



THIS EDITION CONSISTS OF 145 COPIES
FOR SALE IN ENGLAND BY THE FLEURON
LIMITED AND 75 COPIES FOR SALE IN THE
UNITED STATES BY RANDOM HOUSE INC.

THIS IS NUMBER 96

A SPECIMEN BOOK OF
PATTERN PAPERS

A SPECIMEN BOOK OF PATTERN PAPERS

DESIGNED FOR AND IN USE AT
THE CURWEN PRESS

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY PAUL NASH



PUBLISHED FOR THE CURWEN PRESS BY
THE FLEURON LIMITED
101 GREAT RUSSELL STREET LONDON

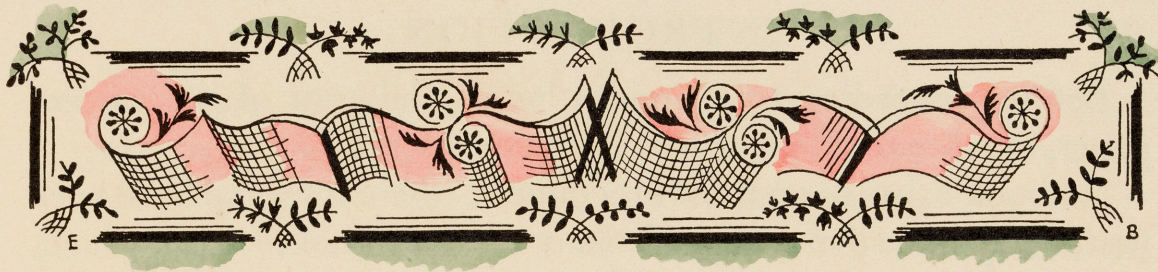
1928

PRINTED IN ENGLAND

AR

655.76

.C79



INTRODUCTION

BY PAUL NASH

IT is not unusual to find the various kinds of papers under discussion in this article described generally as 'end papers', in fact the Collection in the Victoria and Albert Museum is so described, but since many of the papers referred to here are not strictly end papers at all, * Pattern Papers seems a safer general title. This, then, must be applied to the paper covering the outside of a book, as well as to that pasted upon the inside of the boards and attached to the first fly-leaf. In either case its purpose is a useful one—to help in holding the book together—but its more important function is to make the book look attractive. A third use for such papers in connexion with books is in the form of a loose cover or jacket. In this character they have been employed extensively as temporary 'bindings' and as shields for the bound book. Other uses found for the pattern paper appear in the course of its complicated history, for the importance of the pattern paper does not lie solely in its simple useful relation to bookbinding, but as a humble part of the endless contribution to decoration which forms one of the most absorbing studies in the history of æsthetics.

Before proceeding to examine the art and craft of the pattern paper, one has to admit that it is an unexplored subject.

No book exists upon it in this country, whereas several have been written upon wall-papers and many upon printed textiles, which, after all, are only patterned stuffs instead of patterned papers. This is remarkable, in view of the extraordinary store of interest to be found in the Collection of end papers at the Victoria and Albert Museum alone, the bulk of which is not even catalogued.

It is upon this Collection chiefly that the following conclusions are based; that they must be unsatisfying to the curiosity this subject may rouse is inevitable, but without considerable expert research very little exact information can be given. There are, however, certain known facts in the history of pattern papers. Towards the end of the seventeenth century there was a process in use among printers called damasking or damasquening. Damasking was previously applied to describe the art of engraving arabesques upon armour, but another definition is 'to deface by stamping or marking with lines and figures', further, which is an amusing comparison of alternatives, 'to stamp rude draughts on waste paper, to imprint the figures of flowers on silk or stuff'. Thus, certain books deemed unfit for circulation were ordered to be 'damasked', that is, to be defaced by imprinting patterns over the pages of type or upon the blank sides of sheets not yet wholly printed over. Of this form of ban there exists a dramatic record.

This is to require you to Damask or obliterate whatsoever sheets you have seized of a book called Leviathan, and for your so doing this shall be your warrend. Given under our hand this 11th day of December 1673, Humph, London, to the Masters and Wardens of the Company of Stationers.

This process of obliteration led to a pleasant by-product of the

printing trade, for, when the sheets had been damasked, they passed into the hands of booksellers and such merchants, who made use of them in various ways, either by binding their books, or selling them for lining cupboards or boxes, and in some cases, no doubt, for making up as wall-papers. An example of the excellent use found for Camden's *Remains concerning Britain*, which, for some odd reason, was required to be damasked, may be seen in a box made of ash and inlaid with pearwood, holly, and bog-oak, which is part of the Collection of Woodwork in the Victoria and Albert Museum. Here the owner of the box seems to have been able to get just what was wanted, for the bold woodcut design of Tudor roses and 'Spanish stitch' exactly chimes in with the pattern of Tudor roses and precise, rigid birds which form the design of the inlay. This sets one speculating upon the choice and variety of the damasked papers. Who were their designers and engravers? What excited or ruled their fancy, and, since their papers might well have several different uses, did they attempt to cut their blocks with discretion, or had the blocks, originally, another purpose, as for printing textiles, when, being discarded for some reason they were put to 'stamping rude draughts on paper' instead of 'imprinting figures of flowers on silk'? Another example of a box lined with a patterned paper is a spirit case, belonging to Judge Blackstone, which has been in my father's possession for many years. The box is fitted with a 'nest' containing bottles and is supposed to have accompanied the judge when travelling on circuit. The lining paper is of good design, very bold, but relieved by graduating or shading, the colour is bright cherry on a cream ground. In this instance there is no printing upon the back and, judging by the character of the pattern, it seems probable the paper was originally applied to walls. The date on the box is 1750. In considering the question whether wood-blocks of patterns were

put to alternate uses it must be remembered that most of the old cover-papers were printed by dyes, not inks, therefore the transposition would not be impossible unless a block had been so bruised by one process as to make it unfit for application to a different material. One thing is certain, that the end paper was used both for lining boxes, etc., and plastering walls, and that some of the covers found in books and in boxes are pieces of wall-paper.

This, then, is an approximate statement of the uses, plain and decorative, of the end paper, there remains the consideration of its æsthetic and the history of its production. Of the latter enough has been said to show that part of its history is almost inextricably confused with that of the wall-paper, particularly in its earlier stages in this country. Of wall-papers much has been written, not the least interesting contribution being that by Mr. Furst to *The Woodcut*, No. 2¹, where he very neatly exposes the 'iniquities' of the wall-paper industry, and makes a plea for the more definite revival of block-printed papers. This, I should like to add, has already begun in the delightful designs of Edward Bawden, cut by him in linoleum and produced by a lithographic process by the Curwen Press. These wall-papers have not only found a sale in London, but have been purchased both in Paris and New York. The earliest wall-paper in this country is that found pasted over a beam in the Master's Lodge at Christchurch College, Cambridge. The date of this is somewhere about 1509. This undoubtedly is a *wall-paper*, and not an end paper, but it suggests yet another use for the damasked sheets! The just placing of historic facts and dates and the nice disentanglement of wall-paper from end paper might easily absorb the remainder of this article, but since it is not its purpose only to consider the production of English papers,

¹The Fleuron Limited, London, 1928.

let us turn to the living record of the tiny, but exquisite, art of the end paper as practised in Italy during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

On first seeing the Collection of designs at the Victoria and Albert Museum one is enchanted and surprised. It seems incredible that this small but lovely corner of art should have been so hidden away. Apart from the extraordinary variety of invention displayed, the textural qualities are a sheer revelation. One is familiar with many different printed fabrics and the considerable diversity of effect obtained by the sensitive application of dyes to various stuffs, but few approach to the delicate beauty achieved by the Italian and French paper-printers. Here, of course, the substance of the ground varies very little, but the effects of the imposition are got by two or three different methods. Many of them are by wood-blocks, many by stencil, the best by a combination of the two. Some combine ground washes of colour by hand over-printed by blocks charged with a kind of distemper. At times a glaze is used, and at one period, particularly, gold-leaf or gold-powder dusted onto gum. Some of these papers have the enamelled glow of Persian miniatures, others vibrate like Cotman water-colours, some are as frail and radiant as flowers. Of the actual patterns it is useless to write without reference to reproductions or diagrams. Their ingenuity of spacing and accent is as charming as the aptness of their rhythm. Most lovely beyond all other qualities, however, are the infinitely varied harmonies of colour: the best of these, at least, cannot be ignored, for they are evidence of a most subtle sensibility. As I remarked at the beginning of this article, it is extremely difficult to give precise information regarding the authors of the early end papers: one is inclined to say, with Blake, 'the authors are in Eternity'. It is only possible roughly to tabulate phases of design, relegating here and there crops of patterns

to certain places, distinguishing actual signatures of artists : thus a few facts emerge. There is no doubt that the Italians were the masters of this craft and that their best work was done during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries at Rome, Florence, and Bologna. One family, at least, is definitely associated with the production of decorated papers, this is the Rizzi. This firm still has in its possession some very ancient blocks, and many of the papers issued to-day are from very old designs. The Rizzi papers show a simple but elegant taste. The patterns, like others of the period, are pleasantly irregular in disposition, with sometimes a discreet use of gold. The great distinction of the Rizzi, however, is that the firm has carried on an unbroken tradition and is producing papers to-day by the same methods employed in the seventeenth century. This, I believe, is a unique case. To return to the South Kensington Collection. In some cases the papers exist made up into little books with a label pasted on the spine and a title written in indian ink. The papers are stuck over stout boards with rice paste, forming a very durable cover. Judging by the titles, these covers were to bind books or treatises of an ephemeral character, such as temporary records, accounts, tracts, and homilies, or souvenirs of events. One, however, bears the inscription *Nuovo Testamento, Tom. II*. So gay are they that we imagine them containing poems and jests rather than accounts and sermons, but it is a relief to think of the New Testament so humanly treated instead of being imprisoned in its usual forbidding black. Certain of the titles are in French, but the covers under the labels do not differ very considerably from the Italian books. A marked change appears in the set of papers issued from Augsburg. Here a few names are visible : Johann Christian Leopold, 1785-7, is responsible for some pleasant geometrical designs of very close floral pattern with the printed title, 'Restrictus Responsiones Facti et juris Videntibus

Omnibus Dominis'. Other designers were Johann Wilhelm Mayr and Carl and Michel Munk, the latter a colourist of great charm, the designs, however, rather conventional. Several sheets of patterns are of quaint animals and birds from crude woodcuts, printed in black and gold on a green ground and so disposed on the page as to remind one of those sets of transfers for children. Apart from this group of South German end papers there is a collection of covers for souvenirs of the marriage celebrations of Anne, daughter of George II, with William, Prince of Orange. These are of elaborate design and coloured in gold, orange, pale blue, magenta, and purple, with portraits of Plato, Cicero, Socrates, and other sages, surrounded by a somewhat repellent baroque ornament; parts of the more modest sections of the scheme are effective and pleasing. With the decline of the eighteenth century the art of this craft seems to have waned. Some one, apparently in France, struck out a new line with cover designs of monograms and armorial bearings: in the hands of more spirited artists such designs might have had a certain architectural dignity, but in most cases they do not appear to have achieved more than a rather dull pomp. At some time towards the end 'marbling' was introduced, a process by which colours were floated on a specially prepared bath, the surface then being combed and the paper applied. The practice still obtains, but, like others, has lost its original artistry. The early marblings are of infinite variety, ranging from bold splashes of bright or subtle colours, happily disposed, to delicate speckling like the marking on a grouse's egg. Invention grew with experiment, so that marbling became more and more fantastic. There is a period of large-scale patterns in rose and purple and their approaching shades, uncomfortably flesh-like, in globular, bulbous forms: these have a three-dimensional character and are particularly frightening. A brief interval of Victorian 'aquarium' patterning, during which the

forms suggest a seaweed or fern-like growth, produced some delicate designs, but a step further led to 'exact' marbling or the perfect imitation of the original substance, and this, if we except an outburst of papers in which a repulsive gold stamping heightens a naturalistic flower device of incredible ugliness, well represents the final horror of decadence.

In treating of modern pattern papers, it is necessary to adjust one's perspective. The decorated papers of to-day—with the exception of those produced by the Rizzi, should not be compared with the work of the French and Italians of the eighteenth century. This is an age of mass-production, and, as such, has its limitations. It is always unprofitable to compare a machine-made article with one made by hand. Pattern papers to-day are for the most part printed by machines with inks instead of with dyes by hand-blocks. This applies, at least, to the decorated papers of this book, whatever other methods may now, or in future, be used for production. Now there are two things the machine can do. It can produce the machine-made article with the machine finish, or it can imitate the hand-made article. Except, perhaps, in the case of a lithographic reproduction, which is not truly mechanical, the attempts of the modern press to reproduce the hand-made 'look' are generally a failure, and it is only when designers attempt to ape the effect of the antique papers and call upon the modern printing press to assist them that an unfavourable comparison can be made between their work and that of the old artists. In introducing the papers of the Curwen Press, I should like to point out that, with very few exceptions, and those not of recent examples, the designs are not in imitation of the early Italian manner. On the other hand, they have their own virtue. These hard, bright, resilient patterns are more in keeping with the modern spirit and admirably represent the revival in pattern paper production. This is not meant

to suggest that other methods of production are not important. Many very beautiful papers are being produced by printing from hand-blocks, in many cases in schools, most notably those made by the children of the Dudley High School and other groups of children instructed by Miss Richardson, who possesses an extraordinary gift for bringing out the child's latent powers for design. Such little industries, however, are very limited in their production and, at present, the work of the Curwen Press is the only important contribution in this country. Before concluding this article it should be interesting to learn the facts that led to the present revival of pattern paper making by the Press. It should be remembered in passing that the end paper proper, that is, the paper used inside the covers, as opposed to the cover-paper, had something of a vogue among designers at the end of the last, and during the early part of the present century. The patterns were usually of a pictorial nature, except for those designed by Lucien Pissarro for the Eragny Press books, which are modest little floral devices beautifully executed. Beardsley, and, later, Charles Ricketts, contributed to the end papers of this period, but the whole output was sporadic and uncertain in character, forming only a slender link between the art of the past and the modern revival.

It appears that in 1920 Gordon Craig gave to the late Lovat Fraser one of those blank paper books with the traditional patterned cover which are still produced in Florence. This seems to have suggested to the ever resourceful 'Lovat' the idea of making patterned papers himself, and he proceeded to fill the pages with notes to that end. Mr. Harold Curwen, looking through them one day, was struck by their gaiety and apt design, and promptly offered to purchase the set, which he proceeded to reproduce in large sheets to be used for covering books, or making up into envelopes with card backs, suitable for carrying proofs and MSS.

through the post. No doubt they were put to other uses as in the past : it would not be surprising to find them lining boxes and cupboards, or even pasted upon walls ! A distinguished bibliophile has brightened his library by covering sets of books in different papers, each author having his or her distinct pattern.

The papers in the following Collection are from designs reproduced by offset printing, the original *key* pattern being a line block from a drawing, or a wood-engraving. The first two designs ever produced by Lovat Fraser were line blocks used with flat printings of coloured inks. Subsequently Fraser added new designs, and since his death other artists have followed his example. The latest designs are mostly from blocks engraved upon wood, sometimes with another colour applied either flat or grained. This notable output by an English printer is another sign of the steadily growing conviction that distinction of design is not only æsthetically, but commercially important. Every article, from the Shopman's showcard to a motor-car, must have economy and beauty of form. It is a lesson we are learning very late, but if we can learn it intelligently, and not like parrots, we may yet recapture what has been so long lost with us, a pride in style.

ORDER OF DESIGNERS

DRAUGHTSMEN

- 1— 7 Lovat Fraser
- 8—14 Albert Rutherford
- 15—16 Margaret James
- 17—18 Thomas Lowinsky
- 19 E. O. Hoppé
- 20 Edward Bawden
- 21 Paul Nash

WOOD ENGRAVERS

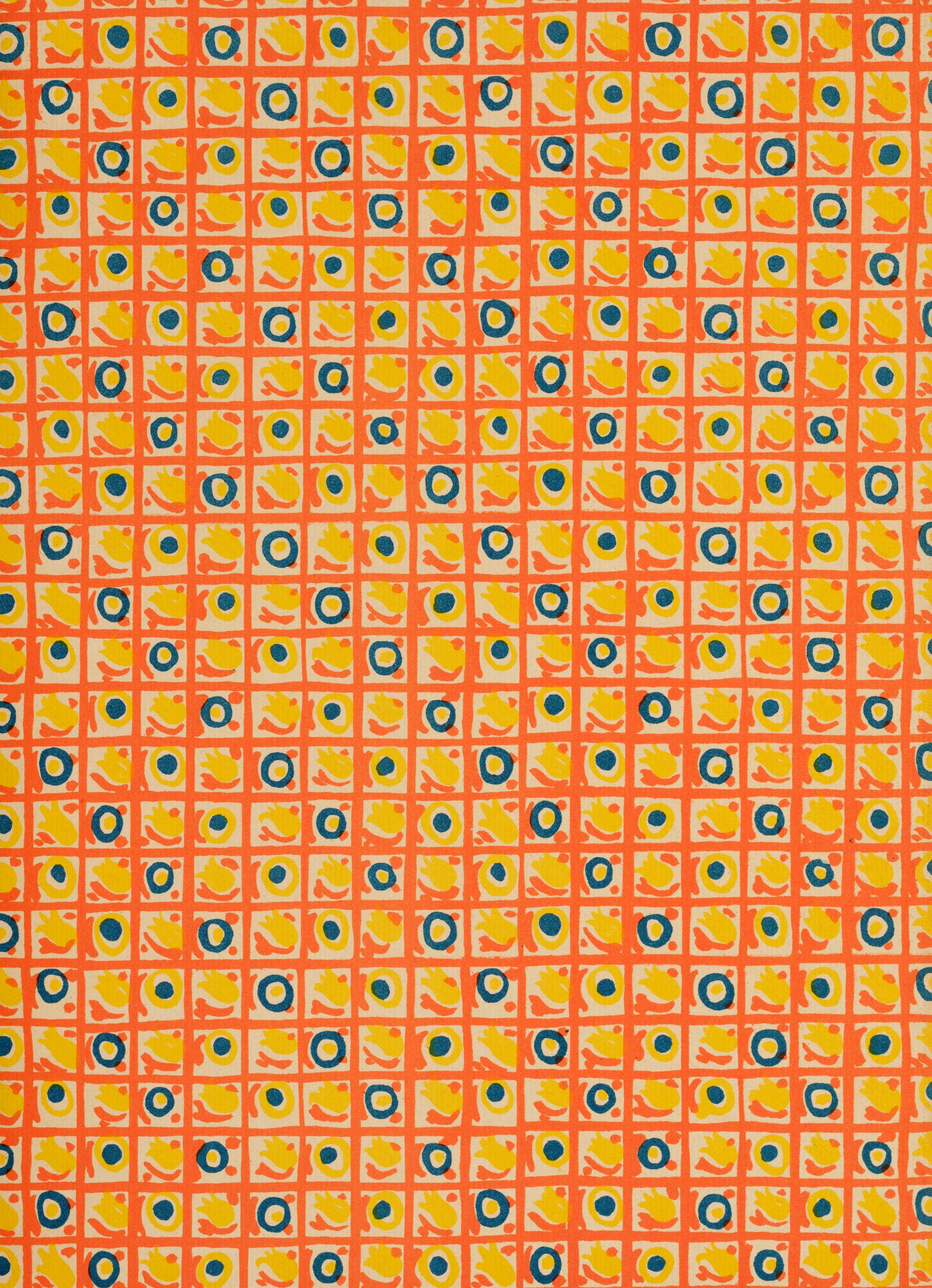
- 22—24 Paul Nash
- 25—29 Enid Marx
- 30 Eric Ravilious
- 31 Harry Carter

DESIGNS FROM DRAWINGS















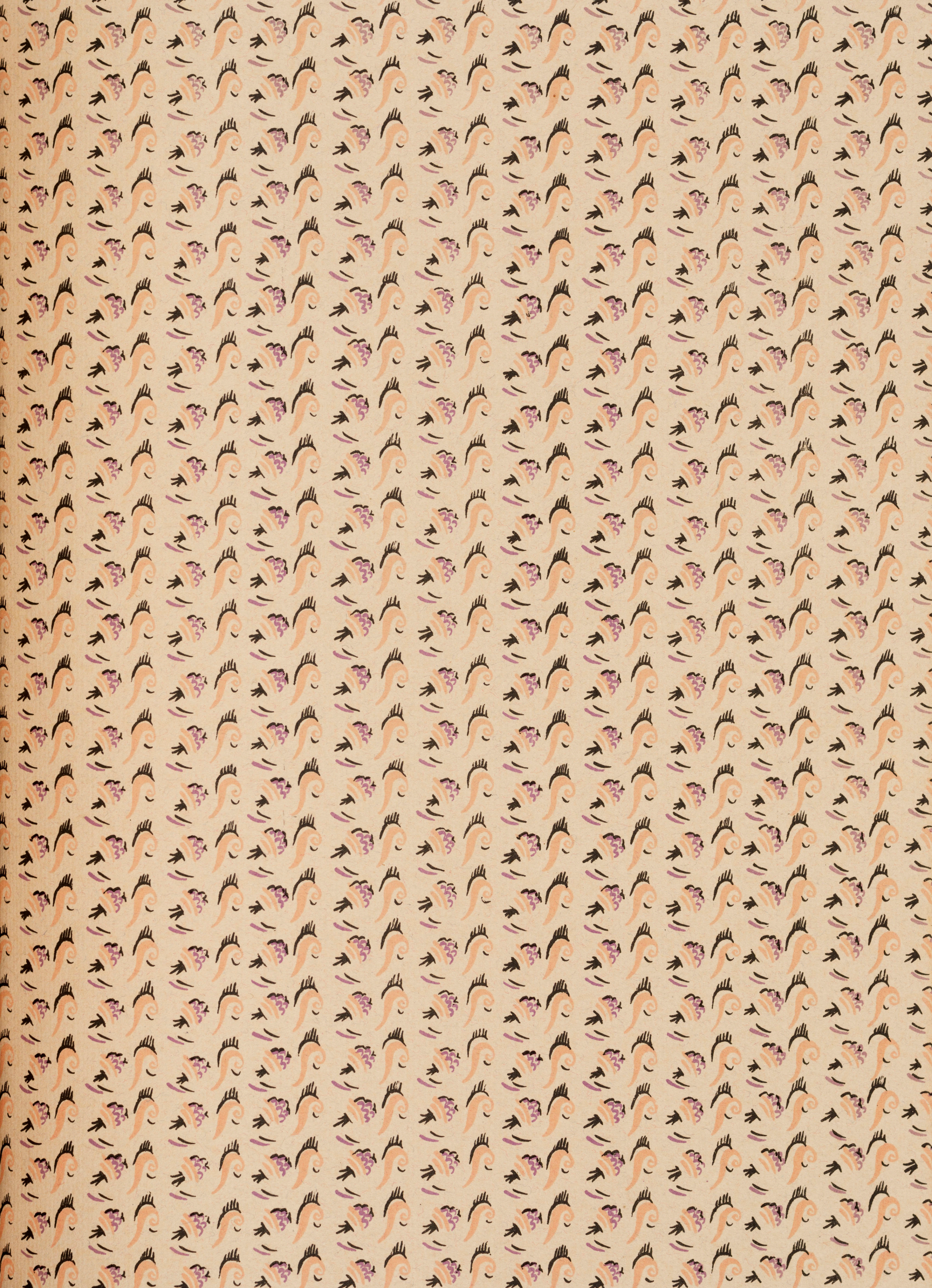






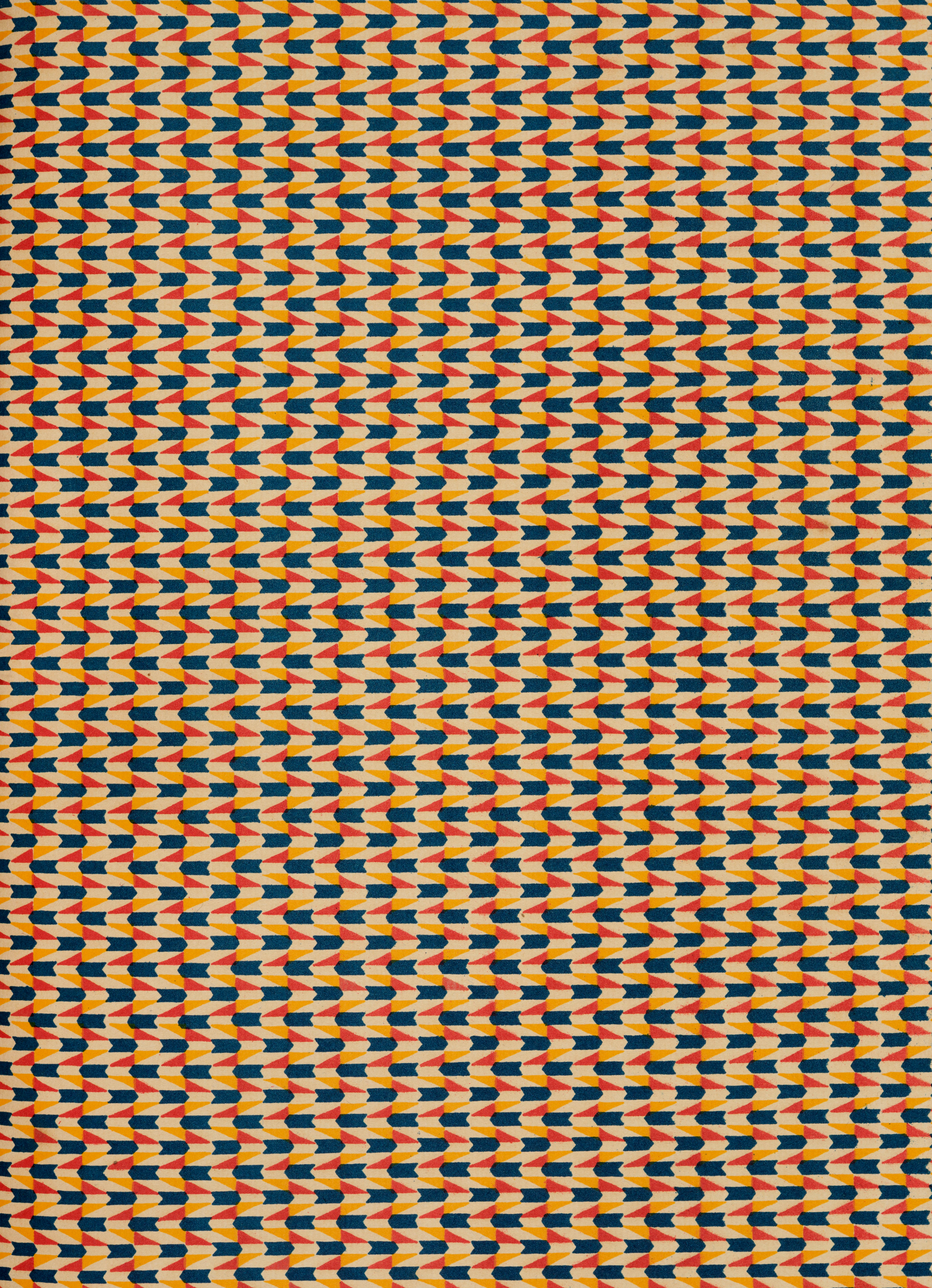


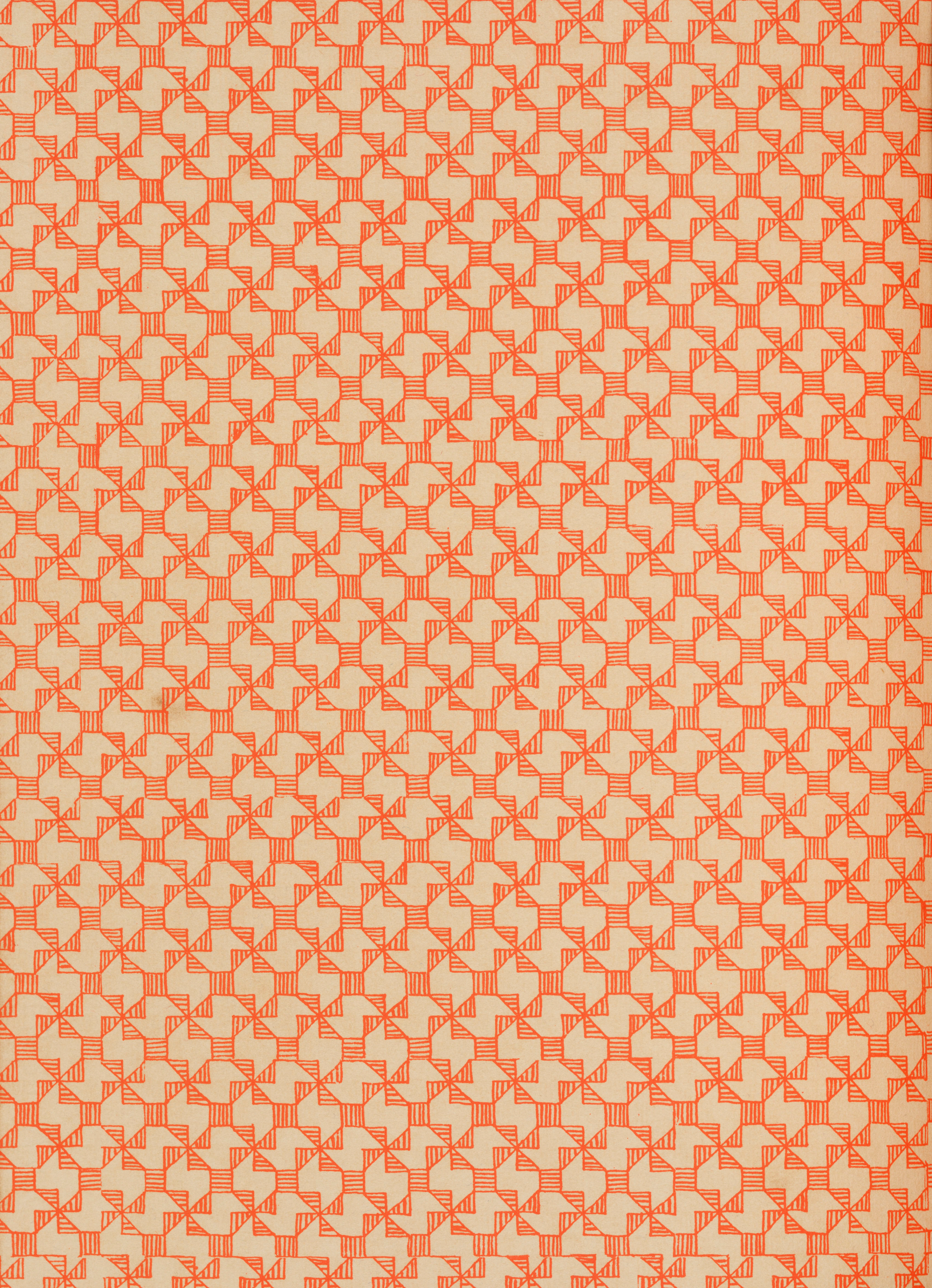


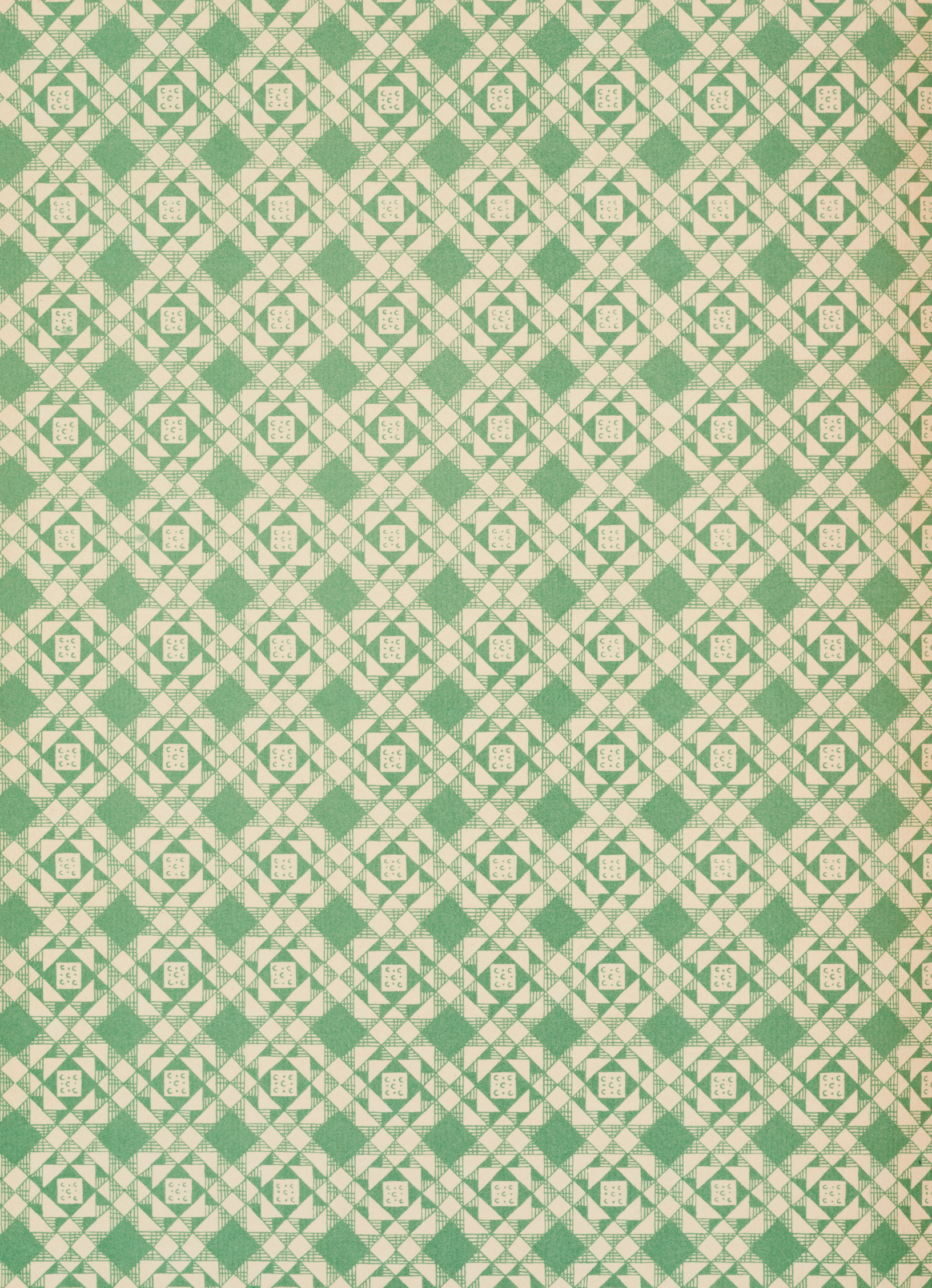


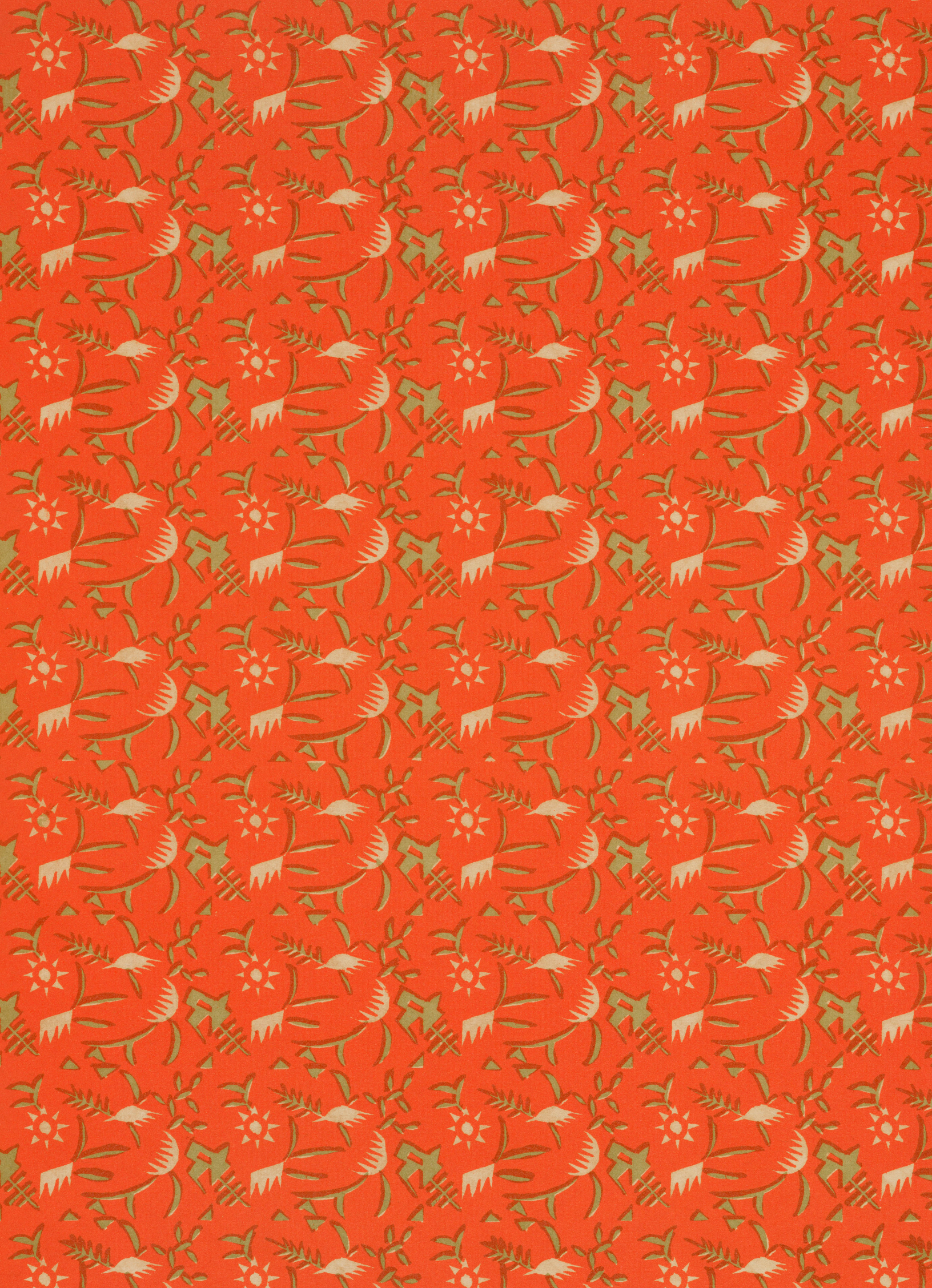


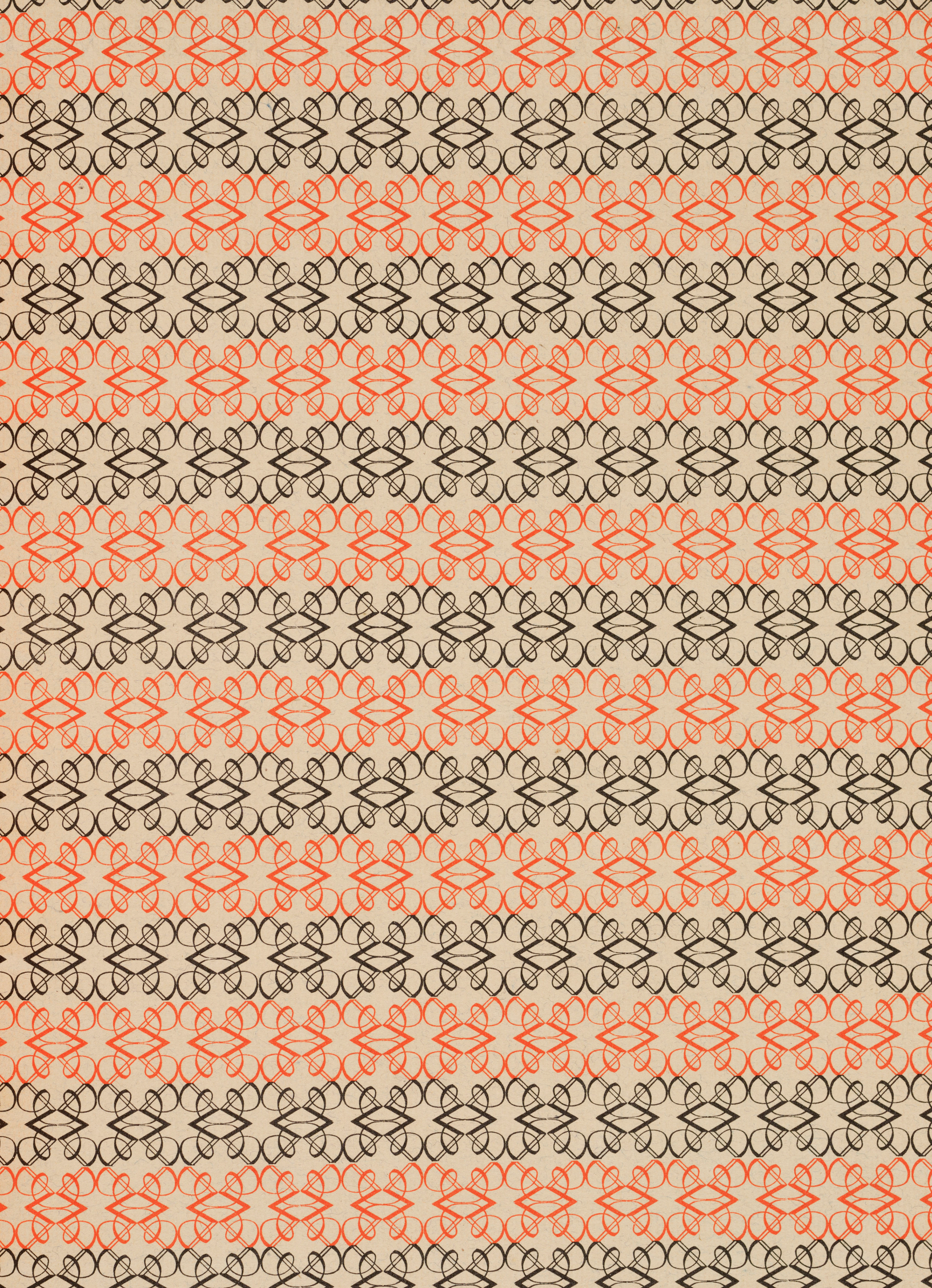






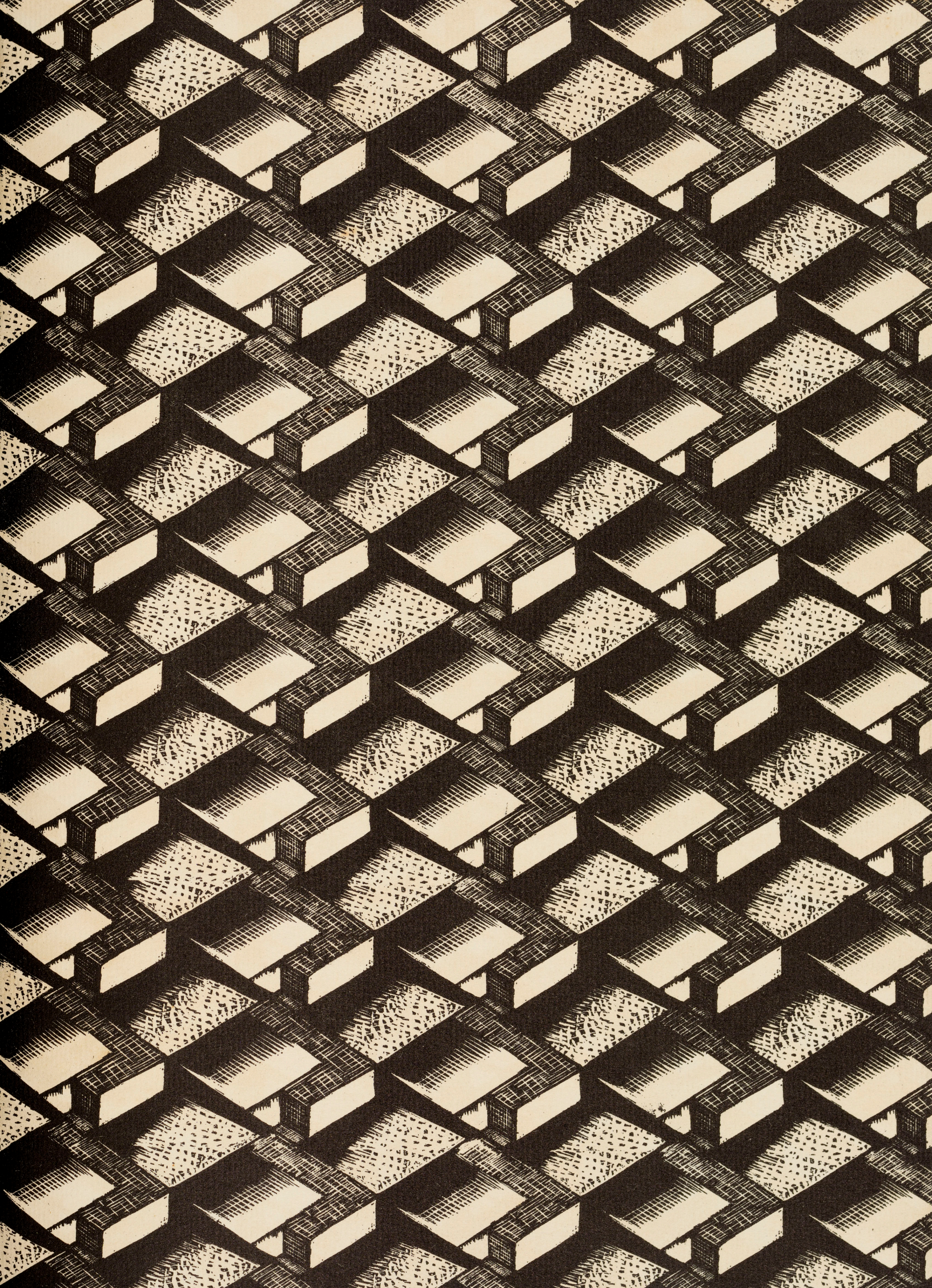


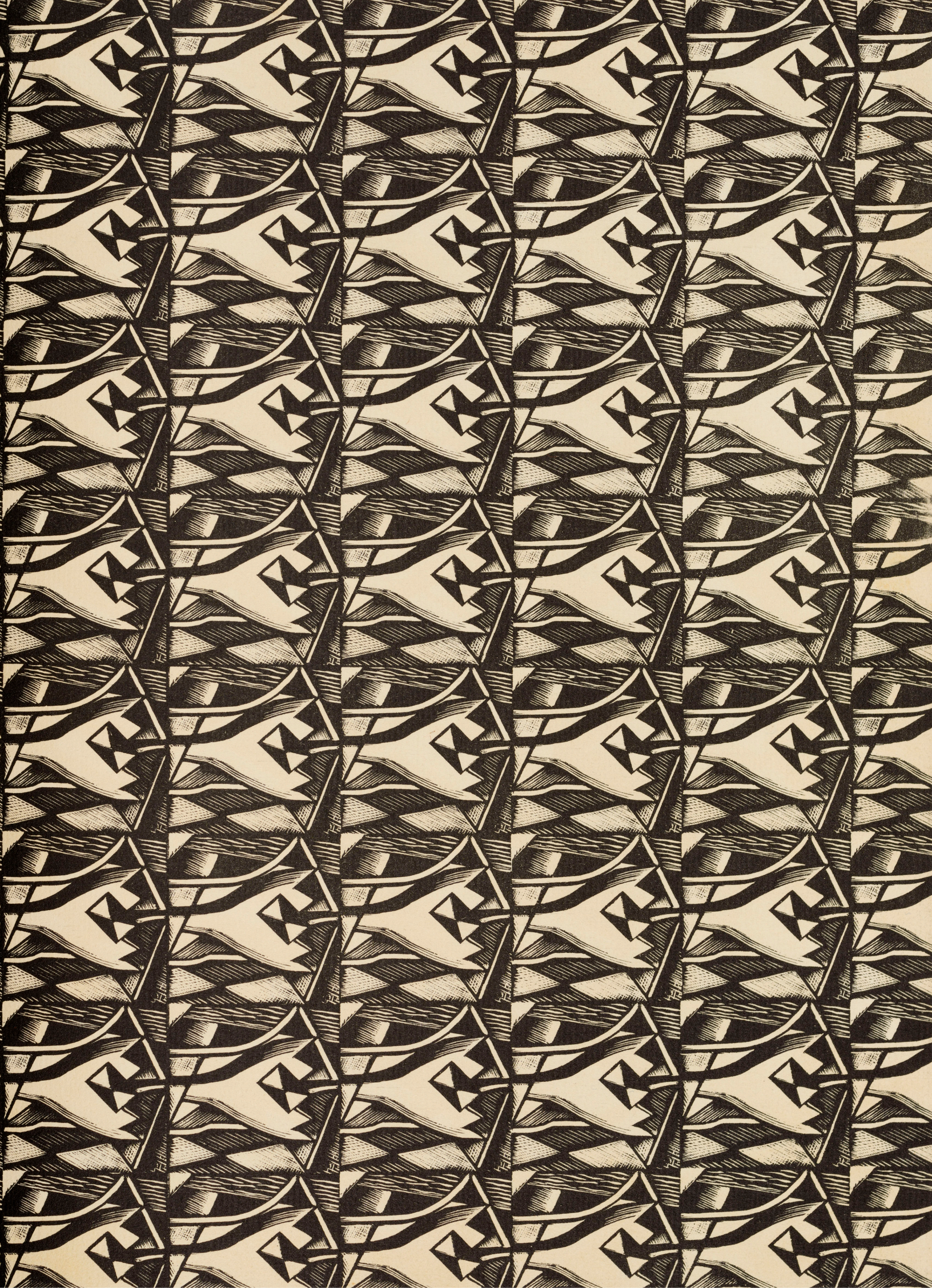


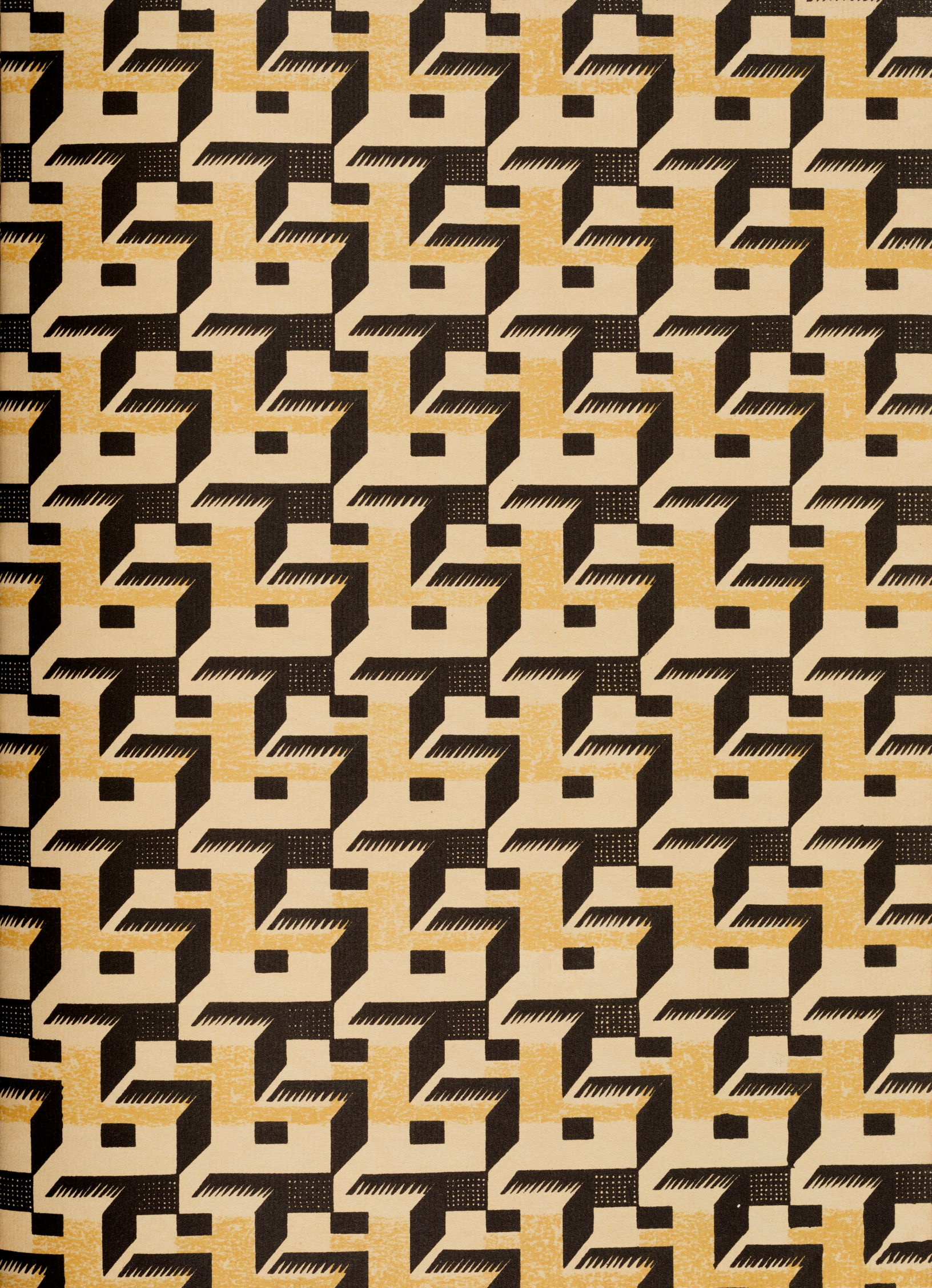




DESIGNS FROM WOOD ENGRAVINGS



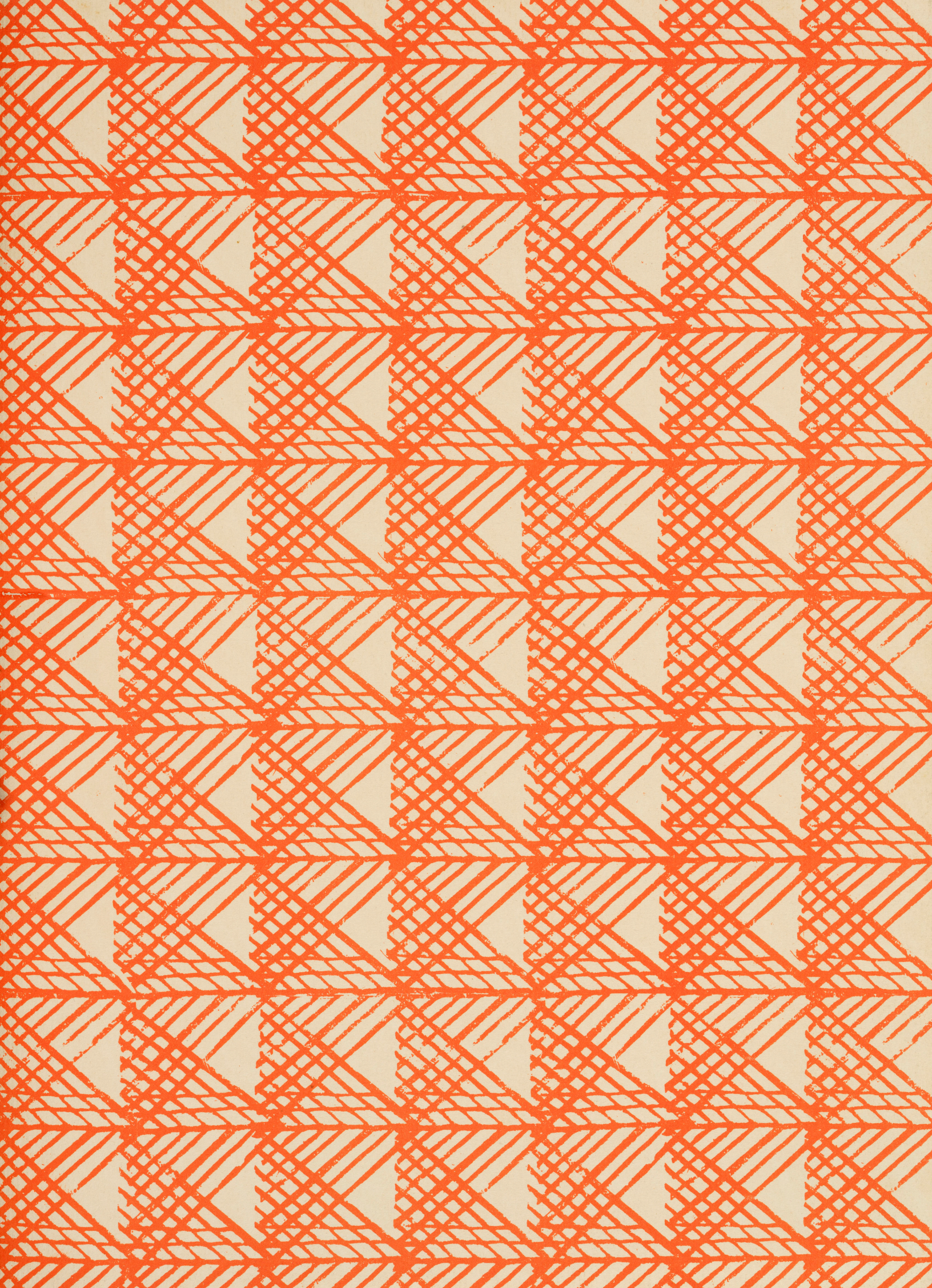






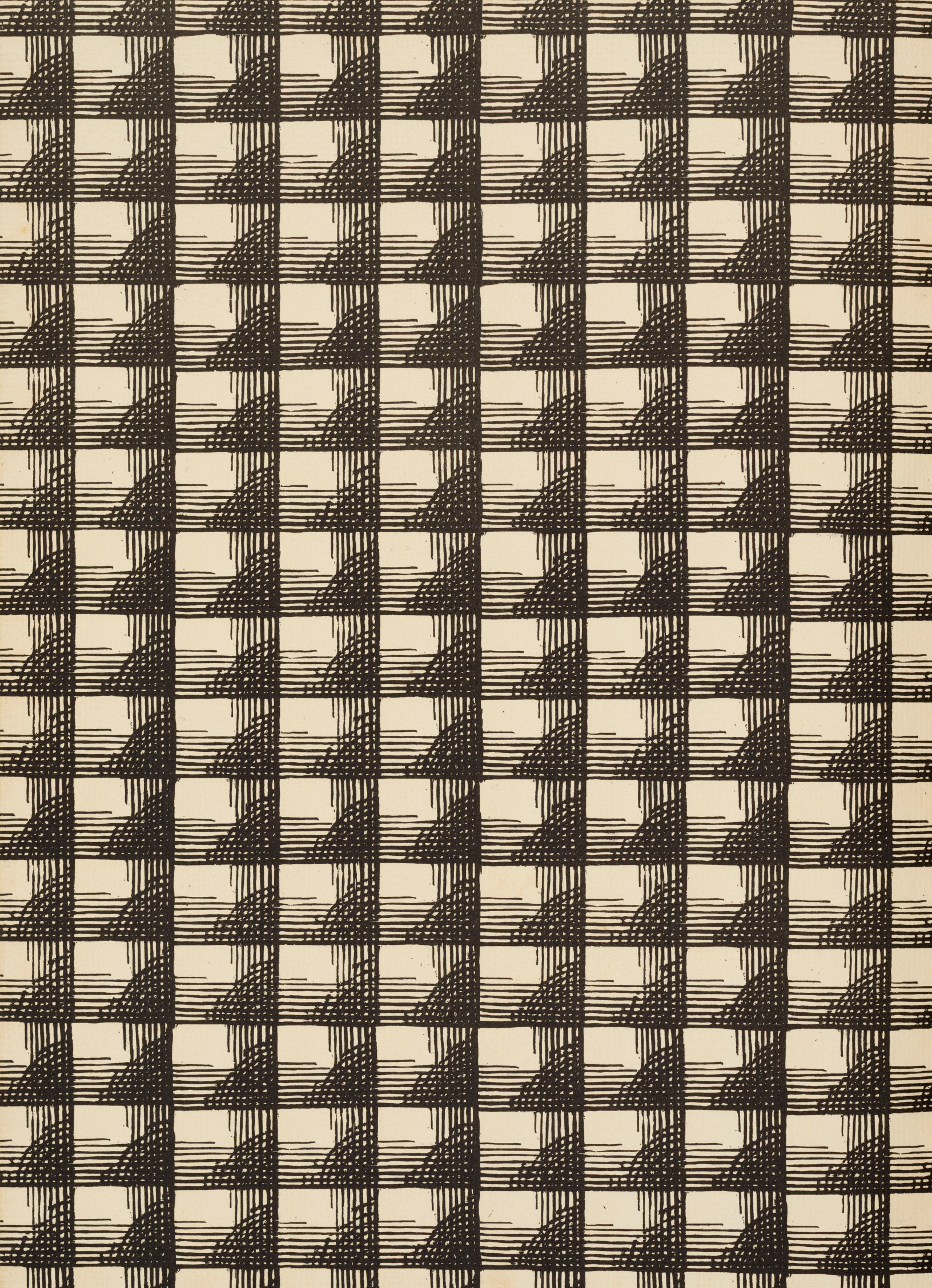


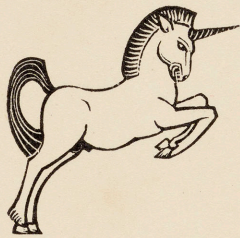












PRINTED AT
THE CURWEN PRESS
PLAISTOW