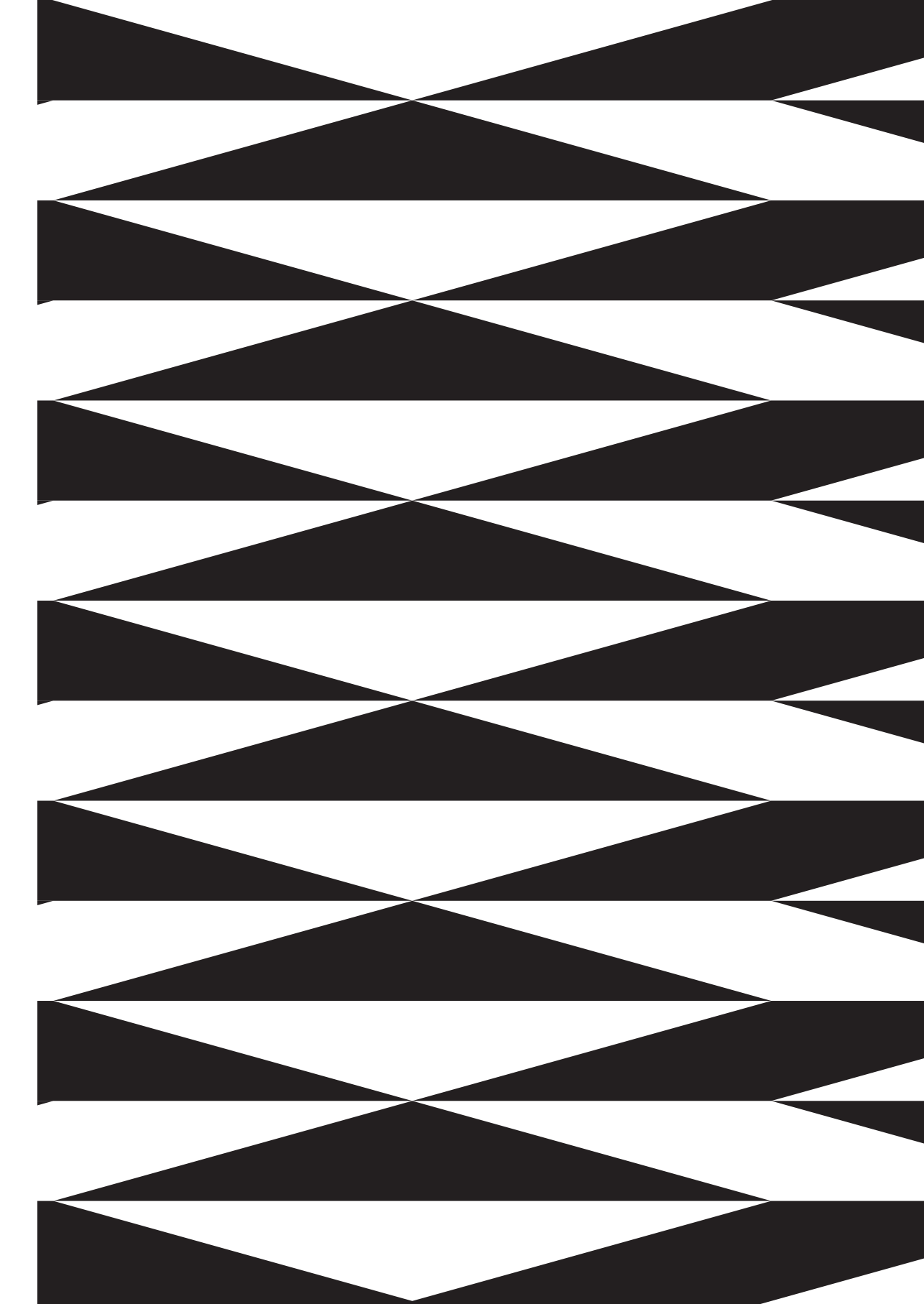


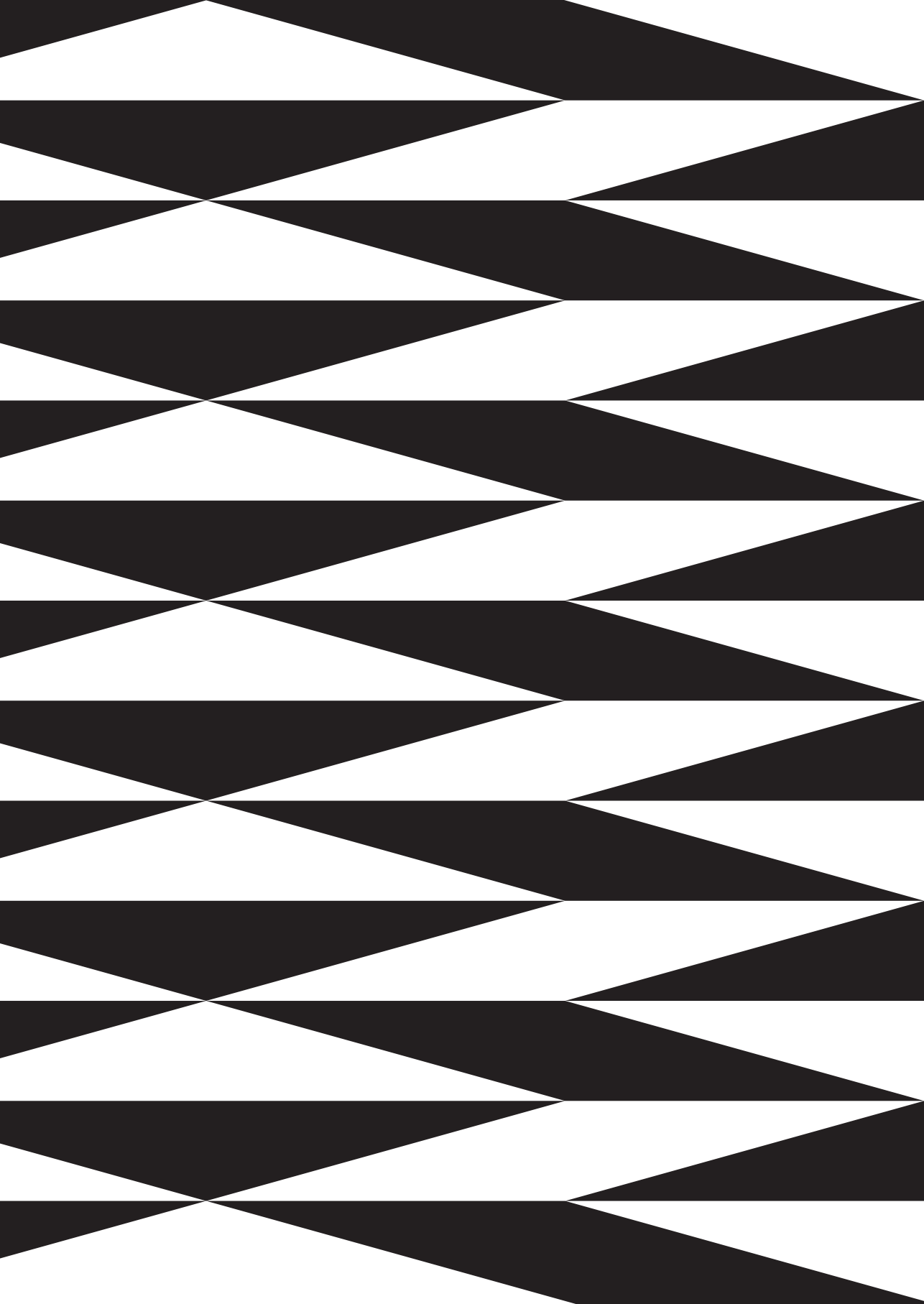


# ALL SYSTEMS GO!

Jan van der Ploeg







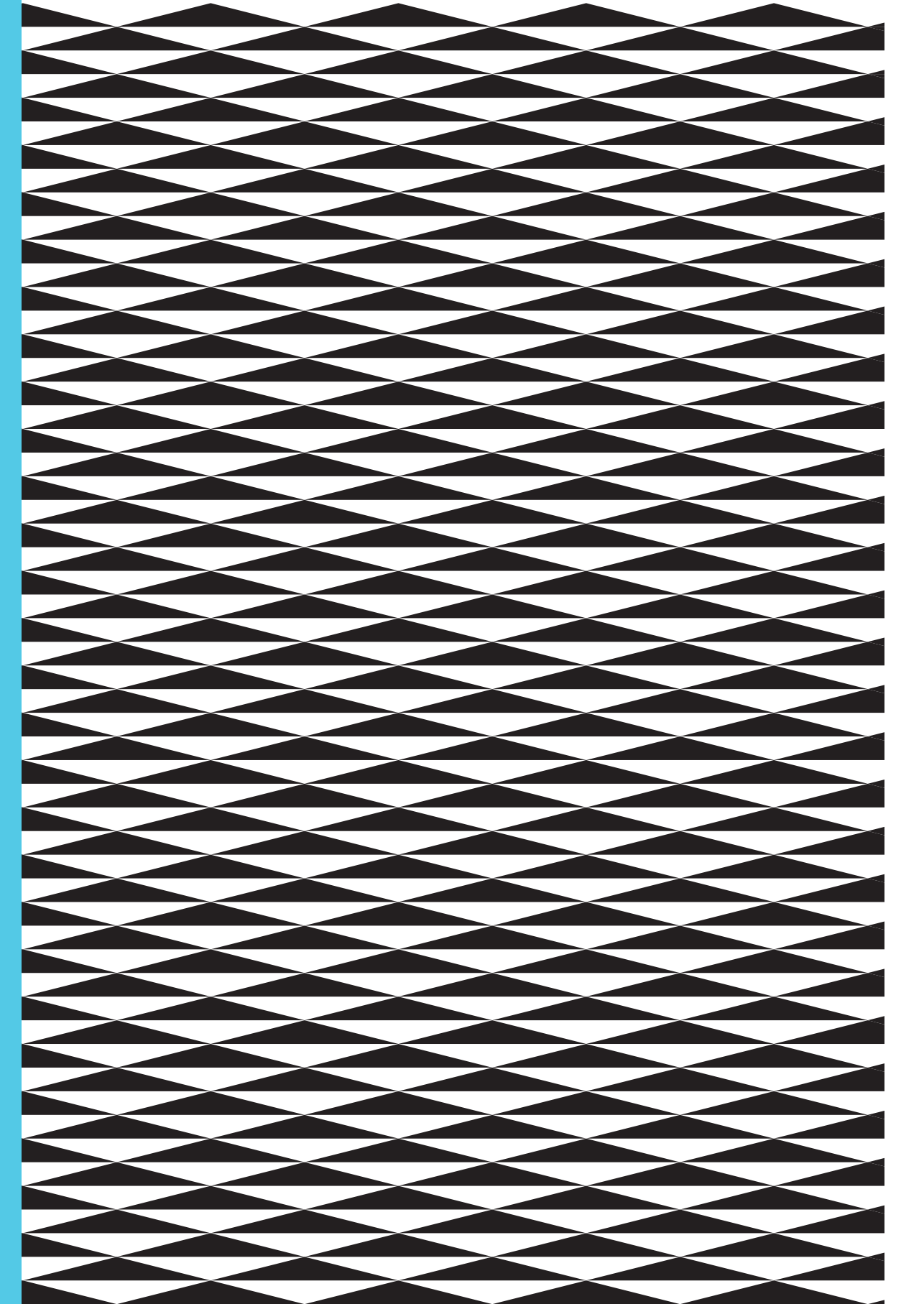
Geometrical art takes on many forms and meanings. Sometimes a geometrical work of art is well defined in space, primarily the sculptures which originated within the sphere of minimal art. They possess an almost authoritarian, monolithic quality and relating to if not actually defining the space they're in. They were supposed to 'refer only to themselves' which in my opinion is an oxymoron: one can't refer to oneself, one is oneself and all referring occurs to things outside oneself. Still the expression illustrated the degree to which these artworks were (or aspired to be) independent of hierarchical values in the rest of the world.

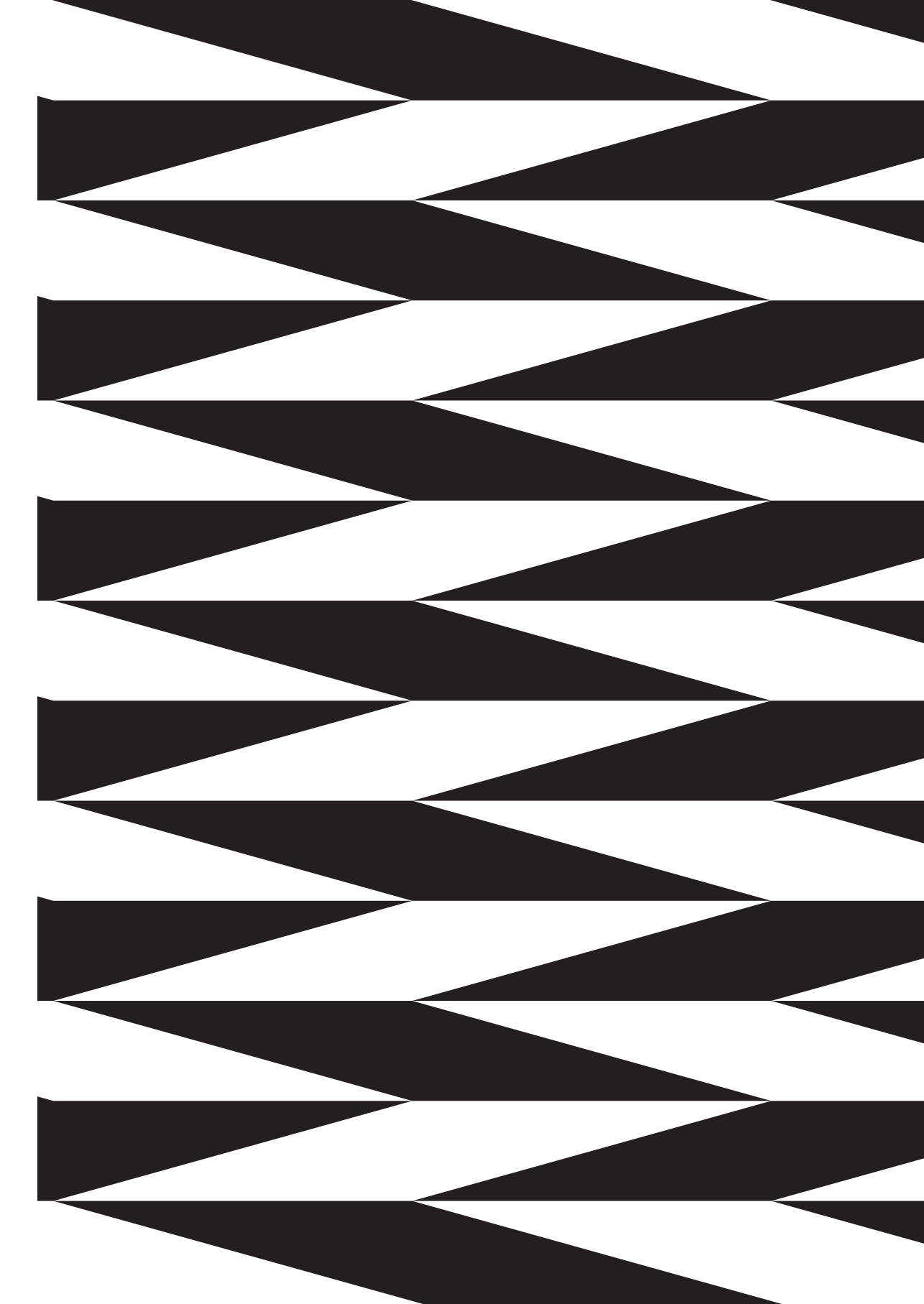
In painting some geometrical works are also well defined in the sense that the image is confined within its own composition, so to speak and as such is finite. They have a beginning and an end and both are visible on the picture plane.

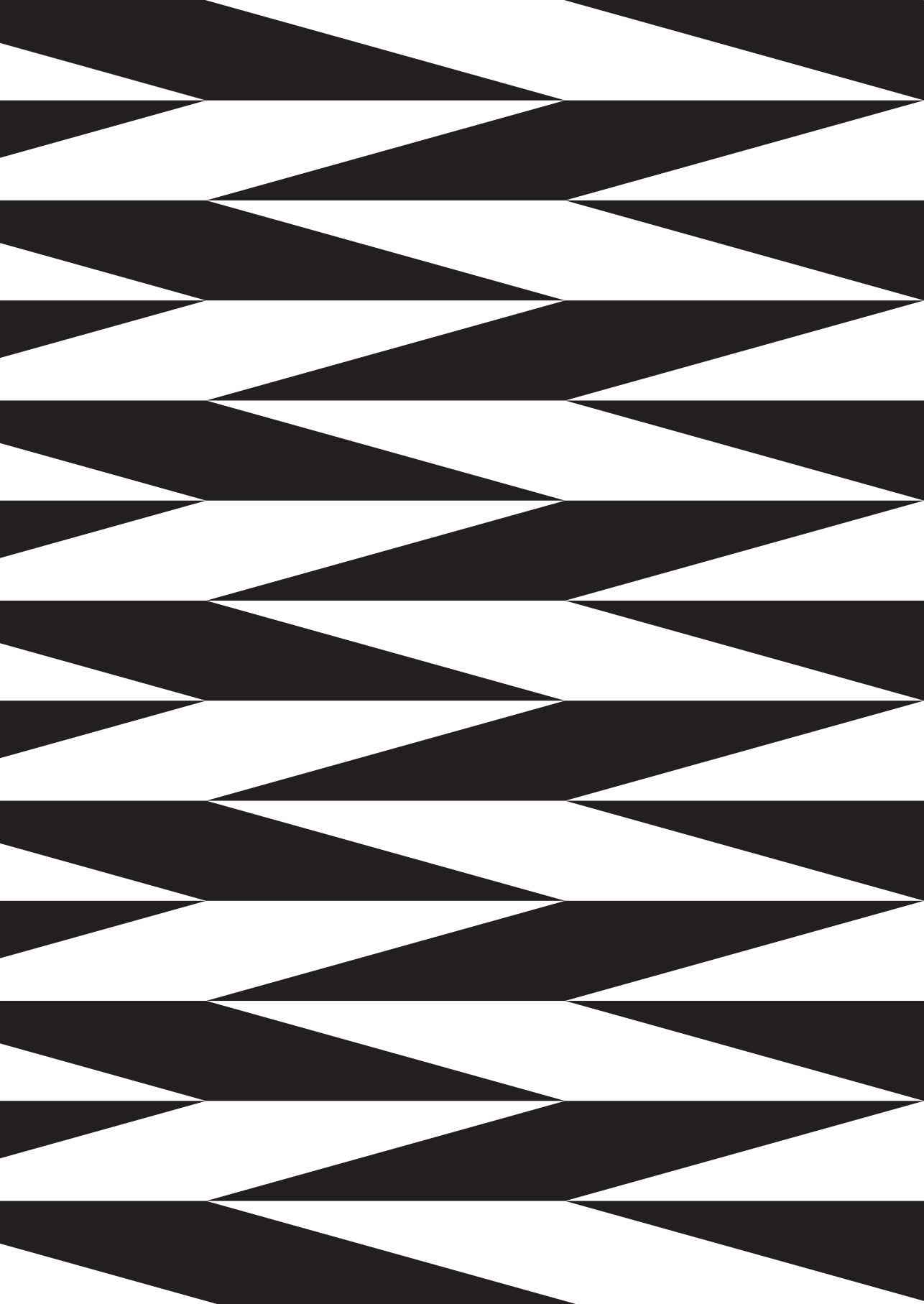
Other paintings are not concerned with finite composition and can be thought of as parts of a never ending whole – or at the very least as forms which completely fill the picture plane and have no independent composition within it.

The elongated horizontal paintings by Jan van der Ploeg belong to the latter category. As is to be expected they show no personal handwriting, no pictorial 'signature', no gestural traces. They are not involved with 'expression', except in so far as all artwork are also signs of expression of the human mind but not always of the kind that led in its wildest manifestations to expressionism. These paintings want to be statements of facts, not the expression of emotions.

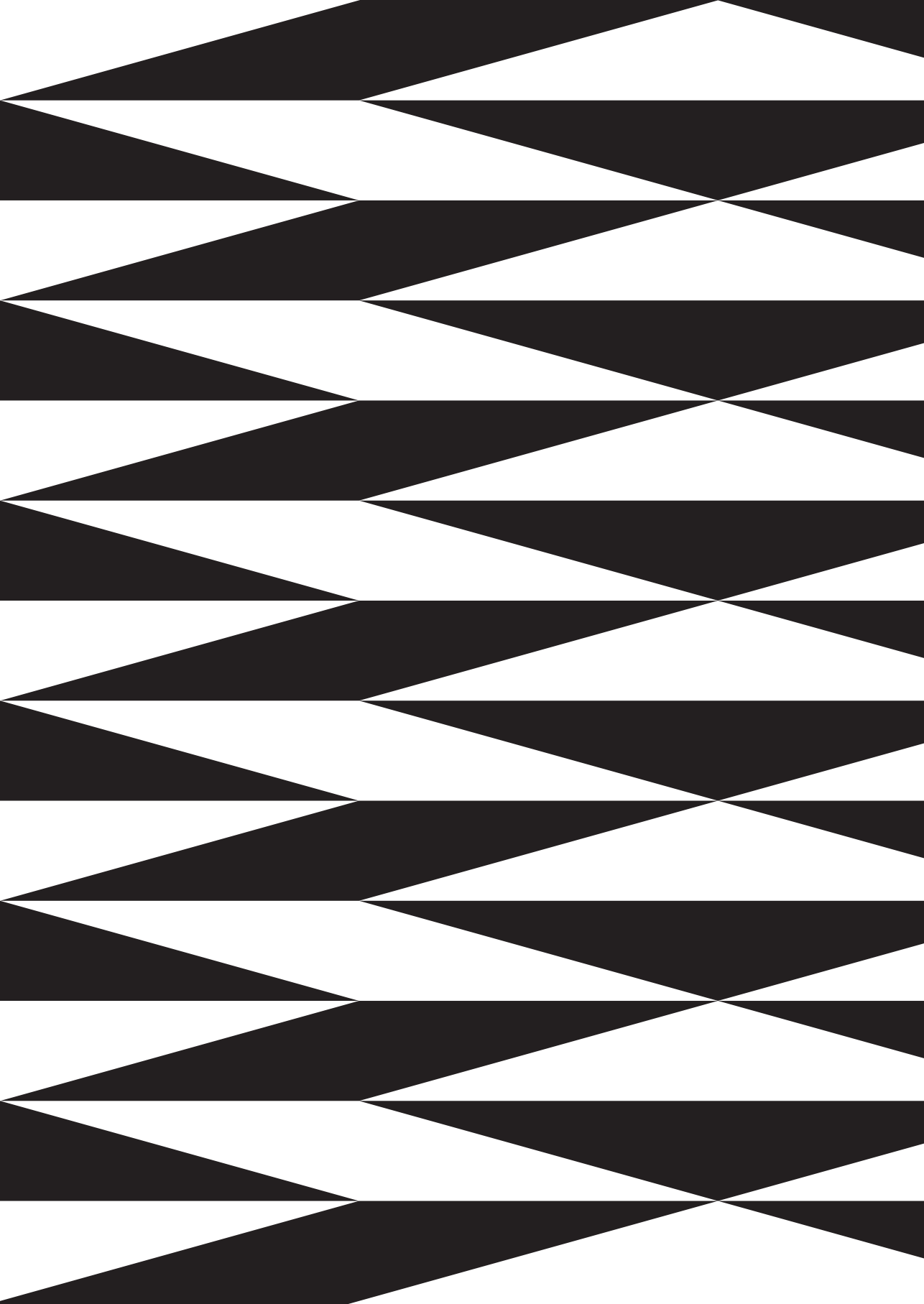
They consist of elementary forms like the triangle or the parallelogram which are for instance presented in horizontal 'lines' covering the whole canvas from left to right and from top to bottom. These forms are alternately presented in a colour (black or blue) and white. In the case of triangles this boils down to black triangles pointing upwards alternated with white triangles pointing downwards. Moreover the first line starts and ends with the last part of a black triangle, as do the third, fifth and other uneven lines while the even ones start and end with the last part of the upside down white triangle. The fact that all the lines start with an extreme part of the basic form emphasizes the notion that what we see is not a finite composition but rather part of a larger, possibly infinite whole that far exceeds the canvas.

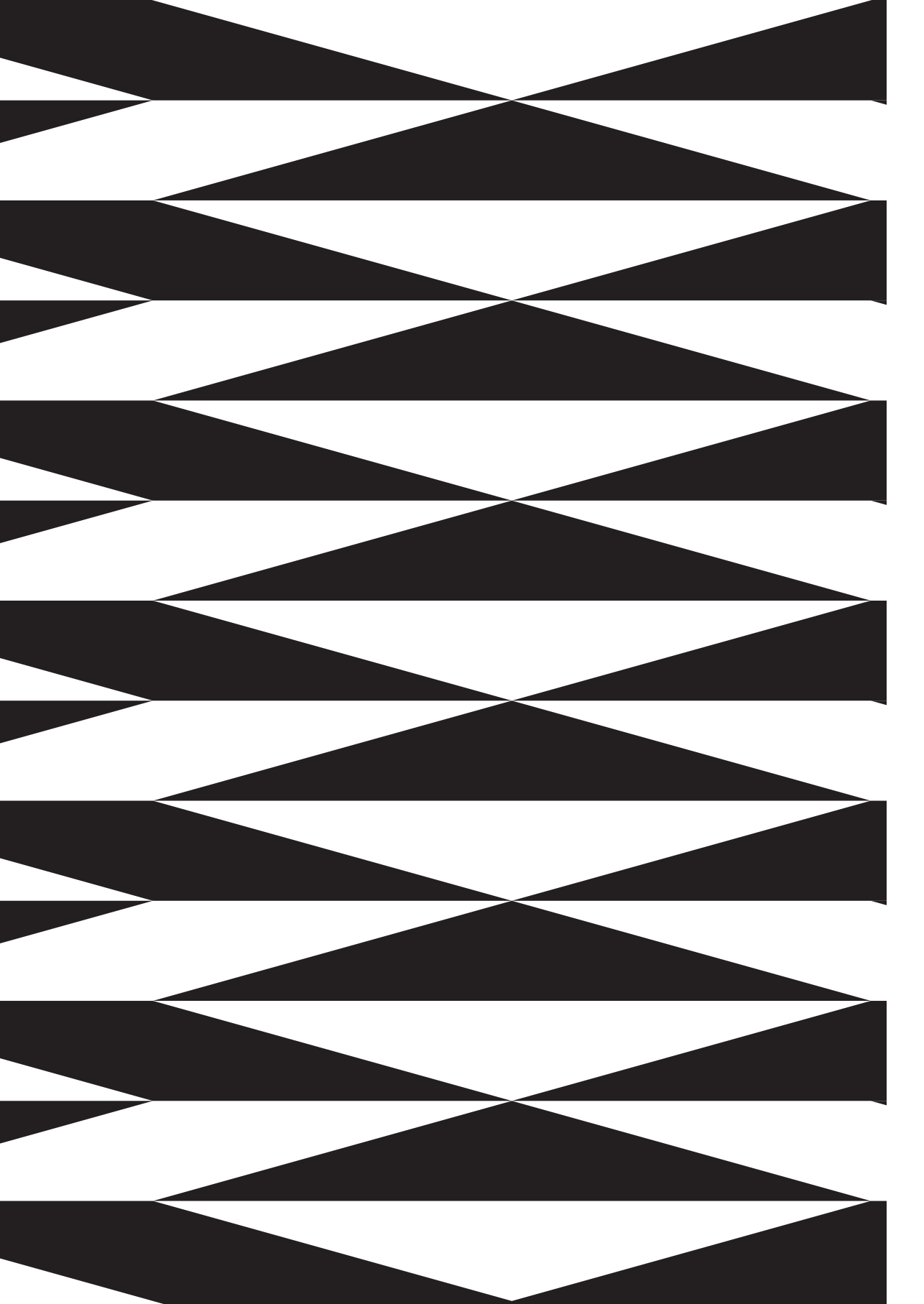


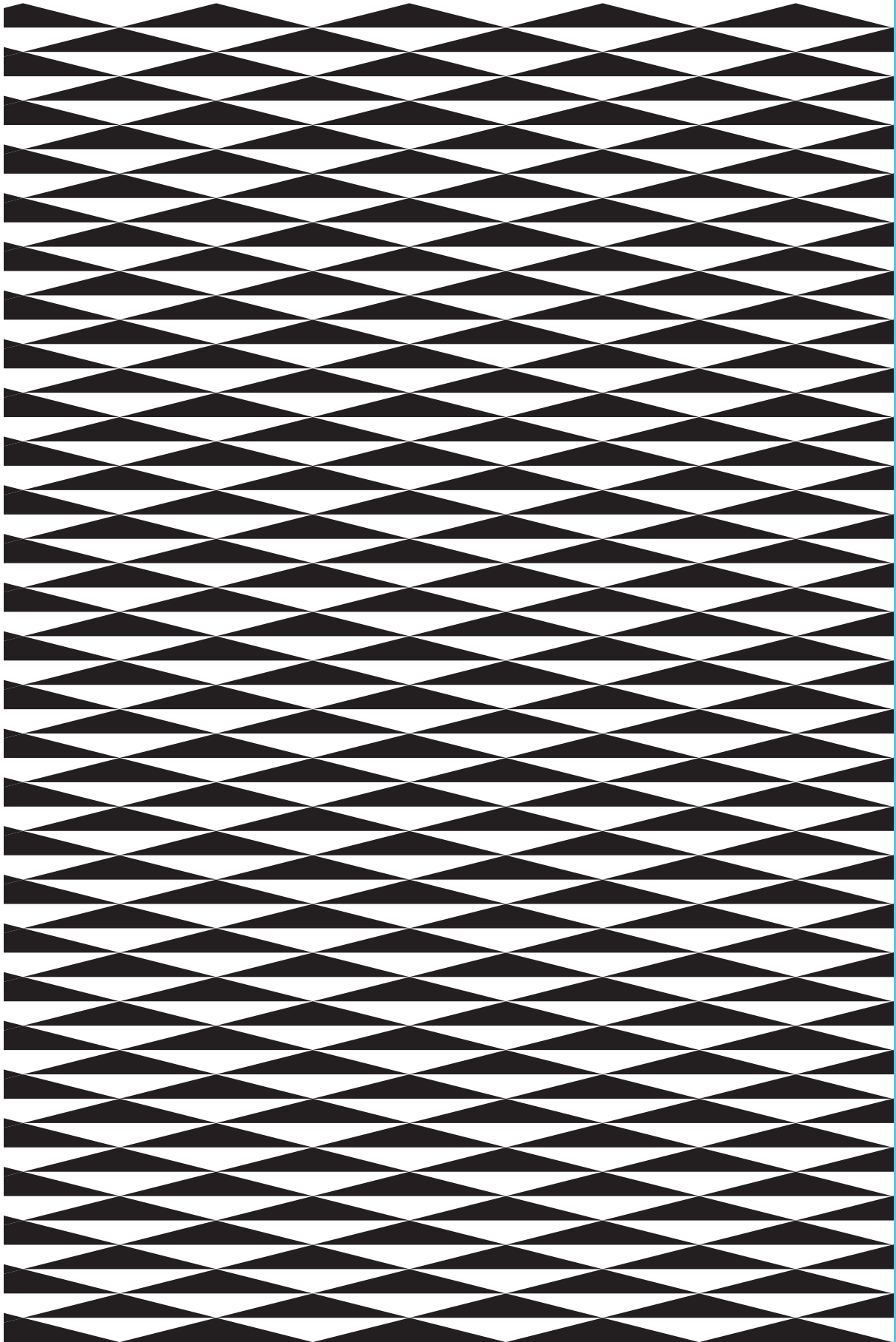












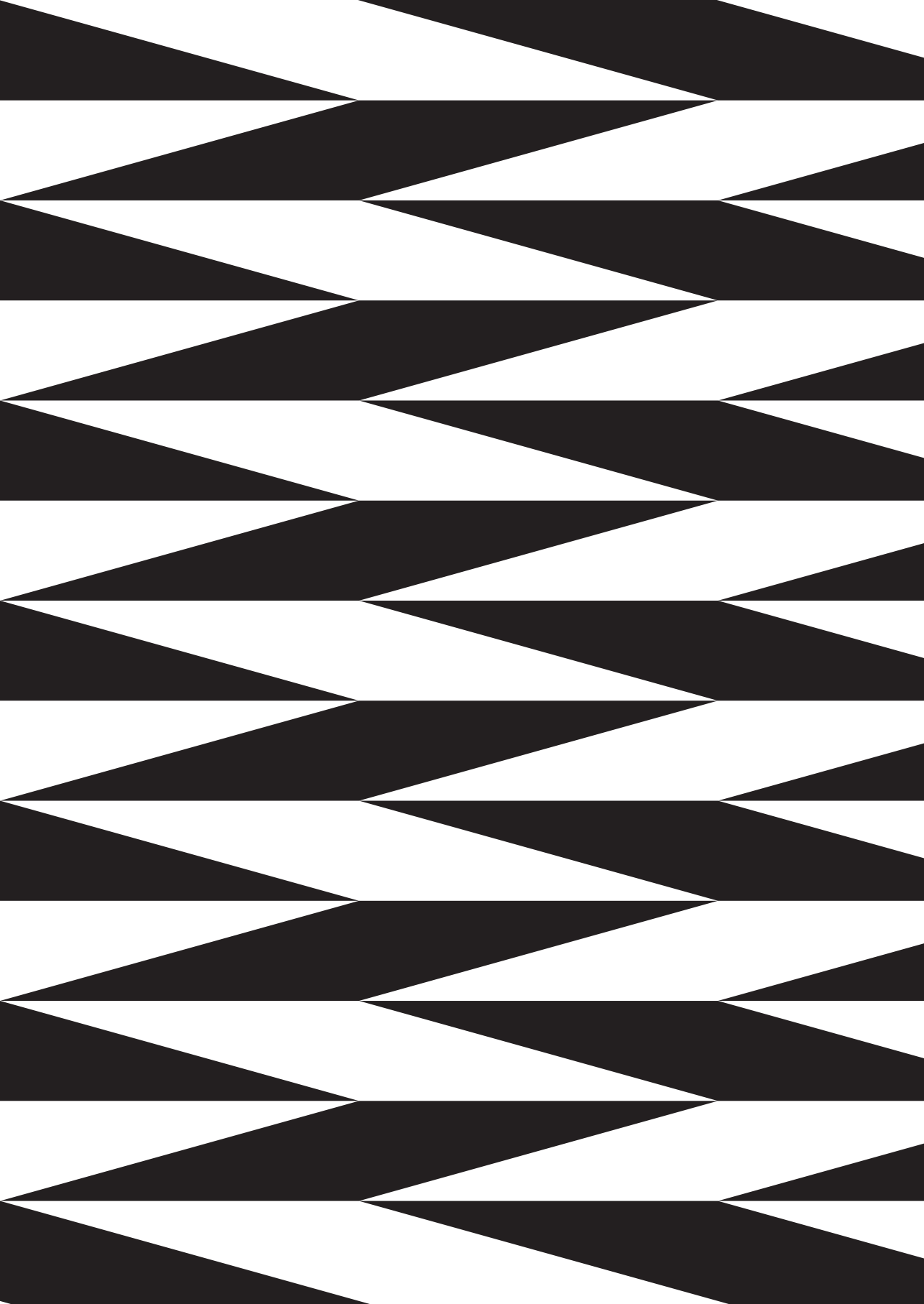
In the cases of the blue parallelograms and the combinations of black triangles and black parallelograms the geometrical starting point is a bit more complicated which provides the combination of lines with an optical suggestion of movement, both vertically and horizontally. Still, the basic idea remains the same. On this theme many variations are conceivable which 'may or may not be executed', to borrow a phrase from Sol LeWitt.

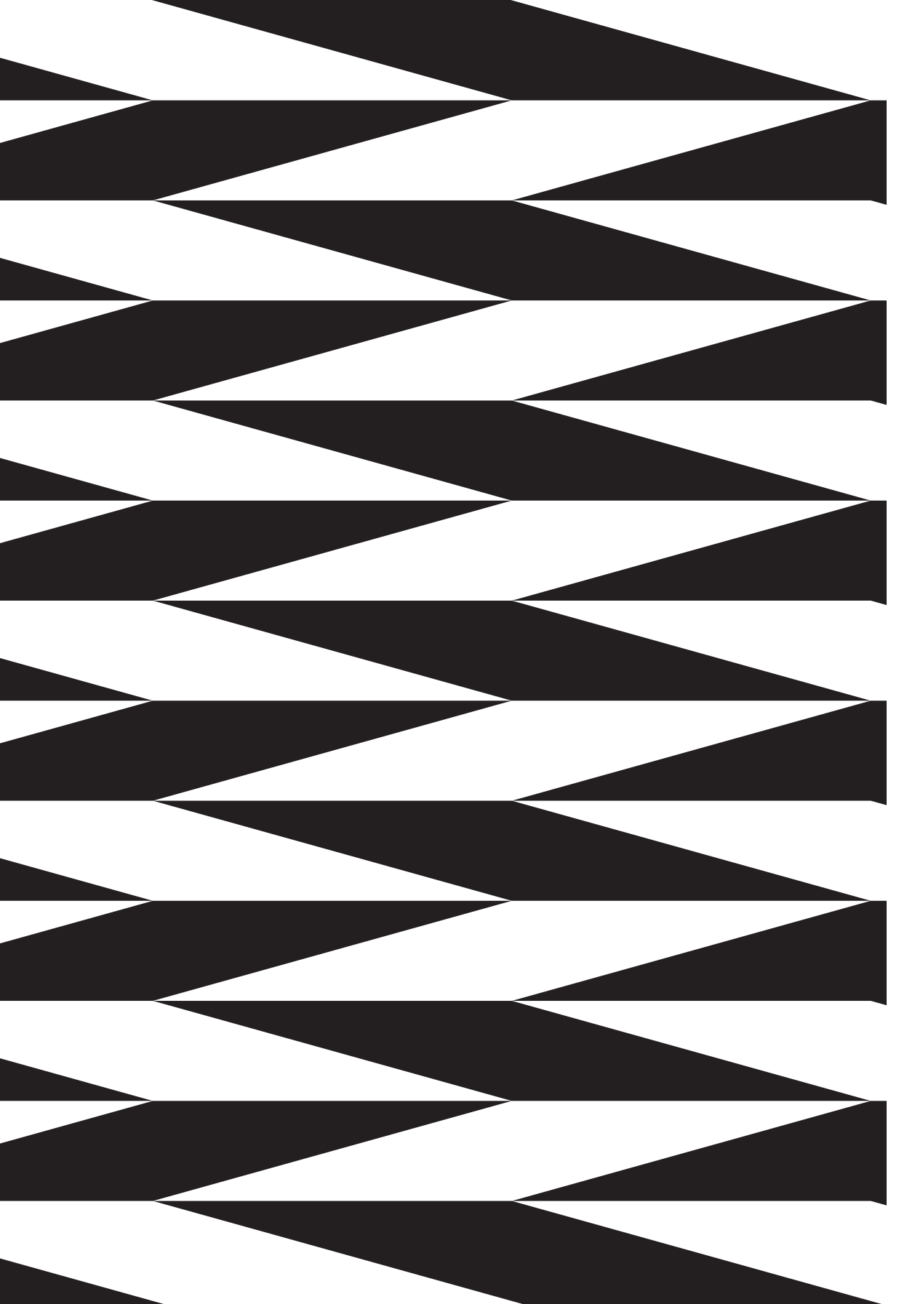
So what we see is basically 'just' structure. That may seem little but actually it's very much and one could even make a case for the proposition that in the end this is all there is. After all everything has structure, from the tiniest fraction to the largest universe, from a microbe to the human brain.

In other words, these paintings are propositions about everything. This explains why they fill the picture plane in a way that suggest exceeding it: after all these are just details, parts of the infinite that look like or, rather, can be graphically represented as what we see on the canvas.

The optical results are such that we can't perceive the whole painting in one glance, one has to focus on the different parts to understand the structure that is offered. Moreover, as static as they are, the paintings tend to suggest constant movement to the eye and when one looks at them for a period of time the image blurs and becomes one undulating, rhythmically moving whole. One could even construe that in this process the viewer himself becomes part of the structure he is watching. The sense of self, the clear boundaries between subject and object seem to dissolve and lose their meaning. After all, we ourselves are part of the structured universe – or the universal structure – as well.

Here the formal touches the meditative, the cool observation meets the transcendent experience. And so these works in the end become proposals about (our position in) the universe. They are representations (not: images in the sense of individual 'portraits') of what we see through a microscope as well as what the telescope can show us. Mirroring both microscopic and macroscopic worlds these paintings are literally uni-versal.





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