



# Pencil To Paper

Susanne Nørregård Nielsen

Glasgow International 2018

Across the City Programme

Reid

Glasgow School of Art

20 April - 7 May 2018



## Pencil to Paper

As part of Glasgow International's 2018 'Across the City' programme, this exhibition featured new work by Susanne Nørregård Nielsen. The playful interdisciplinary work responded to Sophie Taeuber-Arp's (1889-1943) text 'Remarks on Instruction in Ornamental Design' (1922) to form the foundation for a series of drawings on paper.

Sophie Taeuber-Arp is one of the pioneers of abstract art along with Piet Mondrian and Kazimir Malevich. Sophie Taeuber-Arp taught Textile Design in the Department for Applied Art at the Trade School Zurich, in the first part of her career. In this text from 1922, Taeuber-Arp showed how to develop textile design, but at the same time gives us insight into her use of form, rhythm, line and colour in her artistic oeuvre.

The exhibition was held in the Reid Building at the Glasgow School of Art.

The total visitors for the two concurrent exhibitions as part of Glasgow International 2018 ('Pencil to Paper' and 'War of the Corners') was 4021 from 20th April – 7th May 2018. The foot-fall was, therefore, on average 211.6 visitors per day over the course of 19 days.



Image credit: Susanne Nørregård Nielsen

Nielsen's art practice makes frequent use of strategies of appropriation. Although her practice is rooted in painting, other media and materials such as photography, plants, textiles and embroideries are often used to make the work.

Nielsen's central enquiry illuminates art work central to the early 20th century canon, to provoke new thinking on the impact of artists' practice using feminine gendered materiality. Nielsen's most recent and current work investigates textiles' influence on early 20th century visual art.

To that end, over a period of four years, Nielsen took weaving lessons with Jan Shelley, weaver and former head of the textile department at Duncan of Jordanstone School of Art and Design.





Stiftung Hans Arp und Sophie Taeuber-Arp e.V. in Berlin awarded Nielsen a ARP Research Fellowship 2018 to do research on Sophie Taeuber-Arp.

The Stiftung Arp e. V. holds a large proportion of the estate of Hans Arp and Sophie Taeuber-Arp. Part of their remit is to support academic research.

Image credit: Susanne Nielsen

Curator Dr Jana Teuscher  
and Cole Collins



The rules below are extracts from Sophie Taeuber-Arp's text 'Remarks on Instruction in Ornamental Design', from 1922.

'If you want to practice design then you might want to try the following:

Draw a square and try to divide it in its most natural and simplest way, so that you can use those forms or division lines as decoration.

A further exercise is trying to divide it more complex and paint the different fields with two or three clear colours.

Try to do the same with a circle.

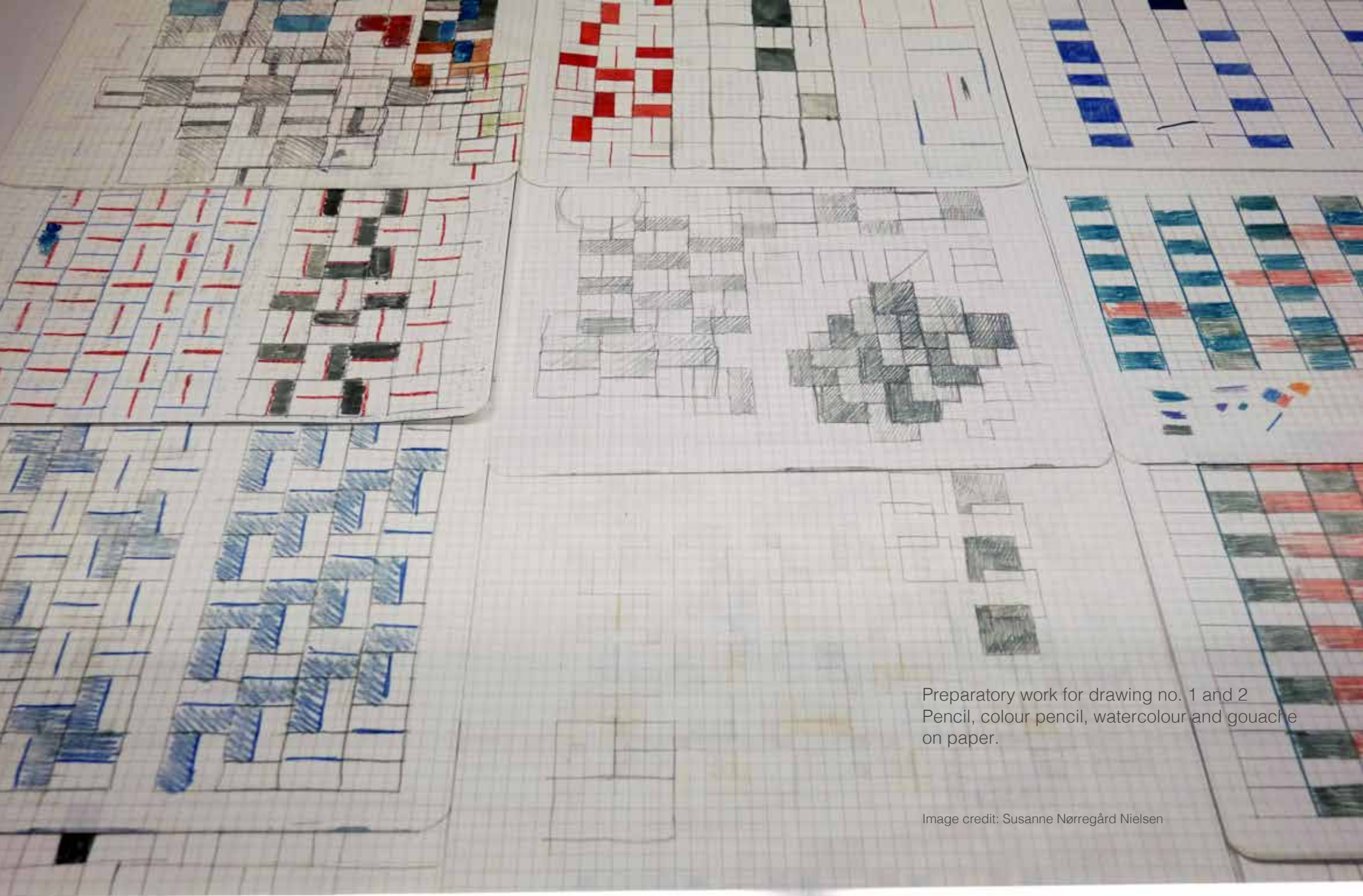
Put a very small form right next to the same very big form and repeat this several times next to each other.

Try to achieve a good rhythm from this, for example by putting three small forms next to a big one or three forms of decreasing size several times after each other. Make sure when using simple forms that the negative one is always as good as the positive. We call a negative form the room between two forms creating the ornaments.

You could also start with the line. Try to see what expression you could achieve with different wavy lines or jagged lines.

Try to interweave those lines in complicated ways.'

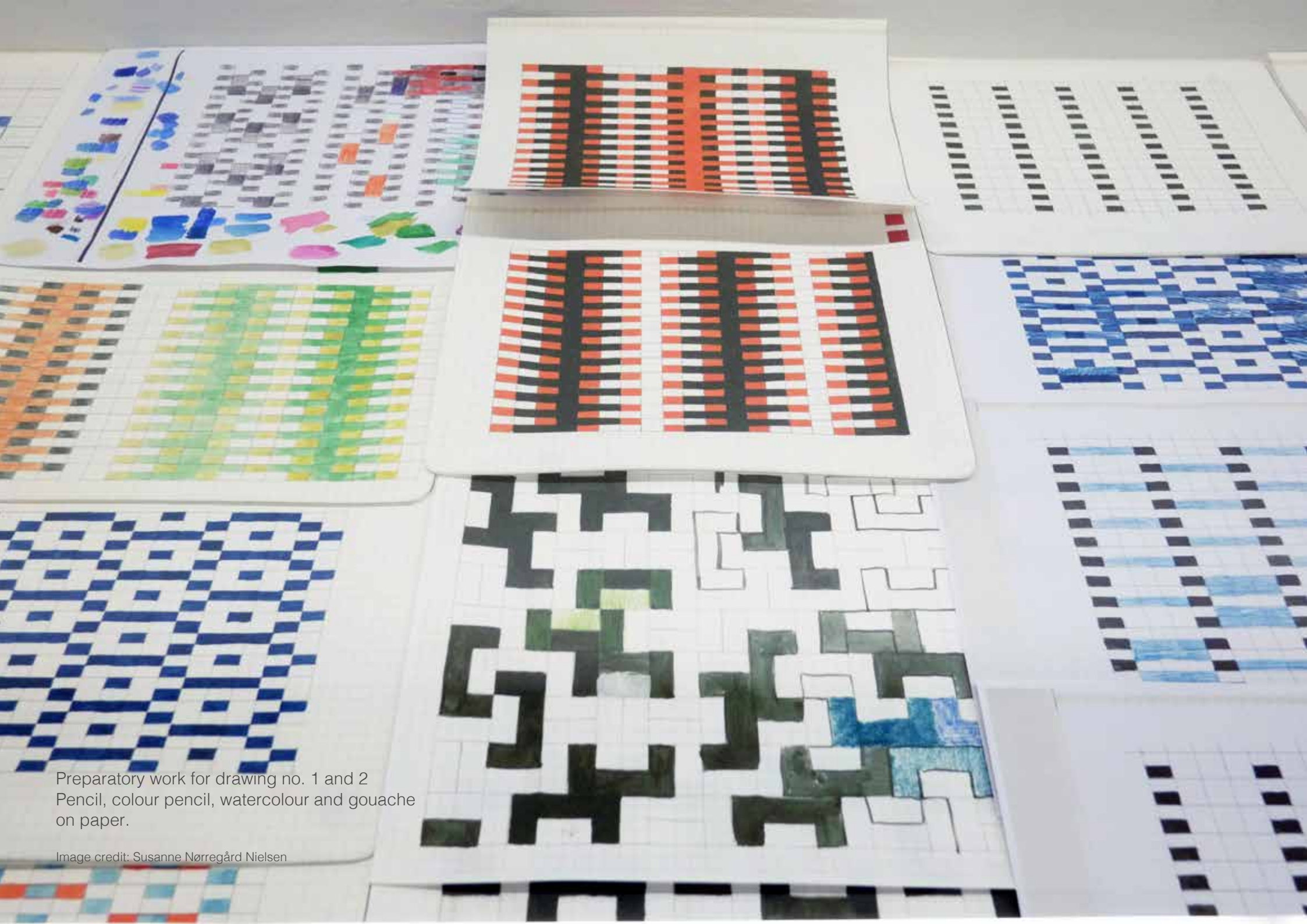




Preparatory work for drawing no. 1 and 2  
Pencil, colour pencil, watercolour and gouache  
on paper.

Image credit: Susanne Nørregård Nielsen

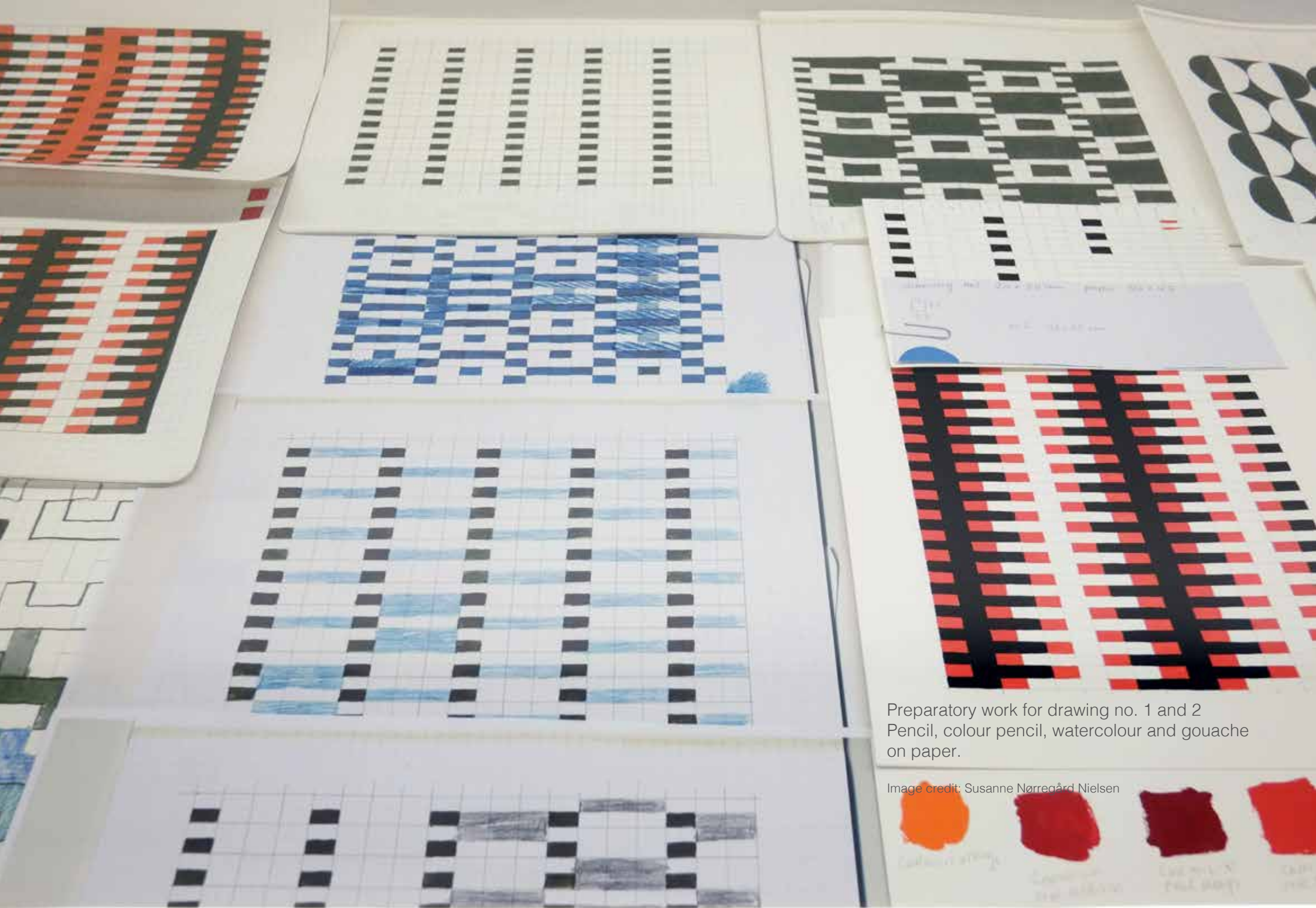




Preparatory work for drawing no. 1 and 2  
Pencil, colour pencil, watercolour and gouache  
on paper.

Image credit: Susanne Nørregård Nielsen



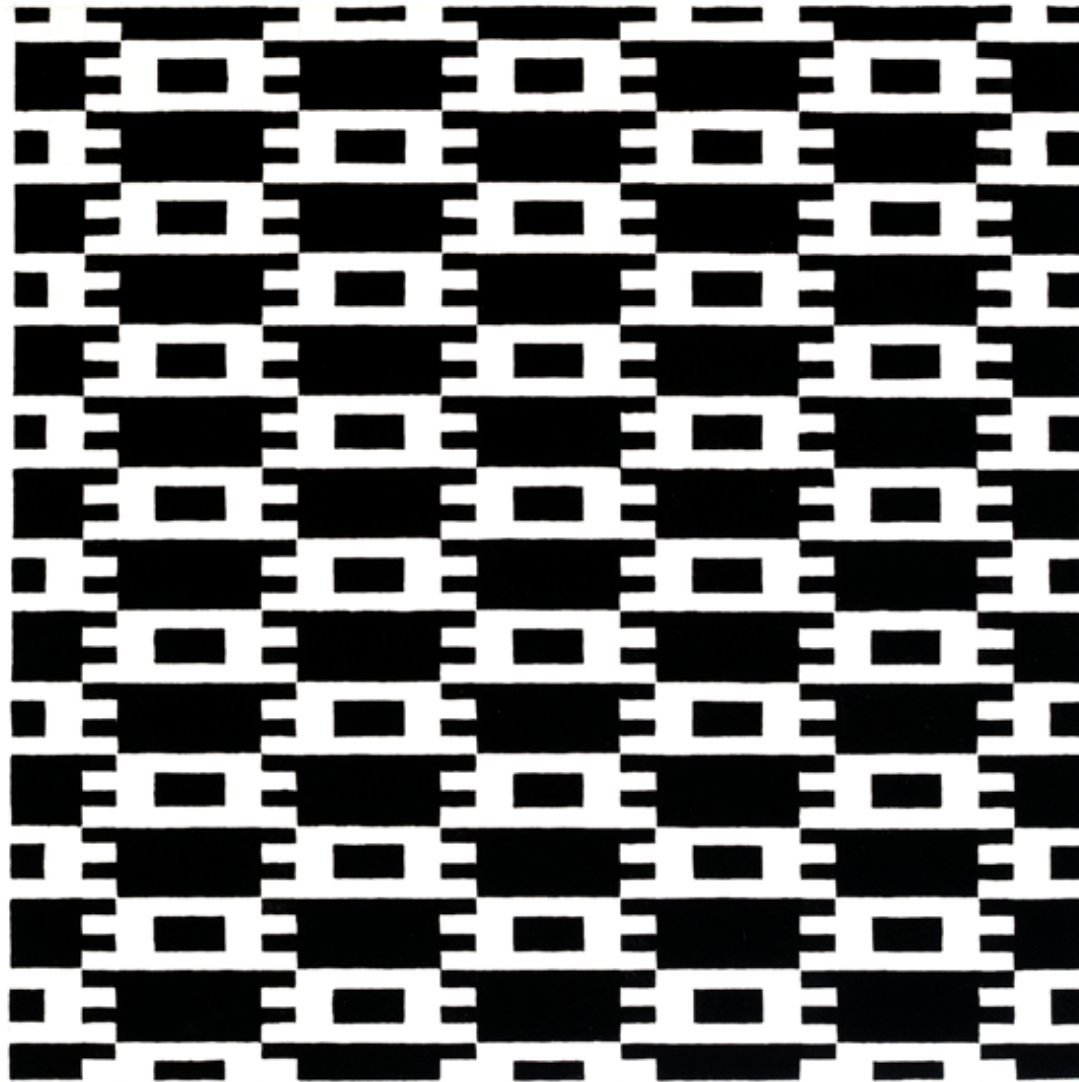


Preparatory work for drawing no. 1 and 2  
Pencil, colour pencil, watercolour and gouache  
on paper.

Image credit: Susanne Nørregård Nielsen



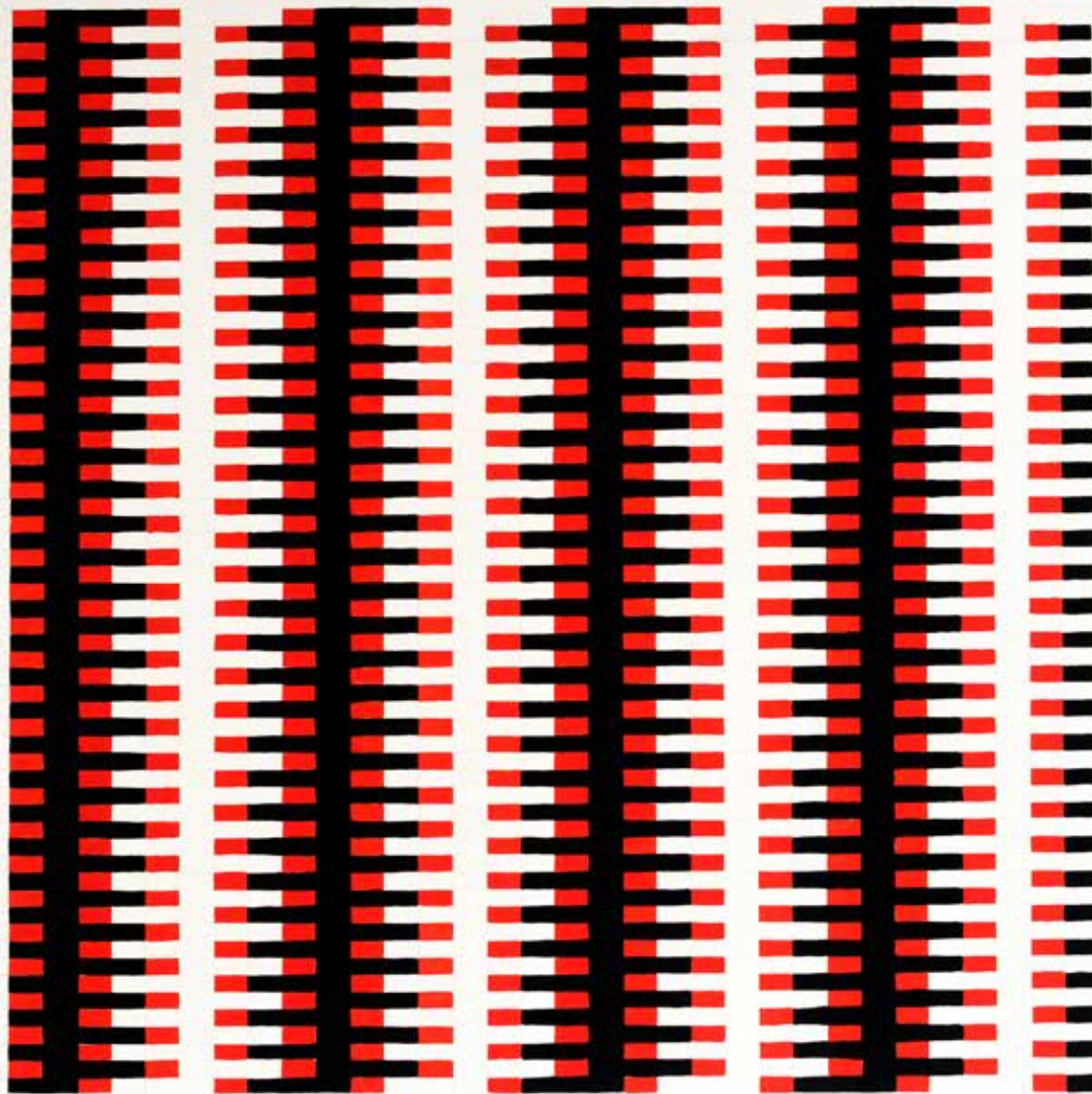




Drawing no.1

'Draw a square and try to divide it in its most natural and simplest way, so that you can use those forms or division lines as decoration.

A further exercise is trying to divide it more complex and paint the different fields with two or three clear colours.'

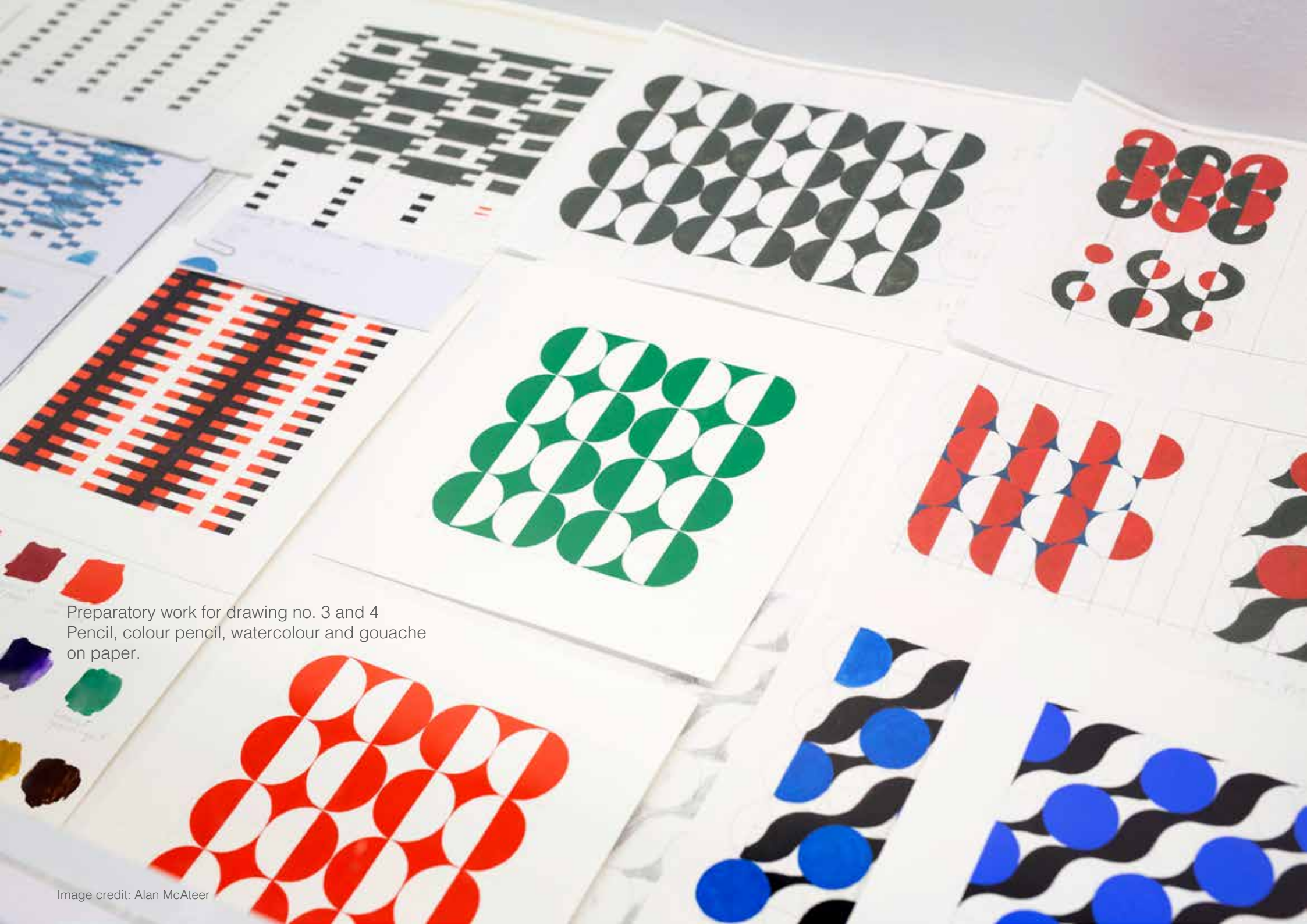


Drawing no.2

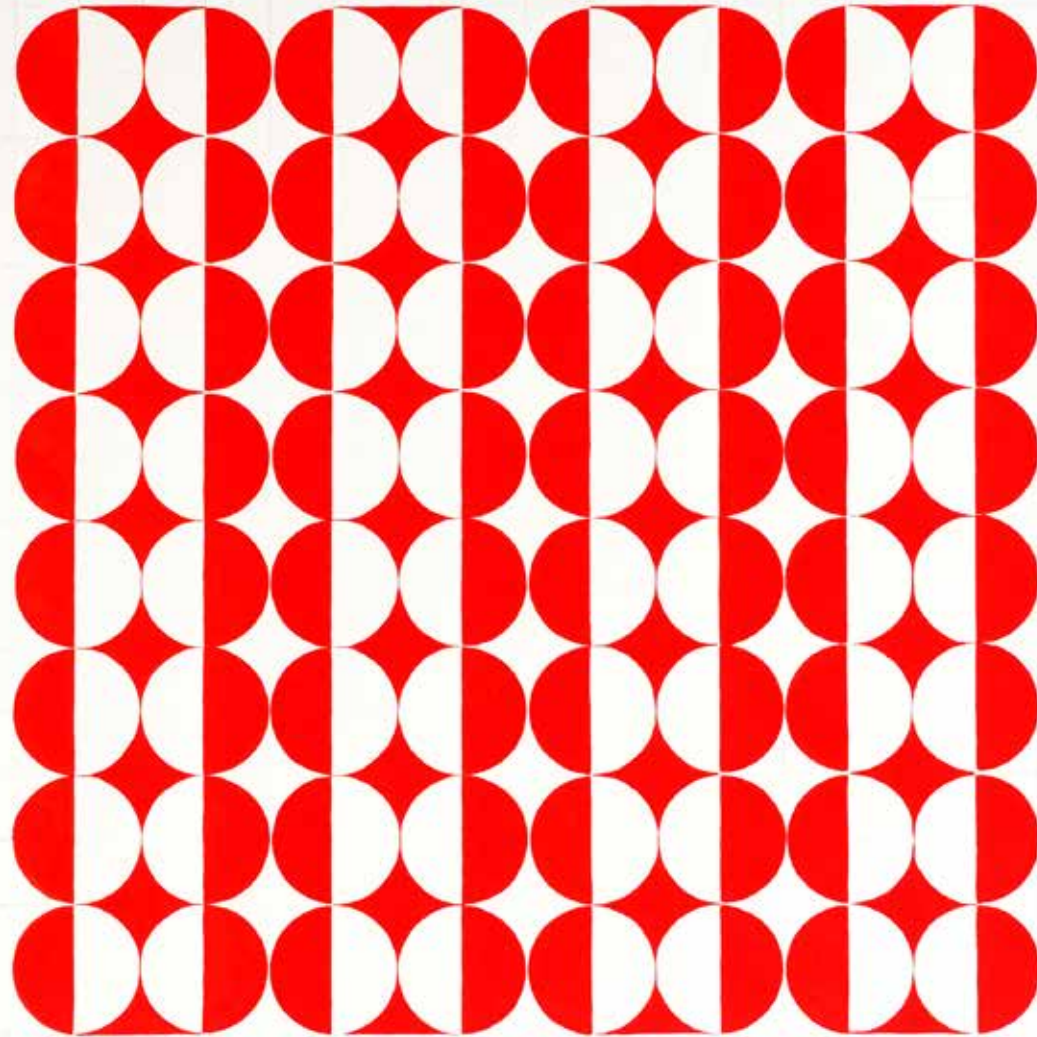
'Draw a square and try to divide it in its most natural and simplest way, so that you can use those forms or division lines as decoration.'

A further exercise is trying to divide it more complex and paint the different fields with two or three clear colours.'





Preparatory work for drawing no. 3 and 4  
Pencil, colour pencil, watercolour and gouache  
on paper.



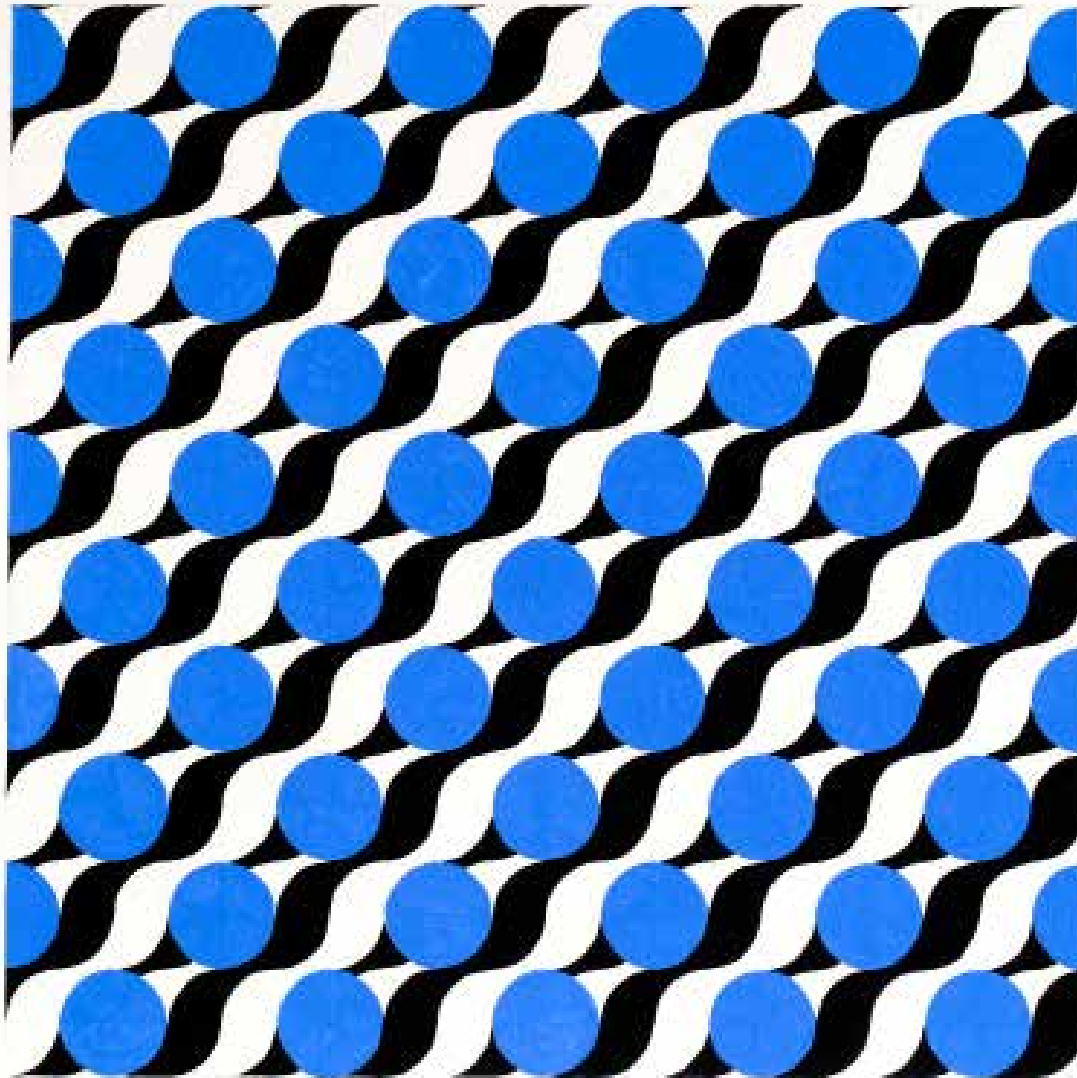
### Drawing No.3

'Draw a square and try to divide it in its most natural and simplest way, so that you can use those forms or division lines as decoration.'

A further exercise is trying to divide it more complex and paint the different fields with two or three clear colours.'

Try to do the same with a circle.





Drawing No.4

'Draw a square and try to divide it in its most natural and simplest way, so that you can use those forms or division lines as decoration.'

A further exercise is trying to divide it more complex and paint the different fields with two or three clear colours.'

Try to do the same with a circle.

Preparatory work for drawing no. 5 and 6  
Pencil, colour pencil, watercolour and gouache  
on paper.

Image credit: Susanne Nørregård Nielsen







Preparatory work for drawing no. 5 and 6  
Pencil, colour pencil, watercolour and gouache  
on paper.

Image credit: Susanne Nørregård Nielsen





Preparatory work for drawing no. 5 and 6  
Pencil, colour pencil, watercolour and gouache on  
paper.





Drawing No.5

'Put a very small form right next to the same very big form and repeat this several times next to each other.

Try to achieve a good rhythm from this, for example by putting three small forms next to a big one or three forms of decreasing size several times after each other. Make sure when using simple forms that the negative one is always as good as the positive. We call a negative form the room between two forms creating the ornaments.'

Image credit: Gair Dunlop



Drawing No.6

'Put a very small form right next to the same very big form and repeat this several times next to each other.

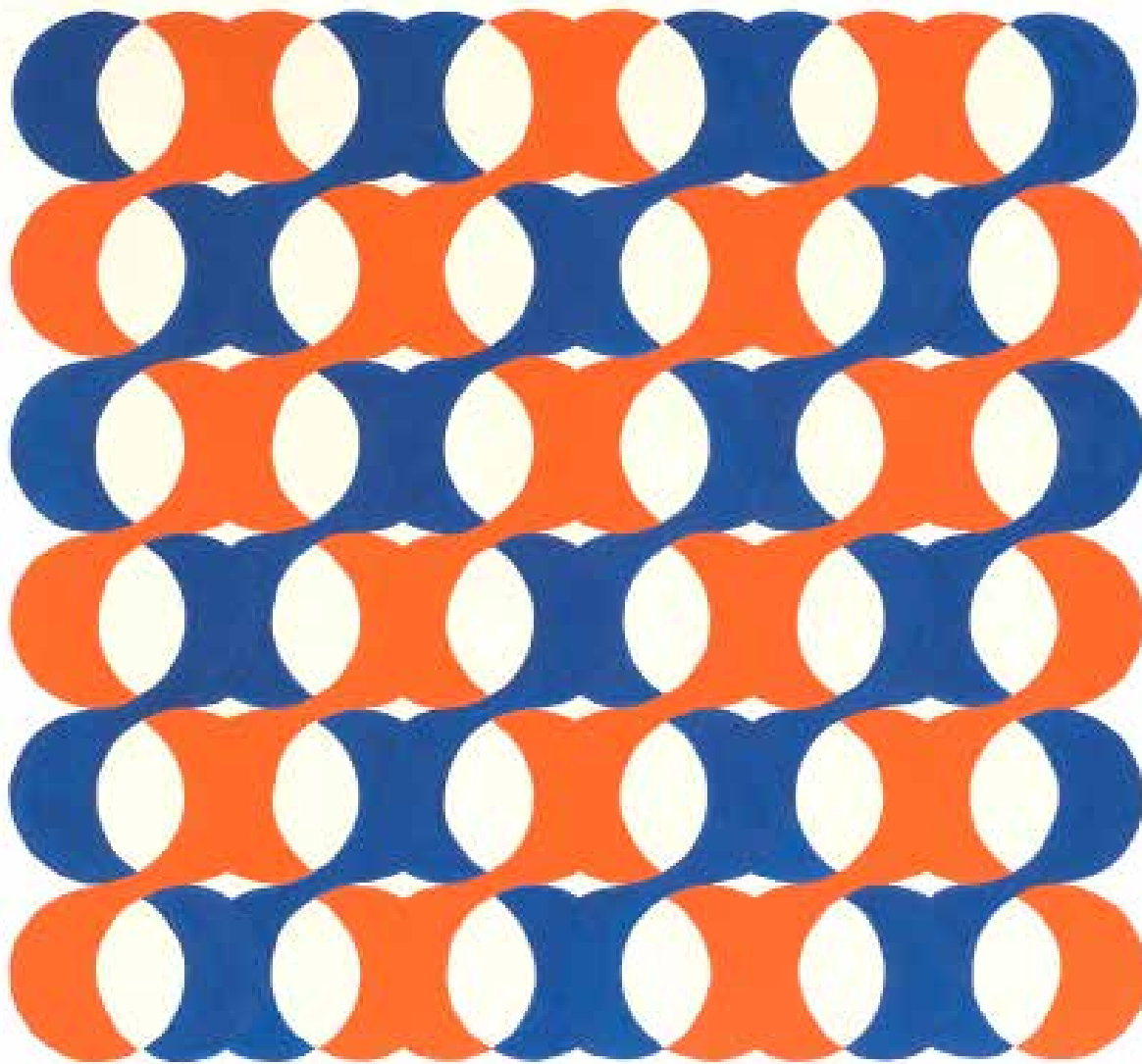
Try to achieve a good rhythm from this, for example by putting three small forms next to a big one or three forms of decreasing size several times after each other. Make sure when using simple forms that the negative one is always as good as the positive. We call a negative form the room between two forms creating the ornaments.'





Preparatory work for drawing no. 7 and 8  
Pencil, colour pencil, watercolour and gouache on  
paper.

Image credit: Susanne Nørregård Nielsen

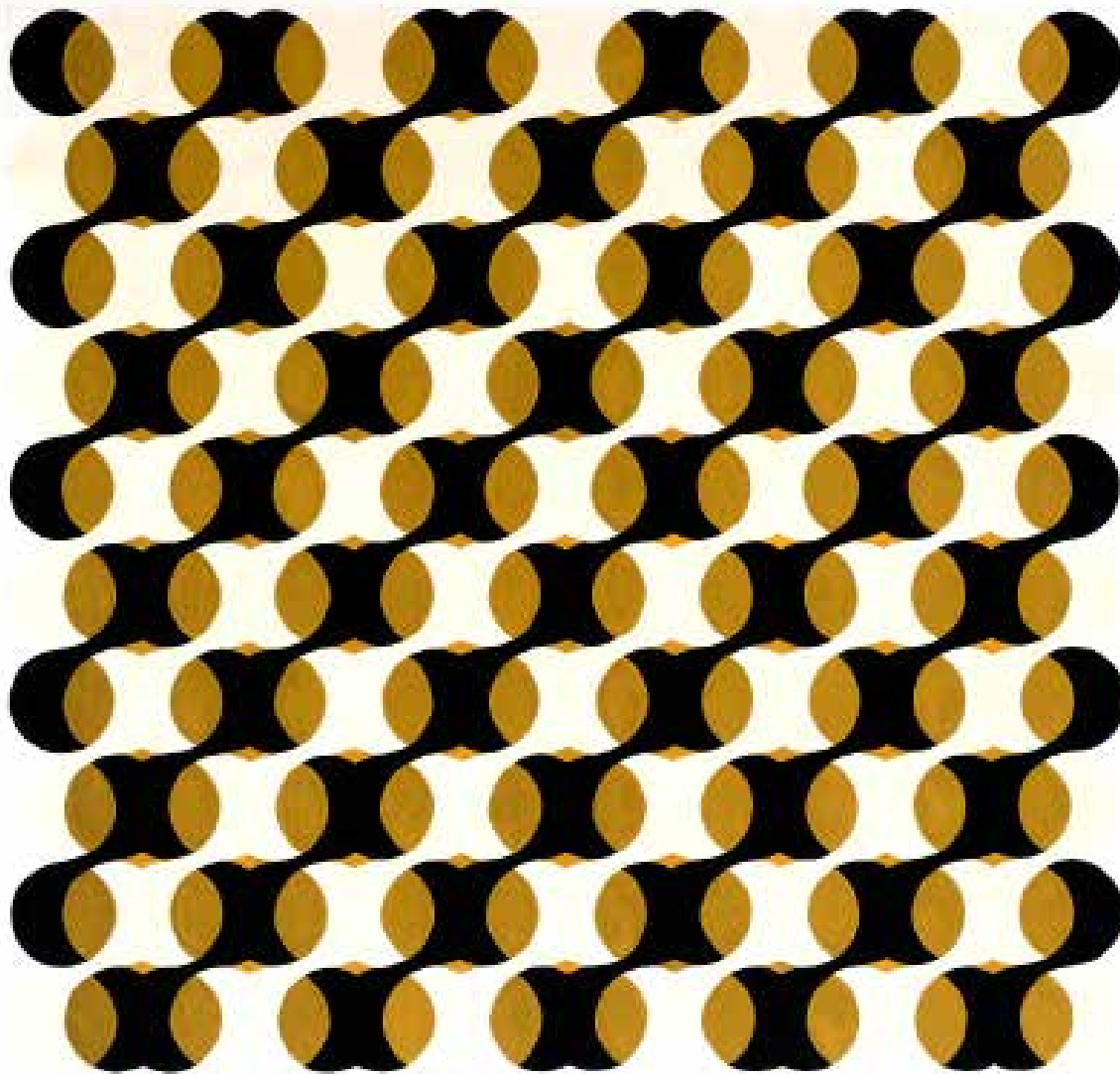


Drawing No.7

You could also start with the line. Try to see what expression you could achieve with different wavy lines or jagged lines.

Try to interweave those lines in complicated ways.'





Drawing No.8

You could also start with the line. Try to see what expression you could achieve with different wavy lines or jagged lines.

Try to interweave those lines in complicated ways.'

PENCIL TO PAPER  
Susanne Norregård Nielsen  
20 April - 7 May













## Notes on Sophie Taeuber Arp's Instruction

As an artist I am interested in the knowledge we can gain from working with methods and materials. How can a practice led methodology of engagement with a historical artist's text bring about new understanding of Sophie Taeuber Arp's practice across disciplines?

Through carrying out the instructions extracted from the text 'Remarks on Instruction in Ornamental Design' by Sophie Taeuber Arp (1922), could I get a better understanding on how Taeuber-Arp devised those instructions?

And I was just as curious to find out what would I produce: what would the pattern look like?

I set out to follow each instruction as closely as possible and embrace the possibilities as they emerged.

The first couple of weeks I was drawing in a square paper sketchbook, trying to discern if dividing it vertically or horizontally was most natural for me. I decided on the latter.

For each pattern I followed this process:

Based on the initial pencil drawing in the sketchbook I would make a new pencil drawing on a bigger sheet of square paper and photocopy the drawing to repeat the pattern in order to scale up. Through this process I was able to decide on the size of the pattern. The full scaled photocopy enabled me to draw up a unique grid structure, based on the pattern, on to a Fabriano paper. Using the grid I could draw in the pattern, finally adding colour.

Something happens when you need to physically carry out an instruction, from text to action, via the eye hand connection. Working through the instructions it became clear that there are three layers of structures. The grid is the first structure, then structure of the pattern, and thirdly colour structure.

The eight instructions are laid out in four pairs. One instruction flows into the next and refers back to the first. This movement between each pair of instructions significantly increase your understanding of the potential of the next pattern. At the same time, you get a fundamental understanding of the pattern you have just made.

'If you want to practise design, you might try the following:'

#### Pattern no.1

**'Draw a square and try to divide it in its most natural and simplest way, so that you can use those forms or division lines as decoration.**

A further exercise is trying to divide it more complex and paint the different fields with two or three clear colours.

Try to do the same with a circle.'

In the first instructions you are asked to draw a square and divide it. Sophie Taeuber- Arp is essentially asking you to make an 'element'. You can understand an 'element' as the smallest indivisible component of a pattern. A repeat pattern can be made by using 'elements' only.

Because you are asked to make a square in the first instance it also operates as a 'cell', a square is a polygon which can be fitted together without any spaces in between and be repeat in a pattern.

Sophie Taeuber- Arp set out in the first instruction with the most basic and core of making a pattern the 'element'. And yet gives you options: how does one divide a square? If you divide it vertically, it tends to led to a more vertical underlying structure, likewise horizontal structure or diagonal structure. In the first instruction there is no mention of colour, so I decided just to use black Gouache.

#### Pattern no.2

'Draw a square and try to divide it in its most natural and simplest way, so that you can use those forms or division lines as decoration.

**A further exercise is trying to divide it more complex and paint the different fields with two or three clear colours.**

Try to do the same with a circle.'

The following instructions invite you to divide with greater complexity.

In order to do so, you need to reflect on and analyse the first pattern.

What is the core structure? How can I build on this?

Due to using only black in the first instructions it was easier to discern the core structure in the pattern.

In this second instruction Sophie Taeuber- Arp also introduces colour which opens up new possibilities of applying a colour structure. One can start to play with core structure, reinforcing or dissolving the structure by degrees.

#### Pattern no.3

#### Pattern no.4

'Draw a square and try to divide it in its most natural and simplest way, so that you can use those forms or division lines as decoration.

A further exercise is trying to divide it more complex and paint the different fields with two or three clear colours.

**Try to do the same with a circle.'**

Sophie Taeuber- Arp introduces you to a new shape; a circle. It is a very different 'element' from a square and it is not a polygon. By doing so you are being reinforced to think about the choice of 'element' and how it creates new consequences for pattern development. As soon as you put circles together you create a negative space between them. At this stage Sophie Taeuber- Arp does not emphasise the importance of this and leaves it until you have more experience.



Pattern no.5

**‘Put a very small shape right next to the same very big shape and repeat this several times next to each other.**

Try to achieve a good rhythm from this, for example by putting three small shapes next to a big one or three forms of decreasing size several times after each other. Make sure when using simple shape that the negative one is always as good as the positive. We call a negative shape the room between two forms creating the ornaments.’

By putting a small shape right next to the same very big form you are making a ‘motif’, a graphic shape, used to create a repeat pattern. Sophie Taeuber- Arp invites you to repeat this several times but leaves it open for you to decide which direction to repeat. You are essentially making a linear symmetry, which leaves options for creating a repeat pattern.

Intuitively one starts to try out possibilities. It is also somewhat left open for you to embrace what are seen as the four basic operations for making pattern: Reflection, Rotation, Translation and Glide Reflection.

Pattern no.6

‘Put a very small shape right next to the same very big shape and repeat this several times next to each other.

**Try to achieve a good rhythm from this, for example by putting three small shapes next to a big one or three forms of decreasing size several times after each other. Make sure when using simple shapes that the negative one is always as good as the positive. We call a negative space the room between two shapes creating the ornaments.’**

By pointing out that the importance of shapes and their negative spaces are equally important, you are made aware of the distance between the shapes when making a repeat pattern. There are many variations of a pattern you can make by just experimenting with spacing.

Equally it is here that colour structure comes into play.

It is at that point, when for example, a shape and a ‘negative space’ can be the same colour, that the unexpected and playful can take place.

Pattern no.7

**‘You could also start with the line. Try to see what expression you could achieve with different wavy lines or jagged lines.**

Try to interweave those lines in complicated ways.’

In the instruction no.6 you were invited to consider spacing carefully and intuitively. Now you are starting to play with spacing of wavy or zigzag lines.

There is no guidance on colour. It is up to you to decide if it is a pattern consisting of line only or if you also want to use colour.

Pattern no.8

‘You could also start with the line. Try to see what expression you could achieve with different wavy lines or jagged lines.

**Try to interweave those lines in complicated ways.’**

If you have overlaid zigzag lines you can create a structure that can be seen as a method called Tiling. It can become ‘Triangular Tiling’, namely Equilateral Triangles (each side the same), Isosceles Triangles (two sides the same) or Scalene Triangles (each side a different length).

A tile is essentially a black cell; a polygon if repeated fits together. It is a key method of making repeat pattern. If you leave it black it becomes a line structure or you can add an image or colour.

Likewise with wavy lines one can play with a Heptagon, Nonagon and Decagon Tiles.

By overlaid zigzag lines or wavy lines you can very quickly make a pattern with complexity and surprising patterns.

By working through all the instructions you have basically touched on all the fundamental key elements of designing a pattern. Sophie Taeuber-Arp introduces you to pattern making without becoming bogged down on what is the difference for example of reflection or glide reflection.

I think it will create a curiosity about the construction of pattern, and motivate the practitioner to find out more of the basic symmetry. Most important of all, the instructions give you an open mind to approach pattern. It is a creative balance of guidance and room to move, to play and to follow your intuition that make Sophie Taeuber-Arp's instructions a unique and inspiring engagement with pattern. Nearly one hundred years on, they still hold up.

Image credit: Susanne Nielsen

Detail of drawing by Sophie Taeuber-Arp  
Design for embroidery 'Personnages'  
Watercolour on graph paper, 1926

















“Nielsen’s drawings provide encouragement for those seeking to generate new work through artist archives and showcases how artists can retell art history through their own practices.”

-Laura Davidson, a-N

“Susanne Norregard Nielsen (Glasgow School of Art) offers a unique insight into Sophie Taeuber-Arp’s text, Remarks On Teaching Decorative Design.”

-Louise Long, Vogue

## MEDIA COVERAGE

A look ahead to Glasgow International with its artists and curators, Adam Benmakhlouf, The Skinny, 30.03.18: <http://www.theskinny.co.uk/art/interviews/glasgow-international-2018>

Glasgow International 2018: recommended shows and works from across the festival, Laura Davidson, ed. Chris Sharratt, A-N, 24.04.18: <https://www.a-n.co.uk/news/glasgow-international-2018-recommended-shows-works-across-festival/>

8 Must-See Exhibits at Glasgow International, Louise Long, Vogue Online, 24.04.18: <http://www.vogue.co.uk/gallery/vogue-guide-glasgow-international-contemporary-art-fair-2018>

Glasgow International Festival 2018: The largest festival for contemporary visual art in Scotland, the eighth Glasgow International, under the directorship of Richard Parry, has a plethora of exciting work. Below is a roundup of what’s on offer, David Gibson, Studio International, 1.05.2018: <http://www.studiointernational.com/index.php/glasgow-international-festival-2018-review>

Essay by Laura Davidson on Instantloveland blog.

Instantloveland takes its name from a painting made by Jules Olitski at the very point in the late 20th century at which the Modernist hegemony in advanced art began to unravel; and it offers a platform for all forms of discourse that seek to better understand what has happened to abstract art between then and now. By both reaching back into its past and considering its potential futures, Instantloveland will explore how abstract art has continued to interact with broader aspects of social and cultural change, whether they be aesthetic, political, philosophical, and/or technological.

<https://instantloveland.com/wp/2018/06/22/laura-davidson-writes-on-susanne-norregard-nielsen/>





# ARP

Glasgow  
international  
2018

20 April—  
7 May

THE GLASGOW  
SCHOOL OF ART