were annotated prior to the final execution of the painting. Hurrell has obligingly elaborated this method as follows:

"A spirit duplicator was used to create grids which consisted of eight rows of rectangles, with seven rectangles in each. Each rectangle contained four triangles, and these triangles could be combined in different ways to create two types of diamond or lozenge shapes. One type was a diamond shape with a rectangle in its centre, and the other consisted of a diamond made up of four corners from four rectangles. Two lozenges were positioned in diagonal rows.

"The first dice score, recorded on the score sheet, decided which direction the diagonal rows would start, and the next seven scores determined which of the two lozenge types would be in each row. These decisions each involved two choices; scores one to three for one, and four to six for the alternative.

"In choosing one of the four positions for the central bar, fives and sixes were ignored. However, the full range of the dice was used when six kinds of bar for both lozenge types were invented. In deciding which of three chosen colours would predominate in each individual lozenge, the six possibilities of the dice were divided by three, with two numbers for each colour. The three colours were labelled A, B and C, at this stage. Once it was established which colours to use in filling in the triangles which make up the lozenges, decisions had to be made as to how to treat the internal components of each lozenge, that is, the three small triangles in the centre, the bar itself and the fourth small triangle at its end. It was decided to use the dice as follows: If six was rolled, all the components would remain the same colour as the surrounding larger triangles. If a five, they would all be different. Each unit was designated a number and the specific details settled that way. A red dot was placed on the drawing in those units chosen and a very simple table used to specify which colours were used.

"Up to this point, just the the letters A, B and C were used to designate the colours. Originally, they were to be carefully considered, but it was decided to continue the initial random process further, to allocate six colour numbers and to pick three that way. Here repetition was not considered, except when using the same method for picking the colours for tape line and the grid margin.

"The tonal values, however, were predetermined, as were the size of the canvas and the rectangles, the size of the grid being seen as a fixed format within which the various fortuitous combinations could be explored to maximum effect."(8)

Although the process by which *Dice Piece I* (cat. no. 2) developed is largely fortuitous, within the confines of a grid pattern, the execution is tightly controlled. There is no painterly gesture, edges have been masked with tape, the

range of colours is restricted and their tonal values have been balanced. Every element can be accounted for in terms of a governing programme; the work has developed according to an inner logic. Here lies a paradox; based on a scrupulously systematic process, the composition is illogical since it is based on the mechanism of chance. The relationship between the grid pattern in *Dice Piece I* and its randomly disposed formal components and colour elements is similar to mechanisms of change and development in the natural environment.

The aesthetic resolution of determinate and indeterminate elements in Hurrell's *Dice Piece I* is the kind of formal issue about which P. Weiss has made some penetrating observations:

"Observation of nature ... justifies our instinctive rebellion against the stereotype, against a concept of order so mechanised and rigid as to make no allowance for some degree of latitude for the individual elements within it. True organic order as we know it sets only the general frame and pattern, leaving the precise ways of execution adjustable, and to this extent indeterminate."(9)

*Dice Piece I* was the only painting of its type that Hurrell actually completed, although he attempted another more complex painting which was left unfinished. For what reason?

"I found myself introducing more and more variables and the drawing became very fragmented and complicated. The main problem was where to allow chance to affect the decisions, and when to have fixed arbitrary, or aesthetic, decisions. For example, should I have six choices of canvas stretcher sizes, or six masking tape thicknesses? The list of possible variables seemed infinite and I couldn't find a suitable cutting off point. Consequently I continued to experiment with more formal compositional techniques, as I had done earlier."(10)

The two other paintings by which Hurrell is represented in this exhibition are of a decidedly more formal type than *Dice Piece I*, although *Bars in Two Directions* 1979 (cat. no. 1) looks similar superficially. Both paintings are based on the same lattice pattern and employ the same range of components; lozenges, bars, triangles, although *Bars in Two Directions* is tonally much darker and altogether more regular in both its colour pattern and the disposition of its components. Irregularities in the pattern of *Bars in Two Directions* were made intuitively by the artist and therefore subjectively; whereas in *Dice Piece I* the decision-making was relegated to the dice and was therefore objective.

*Painting in two parts* 1980 (cat. no. 3) departs from the common format of *Dice Piece I* and *Bars in Two Directions*. Basically it is comprised of one grid structure imposed on another. The underlying grid is made up of tiers of rectangles each of which contains a St. Andrew's cross. These crosses are not identical, nor necessarily symmetrical; that is, the arms of the crosses are not always aligned with the diagonals of their enclosing rectangles, but are sometimes lifted slightly, or dropped slightly, as the case may be. For example, in the left hand panel, the arms of the crosses (reading the columns from left to right) are alternately: lowered / even / raised / even / lowered. In the right hand panel the order is: raised / even / lowered / even / raised. The underlying 'misregistered' strips of colour in both panels contribute to a subtle but compelling effect of stress in the lattice pattern which is an optical agitation that 'teases' the stasis of the overlaid grid.

Hurrell's grid paintings work on two levels: firstly as structured patterns of tonally balanced components, apprehended as harmonious and unified compositions (the aesthetic experience); secondly as the realisation of a systematic process, the nature of which the viewer is challenged to establish and decipher (the intellectual experience).

Richard Killeen

Between 1974 and 1978 Killeen produced several series of paintings in which the grid is the pre-eminent subject. Some of the earliest paintings, for example *Tukutuku* 1974 (cat. no. 4), comprise patterns of repeating geometric elements 'floating' on a raw canvas field.

"It is not actually a *tukutuku* panel; it's just a kind of geometric motif ... It's not as if I saw a *tukutuku* panel and said 'I'll do that'. It just grew out of what I was doing and then I related it to *tukutuku* because all those patterns appear in Polynesian art. I was conscious of living in the Pacific and it was a part of my background. I saw a connection between the patterns of Polynesian art and grids. But strangely, it's only now when I have been doing research into all those (Polynesian) things that I found out what I was doing."(11)

After the *tukutuku* paintings Killeen moved from a position of painting within the canvas to extending his patterns right to the edges of the stretcher. Most, but not all, of the paintings of this secondary phase are composed around grids. In *Four Triangles* 1975 (artist's collection), for example, geometric elements spiral out of a pyramidal vortex; yet this painting is atypical of the period. Most are regulated by grid patterns which lie parallel to the picture plane. *Frog Green* 1976 (cat. no. 6) is built upon a complex of three basic grids, coloured in such a way as to create a kaleidoscopic pattern of red, yellow, white and black triangular elements comprising a regular 'faceted' field. Superimposed on this field is another grid of vertical and oblique parallel lines which creates a battery of lozenge shapes. These lozenge shapes have been alternately painted with clear bright colours and left open, like windows, through which the underlying pattern is visible. The overlying and underlying fields are initially perceived as distinct, although where triangles and lozenges of the same colour are contiguous the two patterns merge to create geometric shapes of the third order; lozenges, with wedge-shaped 'prows'.

*Frog Green* is strictly geometric/abstract, in spite of its allusive title. But in other paintings from the same period, for instance *Frog Shooter* 1976 (Auckland City Art Gallery collection), Killeen incorporated small figurative elements such as frogs, fish and insects (like zoology textbook illustrations) into his geometric patterns. In accordance with the non-figurative theme of this exhibition it has been decided to exclude Killeen's 'Frog Shooter'-type paintings.

The 1975 *Three Patterns* (cat. no. 5) is the richest and most complex of all Killeen's grid paintings. The title informs us of a tripartite composition; but the way the patterns interrelate is so complicated that it is impossible to visually separate them. Colours lie in patches near the surface, merging back into the kaleidoscopic patterns of underlying colours, rising to meet and submerge them. This confuses any clear spatial reading and is a significant development of the figure/ground ambiguity observed in *Frog Green*, which is restricted to specific components of a pattern. In *Three Patterns*, spatial ambiguity has run riot over the whole composition so that colours ripple across the surface like reflections of coloured light on cut glass.

From *Frog Green*, which was the last of the complex grids, Killeen went on to produce a number of paintings divided into distinct halves, with figurative elements (fish, frogs, etc.) on one side, separated from geometric elements on the other. However, he soon abandoned this simplistic format:

"It didn't work. I was attempting to combine the elements in a self-conscious way. So I just dropped the figurative side."(11)

The next phase, which consisted of lacquer paintings on aluminium sheet, was ironically based on Polynesian *tapa* designs, although the relationship extends no further than the basic composition of geometric shapes. The aluminium

paintings are immaculately finished with reflective impersonal surfaces and razor-sharp edges, and are dependent on a sophisticated technology in the way of materials and equipment. The lacquer paint of *Black Grid* 1977 (cat. no. 7) is brushed on, but in most of the other aluminium paintings it is sprayed with an industrial spray gun. The overwhelming effect of the minimal designs is 'impact' — they launch themselves off a wall at the viewer, rather than invite his/her approach. In some respects they call to mind danger signs (Radioactive area. Keep out.) or flags. It would appear that the aluminium paintings are enlarged versions of the micro-compositions of certain earlier works such as *Frog Green*; in other words, small areas of kaleidoscopic grid patterns magnified greatly. Apart from the black/white versions, the aluminium paintings employ bright primary colours in contrasting combinations such as red/yellow, red/black, yellow/blue. Colour is always unmodulated.

After the geometric paintings on aluminium Killeen returned to figurative elements of the fish/frog/insect variety which he had employed in earlier works. A period of experimentation yielded the cut-outs which have dominated his work of recent years.

"Before I went overseas in 1976 I had started working on pieces of aluminium as a means of freeing myself from the canvas and stretcher. It took me a long time to get around to the idea that I could shape them ... about two years I suppose. When I came back I continued working on aluminium. I even put figurative elements on aluminium rectangles, on the wall; but it didn't work. It tended to look like wallpaper. So I just went back to doing patterns again, as I was doing before, using one technique with another and continuing like that. That's how I developed the hard-edged geometric aluminium works which, in August 1978, developed into 'cut-outs'. There were a few geometric paintings that were shaped — not just squares — but I didn't show them."(11)

Killeen's cut-outs — painted pieces of aluminium sheet cut with a jig-saw into both figurative and abstract shapes — marked his abandonment of the grid and its inherent closure. In contrast to his grid works the cut-outs incorporate a variable composition. Each cut-out is perforated by a hole by which it hangs from a nail. There is no set arrangement of the various units which comprise each work; every time the work is hung the individual pieces can be rearranged to form a new composition.

In retrospect, Killeen sees the grid as playing a transitional role between two distinct phases in the development of his style:

"The grid was very important to me from the point of view of taking me from a position of painting within the canvas to painting the canvas as a whole; and then, from there, to actually cutting it out. I think what I was doing was more pattern painting perhaps than grid painting. Sometimes the paintings are only grids because they have got a repeating motif. I've tried out different motifs, some more successful than others. Attitude is the most important thing to me. What I do is work on my attitude by doing things that don't agree with whatever else I'm doing. So my attitude is changed by my reaction to what I have done. If I want to do something different I change my attitude by putting myself in a position where it can change."(11)

## Robert McLeod

Robert McLeod considers himself a gestural painter rather than a geometric abstractionist, in spite of the fact that he has used the grid in a number of paintings. A cursory glance at any one of his "Grids and Tartans" series reveals why. The paint is rich and applied loosely, sometimes squeezed directly from the tube. There are no straight lines, no taped edges. The works are a visual testament to the process that created them — its speed, its immediacy, its direction. Few of the paintings have survived; he destroyed those he considered unsuccessful. A Glaswegian, McLeod first experimented with the grid motif in Scotland in 1969, but only one painting from the period, *Kisses for Jan* 1969, is extant.

Upon arriving in New Zealand in 1972, McLeod lost his creative equilibrium in response to the impact of the new environment and shortly afterwards reverted to landscape painting in an effort to find his footing. He also went through an expressionistic phase, which reflected the continuing influence of his compatriot, Alan Davie.

In 1976 he revived the grid motif, and produced the "Grids and Tartans" series, represented here by five paintings. While the series did not exactly stem from any patriotic sentiment, they were stimulated by a consignment of tartan table-cloths his mother sent out from Glasgow; "the idea was a bit of a joke really".(12)

McLeod's liaison with the grid was intense, but temporary. He considers it was a useful compositional device on which to develop a painting spontaneously and freely, without recourse to the normal, preparatory drawings, or the need to consciously compose the painting in progress. Given the governing network of vertical and horizontal lines, the work could evolve almost unconsciously. The question was not what to do next but when to stop. These paintings, in fact, carry a good deal of colour. In *Carelessly Calculated* 1976/1977 (cat. no. 12), the paint is not applied heavily but builds up in numerous layers, so that superimposed grids recede into a deep, illusionistic picture space. The effect is one of considerable richness and complexity which the grid format successfully rallies from the brink of confusion.

On the other hand, *Learning to Count* 1976/1977 (cat. no. 11) is laden with impasto, like icing on a cake, some colours having been squeezed straight on to the canvas. Its colours, lime green, creamy white, guava pink and orange, make it a fruit salad painting in the best sense. The title is a reference to the way he counted out the dabs of colour as he applied them to each compartment of the grid. In places, enamel paint, heavily diluted with linseed oil, has run in tears down the canvas, which is the only indication of the way the painting should hang. The grid of *Learning to Count* seems to stagger under its burden of oil impasto, like a fishing net festooned with seaweed.

In size, McLeod's "Grids and Tartans" range from the large *Lots of Little Landscapes* (2100 x 5500 mm) to the two compact "Tartan Boxes" (190 x 160 mm approximately). By usual standards the "Tartan Boxes" 1976/1977 (cat. nos 9 and 10) are dwarfs of paintings, with the approximate size and shape of small birthday cakes. McLeod made a stretcher for a third 'tartan box', never painted, which he envisaged as being displayed horizontally on a table, like a cake, rather than hanging on a wall. The generic title "Grids and Tartans" needs explaining. The 'grids' are the more compartmentalised paintings, such as the 1977 diptych *Lots of Little Landscapes* (cat. no. 13) in which there is variation in colouring from one unit to another. On the other hand the 'tartans' have continuous bands and stripes of colour. As a whole McLeod felt the grids were the most successful of the two types. To reiterate, he destroyed most of the "Grids and Tartans". By the end of 1977 McLeod felt he had painted himself into a corner:

"The grid was a useful compositional device at the time. But like any device, you come to rely on it."(12)

He then went on to abandon all compositional aids in an effort to find a less contrived way of getting the paint spontaneously on to the canvas. To this end he adopted an action-painting technique which involved flicking or spattering the paint from loaded brushes to achieve a dense pointillist texture. The method combines Seurat's dotted manner with Pollock's expressionist technique. Colours are applied in a pure state and mixed retinally. Like raindrops, the distribution of the specks of paint is largely random. McLeod was able to vary the density of the specks of a particular colour in any general area, but beyond that the specks of paint more or less composed themselves. This new development represented a definite move away from the closure of the grid towards a more indeterminate, 'statistical' composition, and consequently a more open style.

## Allen Maddox

It is not uncommon for originality to flourish when suppression of disunity is at a minimum. Freed from the burden of having to obtain results, creativity can manifest itself spontaneously without the mediating filters of consciousness and taste. Unconscious gestures and accidents when capitalised on by the artist can all serve as a creative 'trigger'.

Maddox began his 'crosses in boxes' paintings in 1976 with a destructive impulse — by cancelling out earlier failed paintings. What he had unsuccessfully sought in those cancelled paintings he found himself unwittingly achieving through an act of negation. Not burdened by the problem of having to think about what he was doing, he was able to get on and simply do it. Some six years and numerous paintings later, Maddox is still producing lattice paintings on the 'crosses in boxes' theme.

His method in the early works of this series was to cover an unstretched piece of cotton duck with a loose pencil network of rectangular and square boxes of various sizes, within which he then painted crosses of intersecting diagonals. Where the corners of the boxes meet the crosses join 'hands', to produce a starkly erratic line which zigzags about the composition. A significant example of Maddox's early monochromatic paintings is *Finer and finer and more gutless* 1976 (cat. no. 14) which, as the title bluntly proclaims, is one of Maddox's more restrained works.

When he applied colour to these scaffolding structures they began to 'move about' in an unstable way, pushing and pulling according to their tonal values — reds and yellows tending to push, blues and greens tending to pull. The slack, unstretched material on which many of these early works are painted helps promote this impression of instability. Significantly, this was a tumultuous period for Maddox, and at times, after long intense sessions, he found himself experiencing obsessive hallucinations. 'Crosses in boxes' began manifesting themselves in unexpected ways. Exploiting these visions, he endeavoured to capture them in paint. The broken threads of his cathartic lattices he alludes to as 'synapse lapses'.

The push and pull of some of his lattices becomes a vortex in others, *Life's Hurdles* 1976 (cat. no. 15) for example, which is four paintings in one, telescoped like Chinese boxes. Each of the sub-paintings in *Life's Hurdles* is a free-hanging piece of cotton duck, the largest of which has a large square hole, within which the next piece is hung, and so on. The painted lattices on the concentric pieces get progressively more intricate towards the centre, enhancing the vortex effect. A limited range of bright colours has been skilfully combined in various permutations — yellow and red diagonals on a blue square, blue and yellow diagonals on a red square, red and blue diagonals on a yellow square, and so on. The edges of the sub-paintings are not trimmed square, but follow the irregularities of the lattice borders; a device which Maddox used in the early paintings to emphasise the independence of the structure and enhance the effect of instability.

Few of the early paintings are stretched or framed. Some of the lattices, in effect, are frames themselves, enclosing other lattices. *Coarse Investigation* 1979 (cat. no. 18) is composed of telescoping lattices of diminishing gauges, but the canvas it is painted on is continuous and stretched. An exquisite iridescent butterfly is affixed to the surface and mimics the coloured tracery. The butterfly was a memento of a visit to the aquarium at Napier, the city where Maddox was living at the time. The addition is ingenious, a stroke of brilliance.

Since the Napier paintings Maddox's works have become increasingly deconstructive and gestural. If the earlier paintings suggest a building up of elements into articulated structures, albeit unstable ones, the later ones suggest a process of severe distortion and disjunction. The lattice framework, which was explicit in the early paintings, persists, but is now only vaguely discernible. *Untitled* 1981 (cat. no.

19), for example, has an underlying lattice, but the violence of execution has almost entirely effaced it. Garish colours have been smeared and 'clawed' on in handfuls. The painting was a long time in the making, perpetually being painted over. Ever critical of his own work, Maddox humbly asserts, "It was a good painting once."

For Maddox, his more recent paintings are never finished; at least not in the sense of any conscious decision on his part. Those that are removed from his studio, usually by his dealer, he sees as arbitrarily terminated examples of a process which might otherwise have continued indefinitely. This attitude, which might seem indifferent, is consistent with the perverse origins in 1976 of 'crosses in boxes' as cancellations of rejected paintings. Had Maddox rejected those works as unsalvageable and simply abandoned them, an impressive body of lattice-type paintings might never have evolved. It was because he persevered, even if in bad faith, that the failed paintings finally yielded a metamorphosis.



## Don Peebles

Between 1951 and 1953 Don Peebles studied under John Passmore at the Julian Ashton Art School, Sydney, where he became conversant with the formal principles of abstraction which Cezanne and the Cubists had elaborated. The paintings he produced after his return to New Zealand in 1954, though essentially abstract, carry strong figurative connotations. The "Wellington" series (1956-1960), for example, are concerned with the elemental forces of nature and the distinctive Wellington light.

Then, in 1960, assisted by a grant from the Association of New Zealand Art Societies, Peebles went to London where he met and came under the influence of the progressive British artist, Victor Pasmore, whose abstract reliefs embody something of the formal rigour of De Stijl and Russian Constructivism. Peebles returned to New Zealand in 1963 and developed an increasingly formal and linear style. His earliest proper grid paintings, based on the 'letter rack' motif, date from 1967; but he destroyed all but one and concentrated instead on a series of painted wooden reliefs.

Most of the wooden reliefs, which are organised according to a network of parallel lines, contain implicit rather than explicit grids. One of the few exceptions is *Relief Construction* (cat. no. 23) where an explicit grid is painted and drawn on the central components. Offset against the grid and other geometrical elements are a large cloud-like gouache stain and a rippling woodgrain pattern. The gouache stain of *Relief Construction* heralded a move towards a more painterly style:

"I moved away from the wooden reliefs around the early seventies because I felt they were starting to get too 'designy', too correct, and for that reason I started to incorporate looser elements."(13)

He subsequently returned to the 'letter-rack' motif he had explored in 1967, with a series of paintings on stretched canvas which are dominated by hard-edge grids on atmospheric fields. *Untitled 1972* (cat. no. 21) and *Untitled 1973* (cat. no. 22) both of which are exhibited here, are typical of the series as a whole.

"The grid never sinks into the field; it always sits implacably upon it, in one sense. I didn't want it to merge with the field. I was, at that stage, being very emphatic about the grid. I put it on; I overlaid it. For reasons which I didn't rationalise at the time, I felt a need to allow something of the opposite of that strong impression to happen. You'll notice how the field, on which the grid is placed, is starting to break up slightly. In the pinkish one, it's breaking up in the top right hand corner, and in the grey one it's very slightly breaking up at the top and the bottom. People kept saying to me — 'What went wrong with the paint there?' They didn't like it."(13)

A probable explanation for such a response is that the regular grid pattern of the 'letter-rack' paintings sets up expectations, which are subverted by localised irregularities and interpreted as inadvertent, because they frustrate the resolution we anticipate. In simple terms, the rug is pulled from under our feet, and impressions of depth and illusionism unexpectedly come into play.

While in these 'letter-rack' works the painterly elements are strictly curtailed and gesture is always offset by geometry, *Painting 1973* (artist's collection), by contrast, doesn't exhibit a straight line or hard edge; even so, it describes a loose grid.

"I feel that expressionism or gesture has no significance if it does not co-exist with, or is not measured against, its opposite, without which it becomes formless and slovenly ... Some of the (gestural paintings) went straight on to stretched canvases. Their backgrounds and grids interchange all the time. It was just a further, and perhaps deeper, manifestation of the grids of the ('letter-rack')

paintings of 1972 and 1973."(13)

Peebles' art has periodically oscillated between formal and painterly abstraction, sometimes taking the middle road and resolving both impulses within the same work in a balanced synthesis.

The apotheosis of Peebles' grid paintings is the monumental unstretched canvas *Untitled 1978-1979* (cat. no. 24) which measures 2400 x 9300 mm and is hung loosely, not taut. Constructed upon a non-regular grid, the painting creates rhythmical patterns and tonal transitions which sweep the eye from right to left or left to right across its broad panorama:

"There again I was dealing with something like the grid in that there was a sort of theoretic development right across the thing. The image is mainly a series of triangles of different sizes. They vary in width and height and locality. I think what was in my mind at the time was the idea of presenting an almost endless situation based on the idea of repetition without becoming static and boring. This repetition works across about seven of the nine metres and then you get to the left hand side of the canvas. At that stage I wanted to counter it with the most opposite thing I could find — the most different thing — and at the same time bring it into a state of unity. There is always, I think, the implication of any idea in its opposite. You're not aware, for example, of being tense until you come out of that state of tension. The left-hand side of that painting was the counterpoint of everything else that went before it, in the most dramatic way I could find."(13)

The rhythmical periods of the triangular elements in *Untitled 1978-1979*, to use a musical analogy, are a tribal chant which concludes explosively (the red cross), like a Maori *haka*. The compelling sense of movement and rhythm is a far cry from the contrived stasis of the early painted wooden reliefs in which the elements 'lock together' like a Chinese puzzle.

In recent years Peebles has improvised on the rhythmical effect of *Untitled 1978-1979* in a series of canvas reliefs composed of parallel fins of canvas sewn vertically on an unstretched canvas backing. The arrangement of the fins is formal and periodic; but each time the work is hung they rearrange themselves like the floppy pages of a child's cloth book. The looseness which Peebles regards as a necessary foil to more formalised elements is now extended in the canvas reliefs to the viewer, who is invited to ruffle the fins and perpetuate a flexible (dis)arrangement.

## Ian Scott

Ian Scott began his series of lattice paintings in 1976. He had earlier produced a number of paintings in which pastel-coloured stripes levitate at an oblique angle above a white field. Later, the bands were attached firmly to the field and orientated on a vertical axis; stripes of primary colour to one side of the painting offset by a large area of pale colour to the right-hand side.

"Gradually I got the idea of taking the bands from one corner of the canvas to the other, and then to crossing over the bands. And that's how the lattices began."(14)

Initially the edges of the bands were delineated by rubbing crayon over the edges of masking tape to produce a softer, but still hard-edged, line. Colour, in the early lattices, appears to run behind the crayon-edged bands, vertically and horizontally, devoid of any edging. The vertical format of these early works later gave way to a square format so that the diagonal bands could reach from corner to corner, something which could not happen in a rectangular format.

"In the first ones, the ones with crayon edging on them, all I did was alter the proportions of colours very slightly to different tones of red and blue, etc., and alter the widths of the crayon bands. I had a long run where I did about twenty or so and didn't seem to get anywhere with it. But once I got the idea of removing the horizontal and vertical grid and letting the diagonal show through much more, it seemed to open out in so many directions all at once that I couldn't get it all down fast enough."(14)

Whatever may have escaped him, Scott did get a great deal down. To date, he has produced more than 200 painted variations of the lattice theme, and must qualify as the most prolific and systematic of all the New Zealand painters working within the strict confines of the grid motif. In recent months he has backed off from the grid and is at present involved in producing modular monochromatic paintings on shaped canvases, although he still proposes to return to lattice painting.

His development of the lattice theme has not been systematic; a chronological sequence of the paintings reveals capitulations and cross-references, for example a new pattern combined with a proven colour scheme. Even so, it is possible to chart a general direction in the evolution of the series as a whole. From a position somewhere behind the crayon-edged bands, Scott transferred colour to the bands themselves. Then the crayon edging was dropped in favour of widened bands with a thin strip set in from the edge. Around 1978 the bands were widened even further, and their number reduced to six, three running each way. The white strip was broadened and taken to the very edge of the band. About the same time colour was introduced as a uniform field behind the lattice, eventually black.

"The black intensifies the colour and makes it more like stained glass."(14)

During 1979 he introduced multi-coloured lattices on black grounds which were followed up by pastel, and then progressively more pale, lattices. The culmination of this development are the white lattices on white grounds. *Lattice No. 65* 1979 (cat. no. 30) is a singularly minimal work. From certain viewpoints, the grid is invisible and the surface of the painting appears to be uniformly white. With a slight change in the viewer's position, the lattice suddenly materialises as subtle and distinct. Both the lattice and its field are painted with the same white acrylic paint. The difference in texture between the field, which has received one coat of white, and the lattice, which has received two coats (one coat over the field) is what makes the pattern visible.

In 1980 Scott travelled to America as a result of a Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council award. During this period his painting was temporarily interrupted. Upon his return,

towards the end of 1980, he resumed the lattice series, and began introducing colour irregularities which subvert a logical reading of the bands as being continuous and interwoven. For example, where a red band passes 'under' another, it may emerge yellow or blue or some other colour on the other side. A further development of this colour irregularity is the variegation of the field; the interstices between the lattice bands were given different colours, thus contradicting any reading of the field as continuous and undifferentiated.

"A problem right along through this series has been what to do with the background, or the actual square of the canvas. As soon as you put something on canvas, of course, you get left with a negative area. In the first ones I tried to control the size of the background coming through. And then eventually they moved more into a positive/negative effect like Walters' paintings."(14)

In recent years Scott's paintings have become looser to the extent that his colour has become slightly modulated, and a discreet raggedness has appeared at the taped edges of the lattice bands.

"In the first paintings, the areas are very carefully painted and smoothed out much more; whereas, in the later ones, a lot of areas are more roughly and much more loosely painted and the colour is scrubbed on much more. When you're working on a series of different paintings you gradually work from very tight to very loose, and the thing gradually breaks down; then you move into something else. You try and do as much as you can with it. For example, in some of the later ones, I tried to break the colour up and see if it will hold together; then you take it a bit further and start using brighter, more arbitrary colours. I've done a sequence where I've worked right down the scale from the bright colours to the pale ones."(14)

His development of the minimal white lattices is as a result of his consistent pursuit of an idea until it yields a host of variations. One variation is a shiny white enamel lattice on a matt white acrylic field. Another is a white acrylic lattice on raw canvas. In one of the most irregular of all the lattices, a variation of the white on white theme, the lattice bands are hard-edged, but they have been incompletely painted, allowing irregular, raw canvas patches to show through.

Although essentially abstract, the lattice paintings derive from points of reference in the artist's social environment, such as weatherboards, the tracery of concrete block walls, trellises, awnings, sails of yachts, brightly painted roofs, cars. It is as if Scott has tried to synthesise from the confusion of bright colours and patterns, that he feels are characteristic of the New Zealand townscape, an emblem which does not allude to any one thing specifically but in a general kind of way, represents them all. He uses colour for expressive and not just for formal reasons, aspiring to a quality which he feels is endemic to our social environment and lifestyle. The 'grasshopper green' of a fibreglass sailboat; the broad expanse of red on the side of a removal van; the broadly contrasting stripes of an awning or a yacht's sail; the thin, coloured stripes on car bodywork, the tracery of a bright yellow wrought-iron gate; these are the sources which subliminally provide the expressive content of the lattice paintings. Control is important.

"You keep trying to get the exact colours, the exact proportions, the right size canvas for the right image, the right kind of paint application. You build up to getting the whole thing under control."(14)

But this control is an aid to expression — a keyed-up quality in which all elements contribute to a holistic effect which is greater than the sum of its parts.

## Ray Thorburn

Thorburn's involvement with the grid, mainly between 1967 and 1973, developed from his idea of giving a painting a variable modular composition. This involved breaking it up into units or panels, the arrangement of which was arbitrary and variable. Thorburn stated in the introduction to his one-man exhibition at the Barry Lett Galleries in February 1969:

"... I believe I am changing the role of the viewer from being a passive spectator who reads a painting from a distance, to one which provides him with the opportunity to become more involved with the painting by giving him a part to play in the creation of the image. Like a child with its blocks, he can adjust the units to suit himself."(15)

One of the paintings in Thorburn's 1969 exhibition ran down the wall and projected out from it to serve as a coffee table. The New Zealand Herald art reviewer was not sympathetic: "It is not the function of art to support tea and cakes,"(16) he wrote. Thorburn's impulse was to produce a painting:

"That not only could be turned around but which in fact could be taken apart and rearranged according to the space that was available. This meant there was an element of sculpture in it. The painting could project out across the floor. The units could be hung in space, back to back."(17)

He was obviously unperturbed about notions of what was proper. He violated one of the most hallowed of art traditions by contracting the actual painting of his modular units to a commercial spray painter, using materials and equipment designed for spray-painting cars. The paint used in the modular series is a cellulose lacquer of bright, clear colour with no tonal modulation. The hardboard support is prepared with primer and wet and dry abrasive. The lines of the grids which decorate the early modular paintings were masked with a special body painter's tape.

In a reversal of standard artistic practice the colour of the lines uppermost in the design was applied first, then taped over. Then the next colour was applied and the subsequent layer of lines taped, and so on. Following the application of the final colour, all the tape was removed to expose the buried layers of colour:

"The excitement to me was to unmask the units and put them together. I never knew what was going to happen until the units actually went together. I have always dissociated myself from the label 'op art', because the illusionary effects that occur because of the coming together of the lines was not a major intention — it was an outcome rather than an intention. I also never used a measure. I did it all by eye. That's why I wear glasses now."(17)

The optical effects Thorburn describes are produced by bundles of closely ruled parallel lines which suggest a hazy *moiré* pattern in the form of an overlying, or in some cases an underlying, supplementary grid pattern. In several of the paintings these bundles of closely ruled parallel lines run diagonally across the panels. Only when the units are assembled in a particular order will they generate a grid pattern. By the same token the modular square units of these paintings only generate grids when arranged in a battery. It is obvious then that the grids of such modular paintings are only latent and not manifest. Significantly the very first of the series, *Modular 1 Series 1* 1967 (destroyed) was of this type; only later did Thorburn embellish the panels with the unequivocal networks of fine lines that we find in, for example, *Modular 13 Series 2* 1970 (cat. no. 35) and the large and complex *Modular 2, Series 2* 1970 (cat. no. 33). The four square panels of each of the latter two paintings are identical, but in other works this is not necessarily the case:

"If you look at the separate panels that make up some works you will find that the lines have been placed either

over or under each other in a different way. So you get a blue line that appears to be underneath a red line, but on the panel next to it the order could well be reversed."(17)

In a later development of the modular series, Thorburn began angling the front surfaces of the panels and shifted attention from the surfaces to the now partially exposed sides of the panels. In *Modular 2 Series 4* the front surfaces of the rectangular panels are painted with a blue/grey pinstripe pattern 'illuminated' at the edges by reflected yellow and red colour applied to the narrow sides of the panels. In other paintings, such as *Modular 3B, Series 4* 1973 (cat. no. 36) he abstained from patterning the front surfaces of the panels altogether and left them uniformly white:

"When you look at this work straight on, it looks like a large white billboard; but when you walk around it colours appear as the light hits the edges. Because the colour is on the edges you get light reflected or bounced through the white, so it kind of lights up like a neon sign, but quite naturally."(17)

Stretching the sculptural aspect of the idea even further, Thorburn next abandoned all colour variations, concentrating instead on the reflective qualities of the painted surface. To enhance this he made the surfaces of the modules undulate. He achieved this by constructing for each unit a square frame with shallow sides of uneven height with a dividing brace which had a contoured upper edge. A sheet of hardboard was then forced on to and moulded to the structural form with a furniture press. One convex and one complementary concave module were simultaneously pressed together by this machine, so that for every male unit in the works there is a corresponding female one. The highly polished monochrome surfaces of these units act like distorting mirrors reflecting an image which changes with ambient movement, an effect which underscores the variability which Thorburn constructed into the modular composition.

For Thorburn the grid was never a compositional device on which to hang a painting in the way that, for example, McLeod and Maddox have used it:

"To me the grid was never an end product in itself. It became the concept, the content and the product, whereas McLeod and other people use the grid as a device to hold things together. The whole business of the way McLeod makes marks graphically is expressionist, whereas I was coming from the other side of the fence, coming out of the hard edge formal abstractionist era of the sixties. Also there is the fact that I was trained as a graphic designer. My work of that time would have fallen down if the finish and the technique hadn't been right. I was interested in the concept and the idea but the technique had to be appropriate to realise the idea."(17)

## Geoffrey Thornley

The grid in Thornley's painting is most evident in the "A" and "Albus" series of 1974, although some paintings he produced both prior and subsequent to these series incorporate the grid in less overt ways. *Untitled No. 4* 1973 (cat. no. 37) for example, is divided up into square and rectangular compartments by a network of horizontal and vertical lines, but this network is not nearly so regular as the grids which compose the "Albus" works. Thornley's "Albus" series represented New Zealand at the 13th International Sao Paulo Biennial of Contemporary Art in Brazil, in 1975. Four years earlier Ray Thorburn's "Modular" series had represented New Zealand painting at the 11th Sao Paulo Biennial. Both events point to the important role that grid painting had in this country during the 1970s.

The "Albus" works are all on paper backed with canvas and probably constitute the largest works on paper that had been produced in New Zealand up until that time. Although Thornley says he used a "watercolour-type technique", in fact ink is the medium. One of the most compelling attributes of these images is their richly patinated surfaces which are enhanced by all sorts of textural irregularities — scumbling, wiping, stains and blotches which speak of an erratic and volatile process. In places, overlying films of ink have lifted off in broken patches like old weatherbeaten paint. Countering the amorphous fields of the "Albus" works is the fixity of an imposed grid of either continuous lines running parallel to the sides of the work, or regularly spaced small squares of colour; a kind of vestigial grid. These vestigial grids occur in the latter part of the series and seem to indicate the artist's reservations about the more emphatic network of lines. Some of the "Albus" works, for example *Grey/Albus No. 1* (private collection), combine both lines and small squares which mark the intersections of the lines. In yet another variation of the theme, *Albus No. 12* (private collection), the grid of fine lines has become a grid of broad bands which are textural components in themselves, like their field, and not just a keying device.

Although the grid features in all the "Albus" works in either an obvious or vestigial way, Thornley plays down its importance as simply a structural device which was of use at the time — a way of taking on compositional problems. The "Albus" grids, he cautions, must be considered in the light of the more important emotive or expressive qualities of the images. He also regards his use of the grid as a transitional phase which was succeeded by less conspicuous and more successful organisational methods. Some of the smaller "A" series images, all of which predate the "Albus" series, possess grids, while in others the grid is completely absent. It would appear from this fact that even prior to the "Albus" series Thornley had reservations about the obviousness of the device. What the grid does in the "Albus" and "A" series is provide a key for interrelating what Thornley describes as the "discrete parts" that comprise the composition. By superimposing a grid pattern, these "discrete parts" are ascribed equal emphasis, equal status. Each square segment of the image becomes a unit butting up against adjacent units like tiles, thereby emphasising the two-dimensionality of the composition. It is interesting to compare the grid and non-grid images from within the "A" series. The non-grid images are decidedly more atmospheric and spatially suggestive.

In spite of their overlying grids the "Albus" works do not suggest that they are arbitrary pieces of a much larger extending pattern, a fact which can be attributed to the differentiation in size between the units at the sides and corners of the composition, which are smaller than the internal square units. The corners contain quarter-size units and the sides are bounded by half-size units. But if all the "Albus" works with explicit grids were butted together the quarter-sized and half-sized units would connect up to make new whole units and perpetuate the regular pattern of equal-sized squares.

Any discussion about compositional aspects of the above works inevitably diverts attention from their expressive content which, regrettably, is more resistant to analysis. It is significant that the "Albus" series is the only one to which Thornley has given an allusive title — 'albus' means white — on account of the white base from which all the works are developed. One of the works is subtitled *Nigresco* (cat. no. 38), which translates evocatively as 'black light'. Although there are some notable exceptions, for example *Red Albus No. 2* (private collection) and *Ochre Albus No. 9* (private collection), the "Albus" works are predominantly a blue/grey or silver/grey colour, with muted tonal variations. Only one of the works in the series (never exhibited) is richly coloured; otherwise they are all quietly stated, almost understated. The grey/black works have a tonal range usually associated with black-and-white photography. One can only speculate what the creative stimulus was.

## Gordon Walters

The name Gordon Walters for many is virtually synonymous with the striated *koru* paintings which have been his major preoccupation since 1956. In Walters' paintings the *koru* are visual accents like full-stops which cap the broken horizontal bars. It is principally the figure/ground ambiguity that the *koru* creates that makes these works so intriguing. In a statement which has been quoted often of his works, Walters explained:

"My work is an investigation of positive/negative relationships within a deliberately limited range of forms. The forms I use have no descriptive value in themselves and are used solely to demonstrate relations. I believe that dynamic relations are most clearly expressed by the repetition of a few simple elements."(18)

The above statement is doubtless interpreted by many to refer specifically to Walters' *koru* paintings. It is not so well known that between 1969 and 1975 he produced a small number of grid works to which his above statement can also be applied.

Walters is here represented by three grid works. Fortunately we have been able to reproduce, apart from the three works borrowed from the artist, a fourth major painting *Black/White* 1969 (cat. no. 41) which is the largest of them all.

As might be inferred from the short period over which they were produced, Walters' grid paintings do not occupy a position of pre-eminence in his *oeuvre*, despite the fact that they are all accomplished works and offer useful insights into the way his work has developed. Walters has clarified this fact in a statement he supplied with the loan of the ink drawing *Untitled* 1970 (cat. no. 42) and the two small grid paintings *Taniko* 1977 (cat. no. 44) and *Untitled* 1975 (cat. no. 43).

"The works submitted to this exhibition are studies for paintings, only one of which was carried out, with some amendments to colour and design. While I have been aware of the possibilities of the grid in making paintings, it has only been of minor interest to me in my work over the last decade or so, and I have used it in only half a dozen paintings. In my opinion the device has become hackneyed from over-use in much contemporary work."(19)

Walters here echoes the sentiments of a number of other artists, represented in this exhibition, who also employed the grid in their painting some time during the 1970s only to subsequently abandon it. Like Walters, many of these artists found other means of solving formal problems to which they had previously addressed themselves via the grid.

It is interesting to note that in some of his early *koru* works Walters disposed the *koru* elements in a strictly regular way. The drawing *Genealogy* 1971 (Auckland City Art Gallery), with its evenly spaced vertical rows, is a case in point. *Genealogy* can hardly be described as a grid work although it does contain elements of a grid-like composition; the parallel lines of the horizontal bands and the implicit vertical lines along which the *koru* elements have been aligned comprise a latent grid pattern. Within this regular pattern any deviation from the system becomes accentuated. In *Genealogy* the *koru* 'bulbs' are conspicuously absent from a localised patch in the upper left area of the composition. Our eye is conditioned by the repetition of identical elements to expect uniformity; this expectation is then subverted by the intrusive irregularity in the pattern. This scenario of thwarted expectation is common not only in Walters' works but in those of a number of other artists represented in this exhibition who have employed a repetitive compositional framework. In his grid paintings *Untitled* 1975 and *Taniko* 1977 we find this scenario re-enacted.

Unlike the *koru* paintings, which owe something to traditional Maori art, both *Taniko* 1977 and *Untitled* 1975 were inspired by the formal designs of Melanesian art. *Taniko* is almost completely regular — 79 bi-coloured squares of blue and

pale grey and two renegade squares which are half white, half dark grey. Not only is the colouring of these two squares at odds with the rest of the pattern, their positioning is asymmetric and irregular. In point of fact Walters positioned them intuitively in spontaneous counterpoint to the regularity of their matrix.

In the same way that the *koru* works exhibit an ambiguous figure/ground dichotomy, the grid paintings *Taniko* and *Untitled* 1975 are unstable and interpretable in different ways. First we can read *Taniko* as a simple two-dimensional pattern. Secondly, we can see it as an isometric, three-dimensional 'egg crate' structure, positioned vertically and illuminated from above. Thirdly, we can see it in the same vertical position but illuminated from the left. And finally, we can imagine it lying horizontally as if we were looking at it from above. With this latter reading the cavities of the structure now appear rectangular instead of square, as in the former readings.

The variable readings elaborated above highlight a quality which is characteristic of Walters' works as a whole — namely a dynamic equilibrium. What this means is that, while the disposition of formal elements in a composition can be formally balanced, our perception of them can be highly unstable or variable. In the *koru* works this takes the form of a relatively straightforward figure/ground ambiguity, for example a black element upon a white ground imperceptibly transforms into a white element on a black ground. In the grid paintings, *Taniko* and *Untitled* 1975, the ambiguous visual effects, and the means by which they are achieved, are more complex. In terms of Walters' stripped down aesthetic and economy of means, it is not hard to see why he favoured the *koru* over the grid. Also favouring the *koru* works is the interrelationship of linear and curvilinear elements which provides an additional counterpoint to the contrasts of black and white on the one hand and figure and ground on the other. This interplay of linear and curvilinear elements which is absent from the grid paintings *Taniko* and *Untitled*, as well as the large painting *Black/White* 1969 can be found, however, in the small ink drawing, *Untitled* 1970 (cat. no. 42), the only grid work by Walters in this exhibition which has previously been exhibited. Unlike the small paintings *Taniko* and *Untitled* 1975 the design in this grid drawing is absolutely regular and symmetrical; in spite of this Walters has once again achieved an effect of dynamic equilibrium. The black and white elements have been skilfully set off against one another so that a disconcerting optical effect is produced; we see ghosts of the white areas on the black elements and vice versa. Also, the serpentine lines set up a diagonal rhythmical movement in opposition to the stasis of the superimposed grid pattern.

While the ink drawing *Untitled* 1970 possesses a number of the attributes of the *koru* works — stark tonal contrasts, the interplay of linear and curvilinear elements and an effect of unstable equilibrium — it lacks the irregular, intuitive touches that personalise Walters' most successful works.

## Mervyn Williams

Williams uses the grid as a paradigm of order which he then plays off against an intuitive and spontaneous impulse. A recurring motif in his work is a hairline grid imposed upon, or sinking into a hazy variegated field. In such works as *Study 3* 1977 (cat. no. 45) and *Gambit 1* 1978 (cat. no. 46) these hairline grids, which have been fastidiously drawn with a ruling pen, formally complement the amorphous tinted washes of their fields. In his own words:

"The grid is almost an emblem of reason. Its regularity, its predictability, its stability, etc. are all about reason and organisation and holding together. But then there is in me another impulse which is basically lyrical; in fact it's wildly expressionistic. I want both things. It's the resolution of a dichotomy, and I've got to do it in painting."(20)

The dichotomy of which Williams speaks is one which everyone has to contend with in day-to-day living as, on the one hand, we try to impose order on our experience and our will upon our environment, while on the other we must submit and adapt to changes that our environment imposes upon us. This dichotomy is essentially one of complementary urges toward opening and closure; the need for security and order offset by the need for freedom and expression. The issue is reflected in the way Williams approaches each day — by means of a 'ritual' which provides a secure base from which he can go forth to cope with what he regards as the extreme complexity of daily events and experience. We all need a certain amount of habit and ritual in our lives; without it there would be no direction in our actions.

"There 's a lot of formality and order and ritual in life. For example, getting up is a ritual and I can't bear to have it interfered with. It is the only time of the day when I feel I have some control over events. The process is virtually the same every morning — wake up, cup of tea, fifteen minutes dozing, get up, dress, make a smoke, wash, shave, do my hair etc., breakfast (which is always the same, meusli), another smoke, coffee, and I'm ready for the day. And that takes forty-five minutes. It forms a base on which I can start the day. It is a formal, orderly process of activity. From that order I have to go out to meet the chaos of the world about me."(20)

Williams uses the grid as a springboard for leaps into the unexpected; as a secure base from which he can make forays into uncharted territory. In this respect his method in some ways resembles Gordon Walters', whose *koru* elements are intuitively disposed within a regular system of formal black and white bands in his *koru* works. In fact Williams feels a strong affinity for Gordon Walters' stripped-down aesthetic in which a dynamic equilibrium of formal and informal, black and white, linear and curvilinear elements is achieved.

"I am fascinated by the process of creating within specific limitations. One of the great interests for me is Gordon Walters' work. For years he has been working with basically one colour, black on white — say, two colours — and if we analyse just the *koru* works it is simply a process of constantly rearranging the bar element with a circle at the end that has given rise to endless variations within the most confined limitations possible. That, I feel, is more impressive than someone who has a total range of variables, who will feel quite happy to do, literally, anything."(20)

In spite of the above statement colour does play an important part in Williams' work and he is intrigued not only by the scientific analysis of colour and how it is perceived but also by the way that we emotionally respond to it. In a work like *Study 3* the colour is partly controlled by the imposed grid, in which places it produces a chequered pattern; but elsewhere the watery wash of colour has had its own way and spilled in little rivulets out of the restraining 'cage' of the grid. Watercolour is a fluid and volatile medium, and such

unpremeditated incidents as splashes, runs, etc. are inherent in the watercolour process. By contrast, screen printing is a more controlled and articulated medium. Ink is forced through a screen in patterns that conform to a hand-cut stencil. Colours are applied separately and allowed little opportunity to intermix, unless intentionally. The ink behaves, ideally, as it is directed. It follows, therefore, that the irregularities in Williams' screenprinted grid images should be of a more contrived nature. This is borne out, in fact, by a number of prints, such as *Horus Series 12* 1980 (cat. no. 49), where the grid structure and the pattern of diagonal stripes is absolutely regular, but both the underlying and overlying colours are subtly modulated to create discrete tonal aberrations.

In *Delta 1* 1978 (cat. no. 47) one finds linear aberrations in the delicate hairline grid. These take the form of randomly located breaks and detours which create a maze of zigzagging corridors, right-angle bends and dead ends which play havoc with any order one may try to impose on it. The effect in the central area of the composition is one of disturbance and, as the word implies, movement. This inferred movement is characteristic of Williams' images. In some it is manifested as a kind of optical vibration as in *Horus Series 12*. In others it take the form of a rhythmical motion. In *Delta Series 4 (coil)* 1980 (cat. no. 48) the arrangement of triangles within a grid creates a rhythm which describes a spiralling figure, hence the painting's sub-title 'coil'. Over and above this rhythmical effect there is a spatial illusion which contradicts the inherent flatness of the composition. In the same way that Gordon Walters' *Taniko* 1977 (cat. no. 44) can be read as a three-dimensional 'egg-crate structure', Williams' *Delta Series 4 (coil)* suggests an isometric maze constructed of thin perpendicular walls. It thus becomes apparent from a work such as this that even a comparatively simple composition comprised of several basic elements and two colours can give rise to unexpectedly complex effects. Considering the essential flatness of the composition, it is ironic that it should be interpreted spatially. Most of Williams' images incorporate an enigma of this type.

"The grid is an image of security. It is also one basis upon which a holistic composition can be founded. In fact, simply taking a white canvas and ruling a grid on it is, to me, already producing a holistic composition in which all parts are equal, cover the entire surface, and relate to the outer dimension of the rectangle or square upon which you impose that composition. Having established a secure point on which to operate, I then feel happy about manipulating it. This is the point at which invention, creation, the process of artifice, comes into it. I then feel impelled to take risks and open the situation to the unexpected."(20)

#### Footnotes

- (1) Olsson, G. *Birds in Egg/Eggs in Bird*, London, 1980, p.72
- (2) Gombrich, E.H. *The Sense of Order*, Oxford, 1977, p.7
- (3) Weiss, P. "Organic Form; Scientific and Aesthetic Aspects" in Kepes, G. (ed.) *The Visual Arts Today*, Middletown, 1960, p.193
- (4) Peckham, M. quoted in Hassan, I., "Culture, Indeterminacy and Immanence: Margins of the (Postmodern) Age" in *Humanities in Society*, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, Vol. 1, No. 1 1978, p.72
- (5) Peckham, M. *Man's Rage for Chaos*, Philadelphia and New York, 1973, p.314
- (6) Bacon, F. from an interview with Sylvester, D., in *Sunday Times Magazine*, London, July 1963
- (7) Cage, J. quoted in Bell, J., "John Cage" in *Artnews* March, 1979, p.64
- (8) Letter, John Hurrell to Andrew Bogle, 3 November 1981
- (9) Weiss, P. op.cit.
- (10) Letter, John Hurrell to Andrew Bogle, 3 November 1981
- (11) Conversation, Andrew Bogle interviews Richard Killeen, February 1982
- (12) Conversation, Andrew Bogle interviews Robert McLeod, July 1981
- (13) Conversation, Andrew Bogle interviews Don Peebles, March 1982
- (14) Conversation, Andrew Bogle interviews Ian Scott, February 1982
- (15) Thorburn, R. "A Painter's Point of View" (statement in catalogue to February 1969 exhibition, "Modular Paintings", Barry Lett Galleries, February 1969)
- (16) McNamara, T.J., "Talented Work close to Op Art" (exhibition review) *New Zealand Herald*, February 1969
- (17) Conversation, Andrew Bogle interviews Ray Thorburn, October 1982
- (18) Walters, G., Artist's statement in catalogue to exhibition "Paintings", New Vision Gallery, Auckland, March 1966
- (19) Walters, G., Artist's statement with loan of works to present exhibition, August 1981
- (20) Conversation, Andrew Bogle interviews Mervyn Williams, September 1981

#### Bibliography

- Gombrich, E.H. *The Sense of Order*, Oxford 1979
- Olsson, Gunnar *Birds in Egg/Eggs in Bird*, London 1980
- Peckham, Morse *Man's Rage for Chaos*, New York 1973
- Rotzler, Willy *Constructive Concepts*, Zurich 1977
- Senechal, Marjorie "Themes and Variations" in *Criss Cross Art Communications* # 7,8,9 March 1979
- Abstraction: Towards a New Art*, The Tate Gallery, London 1980 (exhibition catalogue)
- Grids* The Pace Gallery, New York 1979 (exhibition catalogue)

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## Catalogue of the Exhibition

### Notes to the Catalogue

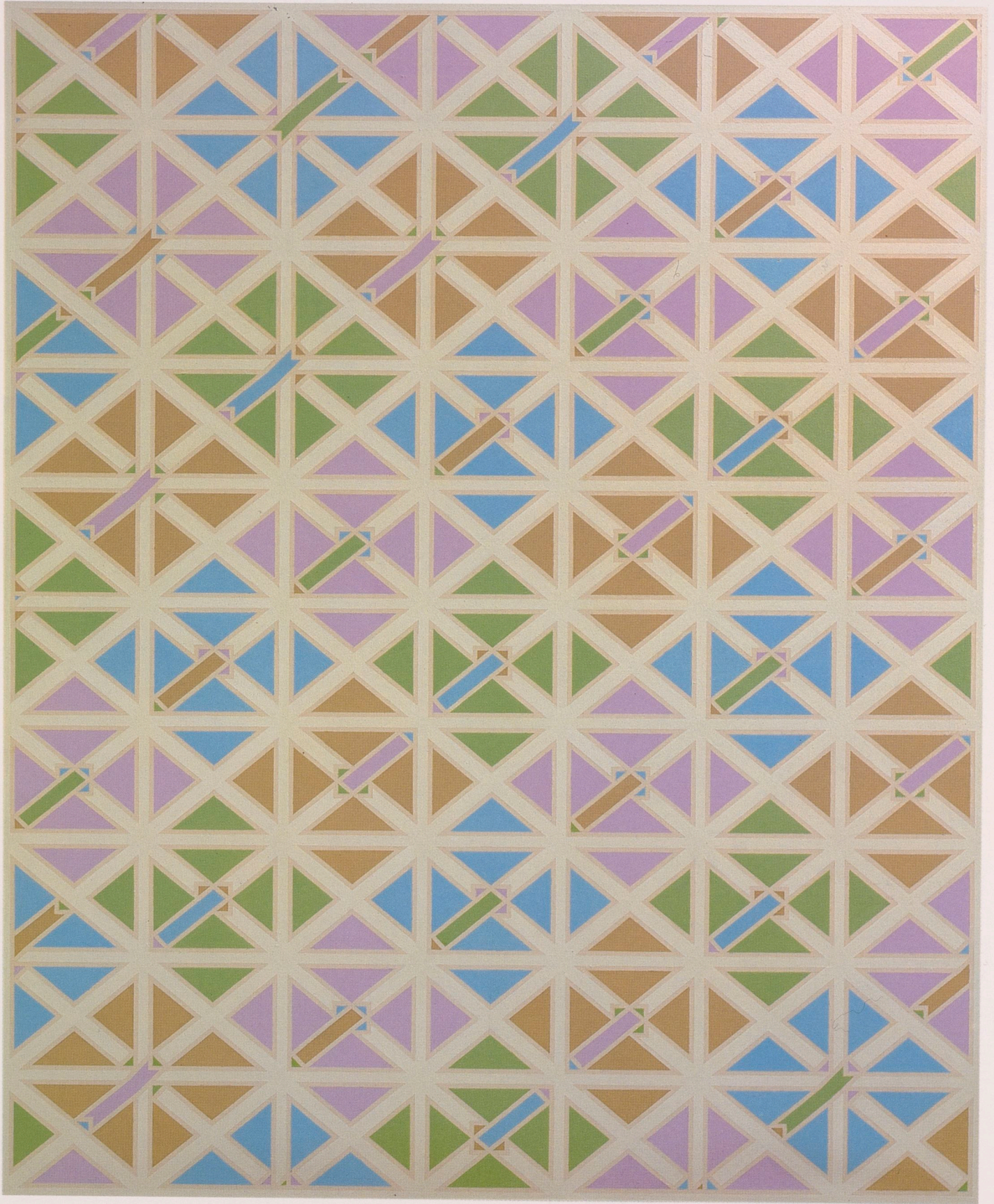
All measurements are in millimetres, height before width.

Unless acknowledged otherwise, the works in this exhibition are uninscribed and belong to each contributing artist's collection.

Works to be shown only at Auckland are indicated by an asterisk.

All photographs are by Julian Bowron for the Auckland City Art Gallery, except for the following:

1, 2, 3, 22	Lloyd Park Photography Christchurch
6	Ian MacDonald, for the Auckland City Art Gallery
11, 23, 24, 35	National Art Gallery, Wellington
13	Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, New Plymouth
41	Michael Dunn
25	Robert McDougall Art Gallery, Christchurch



**John Hurrell**

Born London, England, 1950. Studied Ilam School of Art, University of Canterbury 1970 -1973 (graduating Dip.F.A.) and University of Canterbury (graduating B.A. 1975). First one-man exhibition 1979, Christchurch. Lives in Christchurch.

1 *Bars in two directions* 1979

acrylic on canvas  
1565 x 1275

inscribed verso, *John Hurrell*

exhibited May 1979, Christchurch,  
Christchurch Arts Centre  
(group exhibition)

August-September 1979,  
Christchurch, Brooke/Gifford Gallery  
(one-man exhibition)

2 *Dice Piece 1* 1979

acrylic on canvas  
1240 x 1265

inscribed verso, *J. Hurrell*

exhibited December 1979, Christchurch,  
Brooke/Gifford Gallery,  
"Dice Scores as Content"  
(two-man exhibition, with Paul Johns)

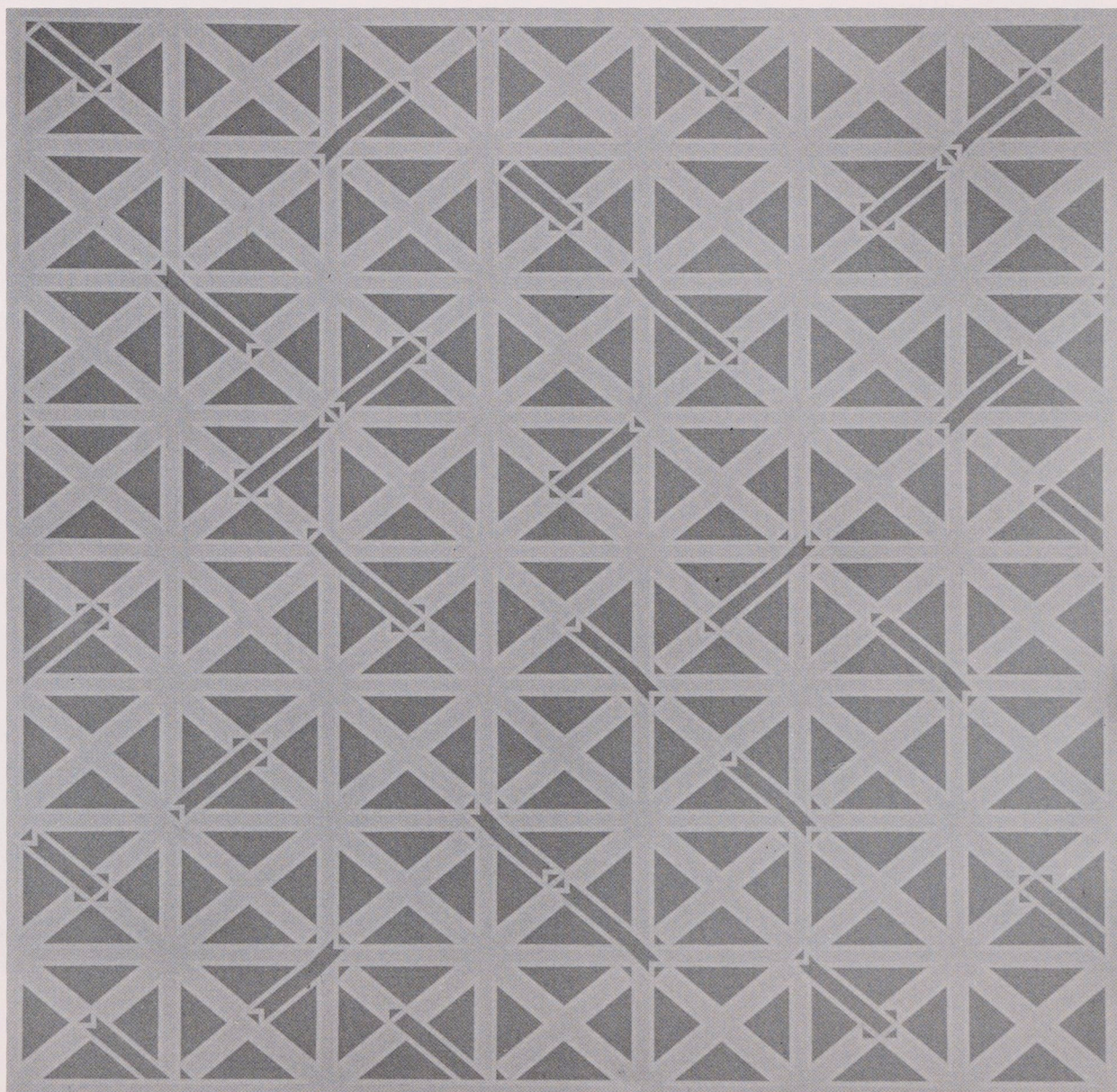
3 *Painting in two parts* 1980

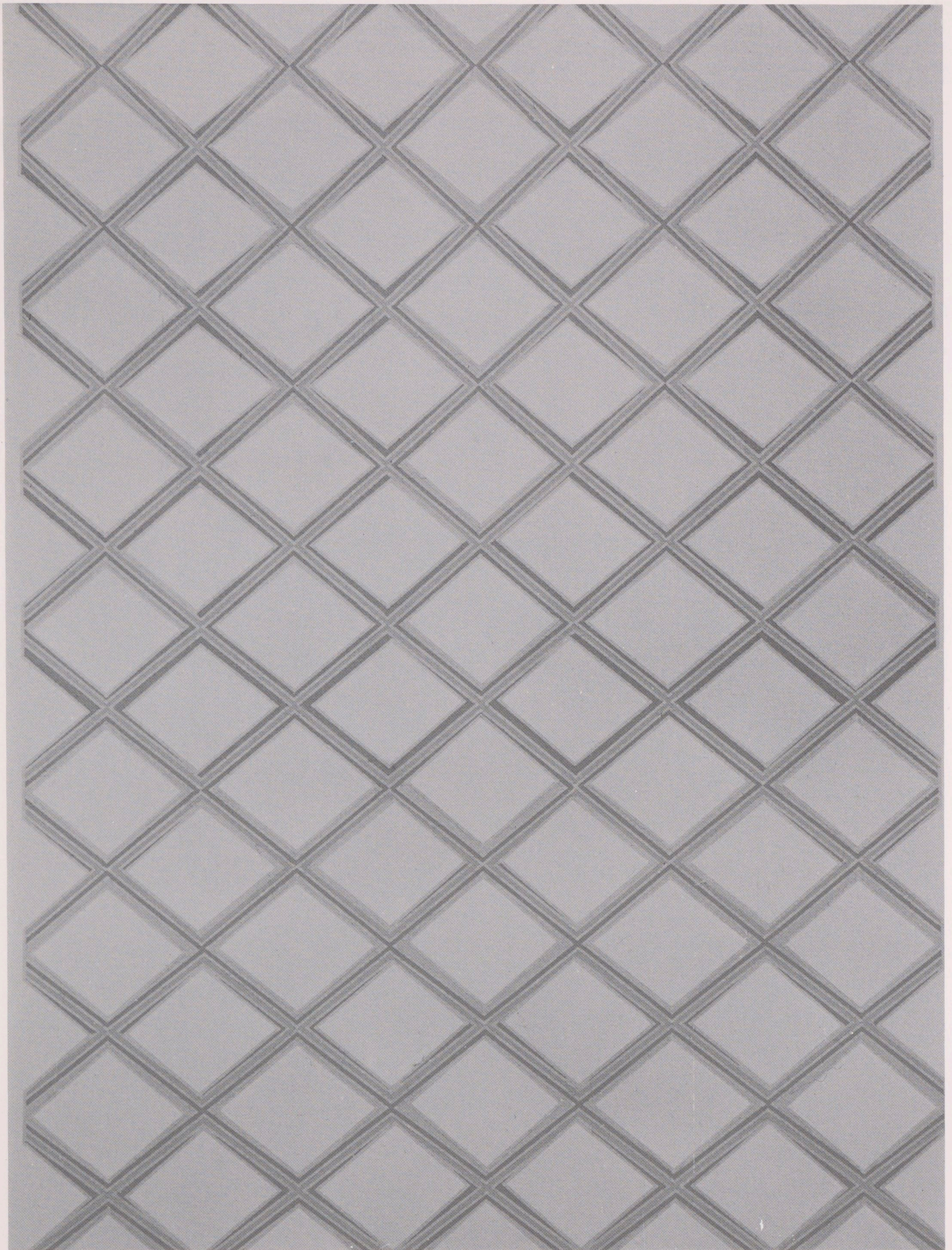
acrylic on canvas and  
hardboard (2 panels)  
910 x 121 each

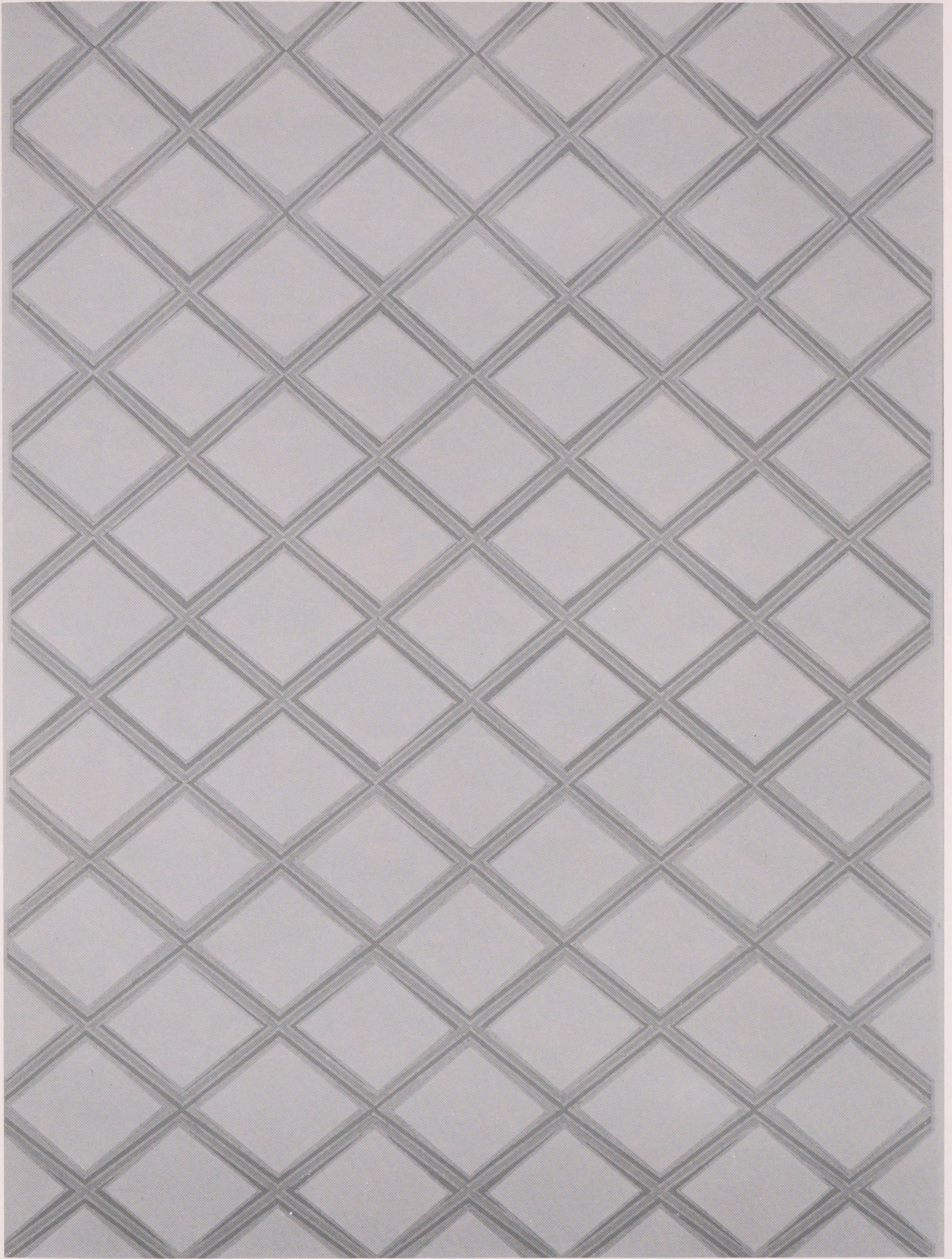
inscribed verso, *J. Hurrell*

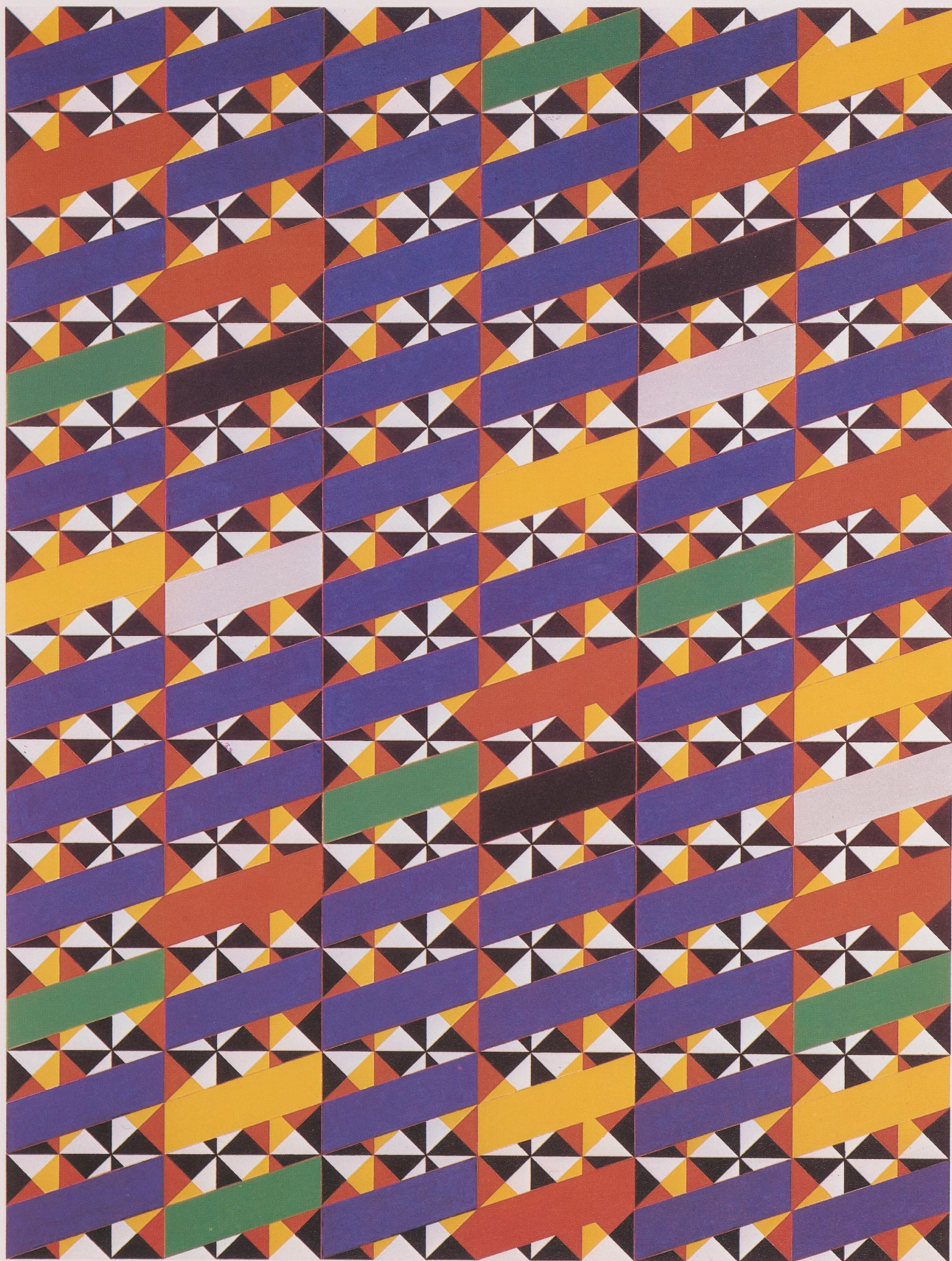
exhibited July 1980, Christchurch,  
Christchurch Society of Arts,  
"Package Deal Exhibition"  
(group exhibition)

collection Mr & Mrs P. S. Trusttum, Christchurch









Richard Killeen

Born Auckland 1946. Studied Elam School of Art, University of Auckland 1964 - 1966. First one-man exhibition 1970, Auckland. Travelled USA and Europe 1976-1977. Lives in Auckland.

4 *Tukutuku* 1974  
acrylic and oil on canvas  
800 x 710

inscribed      verso, *Killeen*

\*5 *Three Patterns* 1975  
oil on canvas  
2040 x 1690

inscribed      verso, *Three Patterns August 1975*  
*Rick Killeen*

exhibited      June 1976, Auckland City Art Gallery,  
(three-man show, with Ralph Hotere  
and Ian Scott)

collection      James Wallace, Auckland

6 *Frog Green* 1976  
acrylic on canvas  
1500 x 760

inscribed      lower right, *Killeen 5.76*

exhibited      June 1976, Auckland City Art Gallery  
(three-man show with Ralph Hotere  
and Ian Scott)

July-August 1976, Wellington,  
Peter McLeavey Gallery,  
"Paintings by Richard Killeen"

April-June 1982, New Plymouth,  
Govett-Brewster Art Gallery,  
"Permanent Collection exhibition"

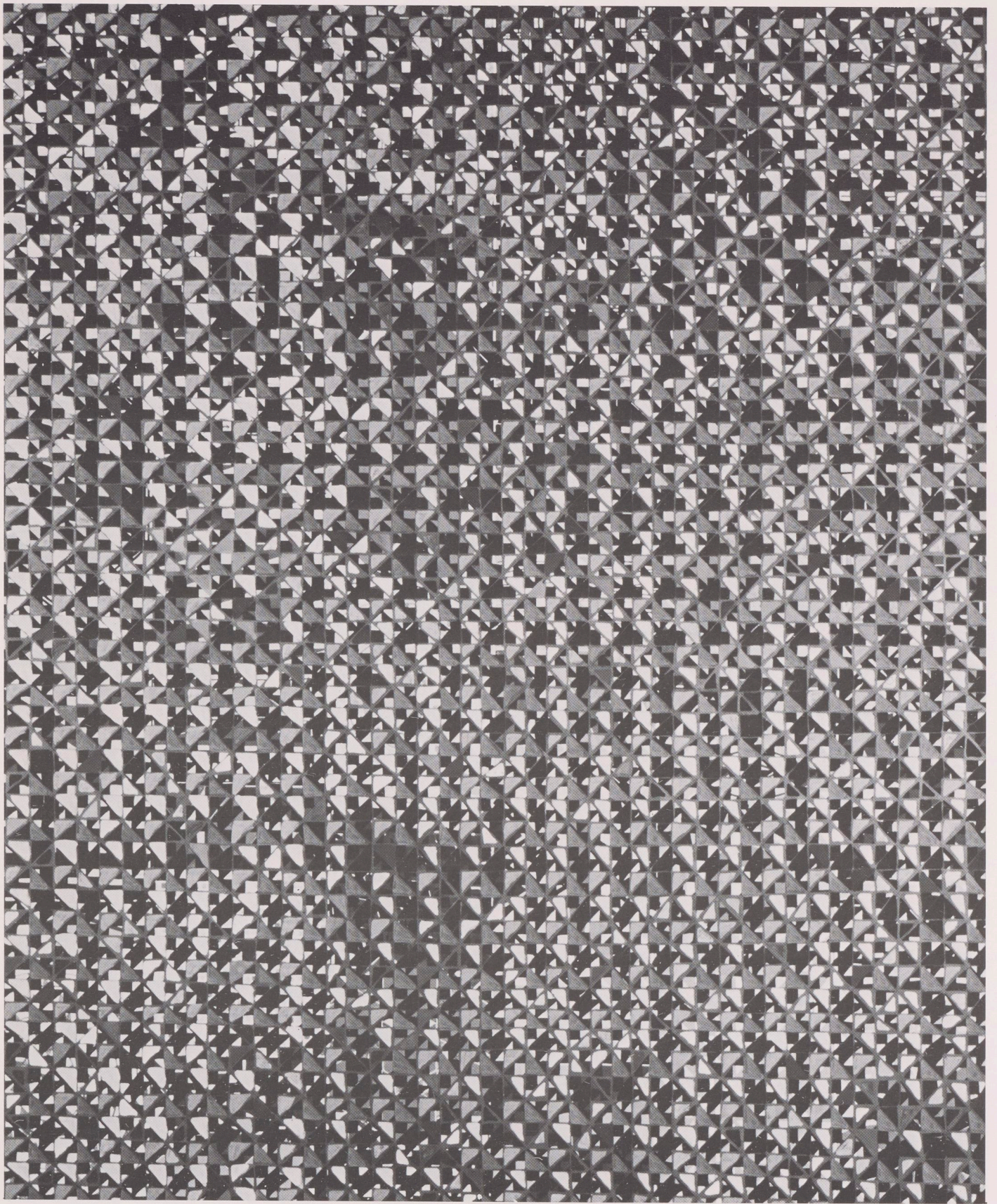
collection      Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, New Plymouth

7 *Black Grid* 1977  
brushed enamel on aluminium  
1180 x 1180

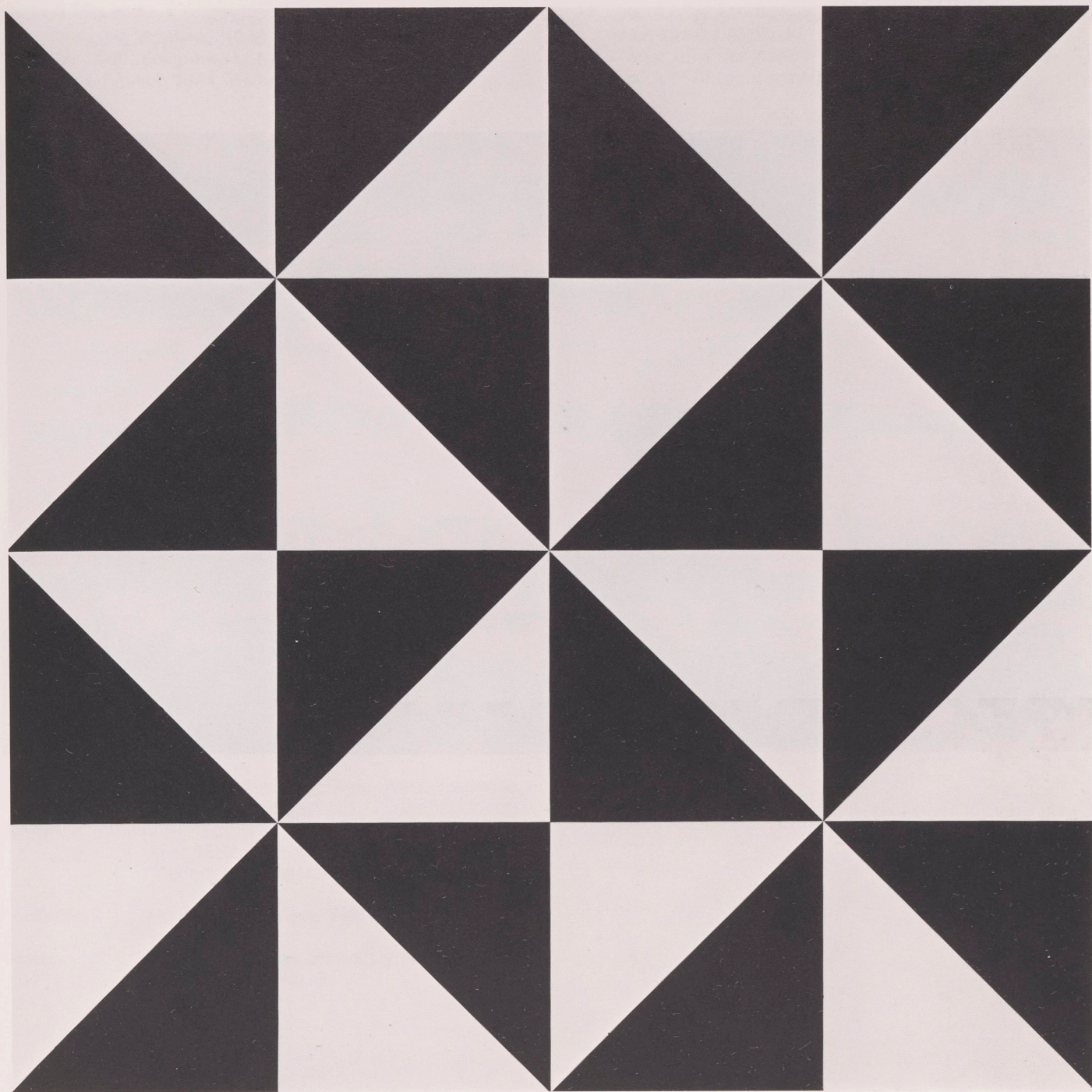
inscribed      verso, *Killeen Dec. 1977*

8 *Blue Max* 1978  
acrylic lacquer on aluminium  
1210 x 1210

inscribed      *Killeen May 1978*







Robert McLeod



Robert McLeod

Born Glasgow, Scotland, 1948. Studied Glasgow School of Art 1965-1969. Emigrated to New Zealand 1972. First one-man exhibition 1974, Wellington. Lives in Plimmerton.

9 *Tartan Box 1* 1976/1977

oil on canvas  
196 x 150 x 90

inscribed verso, *Robert McLeod*  
*Tartan Box 1* 1976/77

10 *Tartan Box 2* 1976/1977

oil on canvas  
190 x 160 x 90

inscribed verso, *Robert McLeod*  
*Tartan Box II* 1976/77

11 *Learning to Count* 1976/1977

oil and enamel on canvas  
219 x 257

exhibited May 1977, Wellington, Elva Bett Gallery,  
"Grids and Tartans"

July 1977, Auckland, Peter Webb Galleries,  
"Grids and Tartans"

April 1982, Wellington, National Art Gallery,  
"Recent Acquisitions"

collection National Art Gallery, Wellington

notes This painting was previously titled  
*Terrible Tartan No. 5*

12 *Carelessly Calculated* 1976/1977

oil on canvas  
1520 x 1775

exhibited May 1977, Wellington, Elva Bett Gallery,  
"Grids and Tartans"

July 1977, Auckland, Peter Webb Galleries,  
"Grids and Tartans"

April-May 1980, Auckland City Art Gallery,  
"New Zealand Paintings of the 1970s  
from the Permanent Collection"

May-June 1981, Auckland City Art Gallery,  
"Contemporary New Zealand Paintings  
from the Permanent Collection"

collection Auckland City Art Gallery

13 *Lots of Little Landscapes* 1977

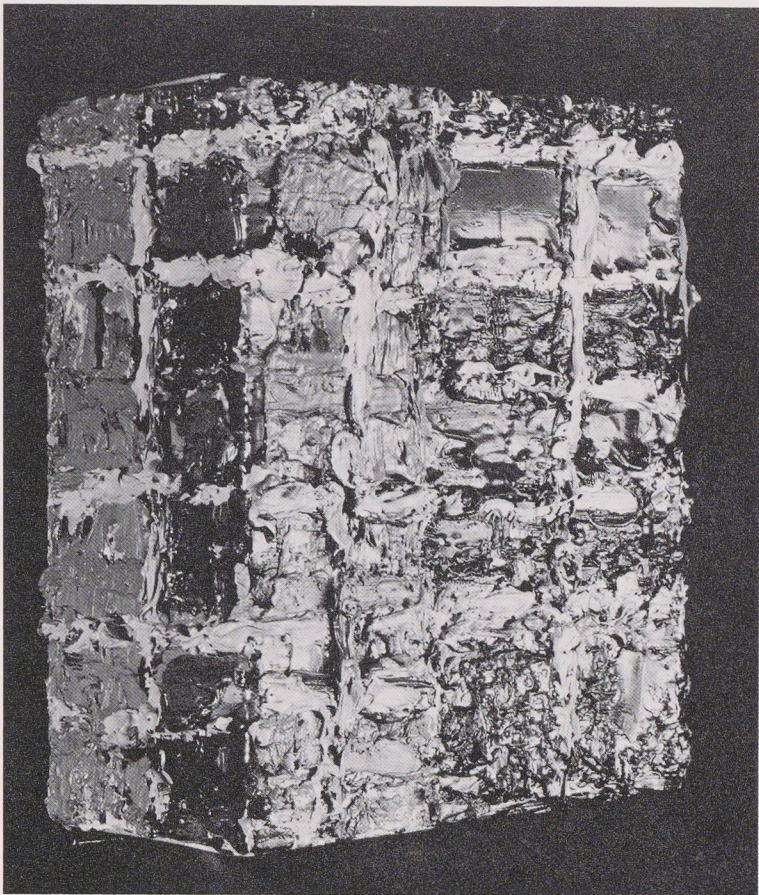
oil on canvas (diptych)  
1780 x 1574 (left panel)  
1780 x 1570 (right panel)

inscribed verso, *Rob McLeod*

exhibited July 1977, Auckland, Peter Webb Galleries  
"Grids and Tartans"

July-August 1977, Auckland City Art Gallery,  
"Young Contemporaries"

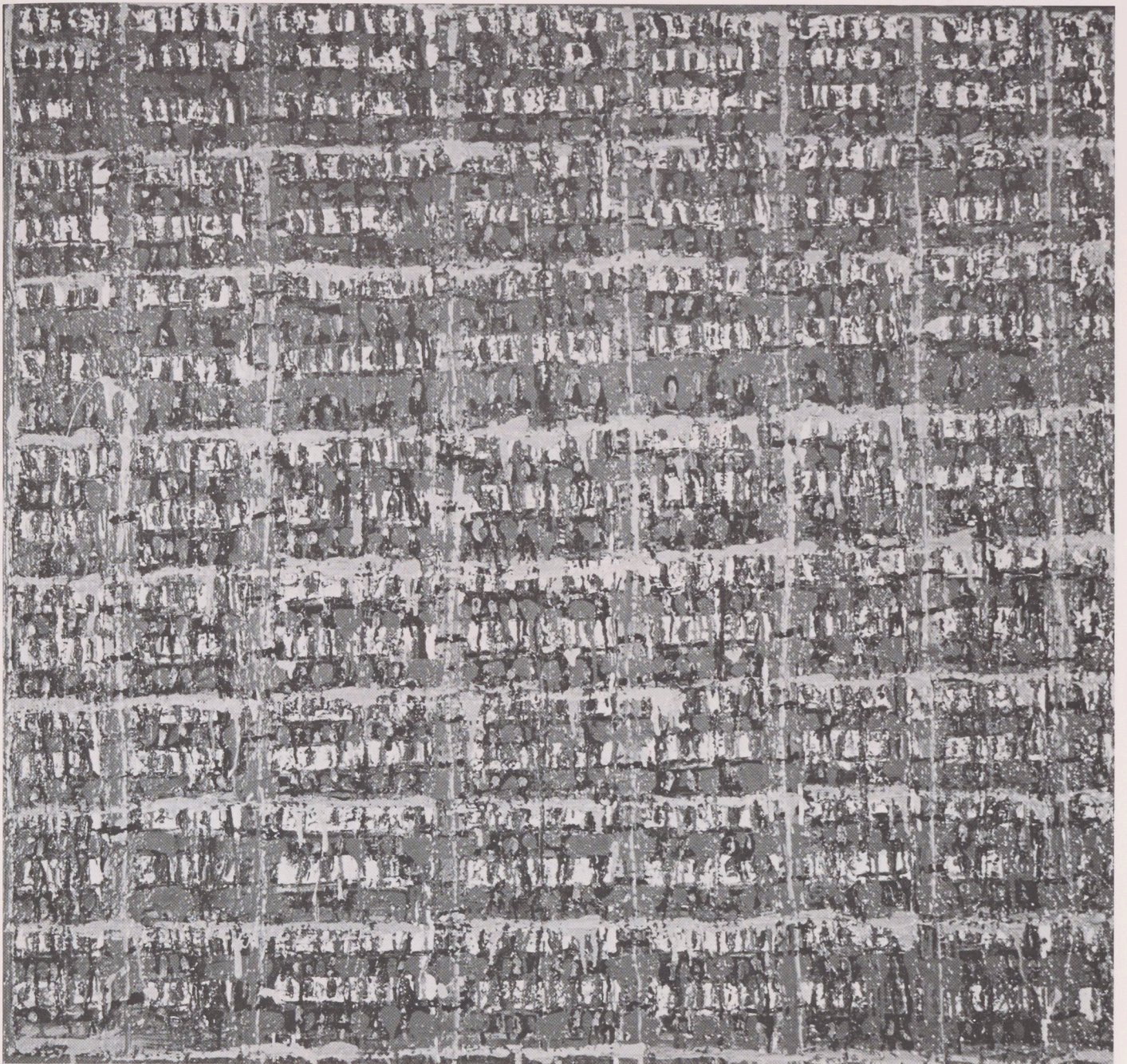
November-December 1977, New Plymouth,  
Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, "Robert McLeod"



9 McLeod *Tartan Box 1 1976/1977*



10 McLeod *Tartan Box 2 1976/1977*





Allen Maddox

Born Liverpool, England, 1948. Emigrated to New Zealand 1963. Studied Ilam School of Art, University of Canterbury 1967-1968. First one-man exhibition 1973, Wellington. Travelled in England 1979-1980. Lives in Auckland.

14 *Finer and finer and more gutless* 1976

oil on cotton duck  
830 x 2060

- inscribed lower left, x 6 pm 6.76  
*Finer and finer and more gutless*
- exhibited March-April 1979, Auckland City Art Gallery,  
"Recent Acquisitions"
- April-May 1980, Auckland City Art Gallery,  
"Hangings"
- April-May 1980, Auckland City Art Gallery,  
"New Zealand Paintings of the 1970s  
from the Permanent Collection"
- May-June 1981, Auckland City Art Gallery,  
"Contemporary New Zealand Paintings from  
the Permanent Collection"
- collection Auckland City Art Gallery

15 *Life's Hurdles* 1976

acrylic on canvas (4 pieces)  
1555 x 2070 (overall)

- inscribed verso, each piece AM 1976
- collection Sarjeant Gallery, Wanganui

16 *Work this out Jungle Boy* 1976

oil on linen  
200 x 2300

- inscribed lower right, AM 315 - 76  
*Work this out* [x] 59 May 3. 76  
*Jungle Boy* [x] 59 & 88
- exhibited July-August 1977, Auckland City Art Gallery,  
"Young Contemporaries"
- April-May 1981, New Plymouth,  
Govett-Brewster Art Gallery  
"Permanent Collection exhibition"
- April-June 1982, New Plymouth,  
Govett-Brewster Art Gallery,  
"Great de-accession exhibition"
- collection Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, New Plymouth

17 *Starry Starry Night* 1977

acrylic on canvas  
1000 x 910

- exhibited 1977, Wellington, Peter McLeavey Gallery  
"Paintings" (group exhibition)
- collection Melissa Leighton, Christchurch

\*18 *Coarse Investigations* 1979

mixed media on canvas  
1219 x 1219

- exhibited July-August 1979, Auckland,  
Denis Cohn Gallery,  
"Paintings by Allen Maddox"
- collection Vernon family collection

19 *Untitled* 1981

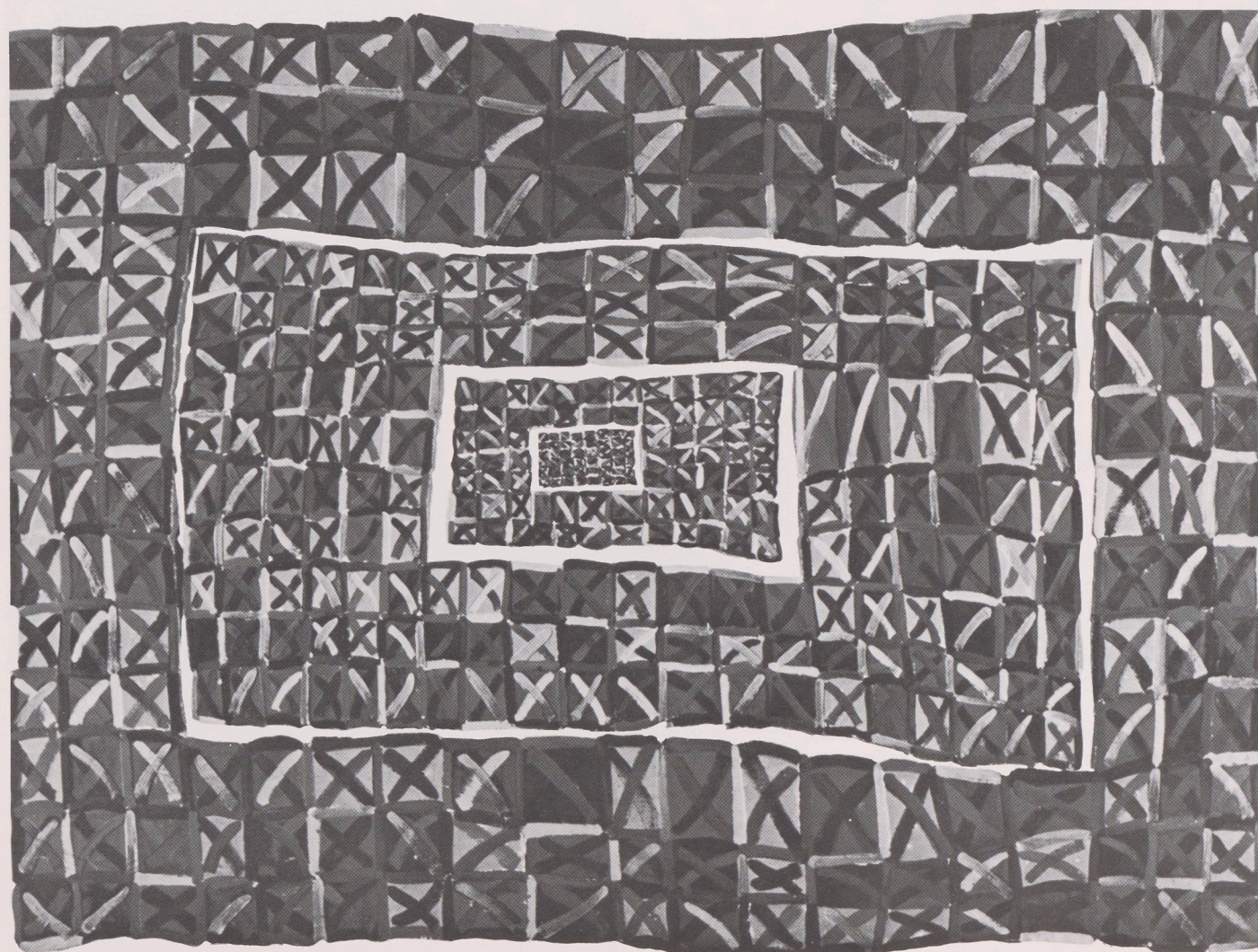
oil on canvas  
1219 x 1219

- inscribed lower right, AM 6.81
- exhibited August 1982, Auckland, Denis Cohn Gallery,  
"Paintings by Allen Maddox"
- collection Cohn/Vernon collection, Auckland



14 Maddox

*Finer and finer and more gutless 1976*

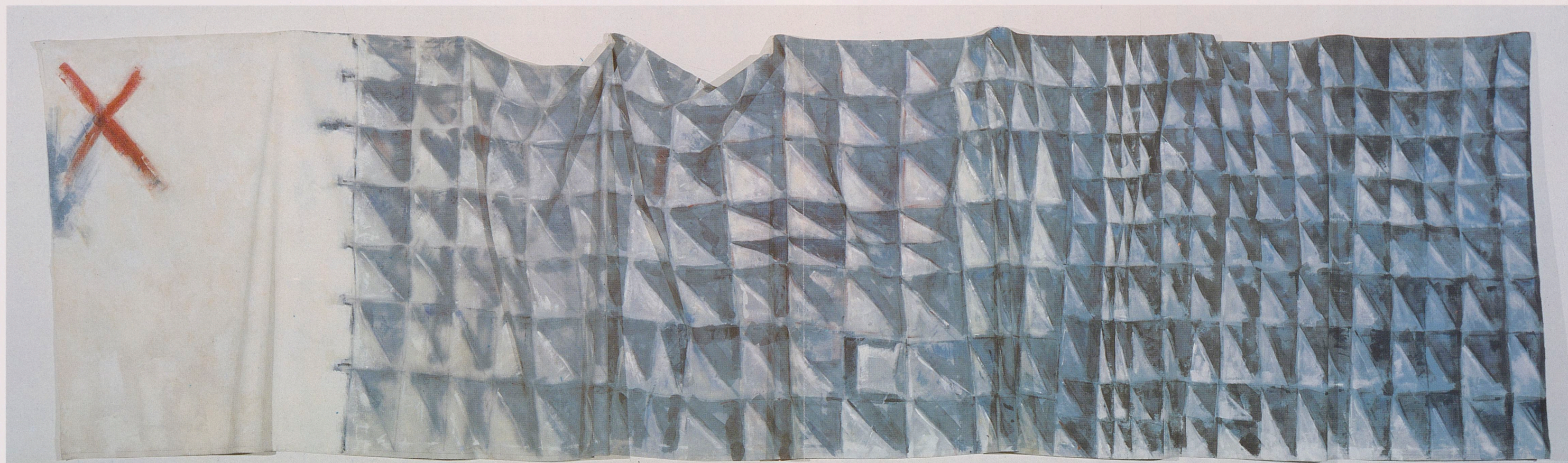


15 Maddox

*Life's Hurdles 1976*







24 Peebles *Untitled 1978/1979*

**Don Peebles**

Born Taneatua 1922. Studied art at Wellington Technical College 1947-1950 and Julian Ashton Art School, Sydney, 1951-1953. First one-man exhibition 1954, Wellington. Travelled in England and Europe 1960-1962; England, USA and Europe 1971 and again in 1976. Lives in Christchurch.

20 *Painting (Linear Series 19)* 1967  
acrylic on canvas  
1524 x 1632

inscribed verso, *Don Peebles*

exhibited May 1967, Auckland, Barry Lett Galleries, "Don Peebles" (Auckland Festival exhibition)

December 1973 — January 1974, Lower Hutt, Dowse Art Gallery, "Don Peebles Retrospective exhibition"

August 1982, Christchurch, Robinson/Brooker Art Gallery, "Paintings, Reliefs and Drawings 1962/1981"

21 *Untitled* 1972  
acrylic on canvas  
914 x 914

exhibited August 1973, Christchurch, Canterbury Society of Arts, "Paintings, Constructions, Drawings by Don Peebles"

22 *Untitled* 1973  
acrylic on canvas  
1536 x 1536

inscribed verso, *Don Peebles*

23 *Relief Construction* 1973/1974  
construction in wood with pencil and acrylic  
910 x 910 x 75

inscribed verso, *Don Peebles 1973/4*  
*Relief Construction acrylic/wood 36" x 36"*

collection National Art Gallery, Wellington

\*24 *Untitled* 1978/1979  
acrylic on canvas  
2400 x 9300

inscribed verso, *Don Peebles*

exhibited September 1979, Nelson, Bishop Suter Art Gallery, "Paintings by Don Peebles"

June 1981, Christchurch, Robert McDougall Art Gallery, "Hanging Paintings" (group exhibition)

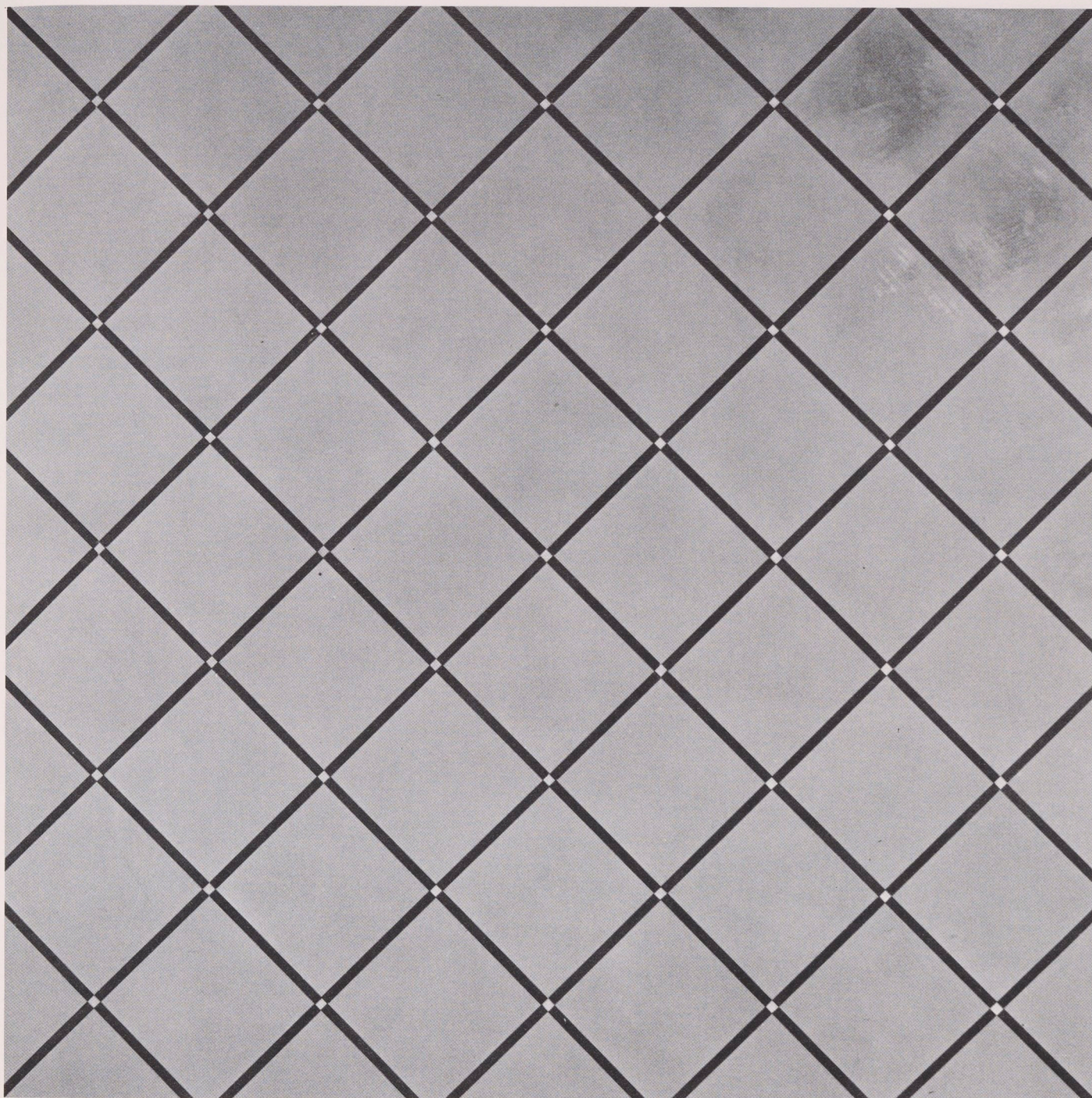
collection National Art Gallery, Wellington

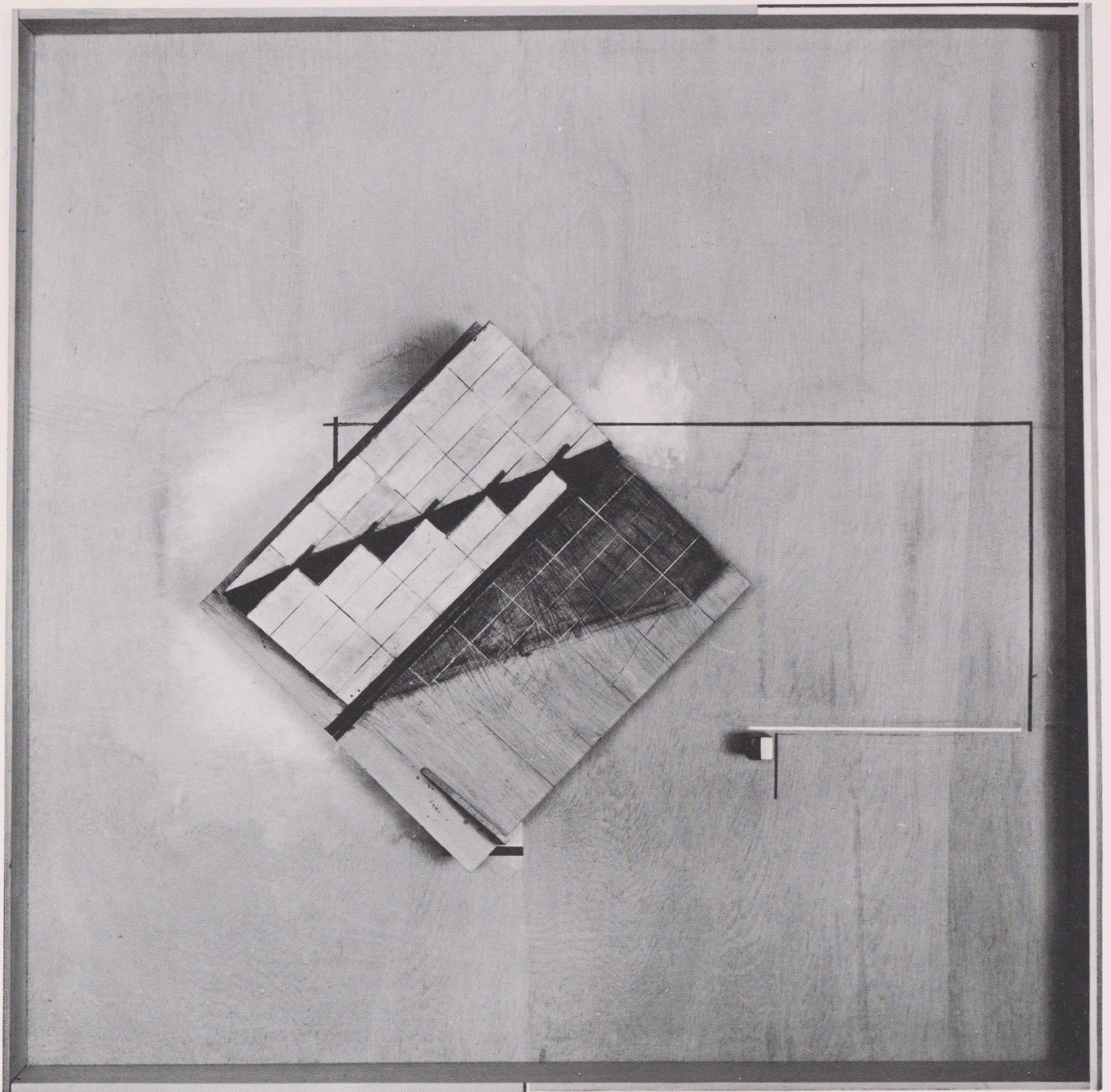
25 *Drawing* 1979  
charcoal on paper  
560 x 545

inscribed verso, *Don Peebles 1979*

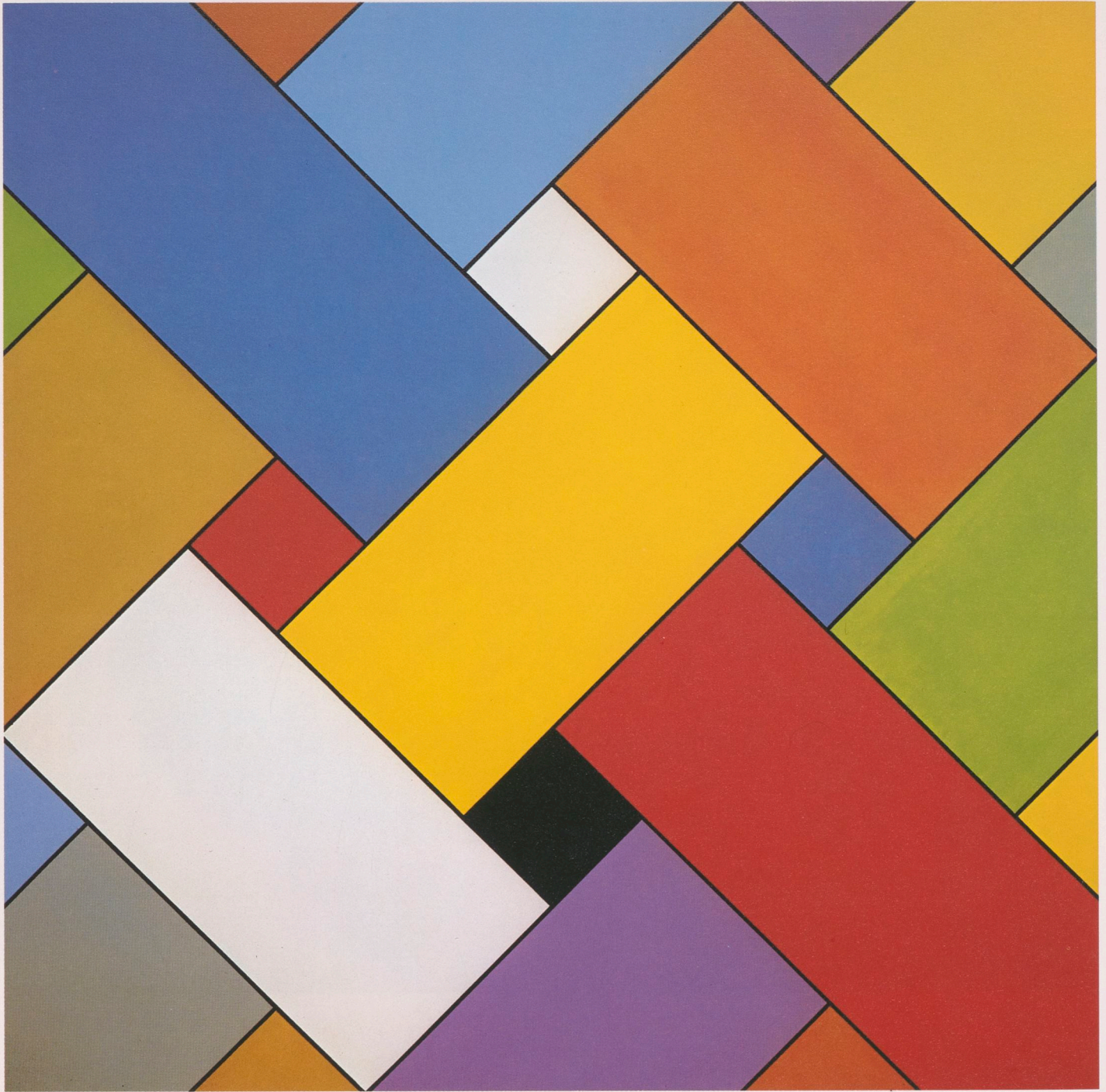
exhibited June 1979, Christchurch, Robert McDougall Art Gallery, "Recent Works by Don Peebles"

collection Robert McDougall Art Gallery, Christchurch









Ian Scott

Born Bradford, England, 1945. Studied Elam School of Fine Art, University of Auckland 1964 -1967 (graduating Dip.F.A.). First one-man exhibition 1970, Auckland. Travelled in USA, England and Europe 1980 -1981. Lives in Auckland.

26 *Lattice No. 14* 1977

acrylic on canvas  
1727 x 1295

inscribed      verso, *Ian Scott, Jan. 1977*

27 *Lattice No. 38* 1978

acrylic on canvas  
1524 x 1524

inscribed      verso, *Ian Scott 78*

exhibited      June 1981, Auckland, Peter Webb Galleries,  
"Paintings by Ian Scott"

28 *Lattice No. 78* 1978

acrylic on canvas  
1829 x 1829

inscribed      verso, *Ian Scott, March 1978*

29 *Small Lattice No. 34*

acrylic on canvas  
914 x 914

inscribed      verso, *Ian Scott Oct. 79*

30 *Lattice No. 65* 1979

acrylic on canvas  
1143 x 1143

inscribed      verso, *Ian Scott 79*

31 *Small Lattice No. 91* 1982

acrylic on canvas  
914 x 914

inscribed      verso, *Ian Scott, 82*

32 *Lattice No. 91* 1982

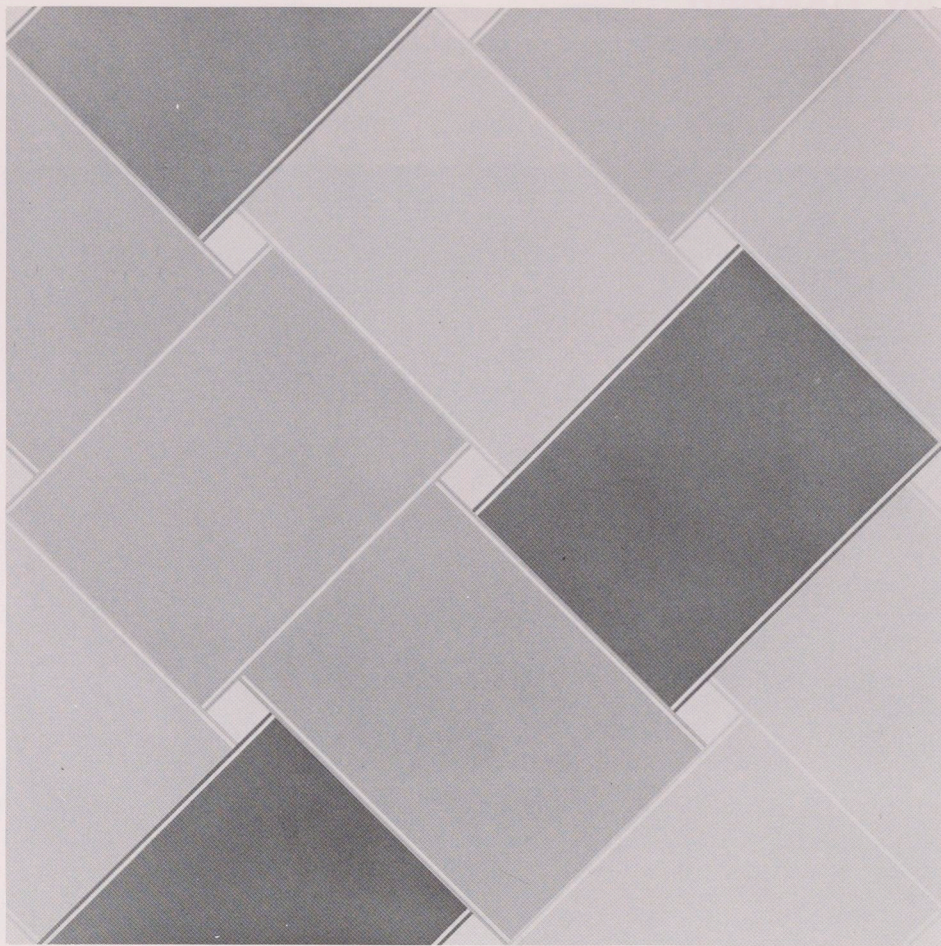
acrylic on raw canvas  
1824 x 1824

inscribed      verso, *Ian Scott 82*



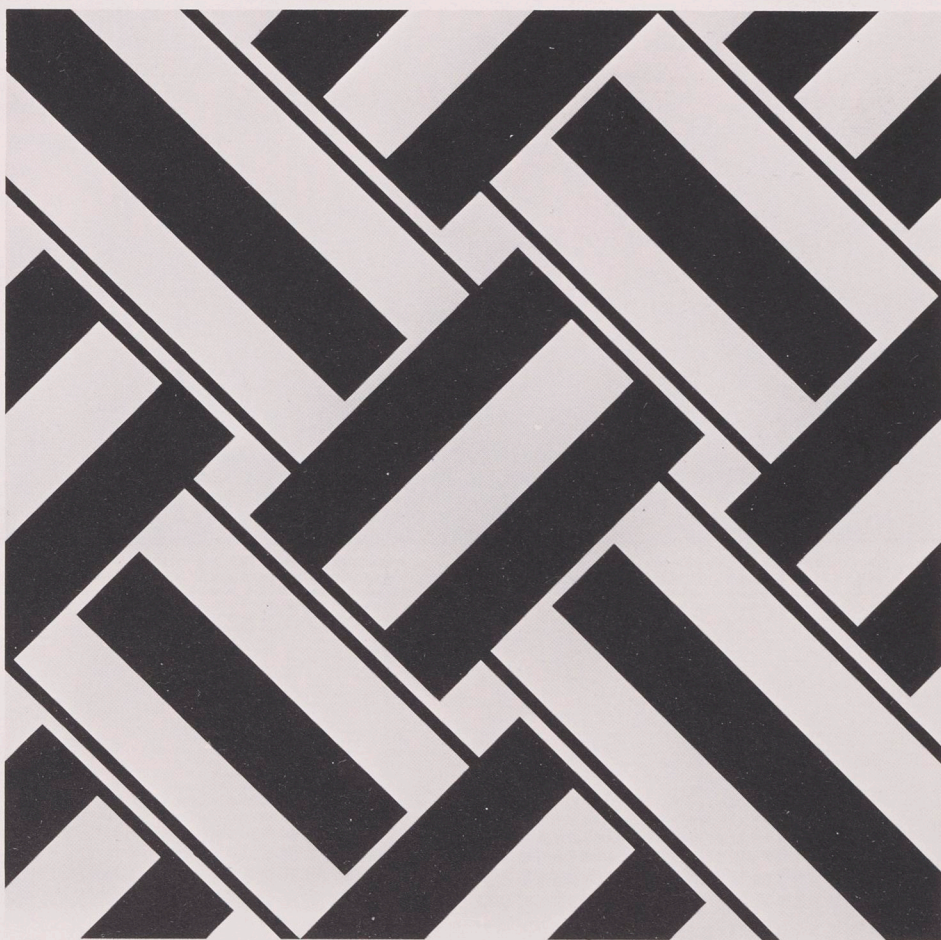
Wool hat design





27 Scott

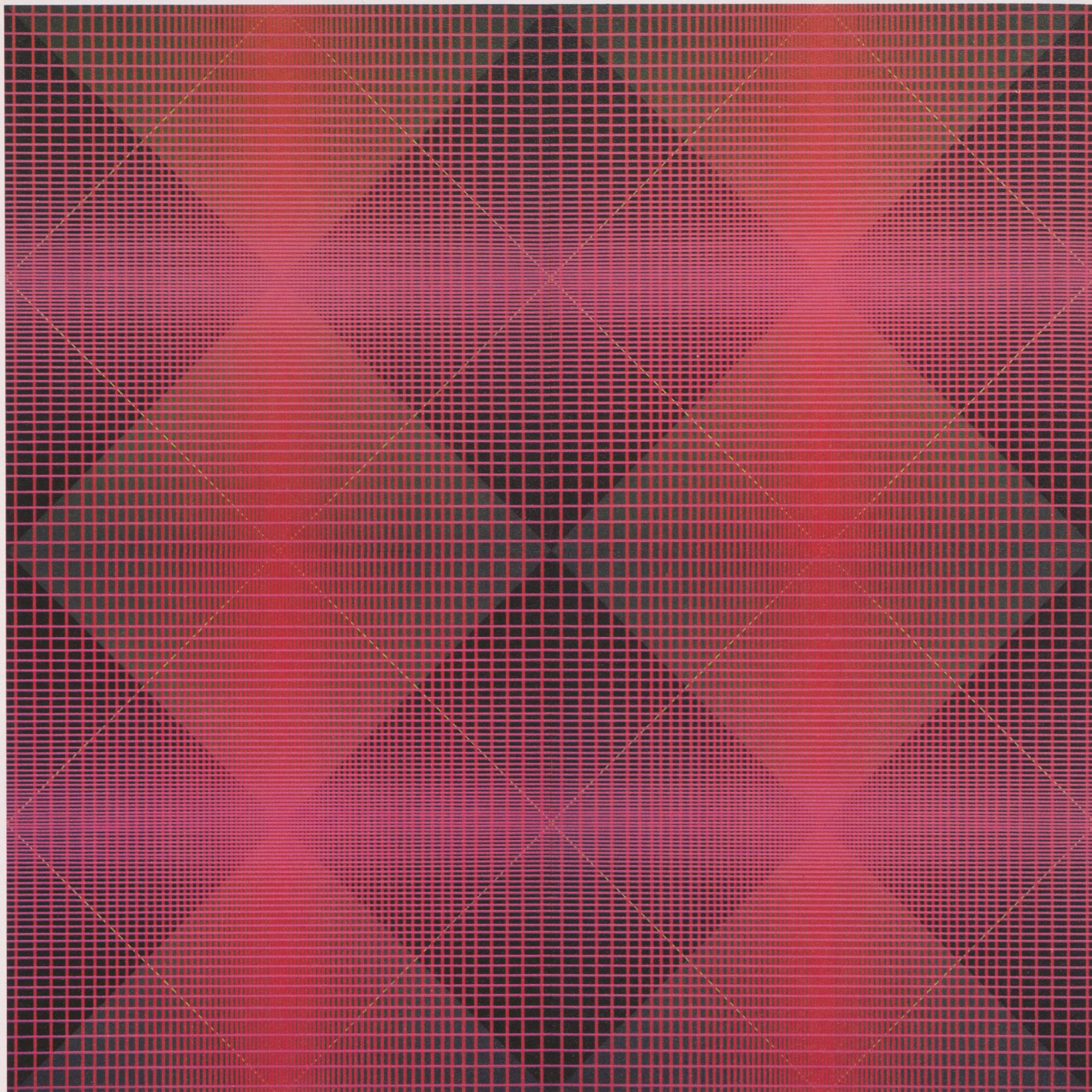
*Lattice No. 38 1978*



32 Scott

*Lattice No. 91 1982*

Ray Thorburn



Ray Thorburn

Born Wellington 1937. Studied Wellington Polytechnic 1951-1954; Elam School of Art, University of Auckland 1956 -1959; Ohio State University, USA, 1974 (graduating M.A.) and subsequently 1979 -1981 (graduating Ph.D.). First one-man exhibition 1965, Melbourne, Australia. Lives in Wellington.

33 *Modular 2 Series 2* 1970  
cellulose lacquer on board (4 panels)  
1371 x 1371 (each)

collection Auckland City Art Gallery

34 *Modular 12 Series 2* 1970  
cellulose lacquer on board (4 panels)  
1220 x 1220 x 50 (each)

inscribed verso, each panel *Modular 12 Series 2*  
verso, one panel *Ray Thorburn 1970*

exhibited 1971, Awapuni Jaycee Centenary exhibition

collection Manawatu Art Gallery, Palmerston North

35 *Modular 13 Series 2* 1970  
cellulose lacquer on board (4 panels)  
507 x 507 approx. (each)

inscribed verso, on separate panels —  
*Modular 13 series 2 1970*  
*Modular 13 series 2 Ray Thorburn 1970*  
*Modular 13 series 2*  
*Modular 13 series 2 1970*

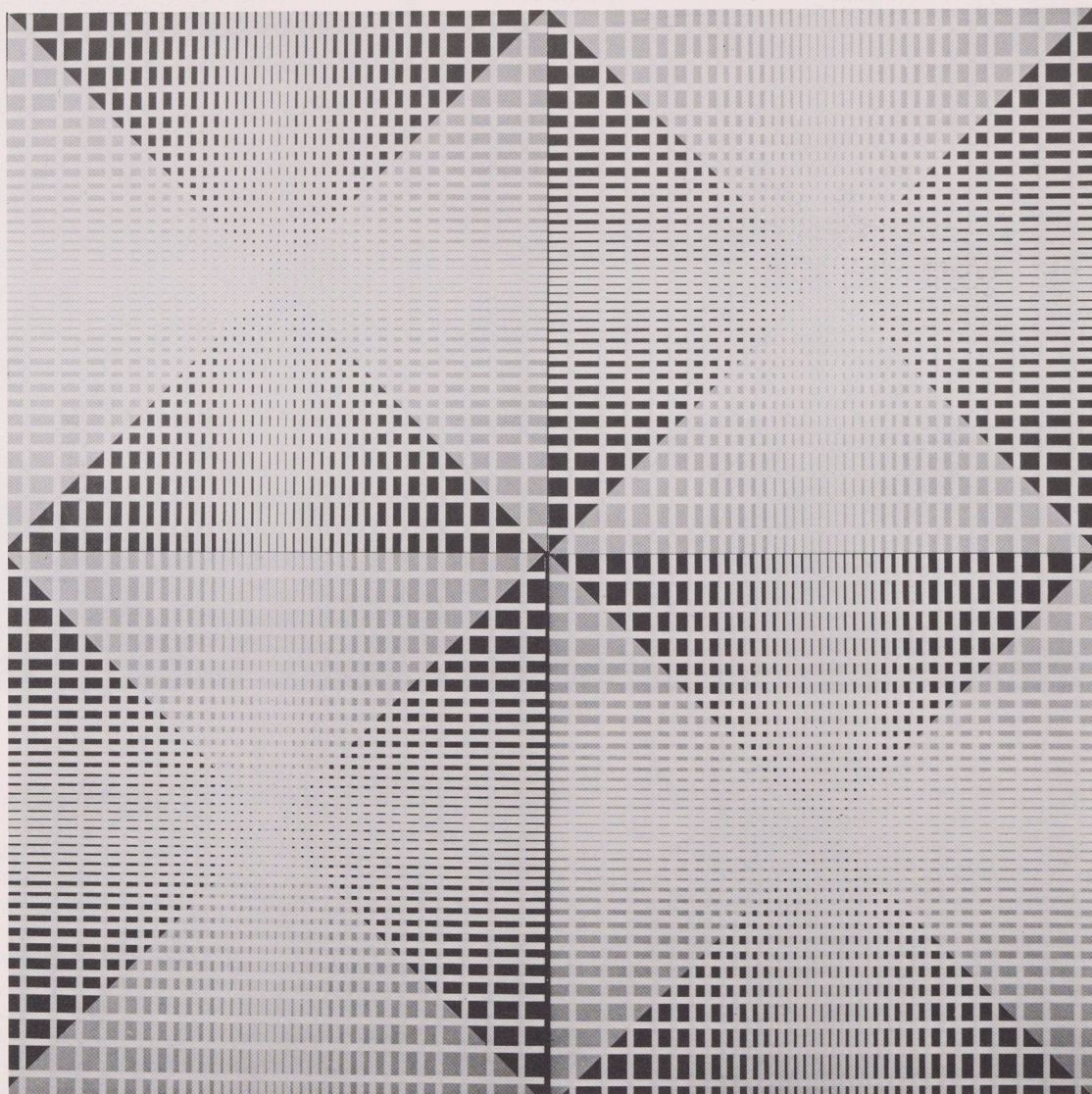
collection National Art Gallery, Wellington

36 *Modular 3B Series 4* 1973  
cellulose lacquer on hardboard (8 panels)  
860 x 380 x 30-50 (variable)

inscribed verso, *Modular 3B Series 4, Ray Thorburn '73*  
each panel is individually lettered:  
*E, F, G, H, FF, EE, HH, GG*

exhibited February 1973, Wellington,  
Peter McLeavey Gallery,  
"Paintings"

collection The Hocken Library, Dunedin



Geoffrey Thornley



Geoffrey Thornley

Born Levin 1942. Studied Elam School of Fine Arts,  
University of Auckland 1960 -1964 (graduating Dip.F.A.).  
First one-man exhibition 1967, Auckland. Travelled in Europe  
and USA 1968 -1969. Lives at Oratia.

40 *Grey/Albus No. 10* 1974

mixed media  
1130 x 1130

inscribed verso, *Thornley, Grey Albus No. 10* 74

collection Sarjeant Art Gallery, Wanganui

37 *Untitled No. 4* 1973

mixed media on paper  
2134 x 940

exhibited May 1974, Auckland, Petar/James Gallery,  
"Paintings" (one-man exhibition)

May/June 1981, Auckland City Art Gallery,  
"Contemporary New Zealand Painting"  
Permanent Collection

1981/82 Auckland City Art Gallery,  
"Artichoke"  
Permanent Collection

collection Auckland City Art Gallery

38 *Albus series No. 4: Nigresco* 1974

mixed media on paper laid on canvas  
1130 x 1130

exhibited March 1975, Auckland,  
Petar/James Gallery,  
"Albus series"

January/February 1979, Auckland  
City Art Gallery,  
"New Zealand Formal Abstract Paintings"  
Permanent Collection

April/May 1980, Auckland City Art Gallery,  
"New Zealand Paintings of the 1970s"  
Permanent Collection

May/June 1981, Auckland City Art Gallery,  
"Contemporary New Zealand Painting"  
Permanent Collection

collection Auckland City Art Gallery

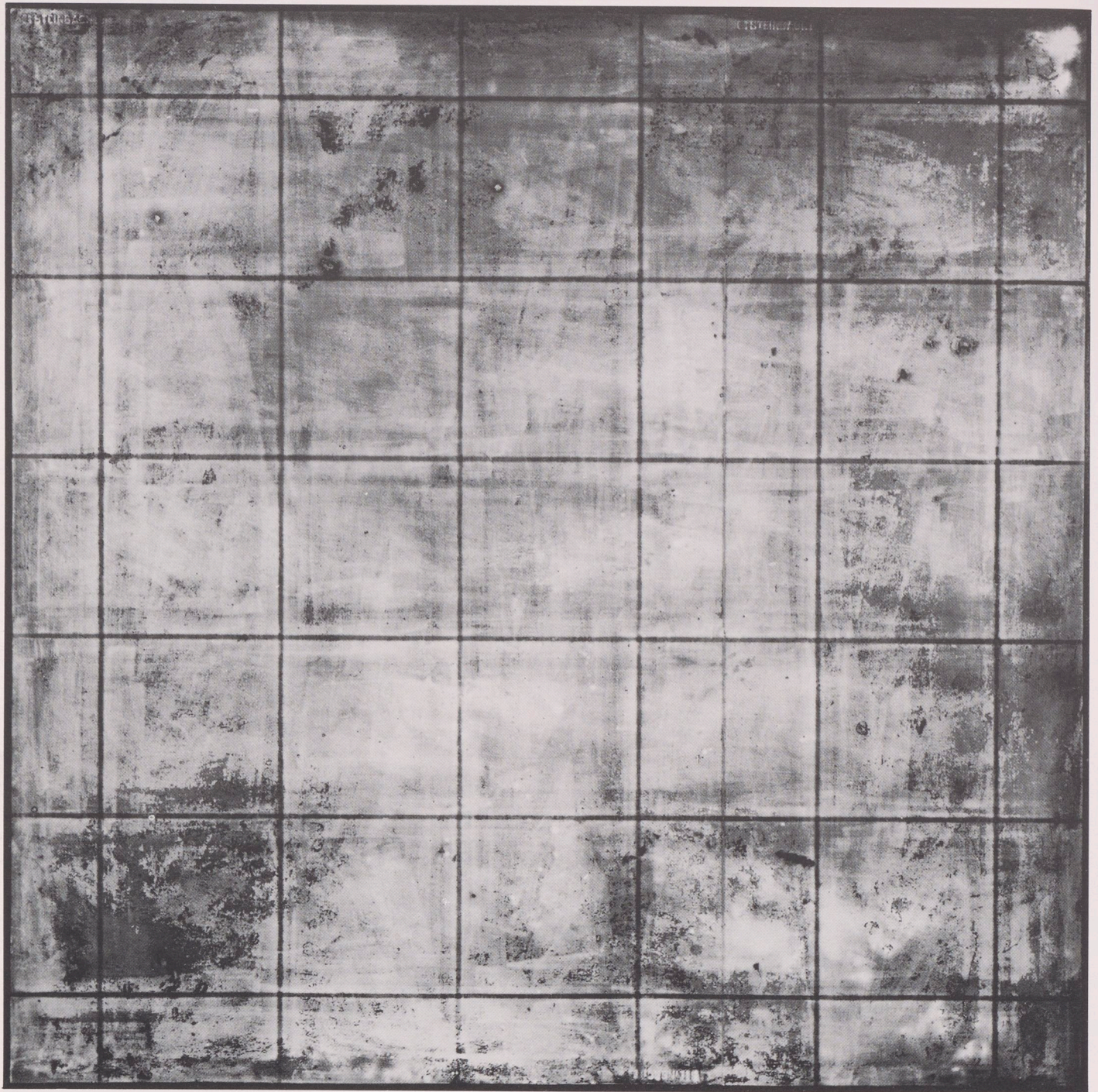
39 *Series A No. 11* 1974

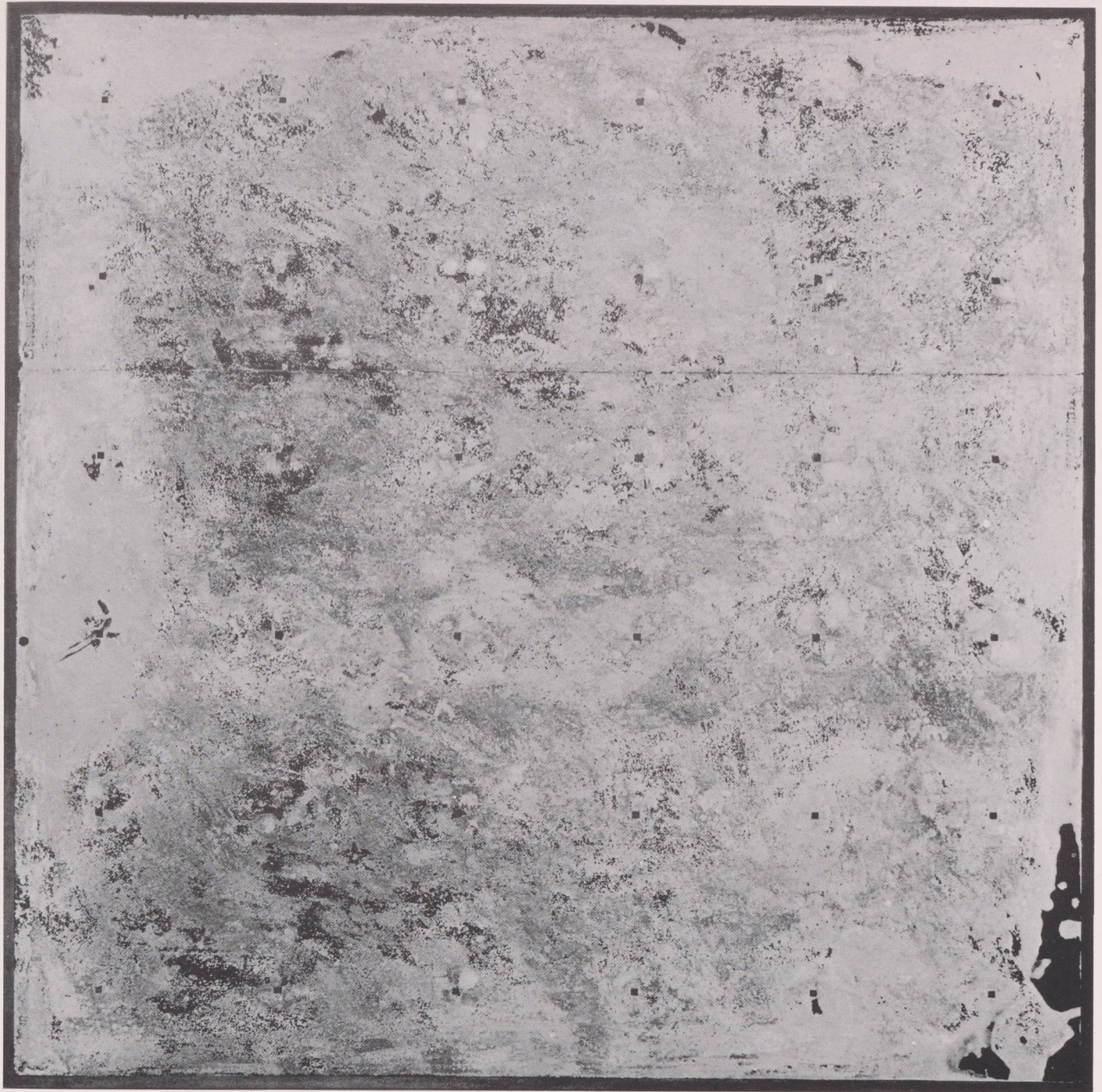
Mixed media on paper laid on canvas  
530 x 530

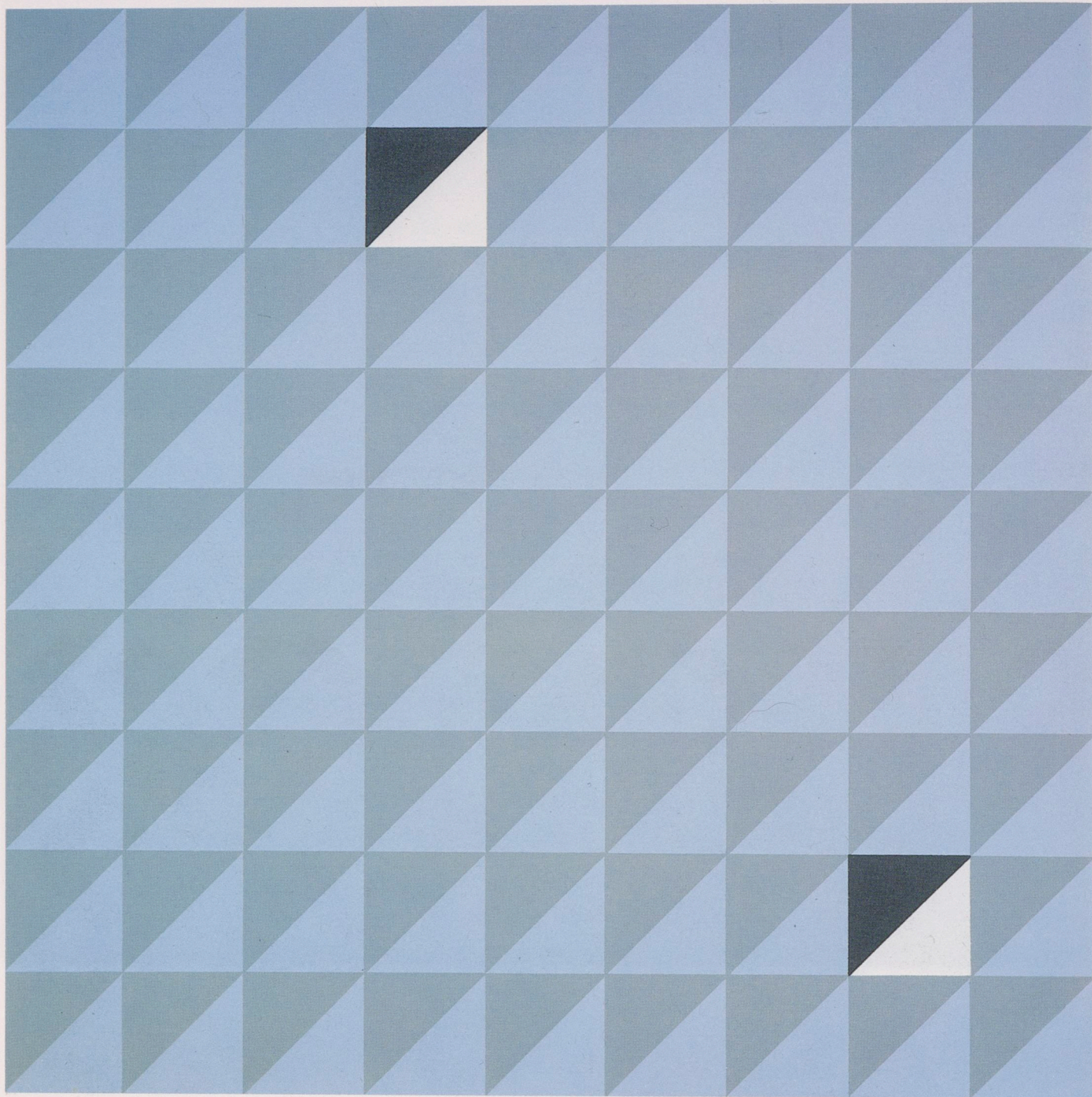
inscribed verso, *Series A. No. 11 1974 Thornley*

exhibited December 1979, Auckland,  
Petar/James Gallery,  
"Small Paintings 1972/74"

collection private collection, Auckland









Gordon Walters

Born Wellington 1919. Studied Wellington Polytechnic Design School 1935 -1944. First one-man exhibition 1942, Wellington. Travelled in Australia 1946, 1948 -1949, lived in Melbourne 1951-1953, and has made frequent visits to Australia since 1953; England and Europe 1950 -1951; USA 1979. Lives in Christchurch.

\*41 *Black/White* 1969  
acrylic and PVA on canvas  
1524 x 1524

inscribed details not available

exhibited May 1972, Auckland, New Vision Gallery,  
"Paintings"

collection private collection, Auckland

notes This painting was not available for exhibition.

42 *Untitled* 1970

ink on paper  
387 x 387

inscribed lower right, *Gordon Walters/70*

exhibited November-December 1973, Palmerston North,  
Manawatu Art Gallery,  
"Drawings Invitational"

43 *Untitled* 1975

acrylic on canvas  
570 x 570

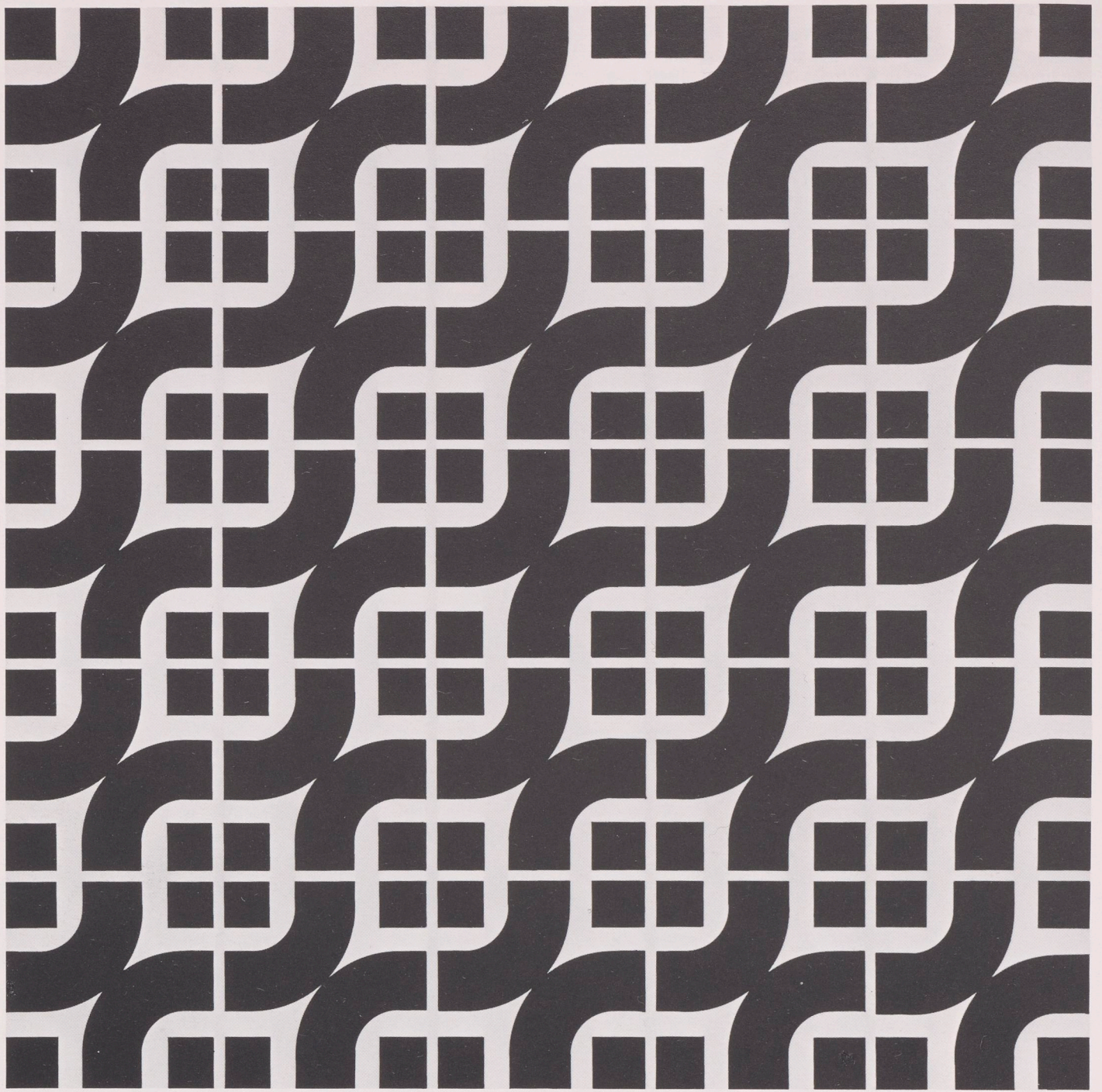
inscribed verso, *Gordon Walters 75*

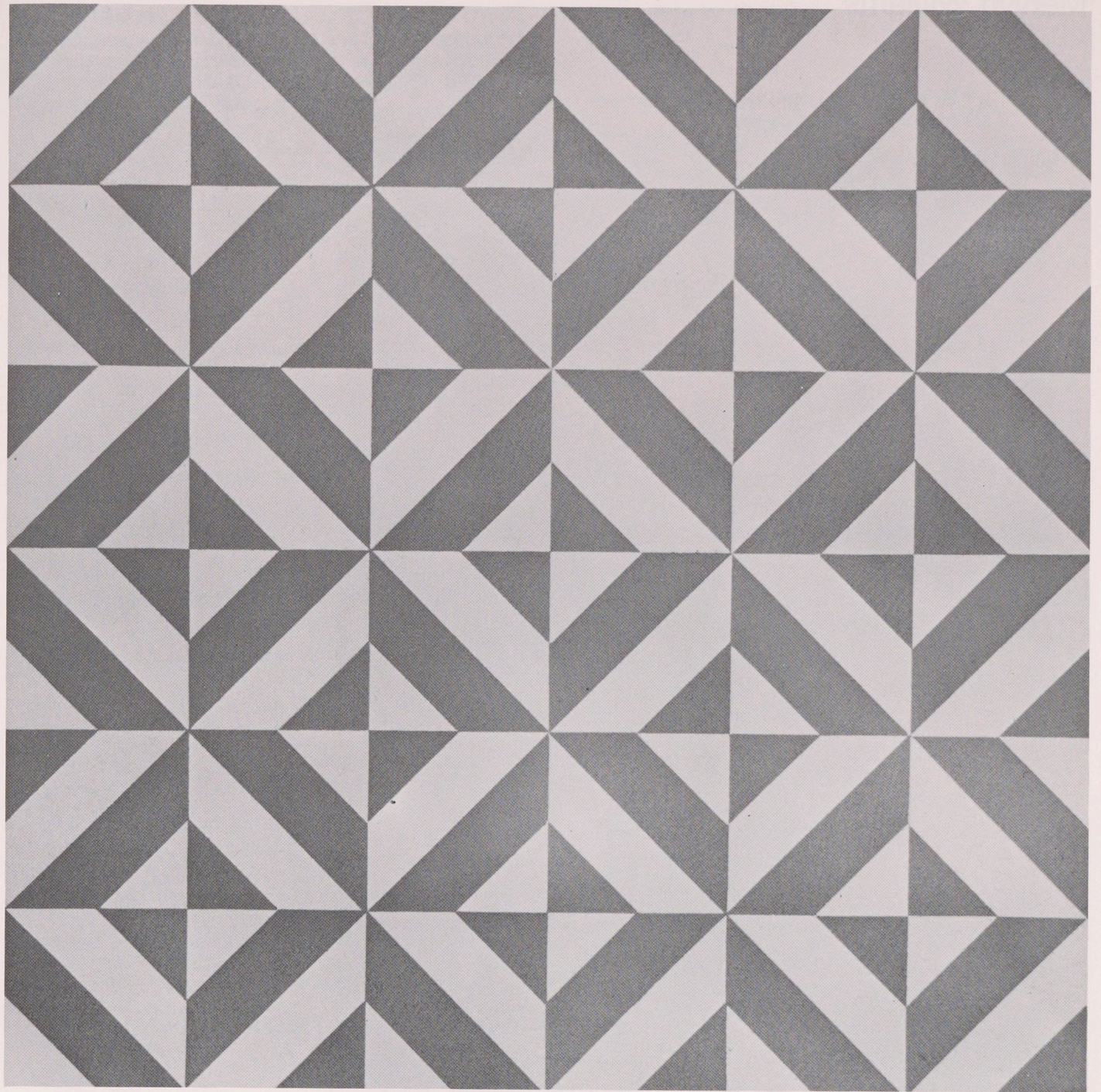
\*44 *Taniko* 1977

acrylic on canvas  
650 x 665

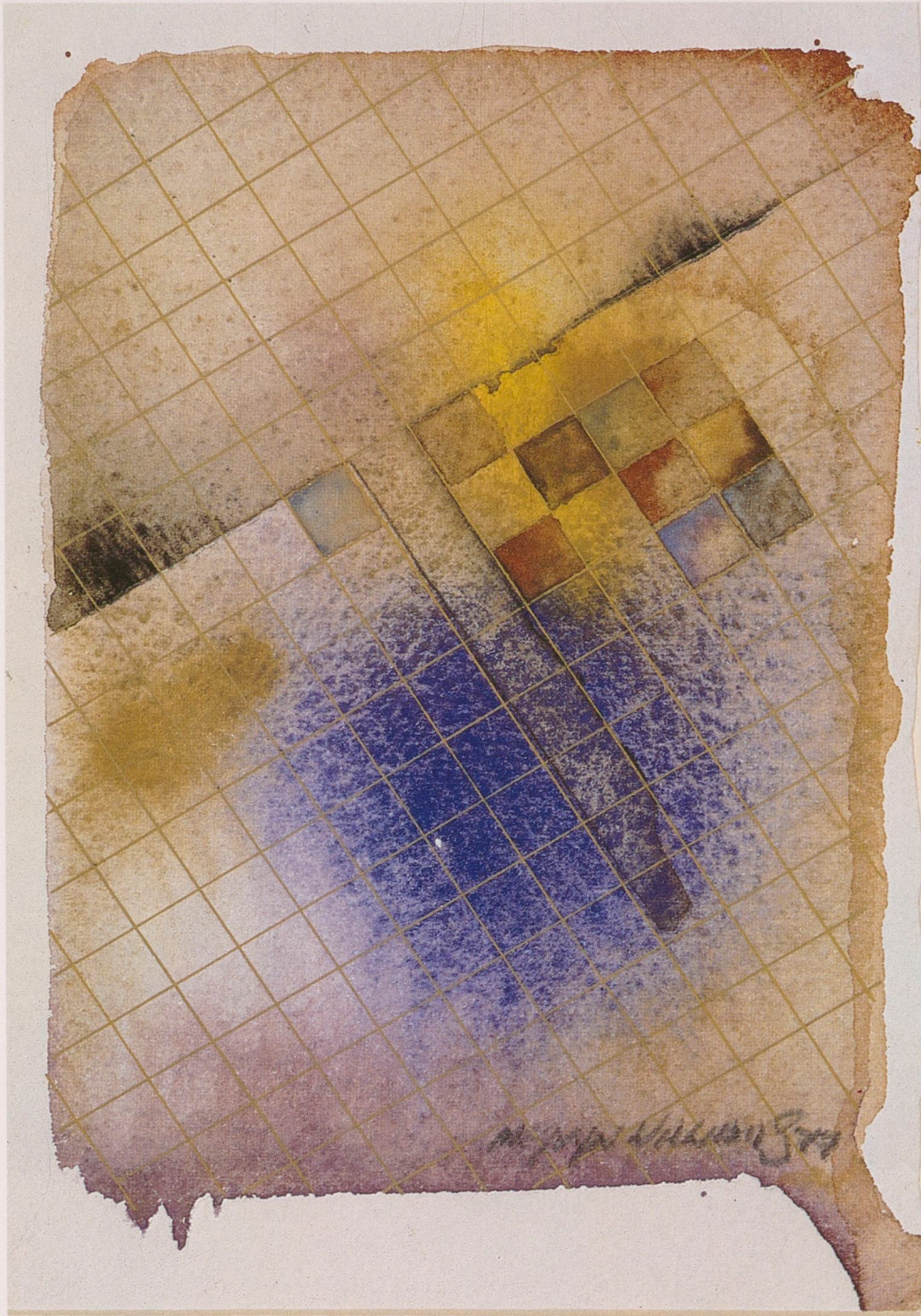
inscribed verso, *Gordon Walters*







Mervyn Williams



Mervyn Williams

Born Whakatane 1940. Studied part time Elam School of Art, University of Auckland 1957-1958. First one-man exhibition 1975, Auckland. Travelled in Australia 1975; USA 1980; England 1981. Lives in Auckland.

45 *Study 3* 1977  
watercolour on paper  
152 x 127

inscribed lower right, *Mervyn Williams '77*  
exhibited August-September 1978, Auckland  
City Art Gallery,  
"Little Works"  
collection Auckland City Art Gallery

46 *Gambit 1* 1978  
watercolour and gouache on paper  
640 x 505

inscribed lower right, *Mervyn Williams*  
exhibited February 1978, Auckland,  
Barry Lett Galleries,  
"New Year/New Work" (group exhibition)

47 *Delta 1* 1978  
acrylic on canvas laid on board  
1150 x 825

inscribed lower right, *Mervyn Williams*  
exhibited March-April 1978, Auckland  
City Art Gallery,  
"Auckland Artists"

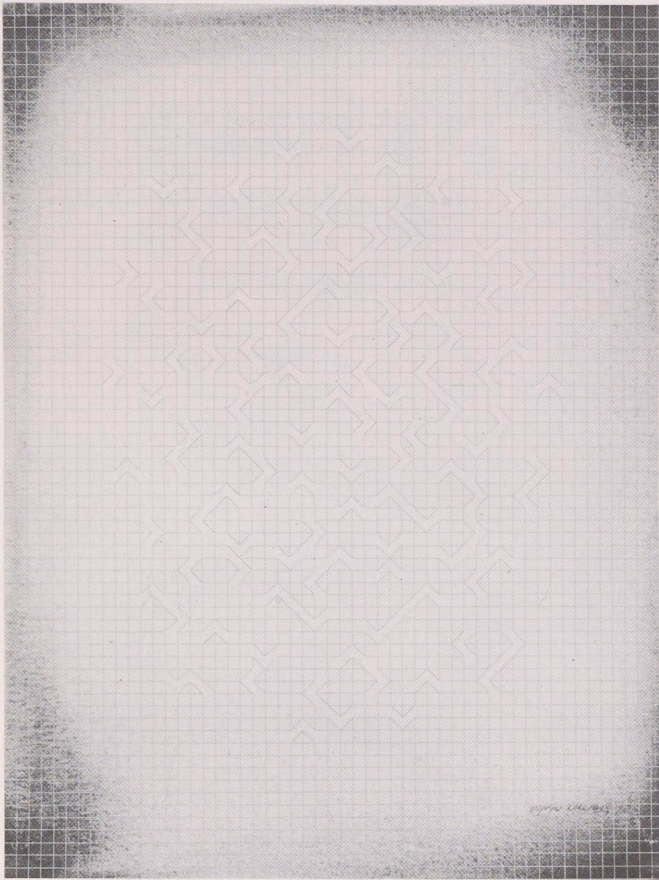
48 *Delta Series 4 (coil)* 1980  
acrylic on canvas  
1220 x 1220

inscribed lower right, *Mervyn Williams*  
exhibited October 1980, Auckland,  
Barry Lett Galleries,  
"Recent Paintings"  
November 1980, Auckland,  
Barry Lett Galleries,  
"Recent Paintings"

49 *Horus Series 12* 1980

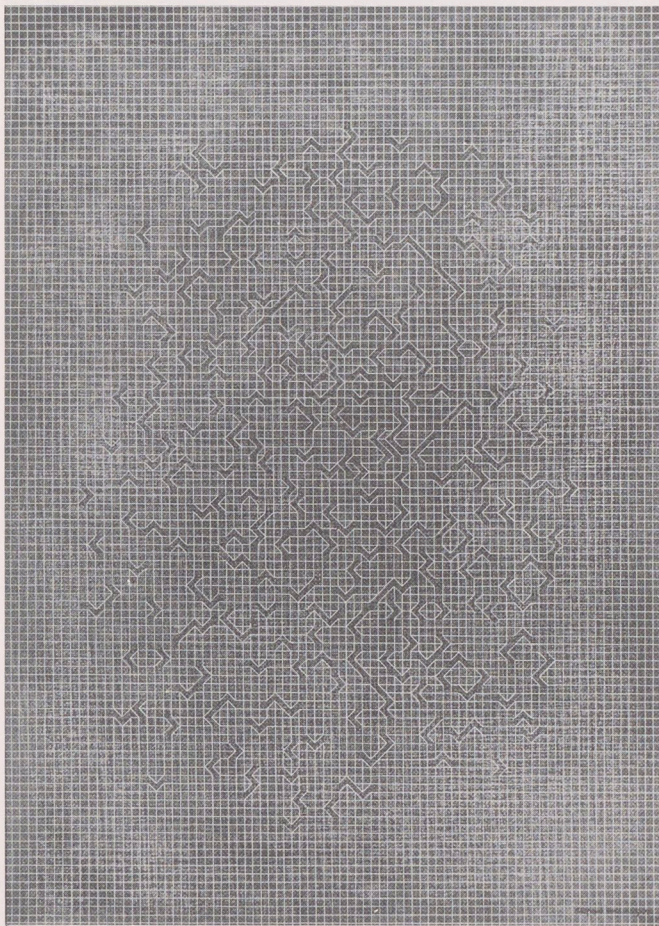
screenprint  
454 x 454

inscribed lower right, *Horus Series XII 9/25*  
lower right, *Mervyn Williams 80*  
exhibited May 1980, Auckland, New Vision Gallery,  
"Recent Prints"  
collection Auckland City Art Gallery



46 Williams

*Gambit 1* 1978



47 Williams

*Delta 1* 1978

