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**National Institute of the Arts
School of Art**



Visual Arts Graduate Program

MASTER OF VISUAL ARTS

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REPORT

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Acknowledgements Abstract

I initially researched aspects of “Chinese Pictographs” as a source for art work, from this I concentrated on the “The Modernized City”, for which I photographed images of four different cities creating a new style of metropolis.

This postgraduate study takes the form of two semesters of Photomedia studies. The final work will be held on the in July 2003 at Photospace that is located in the Photomedia Workshop, and exhibited at the Canberra School of Art Gallery in January 2004. The pieces in the exhibition that comprise the outcomes of the studio practice are presented together with the report that documents the nature of the course of study undertaken.

Deputy Director & Postgraduate Convenor: Nigel Lendon

Photomedia Workshop:

Head: Warren Jolly

Assistant Head: Margaret

Therese O'Brien, Susan O'Brien

Photomedia Workshop:

Head: Warren Jolly

ABSTRACT...

Acknowledgements

Over the period of study this year, there are many people whom I owe a great deal of appreciation. Firstly, my thanks and gratitude to my supervisor, Martyn Jolly, for his patience, insight, wit, and invaluable suggestions, always giving me new ideas, inspiration and any assistance that I needed. Secondly, I would like to thank Nigel Lendon, who provided me with inspirational advice in the reviews and postgraduate seminars. In addition, my friends who gave me their moral support and encouragement are Daphne Cheng, Yen-Wen Chen, Wei Li, Do-Kyung Lee, Kow-Liang Chua, Lanie Basilio, Dan-Dan Cui, Salinda Wong, Tinna Edna and many others. Finally, my sincerest and deepest thanks to my lovely parents who are always on my side.

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Introduction

This report discusses my studio practice with reference to my graduate project research that comprises my graduate level professional practice. This refers to several opportunities offered by the Photomedia workshop over the past two semesters and my involvement with these projects.

The first part of this report records the process of how the whole year of studio practice began with the work “Chinese Pictographs”. However this process developed slowly. After much consideration, it was decided that “The Modernized City” should be concentrated on instead of “Chinese Pictographs”. Therefore the “The Modernized City” will be ultimately the final piece that I present to the public.

I have chosen to perform and produce my work via digital technology because that is the best way for me to present a better visual effect. Similarly, I am also interested in what digital technology can do in supporting my own thoughts and my work.

...*CHINESE PICTOGRAPHS*...

WORK DESCRIPTION

Chinese Pictographs . . .

~ *Themes* ~

The aim of this project was to use the Chinese pictograph in my work. Pictographic characters are simplified line drawings of concrete objects. The earliest known examples of Chinese written characters in their developed form were carved into tortoise shells and ox bones. The majority of these characters were pictographic. Pictographs were not only the characters that could be used to communicate between people in ancient times but were a form of art.

I expected my work to include pictographs of Chinese written characters, such as those representing the sun (日), river (川), tree (木), car (车), mountain (山), fish (鱼), cattle (牛), sheep (羊), elephant (象), people (人), boat (舟), bird (鸟), horse (马), turtle (龟), door (门) and so on to form and display an artistic conception. In addition, I wanted to inform people about the art of Chinese characters and enabling them to enjoy the vast profundity of ancient Chinese vocabulary. However having Chinese characters on my work randomly without any meaning or life attached to them made me feel dissatisfied with them, I intended for them to merge and form a reality of their own with the real world.

My original idea was that using computer technology these pieces would combine the traditional styles of Chinese paintings and produce works which merged the concepts of reality, memory, tradition, technology and creativity to form a new style that evoked imagery of the heart and mind. From the viewing of different dynasties in China such as T'ang, Sung, Yuan, Ming and Ch'ing, each dynasty has different painting styles that can be traced back to the same origin. Using this as a base, it allowed me to broaden my horizon as to create new works of my own. And I hoped that these pieces would not only show themselves as an artistic production, but also communicate to people from different cultures.

~ Processes & Methods ~

In the first instance, I intended to present the four seasons, namely, Spring, Summer, Autumn, and Winter. Before starting the main work, I drew small drafts by pastel of the four seasons. These sketches were approximately 20 cm by 10 cm in size.



The above drafts are the basic sketches of my idea. They are individual frames that evolve and go through some modifications through the computer.

I went to the Menzies library at Australia National University to search for materials on Chinese original pictographs and scanned them into a com-

Water Farm Weather Sparrow Sheep Mountain Sun

Chinese Pictographs

...

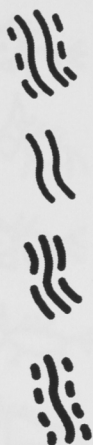
~ Processes & Methods ~

puter, using different words to compose these four compositions. Figure 1 and 2 are the original pictographs that I drafted out. To create diverse sensations, I added different colours onto these compositions, adding skin textures onto it to create three-dimensional effects. Using Bryce 5, Painter 5.5, and Photoshop 6.0 computer software, I created other images including the sky, mountains, trees, rivers, animals, farmland and so on.

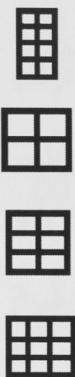
It is obvious that I did not use any real image or photographs for the artworks. My supervisor, Martyn, suggested to put some real images into my work, rather than just using images which can be created from computer software. I thought this was a good suggestion, therefore I attempted to combine photographs of real animals and objects together with Chinese pictographs. After a few months of processing, I found that it was difficult for me to continue this project, because there were many problems that arose. Therefore, I embarked on a new project that opened a new horizon for me.

~ Figure 1 ~

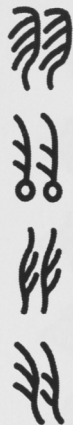
Water



Farm



Feather



Sparrow



Sheep



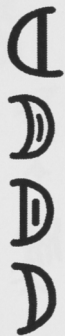
Mountain



Sun



Moon



Person



House



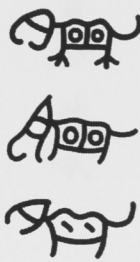
Grain



Grass



Leopard



Rhinoceros



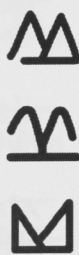
Swallow



Boat



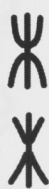
Hill



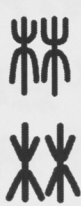
Baboo



Wood



Forest



~ Figure 2 ~

Horse	Turtle	Fish	Elephant	Bird	River	Fruit
						
						
						
						
						
						
						
						
						
						
Deer	Car	Cloud	Cattle	Tiger		
						
						
						
						

~ Bottlenecks & Obstacles ~

Firstly, if I put more than three pictographs in each piece, they made my work too complicated for the viewer. So I discarded the original idea of “Four Seasons” and instead focused on creating more than four pieces, choosing only one or two Chinese pictographs, in combination with real images, for each piece of work.

Secondly, if I took all the real images that I needed all by myself, it would cost me a lot of time and money. Furthermore, some real images were very difficult to find in Canberra. So I decided to find the images I wanted from magazines, art books, reference books and encyclopedias, the internet and so on.

The third reason was concerned with issues of resolution, light and mesh. The resolution was very low even though the image was from books, and meshes were very obvious. These faults were apparent even though I had used a high-end scanner. Moreover, each picture had a different direction of light, combining some of these pictures would have made my artwork look bizarre.

The forth problem was the technological limitations of my computer. I hoped to present each final work with the dimensions of 55 cm by 150 cm and a resolution of 300 pixels. However, the file size was too big thus causing my computer to crash and often not run smoothly.

Fifthly, during my production, I often pondered how to chooses the colour of Chinese pictographs to match the image of the realistic world, and

Chinese Pictographs . . .

~ Bottlenecks & Obstacles ~

the suitability of colours that I wanted to present. As most of the Chinese pictographs were of animals that live in jungles, green fields or oases, it would be more harmonious to create green-coloured backgrounds. However I wanted my pieces to have more varieties so I tried putting in elephants onto the desert, which was yellow in colour, but I found that the result was very odd, because this kind of animal does not live in this environment. Personally, it is very important and essential that the colour tones of a successful artwork should harmonize.

Lastly, I found it very difficult to find Chinese pictographs that visually matched the real images. When I used a pictograph for a car to create a new work, I found it peculiar to put the traditional car on the highway of a modern city. Perhaps this style could make my work more conceptually interesting, but when I finished it and looked at the whole picture, I felt it did not work visually. It was very difficult to combine past images with present images, perhaps this was because these Chinese pictographs were invented about 4,000 or 5,000 years ago, before many of today's modern objects existed. The combination of these in my work made it inharmonious and discordant.

Therefore, after having a discussion with Martyn on December 2002, I made a tremendous change and that was to abandon this project "Chinese Pictographs" and concentrate on the other project "The Modernized City".

...*THE MODERNIZED CITY*...

WORK DESCRIPTION

The Modernized City . . .

~ **Themes** ~

The aim of this project was to present the modern city integrated with a sense of the technology that modernizes it.

When people walk through a modern city sometimes they feel confused, disorientated, and complicated. And they even lose their way, especially with high-rise multistory buildings and skyscrapers on both sides of a narrow road. When you live in various cities, they have some similarities, at times you are not sure which city you are living in.

I do not want my pieces to be just part of traditional photography, I would like to come up with something new on my own and create a stunning visual impact through using computer technologies to replicate some experiences I have had.

I expect to create two-dimensional cities that look like a series of patterns from afar, symbolizing any city in the world. Having a close look, the viewer will begin to perceive something different, realizing where these images come from. The images that I took include pictures of people, cars, buildings, signboards, street lamps, trees, roads, antennas and so on. Repeating the image over and over can be interpreted as “The same group of people, living in the same city, facing the same problems throughout their lives.”

Indeed, every city has its own distinguishing features as well as having some resemblances to other cities. What I want to get through to viewers when they view my work is for it to have an immediate resonance with them, and then by having a second look, they are able to re-experience their own city and culture in a new light.

~ *Historical Background* ~

I had been interested in photography ever since I have become addicted to traveling. Photos taken of metropolitan buildings are my favorite.

Why did I choose Taipei, Hong Kong, Sydney and Melbourne to take photos? For Taipei, as she is my hometown, I want to introduce her to other parts of the world through my art work. Therefore, I will have the responsibility to let people from other countries know its features thus understand how lovely a country it is.

Hong Kong was the first place that I had traveled to overseas, and since 1998 I visit her every year. She is a very special city combining Chinese and Western cultures, but she has her own unique features at same time. I have a very strange feeling towards her. When I stay there for more than one week, I have a strong desire to escape from that city as soon as I can. But once I leave Hong Kong, I miss her and want to visit her as soon as possible. Perhaps that is the reason why I strongly felt that I should put Hong Kong in my artwork.

Ever since I stepped onto Australia and studied here, I had been thinking of doing some artwork using images of Australia. When I climbed up the Sydney Tower, which is the highest building near the city center in Sydney, the stunning sight fascinated me. Similarly, the Observation Deck that was located in the tallest building in the Southern Hemisphere in Melbourne, which has a spectacular 360 degrees view, overwhelmed me. At that time, I made a decision to create works of art about these two most prosperous cities in Australia.

The Modernized City . . .

~ *Historical Background* ~

The decision to discontinuing my first piece of work had a great impact on the second artwork. Due to that, I read a lot of material that influenced me and inspired me to create my second artwork “The Modernized City”.

I enjoy reading the book “Venise” and I was touched by some of short sentences that the book used to describe the relationships between the city and people. Below are some of the sentences that I quote from the book; they are arranged in chronological order.

“On our first day in the city that is new to us, we go looking for the city. We go down this street, around the corner. We are aware of the face of passers-by. But the city eludes us, and we become uncertain whether we are looking for a city, or for a person.” “Our relations with cities are like our relations with people: we love them, hate them, or are indifferent toward them.” “It was Marseilles, and it was at same time another city. They no longer remembered where they were, or what they were searching for...”¹

As noted by the author regarding traveling around, I have the same feelings when I travel in unfamiliar cities around the world. Sometimes, I needed to ponder for a few seconds exactly which city I was in at that time. In addition, when I walked along a street of that city I felt doubtful and curious about the relationship between buildings, which do not have any particular affiliation to this area, and me.

Besides this, I was fond of the photographs taken by George Gerster and David T. Hanson. They took photographs from mid-air and presented vi-

¹ Victor Burgin, 1997, *Venise*/Victor Burgin, Black Dog Publishing, pp. 5.

The Modernized City . . .

~ Historical Background ~

sions of abnormal shapes and patterns, which were nonetheless recognisable as hot-air balloons, villages, cities, trees, buildings, roads, vehicles and so on. Viewers saw these images from a few inches away, this made the images divide into a dense texture of minute spots of colour that form some abstract, beautiful and marvelous outlines and pictures.

In addition, I liked a work by the Pop artist Andy Warhol. When I saw his work for the first time I was surprised and enchanted. The ideas of his artworks were uncomplicated, yet the results given to viewers constitute to different qualities or effects. He created his pieces by using photographs and other mass-media materials to repeat them and form a special visual effect and his own creative style and compositions.

Moreover, the artworks of Heiner Schilling which present a metropolis that is fragmented, artificial, with sharp contrasts, dense signals, complex structures, while still having some distinguish feature, are also relevant. This is the type of metropolis that I can readily imagine.

Furthermore, two science fiction films: “The Matrix” and “Minority Report” gave me some ideas. In the film “The Matrix”, some of the frames are shot in the sky of Sydney center. They are very impressive to movie-goers, from my point of view; those shot were an impressive sight. The second film, “Minority Report”, was full of novel ideas and science-fiction styles. This film describes a crowded city with up-to-date and sophisticated equipment. All of the above sources provided me with the motivation and context to create my own visual world.

~ Processes & Methods ~

All of the images in this project I had gathered by a digital camera from Sydney Tower in Sydney, Observation Deck in Melbourne, the Bank Center in Hong Kong and my friend's house in Taipei. I visited each of these places twice. Although the landscapes are all the same, the difference of weather and lighting between the visits makes them diverse.

When gathering top view images day and night, I could have a choice of different lighting effects with about 300 pictures taken at each venue. However I only required about two or three images in every city that I traveled to. During the period of taking photos I did not use a tripod, because some angles prevented it. As a result some of the photos I took were slightly blurred. In addition, I was trying to take different angles of city buildings, although each angle was just a little different, when placed in a grid it might lead to the whole result being entirely different. Finally, I inputted these photos into my computer and chose image I wanted.

Using a digital camera to take photos, the quality of resolution was limited and some of exposures were not be what I wanted. The problems of contrast, lightness, colour, could be manipulated through the software "Adobe Photoshop 6.0". For instance in "Taipei City" I had selected an image that I preferred and copied it five times, each same image I adjusted for lightness and contrast by using different numbers to present different effects. Then I chose the part that suited the final result best to merge them together forming the last basic image. Next I copied, repeated, rotated and flipped them. Finally, when they were allowed to amalgamate, the parts that joined together would eventually come out with a new shape and pattern.

The Modernized City

~ Processes & Methods ~

During the process of creating the works, some people suggested to me to use images shot at night. Because they had considered the lights of street lamps, neon lamps signs, cars, building and so on can made my pieces unusual, they wanted me to experiment on this path. I agreed that was a good suggestion, nevertheless, I did not want all my final pieces to be presented in the same style. At same time, I was afraid viewers might just focus on the result of lights and ignore some interesting parts, such as the shapes and patterns of the buildings which were amalgamated.

At that time, another idea came to my mind, to create a “long” or “square” piece of art. After experimenting, I discovered that the result of square format was more interesting and better as compared to the long. The reason was, the long format just came out with one kind of new pattern, but the square implied two dimensions. Eventually I adopted the square format as the main framework in my artwork.

For the final exhibition, I expect to present ten large pieces, therefore I have to choose 10 basic images from a final cull of 32 images, finally enlarged by my printer. It was very difficult to choose as every basic image has its own distinguishing feature and style. The only thing I could do was to think of the whole installation, as they are placed together they should have their individual distinctiveness within a group effect.

~ Final Works ~

I will be presenting ten pieces of my work, including three pieces of Taiwan, three pieces of Hong Kong, two pieces of Sydney and two pieces of Melbourne.

In the beginning, I wanted to print my art works out in wide-format from a printing company, but it was expensive. I chose to print out the art works on my own due to the fact that my budget was very tight. I expected the size to be about 140 cm by 125 cm, however, my printer could just print Supper A3 that was the biggest size, and therefore I had to put them together after I printed them out.

The final representation of my work is a grid of 12 times the same image when amalgamated. I tried to make the joints with no flaws, under first trial, I used double-sided tape via overlapping, it has very clear white edges, if you view it from a distance, it is not obvious, but if you watch it closely, you can absolutely see the flaw.

Under the second trial, I used tape rather than double-side tape, it does not overlap, but when you trim the edge manually, it is very difficult to maintain the same dimension due to error. If one image has this problem, a chink will appear when they are allowed to amalgamate.

Some people suggested me to use pins in solving this kind of problem thus making the pin becoming part of the work. At that time, I went to view pieces of art works at the Canberra Contemporary Art Space by an artist

~ Final Works ~

who used a great deal of pins to decorate his works and those pins entirely blended into his work. I tried the same measure but the result was not satisfactory, it was visually disturbing.

My supervisor shared my point of view, therefore after much trial and error, we have decided on the best method in producing the best display results, which was using the double-sided tape via overlapping.

Step 4.6, Figure 4.5, Table 4 and Graphic Capture PPT. These items has different functions that are only used to assist me in doing a large number of photograph images but also help in creating a variety of special effects. After that was done, the final output was stored on the Photo Quality Ink Jet Paper "PUB" in Super A3 size.

Equipment used ...

During this year of studio practice, the techniques used for creating and performing my pieces in this report were mainly digital.

The equipment used include: computer: Macintosh Power book G4, digital camera: Nikon Coolpix 995 which has 8 - 32 mm zoom lens and 3.34 mega - pixels resolution and changeable lens aperture and shutter speeds, scanner: AGFA SNAP SCAN 1212, and lastly printer: HP Desk Jet 1125C.

The software use for creating and manipulating images was: Adobe Photo-shop 6.0, Painter 5.5, Braye 5 and Graphic Converter PPC. This software has different functions that not only assist me to deal with a large number of photographic images but also help to create new materials and provide a variety of special effects. After that was done, the final works were printed on the Photo Quality Ink Jet Paper "PURE" in Super A3 size.

Conclusion

During this whole year of studying at the Master of Visual Arts at the ANU School of Art helped me to achieve a freedom of thought and see the growth of ideas in my art works.

In the first semester, I created and experimented with a variety of processes with the artwork “Chinese Pictographs”. Unfortunately, I met up with some obstacles and underwent some difficulties, putting myself in a serious dilemma. At same period of time, I came out with another idea, “The Modernized City”. In the beginning of second semester, I decided to forego the project “Chinese Pictographs” and concentrate on the second proposal “The Modernized City”.

The “Chinese Pictographs” was a big challenge, a meaningful but high-risk project. However, the development of the project was proceeding very slowly. In addition, I had spent more time and effort gathering information, and refining ideas about how to present it; therefore project became less viable than I thought.

Moreover, I had found it difficult to find a relevant context to base my work on, because there have been very few examples of other work using Chinese Pictographs. Nevertheless, it is a worthy project to fulfill and achieve in the future although it might not be viable now. In the near future, I hope that this piece of work can be completed due to the fact that it is a good chance that I can share the vast, profound and interesting Chinese characters with the rest of the world.

The final result of the second piece of work “The Modernized City” has a very stunning visual effect. I have created the work by repeating, rotating and combining the same image, with these steps being tested many times. By doing this, it automatically forms abstract and marvelous shapes and

Conclusion

patterns, through this you will discover a new kind of image. For me this is what the interesting and vital part is.

In addition, I have found out that lighting conditions make my pieces look more colorful, exciting, and beautiful. Although the buildings are all the same, different lighting conditions can make the photos different. The other part that we need to take into consideration is that the background of the pieces that present the rush hour of a modern city. The ambiguous part about this piece is that the city was not seen clearly on the first sight, but you can feel and imagine what kind of the city it is. That is because everyone has a perception of what a city is. When a viewer looks at an artwork which comprises images shots in a city which they have never been to before, it is still easy to evoke in them feelings derived from their own memories of other cities.

Furthermore, there are two forms of photographic image that I present in this piece simultaneously. One is a shape and pattern that is abstract and static, the other is to enjoy the detail of the city, which records its real life and the active world.

Last but not the least, when asked to make a statement about art, I find it complicated to explain because art is so recondite. However, I regard an outstanding artwork as one that comprises original ideas that are extremely simple. In other words, you do not need complex themes and elaborate processes to come out with an idea that has a fantastic result of visual effect.

I consider this year studying abroad a very precious experience in my life. In conclusion, I wish that in the near future, I could follow my own visual preferences and creating a special visual effect of my own.

CONCLUSION...

Curriculum Vitae

Name : Chia Chi Lien / Rani

Date of Birth : 18 January 1976

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Australia : Toad Hall, Kingsley Street, Acton, ACT, 2601

Country Of origin : 5F, No13, Lane137, Sze-Wei Road, Pan-Chiao 220,
Taiwan, ROC

EDUCATION

July 2002	-	June 2003	Master of Visual Arts School of Art Australian National University Major Course of Study: Photomedia Workshop: Studio Practice
Sept 1994	-	June 1998	Bachelor of Education (Primary) Dept. of Fine Arts & Crafts Education National Hsinchu Teachers College, Taiwan, ROC Major Course of Study: Graphic Design Computer-Aided Design Computer Multimedia Design Foundation of Art and Craft Education Study of Art and Craft Teaching
Sept 1988	-	June 1994	Fine Arts Section Kuang-Jen Junior/Senior high School,
Sept 1983	-	June 1988	Hsin-Pu Primary School Taiwan, ROC

Curriculum Vitae

Books

WORK EXPERIENCE

Aug 2001	-	June 2002	Fine Arts & Natural Science Teacher Chung-Ching Primary School Taiwan, ROC
Aug 1999	-	June 2001	Form Teacher Chung-Ching Primary School Taiwan, ROC
Aug1998	-	June 1999	Fine Arts Teacher Chung-Ching Primary School Taiwan, ROC

AWARDS

2000	Award 10 th anniversary covering design for Chung-Ching Primary School
1999	Awards in coordinating community Fine Arts activities
1998	Prize winner at the 15th National Arts Exhibition, Taiwan, ROC
1997	3 rd prize of CAD at National Hsinchu Teachers College

COMPUTER SKILLS

Able to operate computer software packages like Adobe Photoshop, Painter, Illustrator, Freehand, Poser, Page Maker and able to create a Web Page.

INTEREST / HOBBIES

I enjoy taking photos, traveling, cycling, painting, drawing, designing, listening to music, watching movies, and playing badminton.

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...*CHINESE PICTOGRAPHS*...

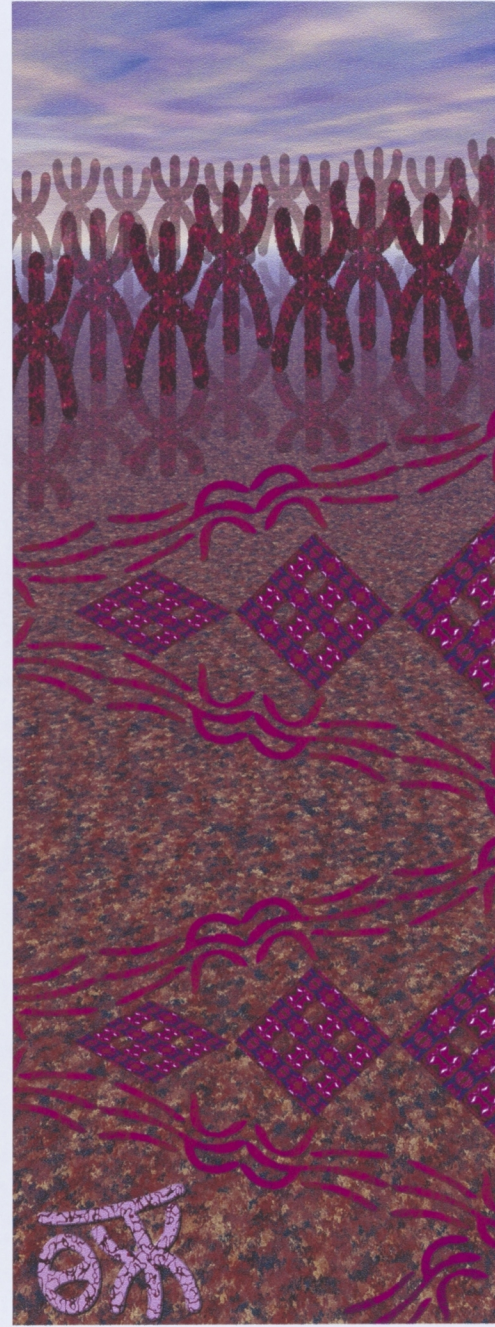
ART WORKS



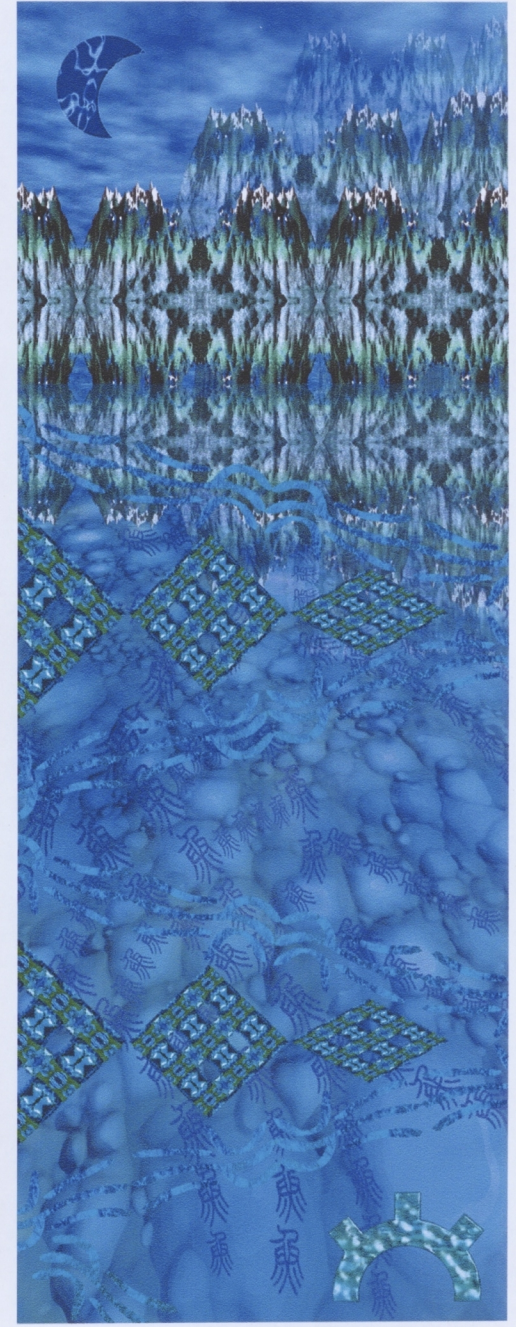
Spring
55cm X 150cm



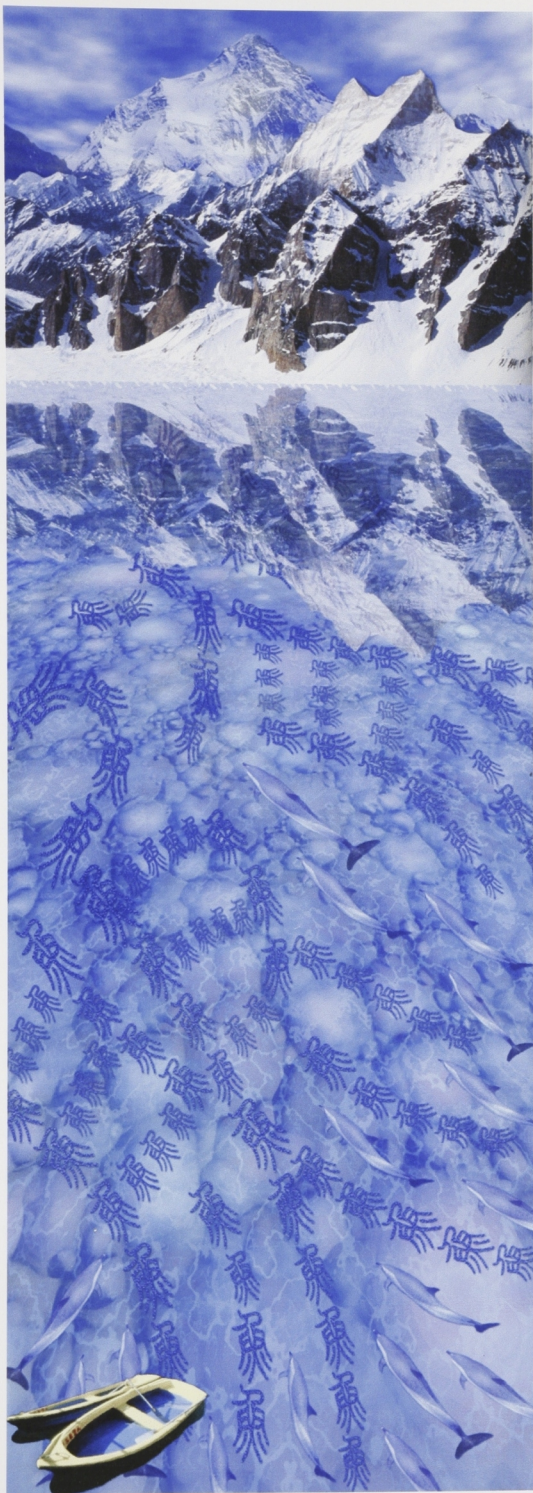
Summer
55cm X 150cm



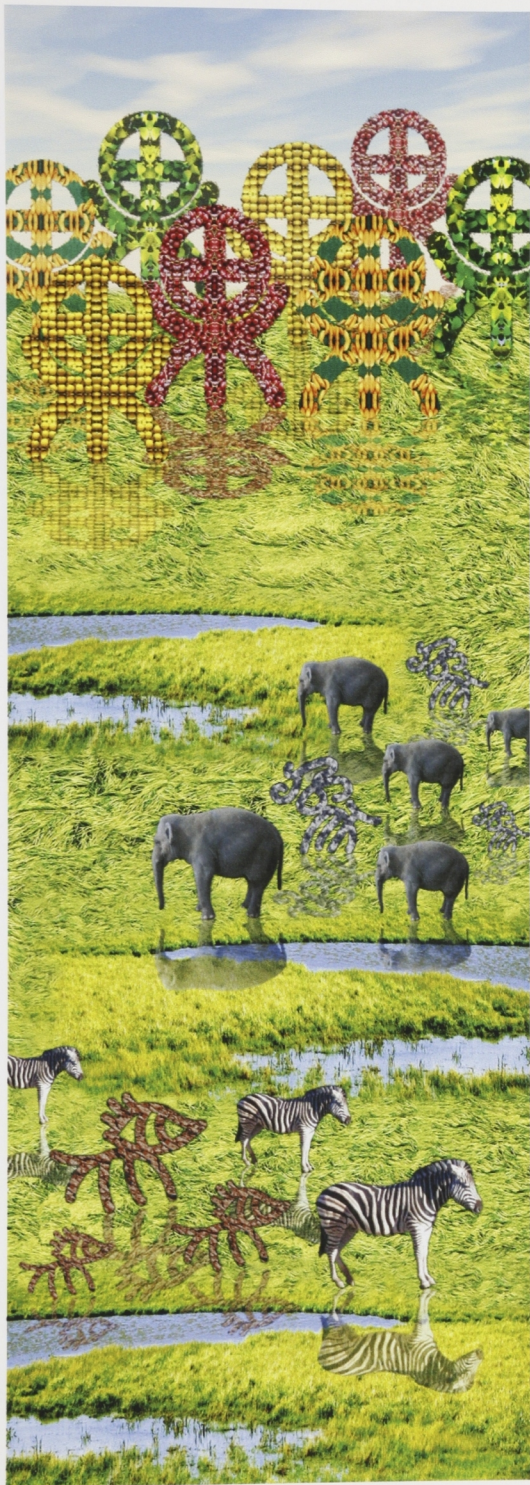
Autumn
55cm X 150cm



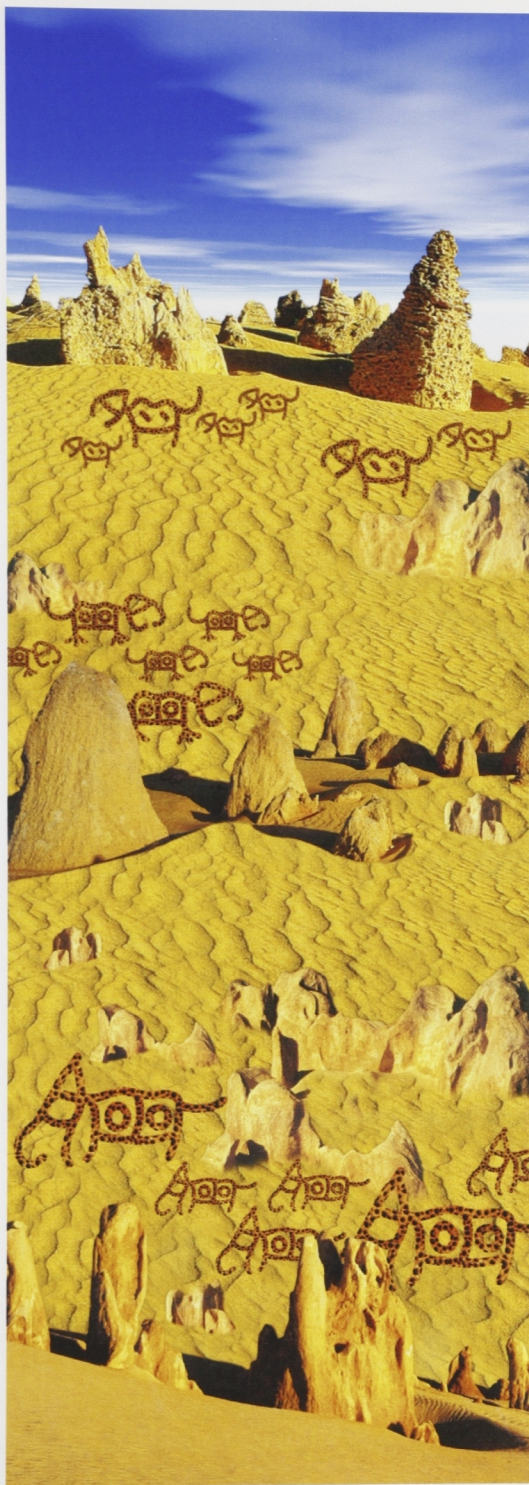
Winter
55cm X 150cm



Arcadia
55cm X 150cm



Earthly Paradise
55cm X 150cm



A Desert Region
55cm X 150cm



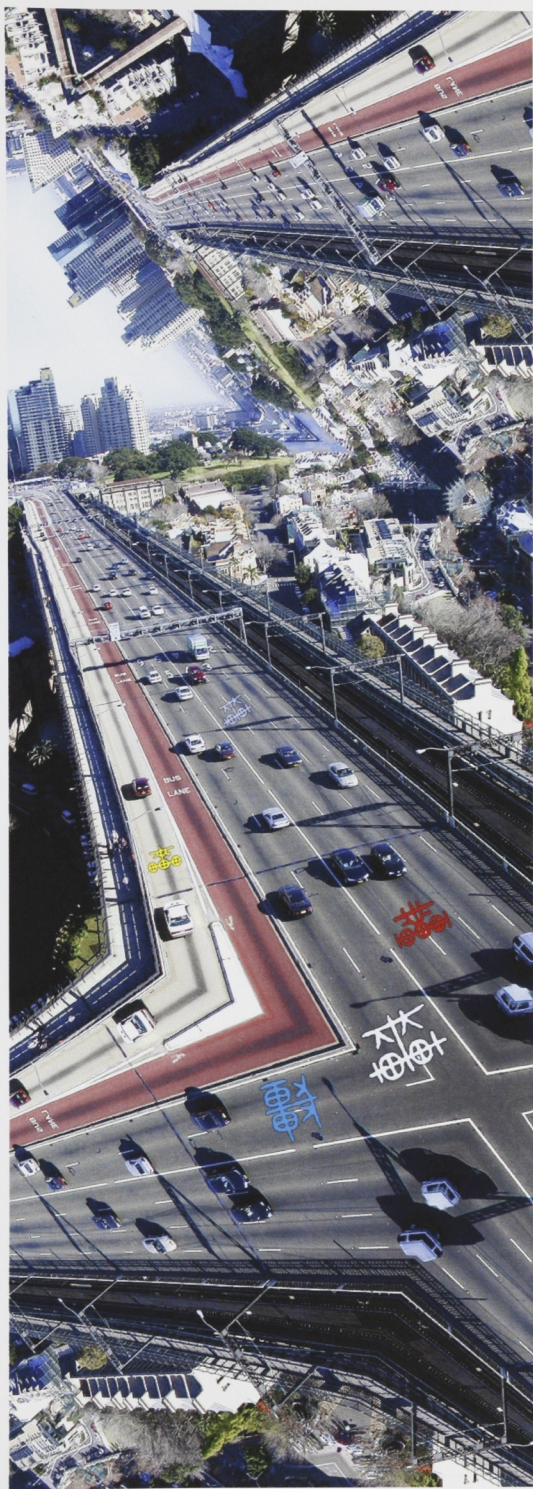
Wetland
55cm X 150cm



Ice Age
55cm X 150cm



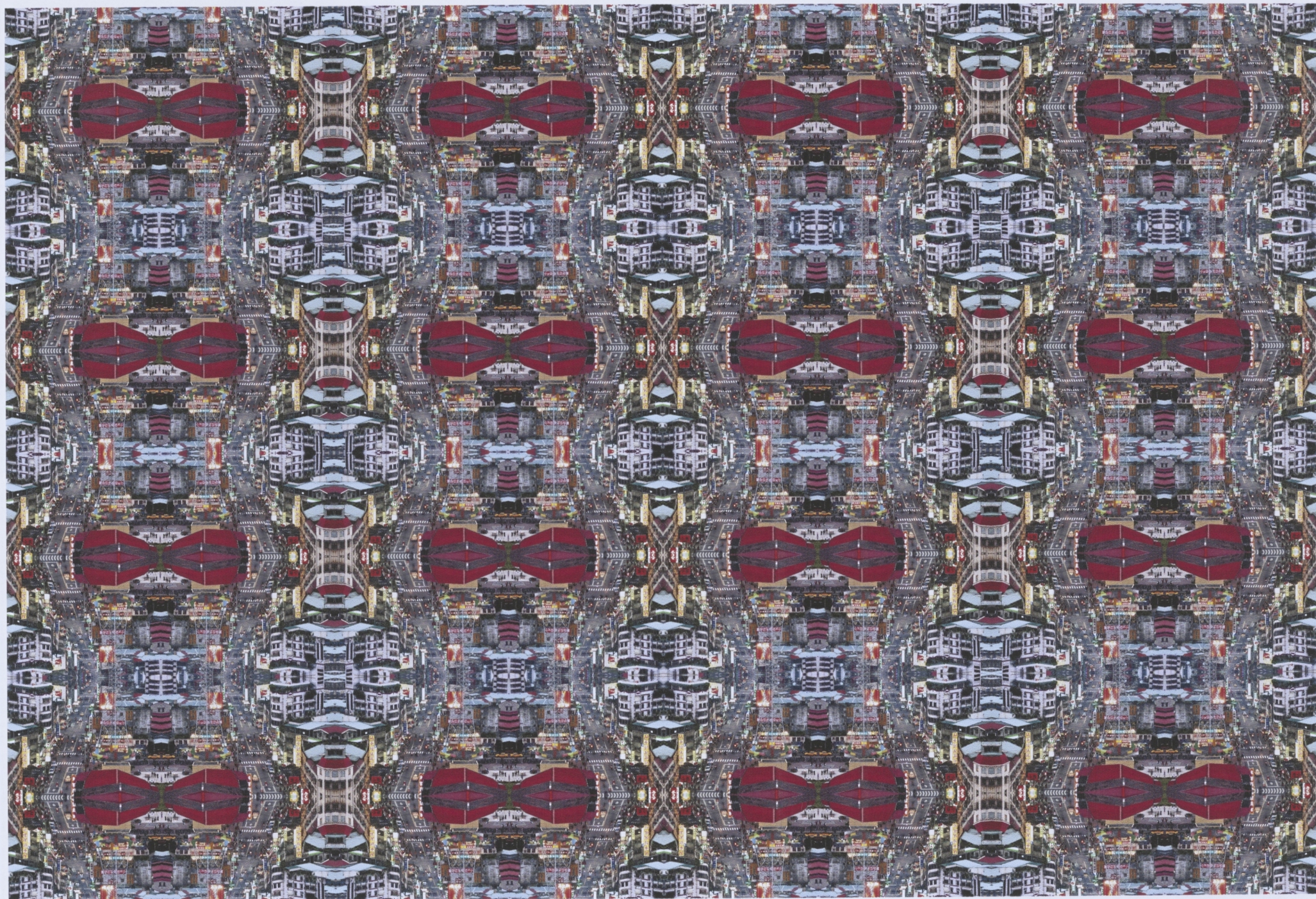
Grassland
55cm X 150cm



Metropolis
55cm X 150cm

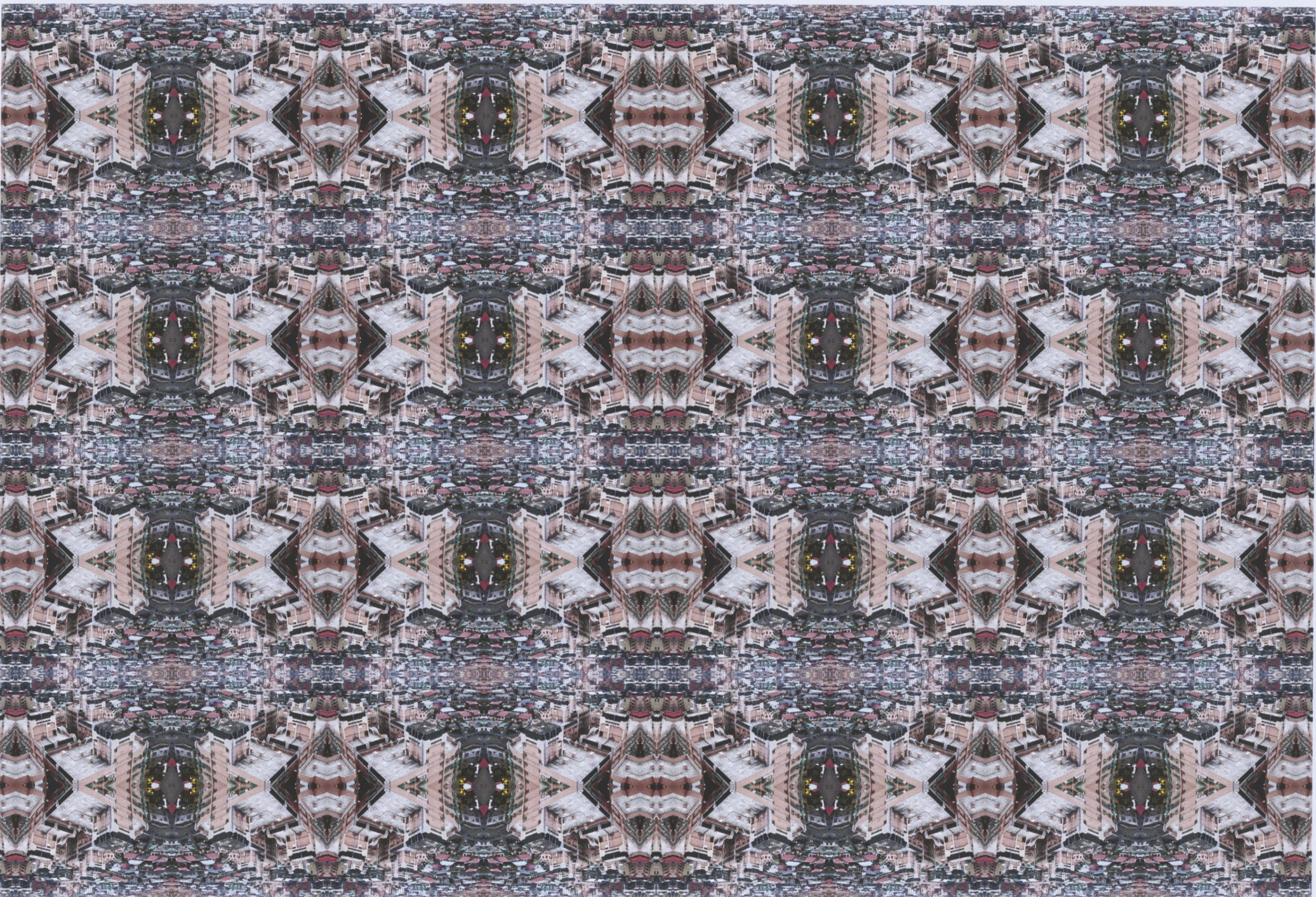
...*THE MODERNIZED CITY*...

ART WORKS



22 February 2003 5:53PM Taipei

140cm X 125cm



22 February 2003 5:57PM Taipei
140cm X 125cm

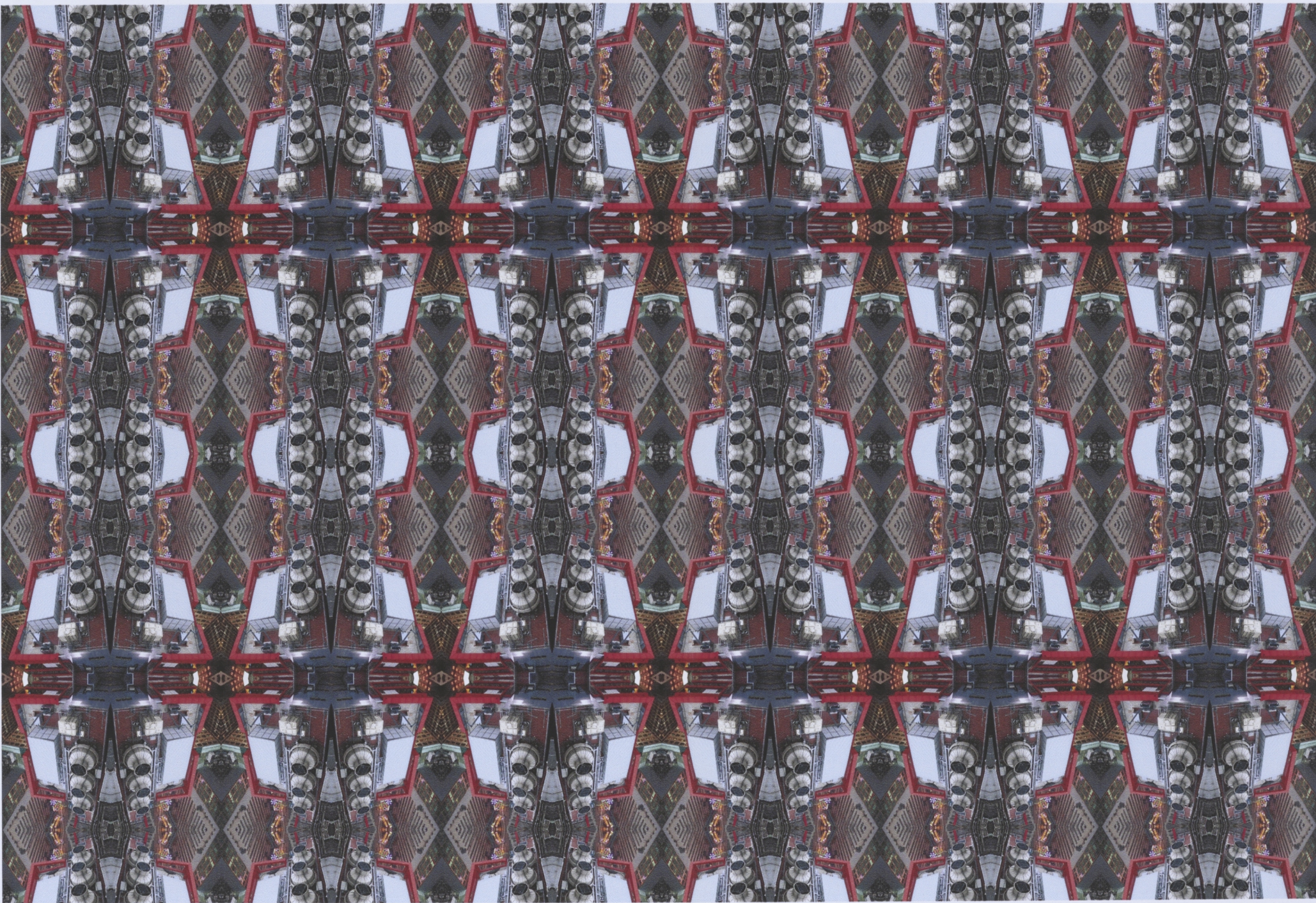


18 February 2003 5:57PM Taipei
140cm X 125cm

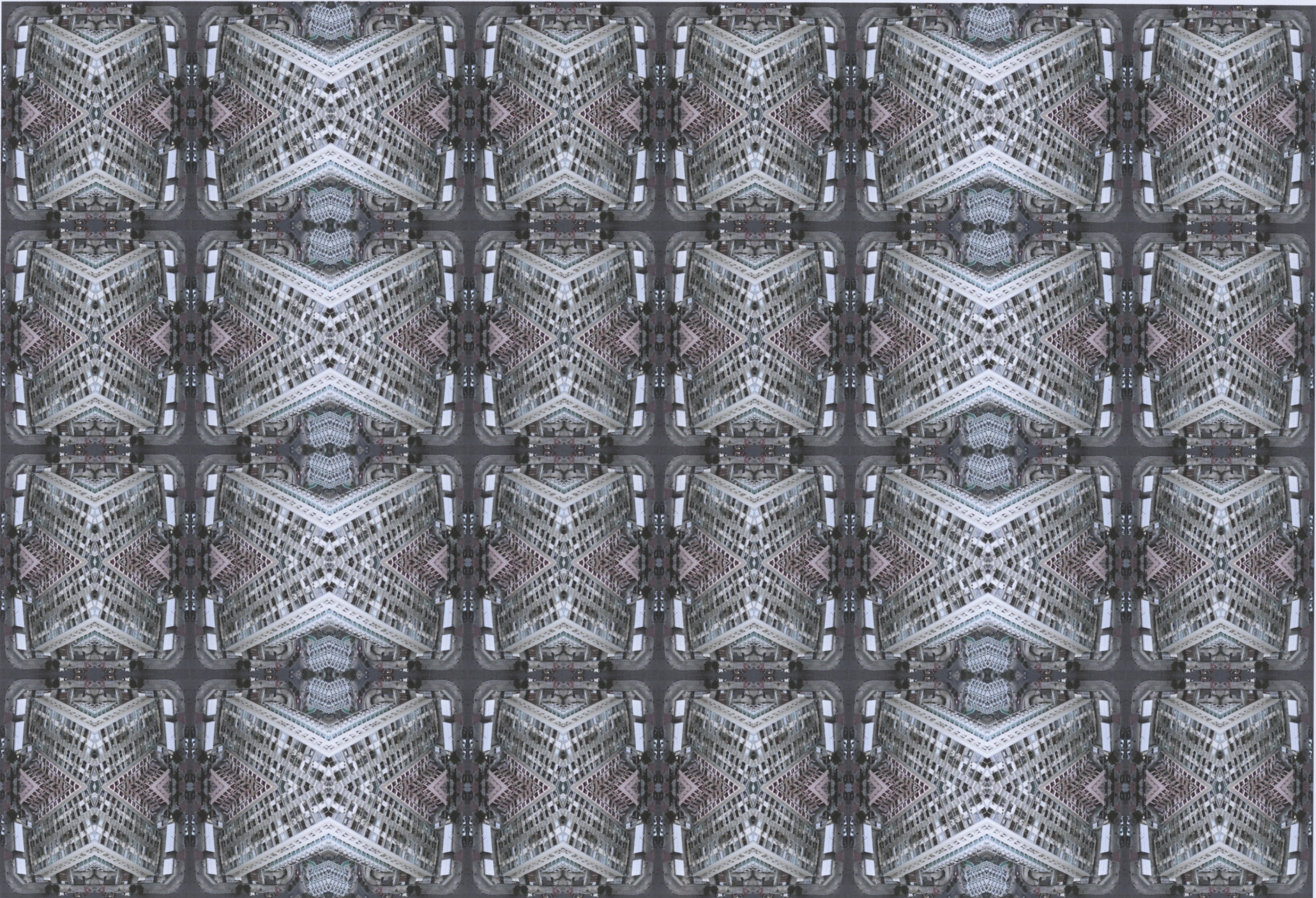


22 February 2003 5:48PM Taipei

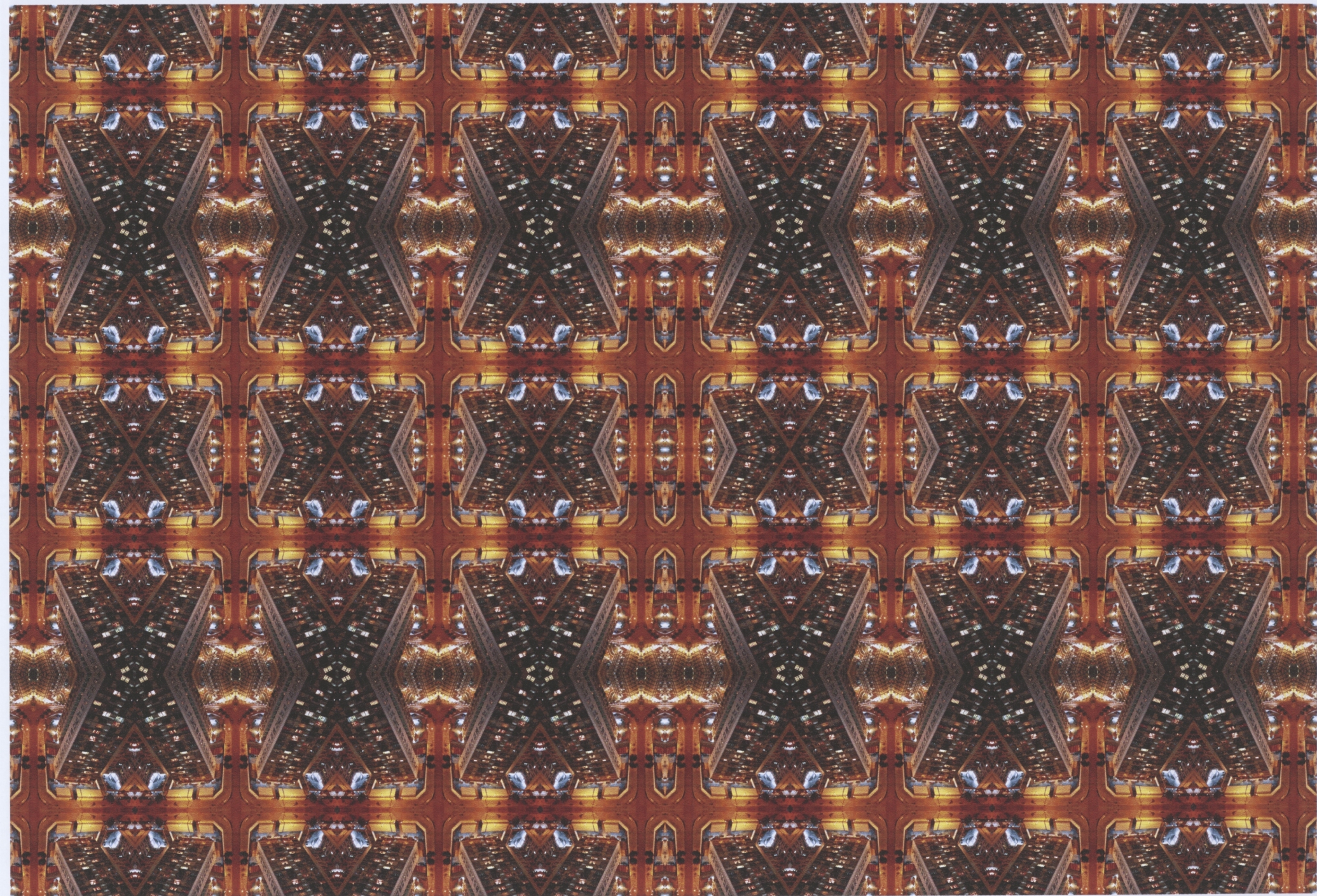
140cm X 125cm



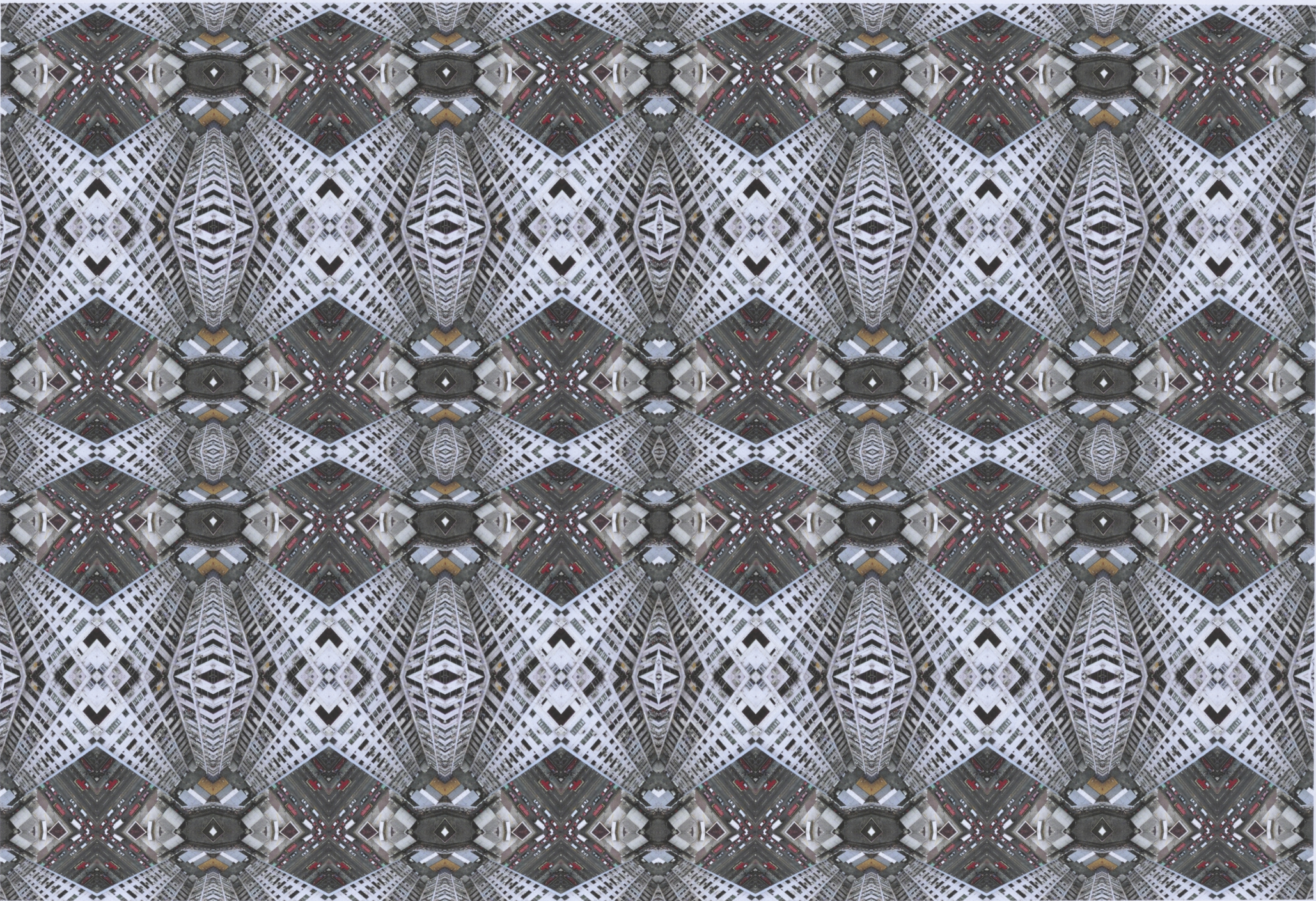
25 February 2003 6:16PM Hong Kong
140cm X 125cm



28 February 2003 11:02AM Hong Kong
140cmX125cm

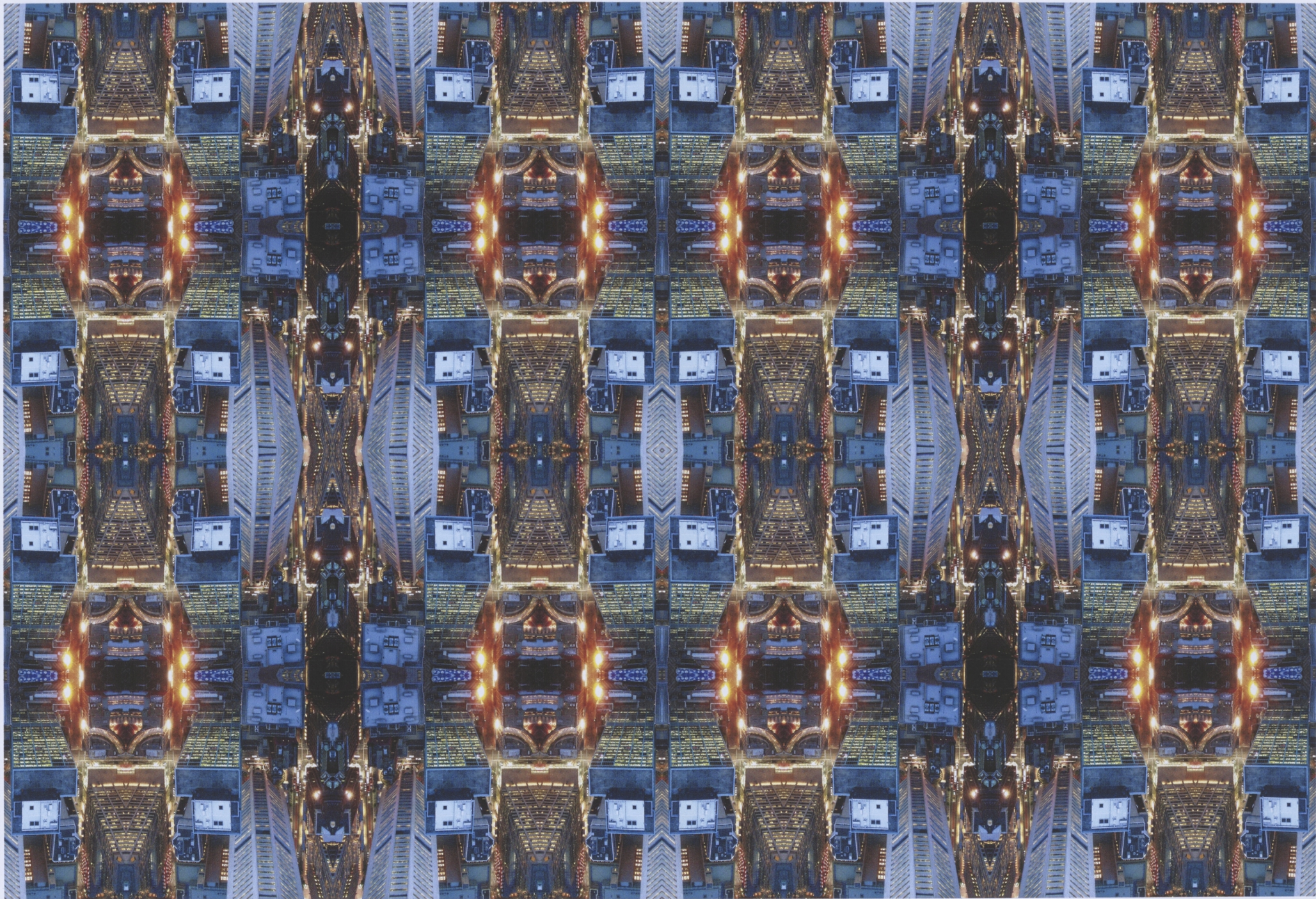


25 February 2003 11:44PM Hong Kong
140cmX125cm

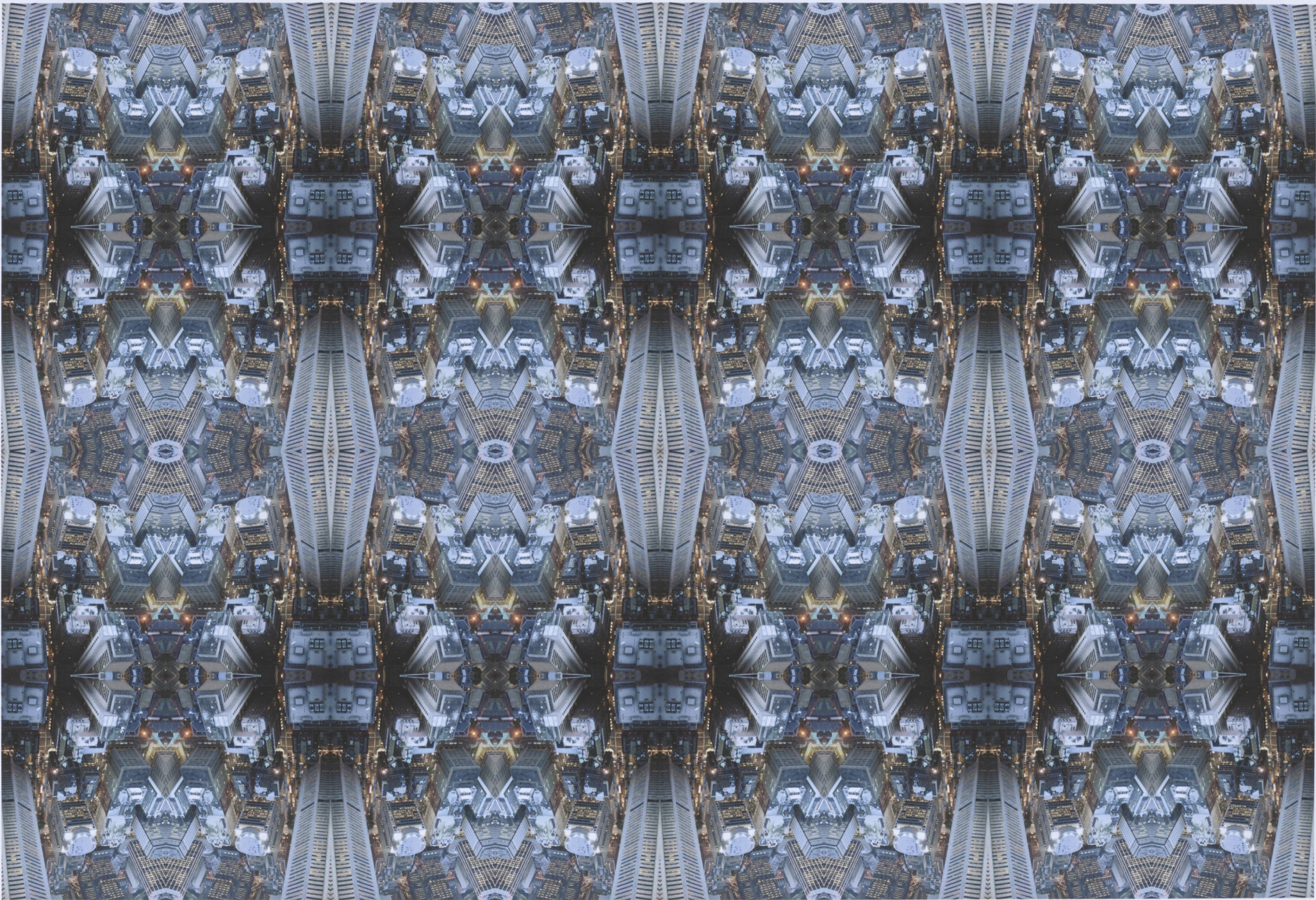


28 February 2003 10:51AM Hong kong

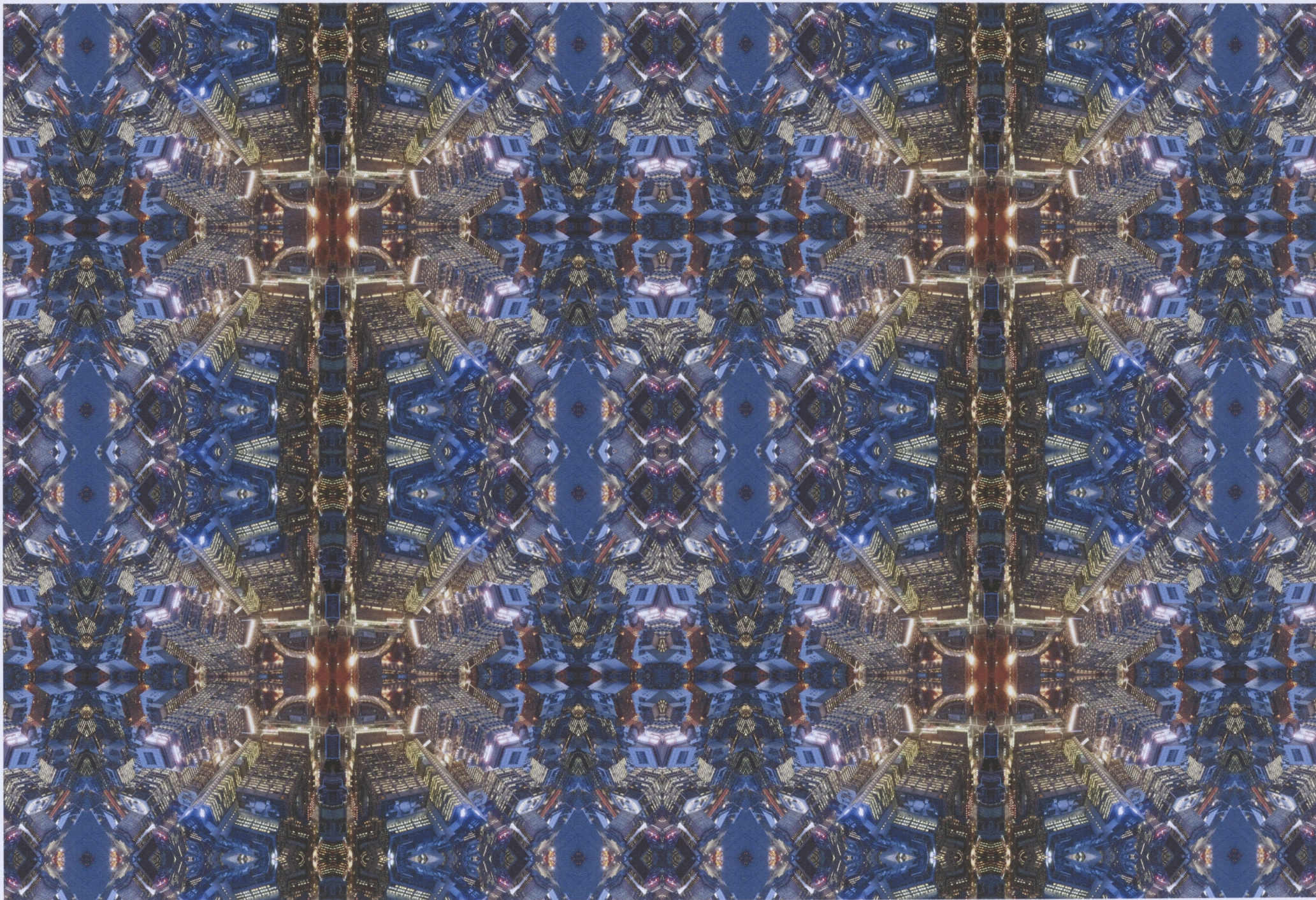
140cmX125cm



12 November 2002 4:49PM Sydney
140cm X 125cm



12 November 2002 4:46PM Sydney
140cm X 125cm

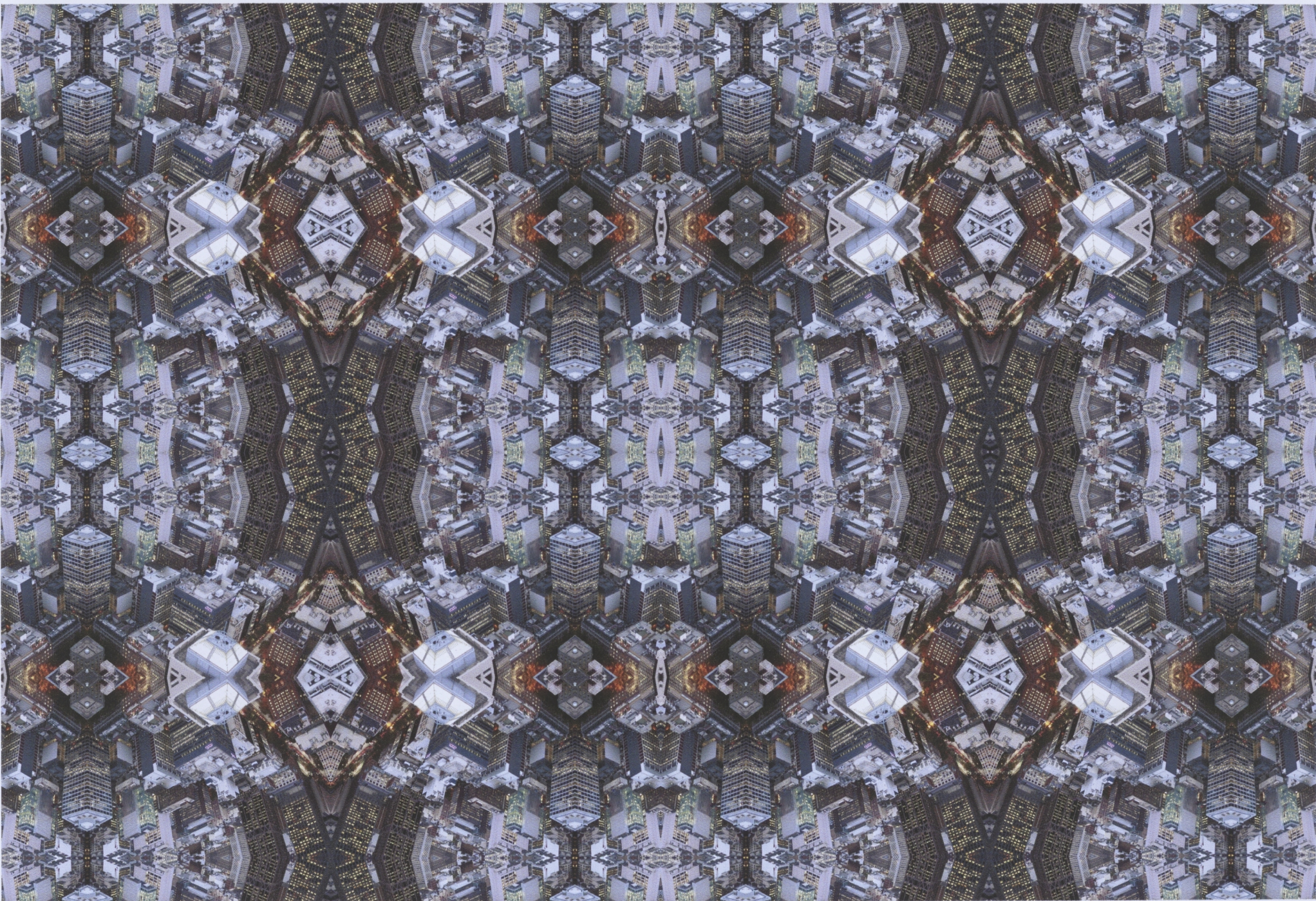


12 November 2002 4:51PM Sydney

140cmX125cm

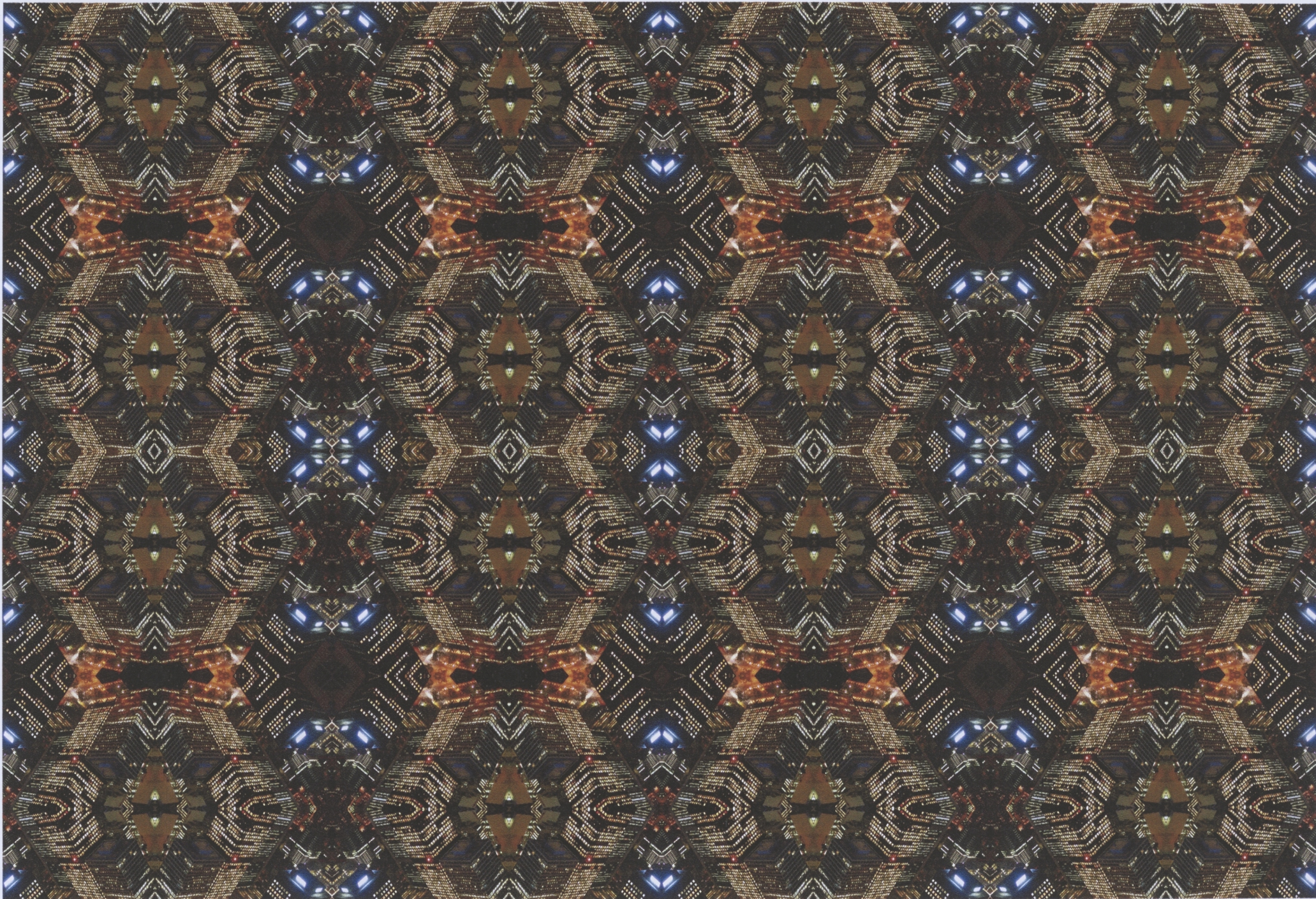


12 November 2002 5:25PM Sydney
140cm X 125cm



8 April 2003 4:11PM Melbourne

140cm X 125cm

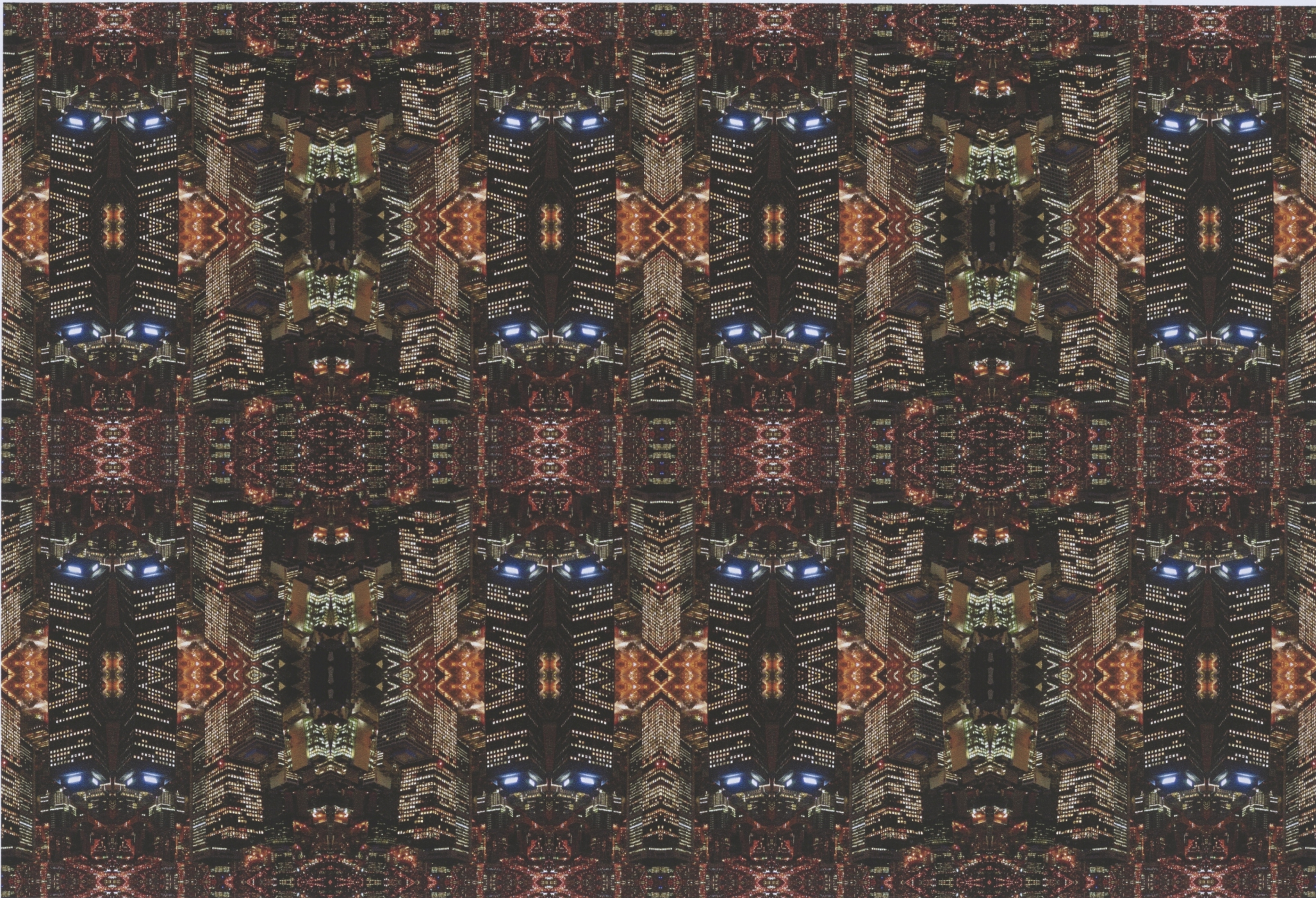


8 April 2003 5:21PM Melbourne
140cm X 125cm



8 April 2003 4:05PM Melbourne

140cm X 125cm



8 April 2003 5:26PM Melbourne
140cm X 125cm