

# Commodity Form

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# Commodity Form

Colin Darke  
*The Capital Paintings*

David Mabb  
*Rhythm 69*

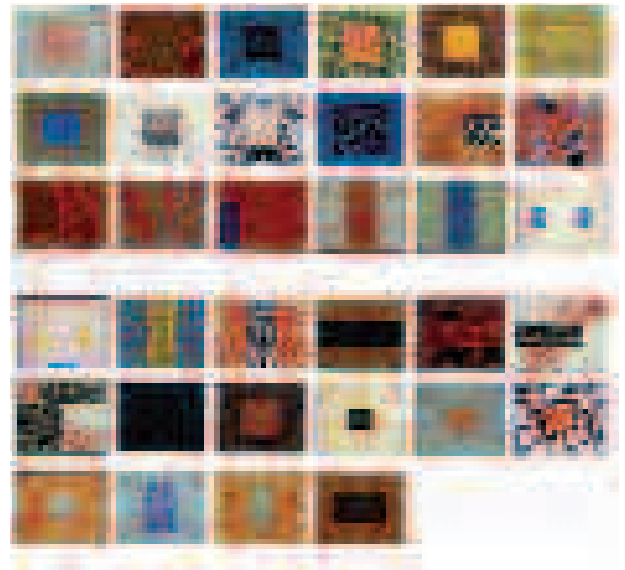
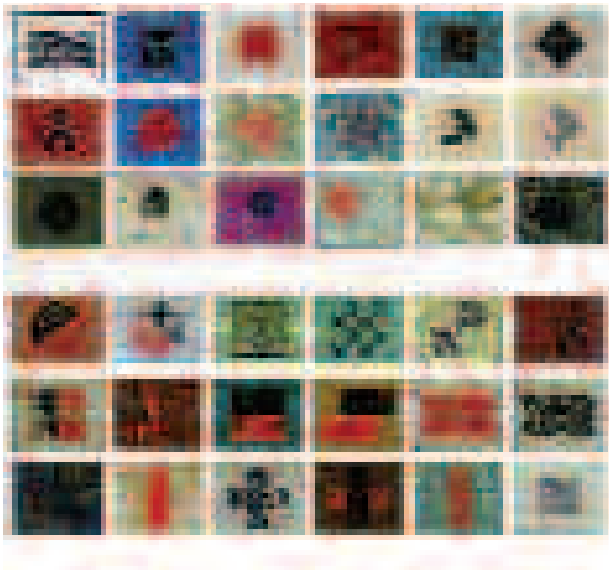
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## *Preface*

Some people will perhaps not be prepared to hear that socialism has any ideal of art, for in the first place it is so obviously founded on the necessity for dealing with the bare economy of life that many, and even some socialists, can see nothing save that economic basis... Nevertheless, ... I assert first that socialism is an all-embracing theory of life, and that as it has an ethic and a religion of its own, so also it has an aesthetic: so that to everyone who wishes to study socialism duly it is necessary to look on it from the aesthetic point of view<sup>1</sup>.

The Golden Thread Gallery has a long-standing commitment to presenting socially and politically engaged art. *Commodity Form* brings together, for the first time, the work of Colin Darke and David Mabb. The project is centred on their shared commitment to socialism and their use of painting as a dialectical process to explore visual language.

Darke's *The Capital Paintings* continues his earlier text-based project in which he transcribed *Marx's Das Kapital*. Having worked with Darke on numerous projects I have gained an insight into his preoccupation with the commodification of art. Here he makes paintings that appropriate the flotsam and jetsam of contemporary culture that previously provided the ground for his handwritten paragraphs of Marx's text.

Mabb's practise has developed into a substantial exploration of the nature of aesthetics and their historical contexts, influenced by the political writings, poetry and designs of William Morris. *Rhythm 69* is a series of paintings appropriating Hans Richter's reworking of Kazimir Malevich images and William Morris wallpaper samples.

This exhibition brings together two important bodies of work, in which painting is employed to simultaneously develop a critique of a 'socialist aesthetic' and the growing commodification of contemporary culture.

Peter Richards, Curator and Gallery Director.

<sup>1</sup> William Morris, *The Socialist Ideal: Art*, *New Review*, January 1891. Quoted in Will Bradley and Charles Esche, *Art and Social Change: A Critical Reader*, Tate, London 2007.





## *Commodity Form* - Introduction

David Mabb and Colin Darke have known each other since 1977, first meeting as students at Goldsmiths College in London. Over the subsequent thirty years, the two artists have maintained a friendship, along with a shared commitment to socialism, which has allowed for an objective critique of each other's art.

While their work has physically been very different (*Commodity Form* probably represents the point where the lines on the graph have come nearest), their approaches to art making have been closely comparable. The clearest correspondence is in their appropriation of existing forms, which they juxtapose/clash/merge in order to explore the historical and social significance of cultural production. The dialectic is central to the practice of both artists. Despite this, they have never, until now, exhibited together. Both Mabb and Darke are looking forward to the repercussions of this exchange.

The show constitutes two pieces of work, both of which consist of large series of paintings. Mabb is showing *Rhythm 69*, made up of sixty-nine Hans Richter/Kazimir Malevich images painted onto William Morris wallpaper. Darke's work, *The Capital Paintings*, is a 480-panel oil-on-canvas series, relating to a previous text-based work, *Capital*.

## David Mabb on Colin Darke's Capital Paintings

“The wealth of those societies in which the capitalist mode of production prevails, presents itself as 'an immense accumulation of commodities', its unit being a single commodity. Our investigation must therefore begin with the analysis of the commodity.” Thus begins Chapter 1 of Karl Marx's *Das Kapital*. It would be tempting to go on to quote Marx's explanation of the nature of the commodity, except that this is exactly what has been left out in the making of *The Capital Paintings*. They are based on an earlier work *Capital* (2000-2003), which Darke made by copying by hand the three volumes of Marx's *Das Kapital* in English translation onto 480 two-dimensional commodities, which were then individually laminated between A4 sheets of transparent plastic. To produce *The Capital Paintings* (2004-2007) Darke painted by hand in oil paint representations of the objects from the work *Capital*, each object to its own canvas, omitting the hand-written text copied from Marx.

### *Capital*

All the commodities used in *Capital* are fairly flat, as a criterion for selection was that they could be written on and laminated. Perhaps because of this, a disproportionate number seem to be forms of advertising, such as flyers that are pushed through letterboxes or packaging for other commodities, long since discarded. However, the commodities also range from sanitary towels to a plectrum - a seemingly random assortment of detritus of everyday capitalist production.<sup>1</sup> When Darke writes Marx's text in his tiny handwriting over these objects in *Capital*, it becomes extremely difficult if not impossible to read. So although *Das Kapital* is literally all over the objects, like a fine layer of silt clinging to flotsam discarded by receding floodwater, it is a text that is left largely unread even whilst its presence is visible - perhaps like the legacy of *Das Kapital* itself. For, of course, although *Das Kapital* has been hugely influential in revealing capitalist society as a historically transitory mode of economic production whose internal contradictions will, with a bit of help, lead to its eventual downfall, we are perhaps more aware of its legacy than we are of the actual work.

<sup>1</sup> To give an idea of the variety of objects used in *Capital* these are the first 20 from Volume 2: NTL flyer - “Your TV can take you here”; ID card laminated pocket; Business Alliance for Commerce in Hemp flyer; car park ticket; coal; contaminated water warning; book - My First Irish Legend Book - Etain and Midir; price label; plastic ruler; Ariel Liqui-Tabs flyer; bedroom door sign; videocassette name label; postcard - Hilfiger Denim; part of Easter egg box; Irish souvenir poster; label from Sainsbury's French lager bottle; explosion-shaped shop sign; Sweet Factory bag; Rice Bowl restaurant menu; Superdrug shine control paper.

### *Commodity Form*

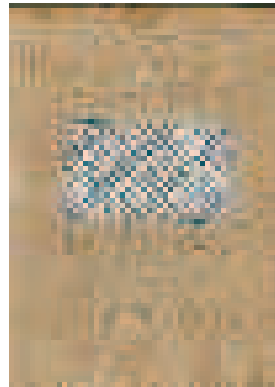
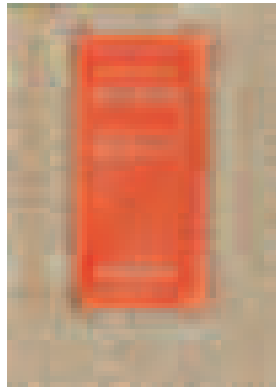
The mass-produced objects used in *Capital* are defined as commodities, in that they were all produced through the application of labour. A commodity does not merely have use value i.e. serve human need; commodities are made not directly to be consumed but to be sold on the market to make a profit. In Darke's *Capital*, all the objects' use value had been transformed into exchange value or commodity form; they have all been bought and sold at some point between their production and the moment Darke obtained them. When these objects are appropriated, recontextualised and transformed in *Capital* they lose their original commodity form. *Capital* acquires its own use value - art also has a use value, in that people want to look at it. It also acquires exchange value as it becomes available for sale as a commodity; and has in fact been sold to a private collector.

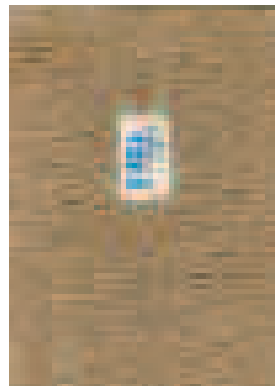
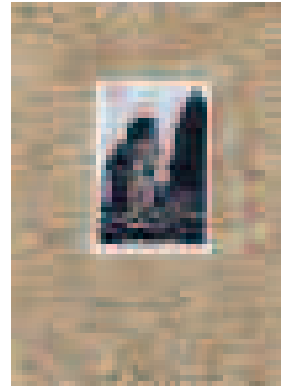
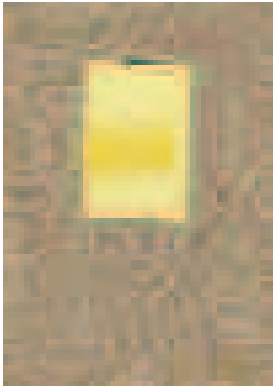
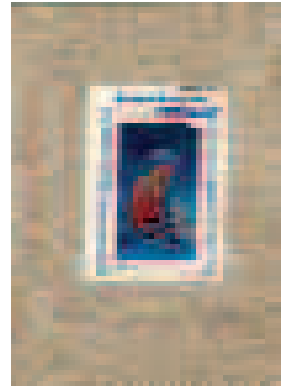
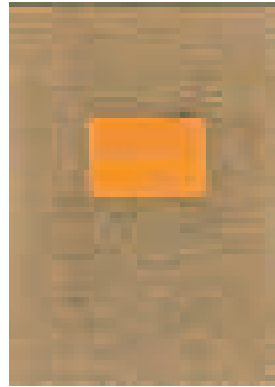
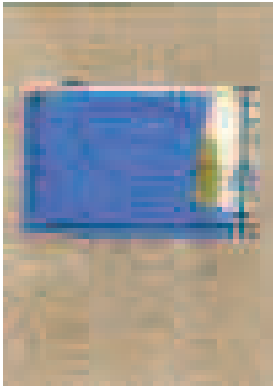
### *The Capital Paintings*

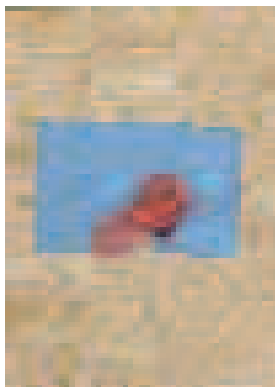
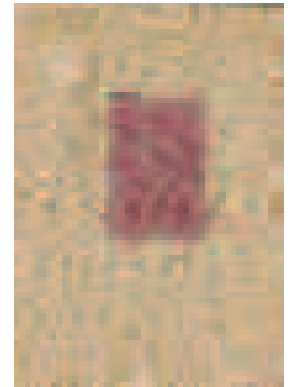
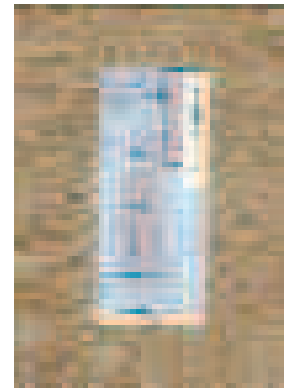
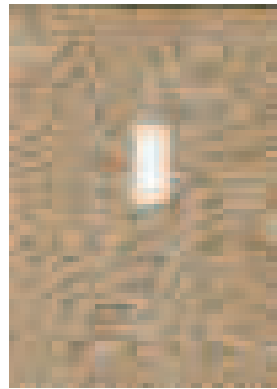
Rebecca Gordon Nesbitt has suggested that the laminating in *Capital* alienates the artist from his product and thereby "references one of the central tenets of Marx's theory, that of the eternal separation of manual workers from the end products they create."<sup>2</sup> But what happens when the objects are individually represented in oil paint on traditional canvases, without Marx's text and without the laminate in *The Capital Paintings*? The turn to painting inserts the work within a different tradition, transforming it into another form of commodity, that of the reified "high art" object of art history; it also produces its pastiche, as the mass produced commodities are represented in a manner reminiscent of hand-painted pop art from the 1960s.

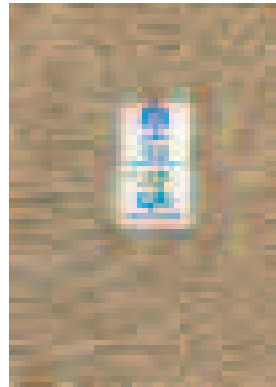
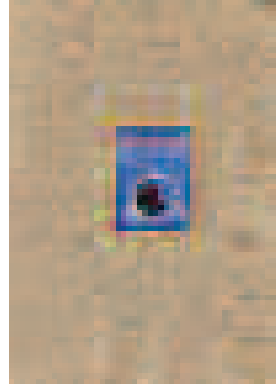
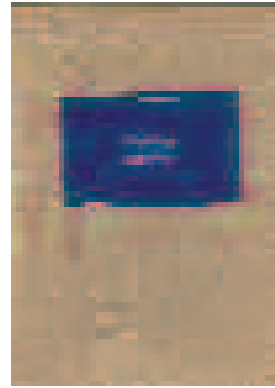
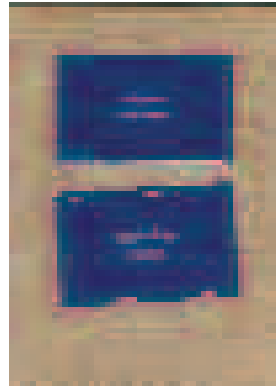
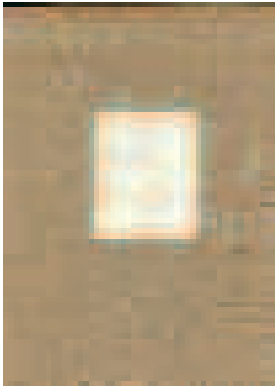
Using digital scans, each painting is a painstaking, although often simplified, naturalistic copy of an object from *Capital*. This might be seen either as a 'labour of love' or as the increasing alienation of the artist from his production through the repetitive boredom of the task. If it is understood as a 'labour of love', a work that requires considerable skill, and Darke is seen as the individual author/producer who is responsible for its conception and realisation and who stands to benefit from its use and exchange as a commodity, perhaps the work can be read as advocating small craft production over the mass produced objects it represents. However, if Darke, and we as viewers, become bored and alienated from the work because of the sheer number of paintings, the repetition of its processes and its value as a commodity, then the work becomes an exemplar of workers' alienation from their labour and the objects they create. Darke's *Capital Paintings* appear to wobble precariously between both readings.

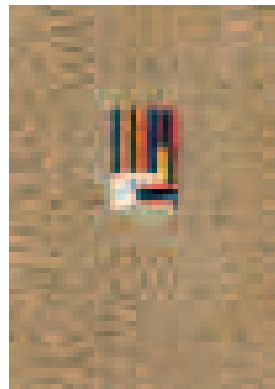
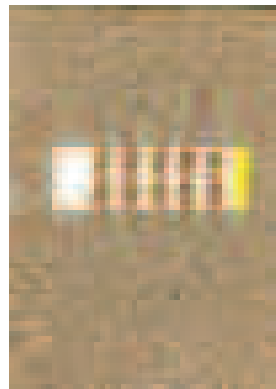
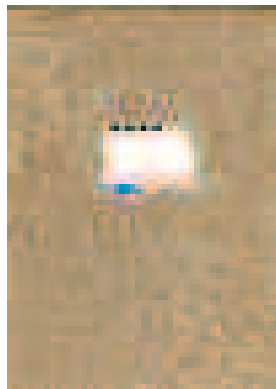
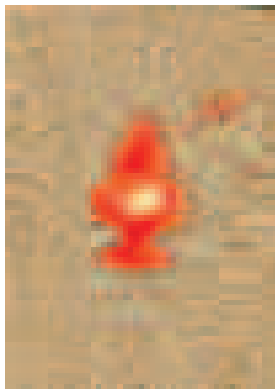
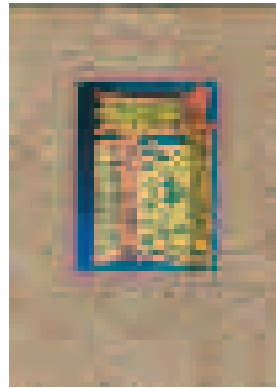
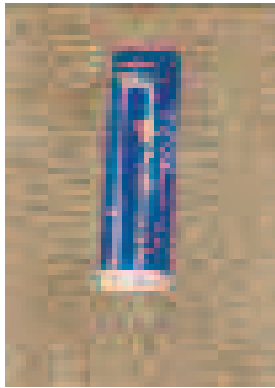
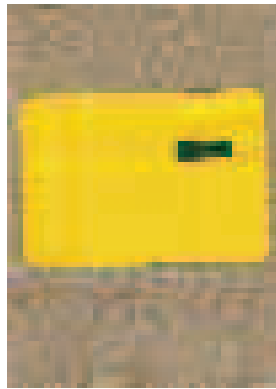
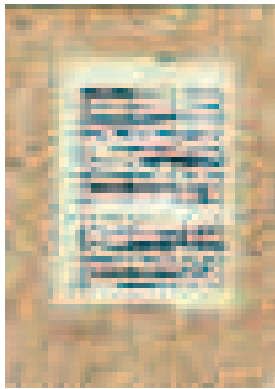
<sup>2</sup>Rebecca Gordon Nesbitt, *On Colin Darke*, Contexts Magazine, 2005.



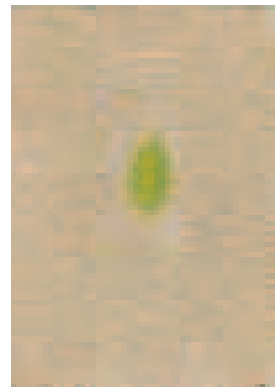
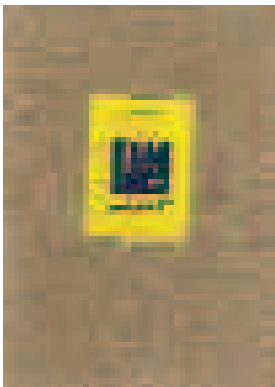
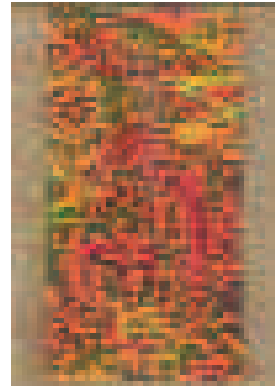
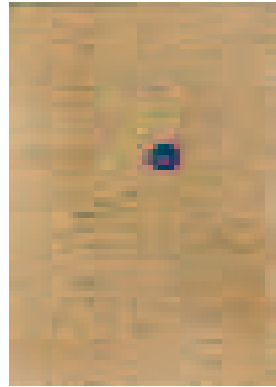
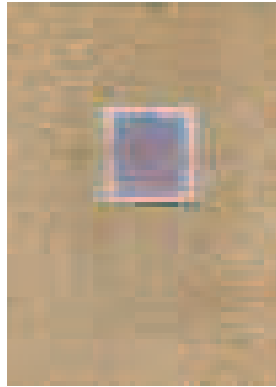
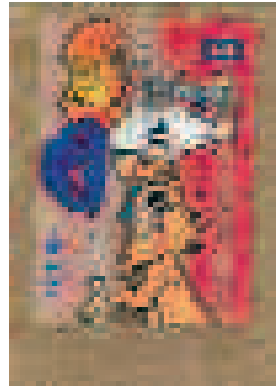
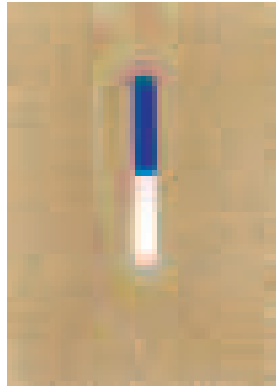


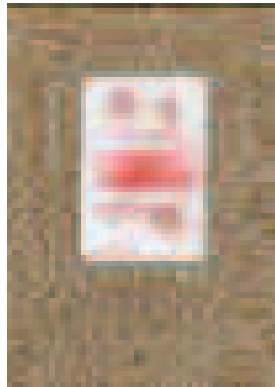
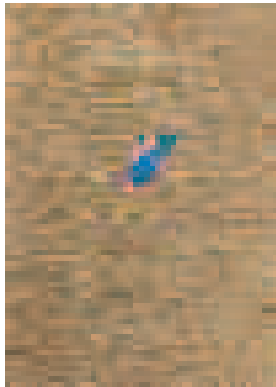
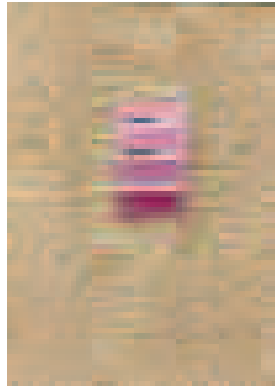
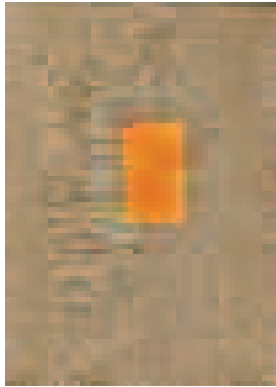


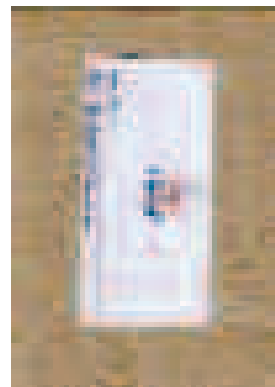
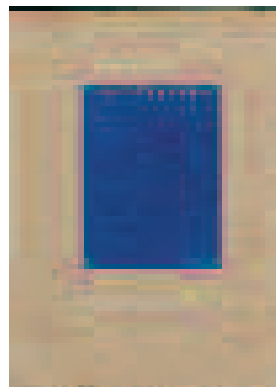
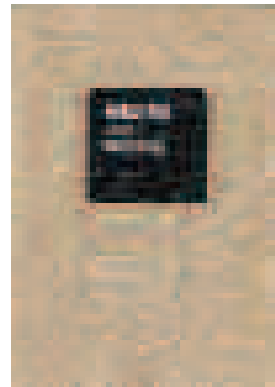
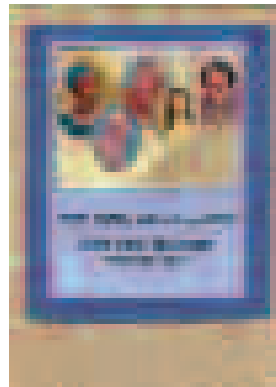
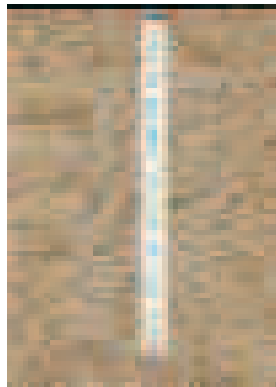
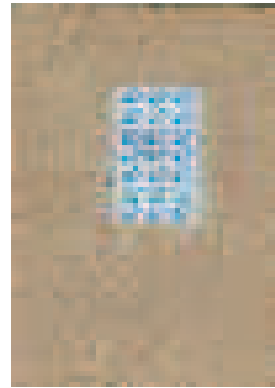


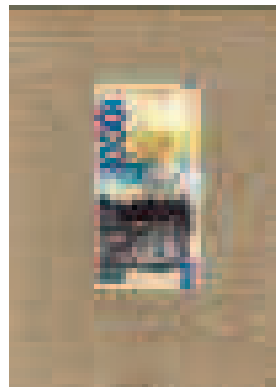
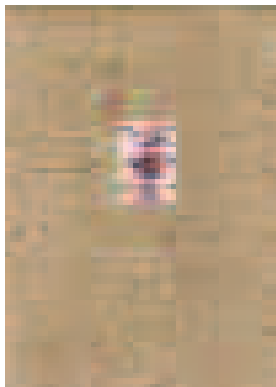
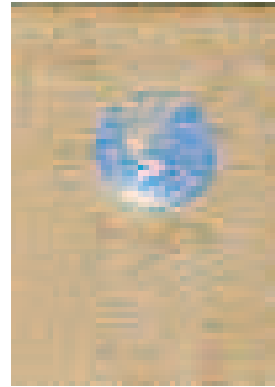
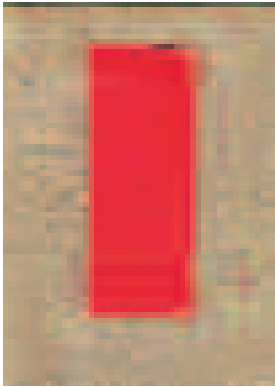
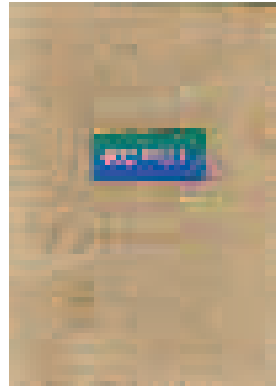
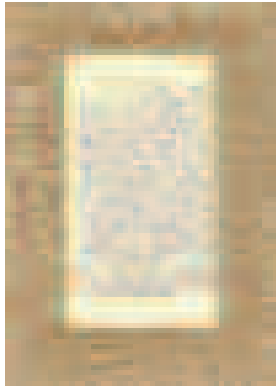


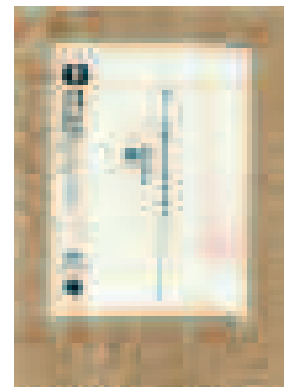
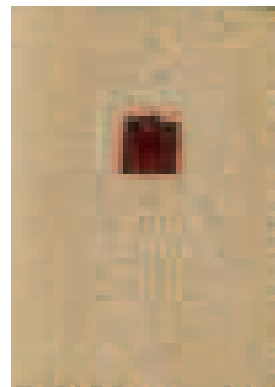
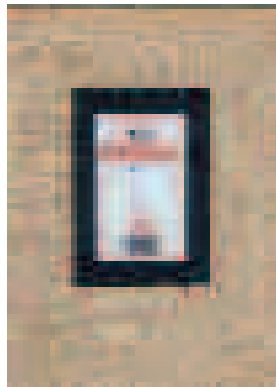
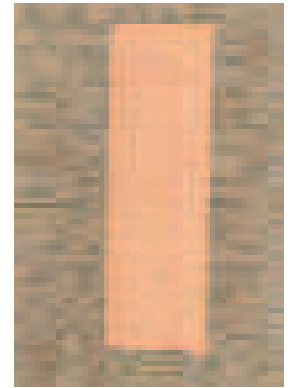
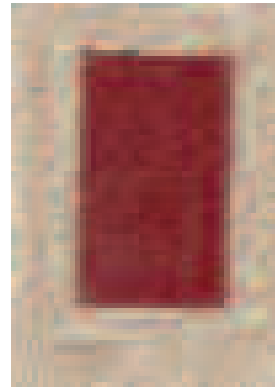
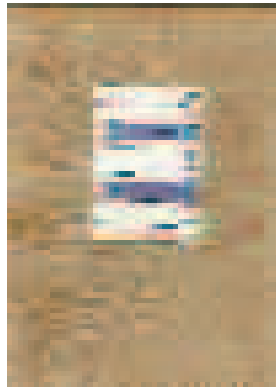
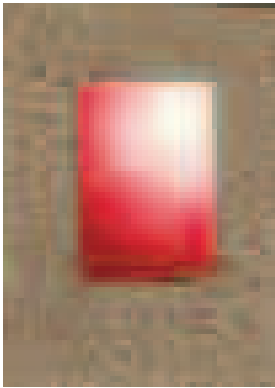


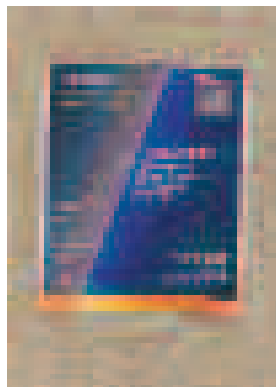
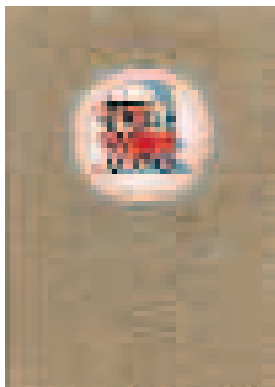
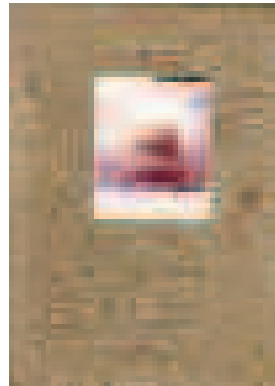


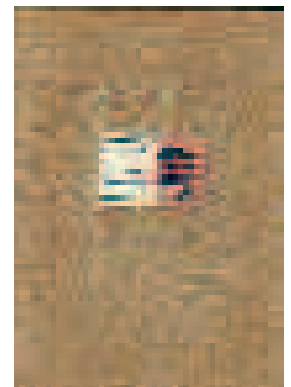
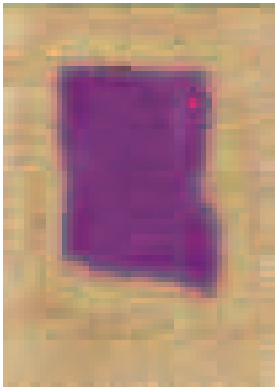
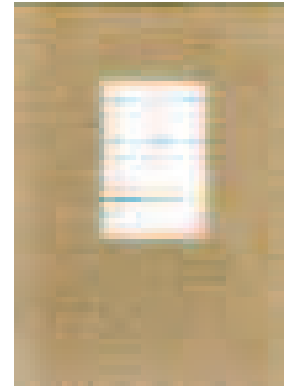
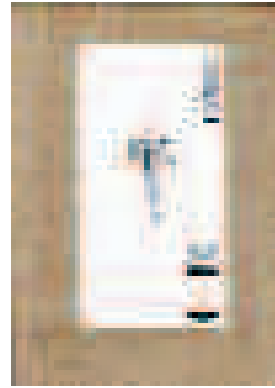
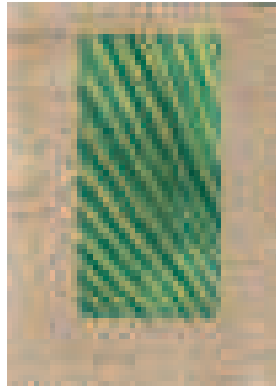


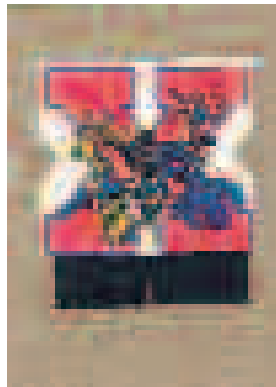
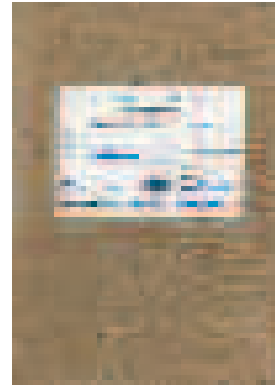
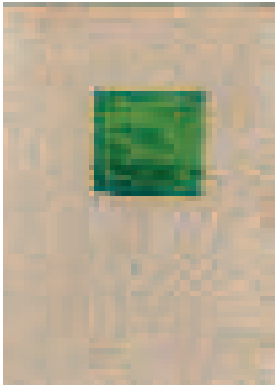
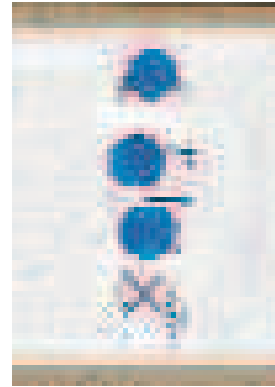
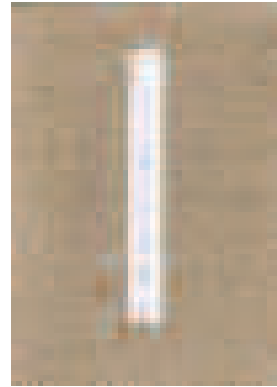
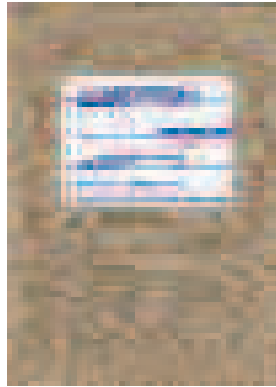
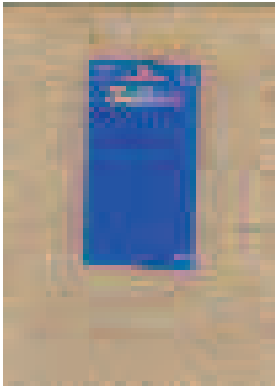




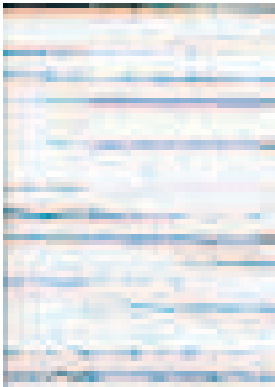
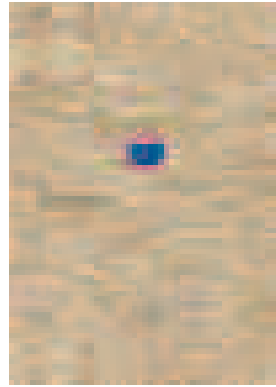
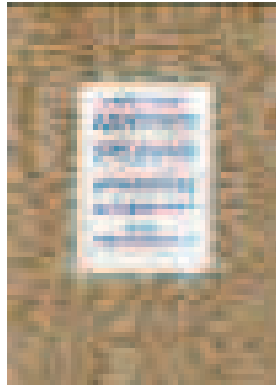
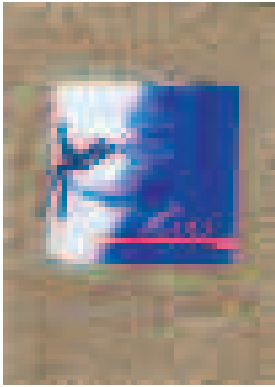
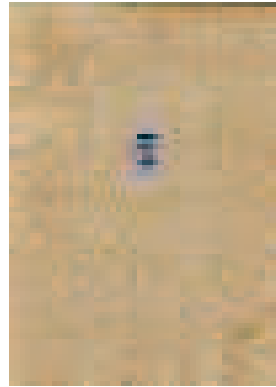


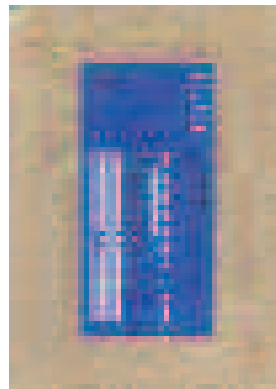
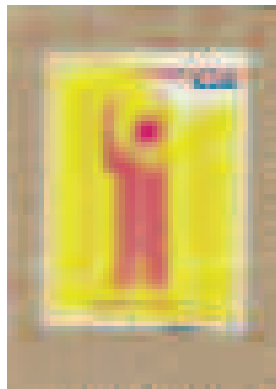
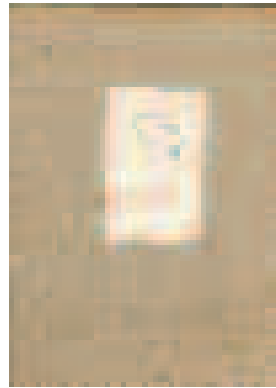
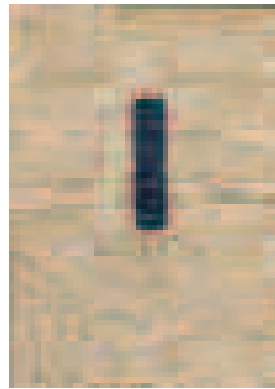
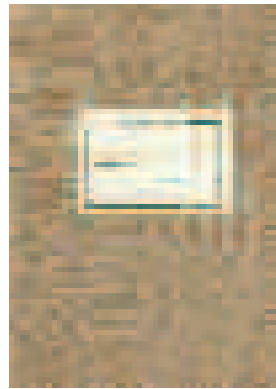
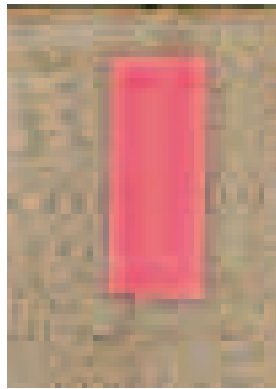
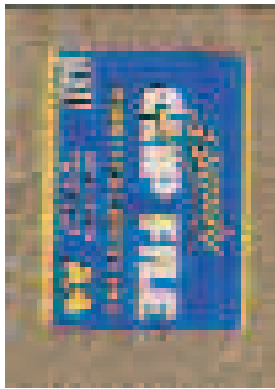


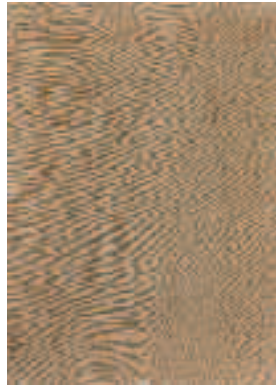
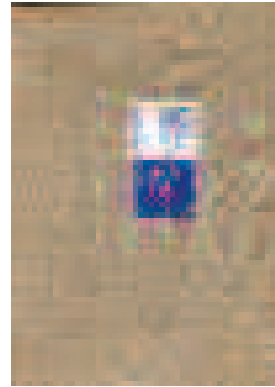
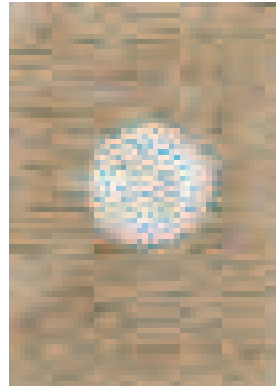
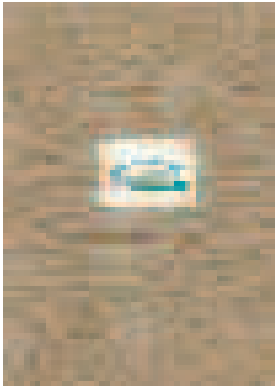


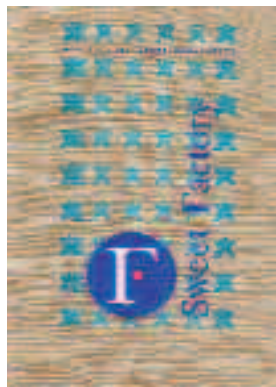
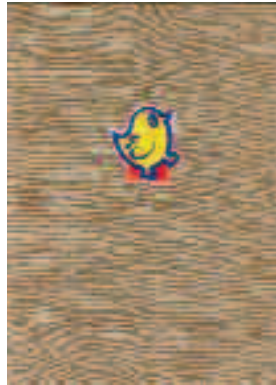
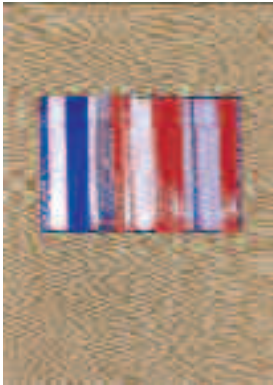
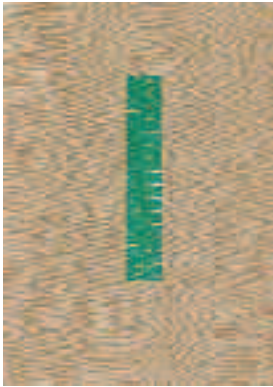


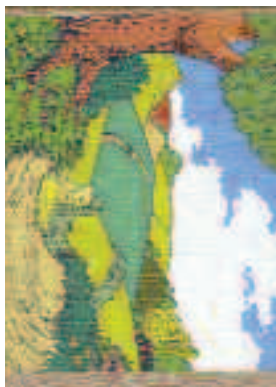


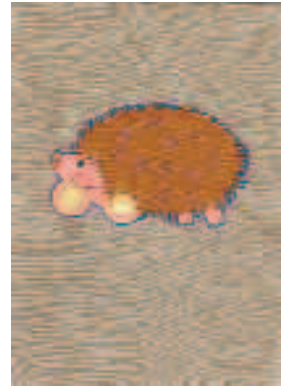
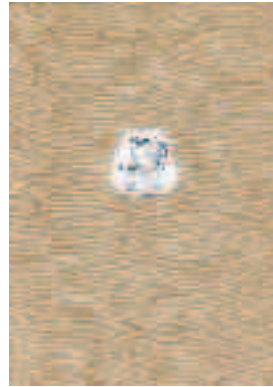


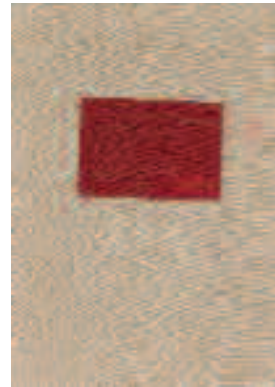
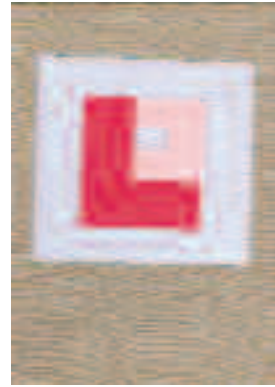
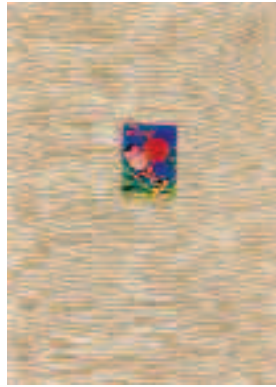
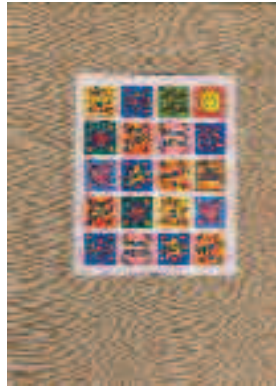
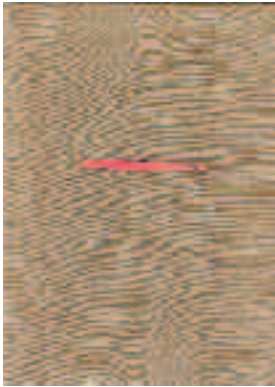


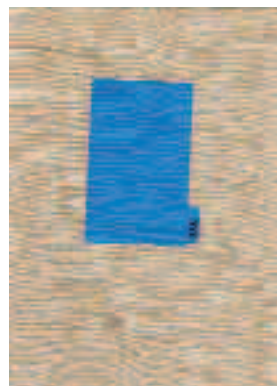
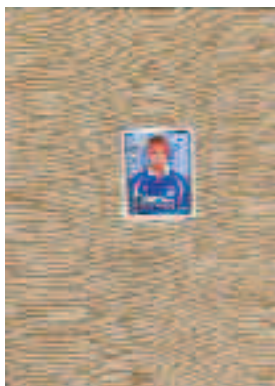
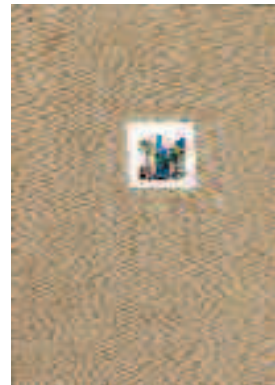




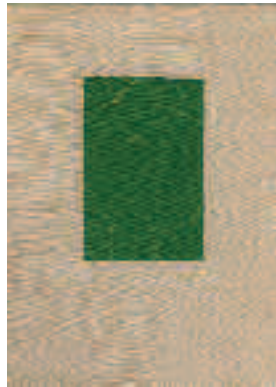
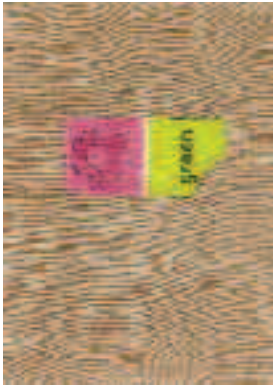
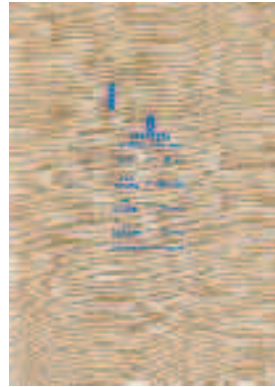
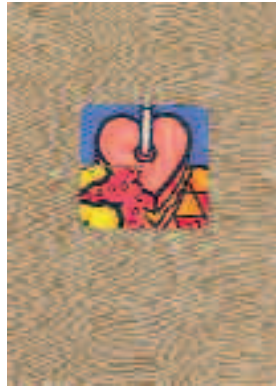


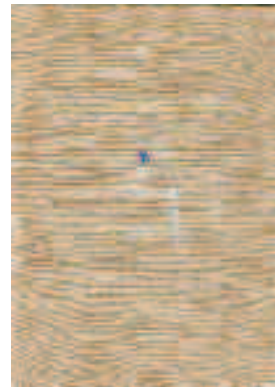
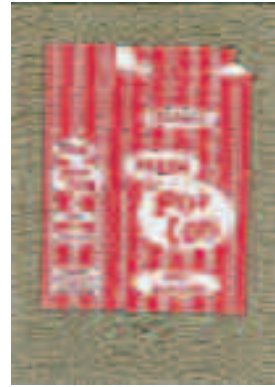
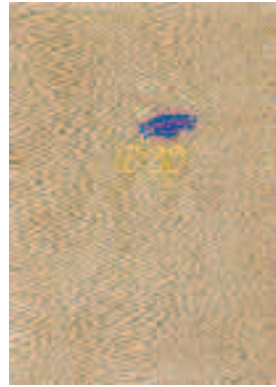
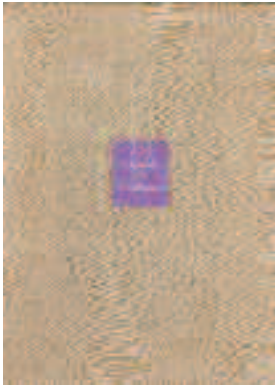
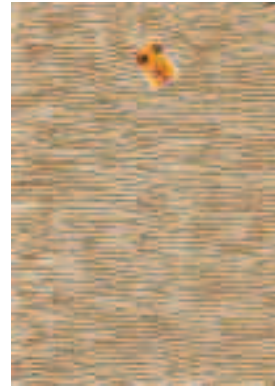


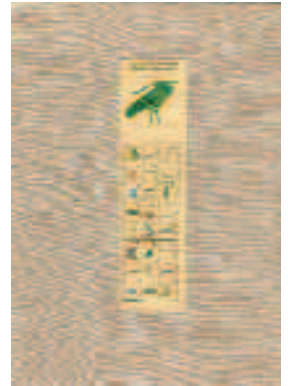
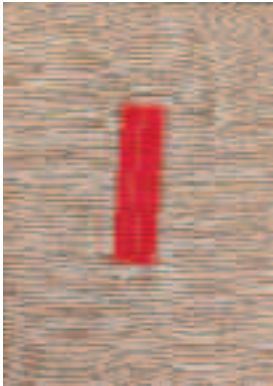
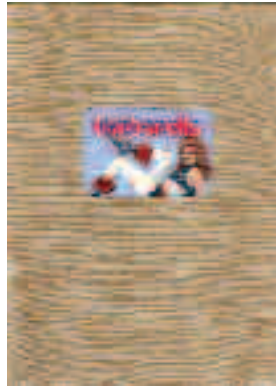


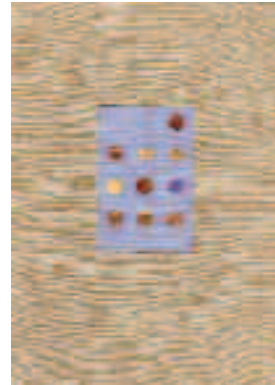
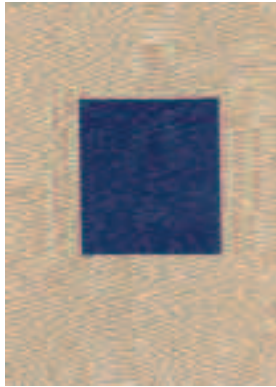


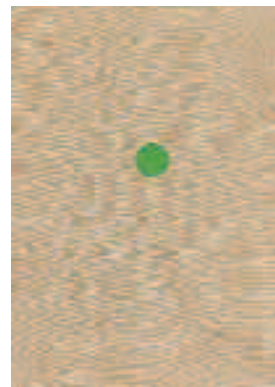
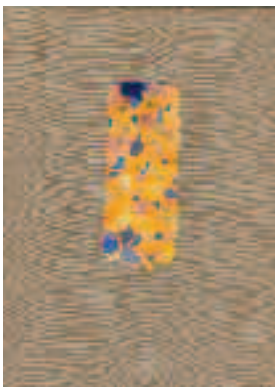
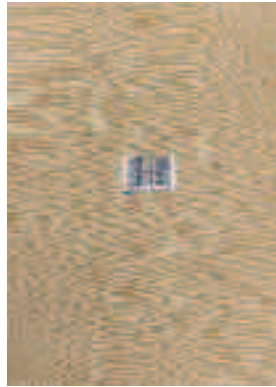
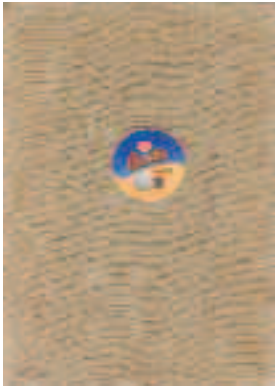


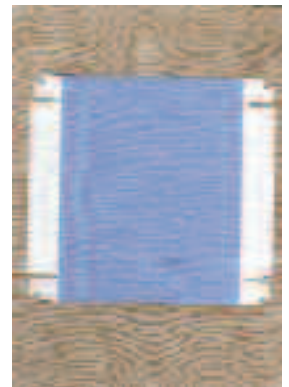


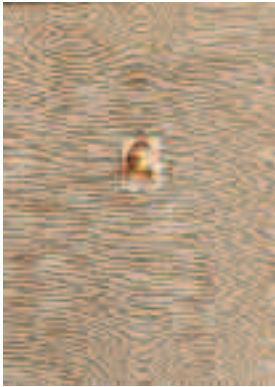


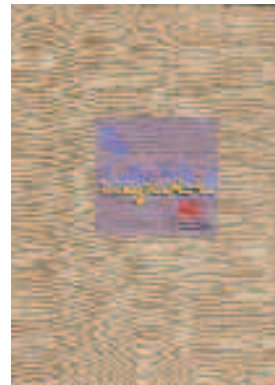
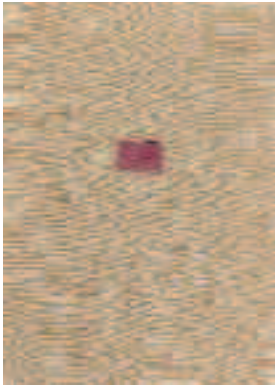




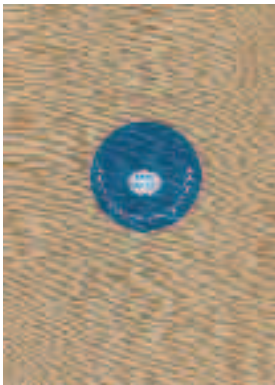
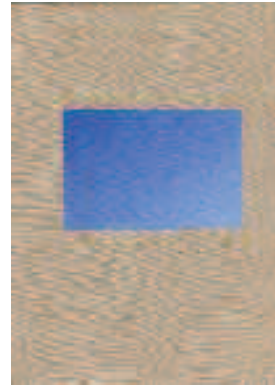


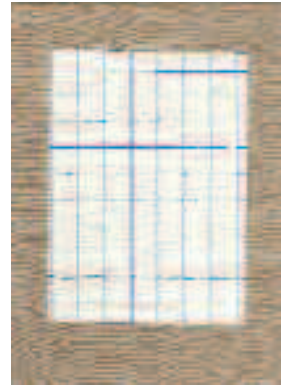
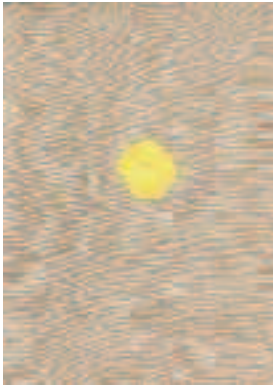
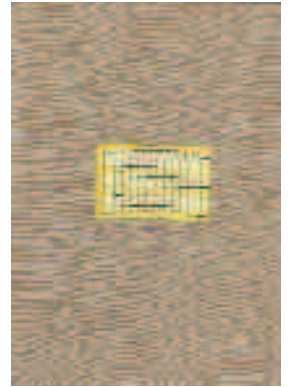


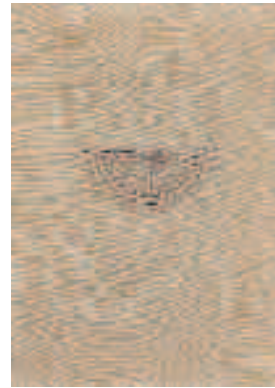
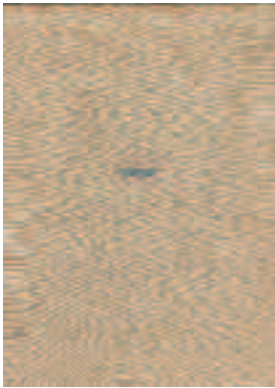
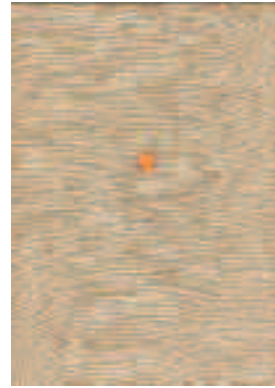
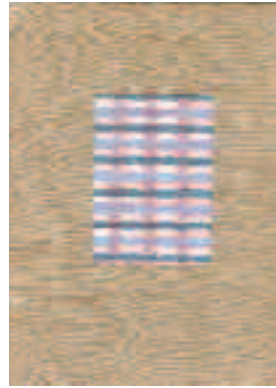
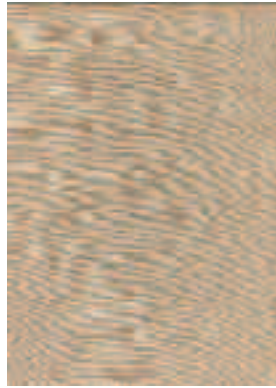


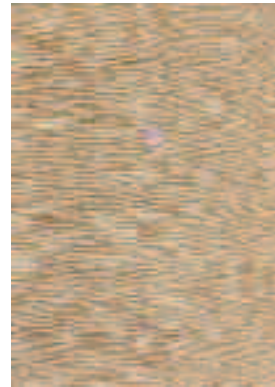
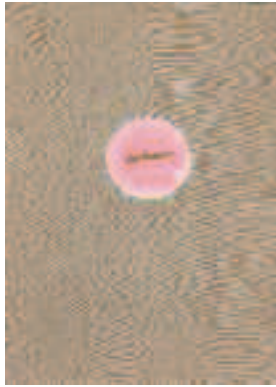
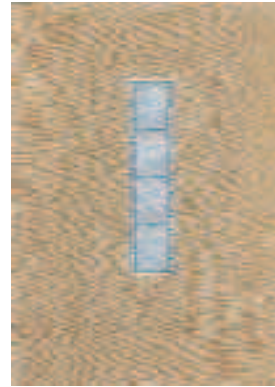
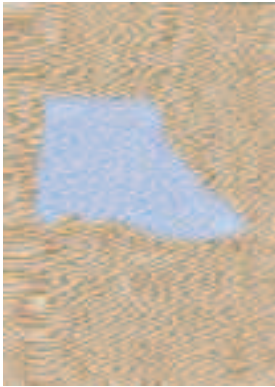


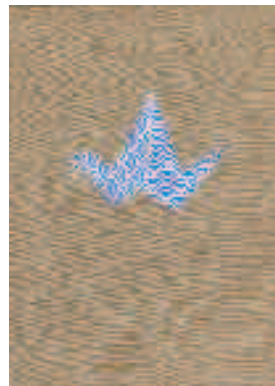
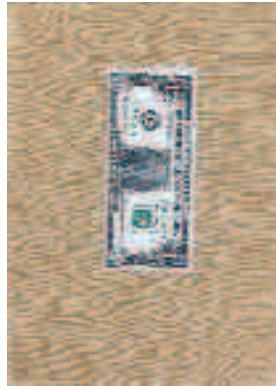
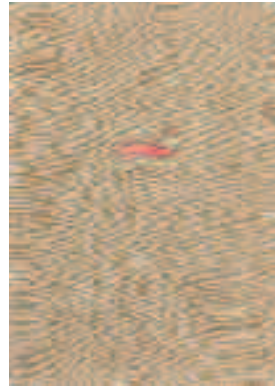
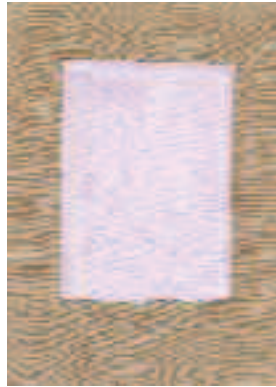


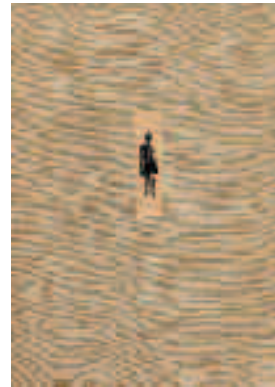
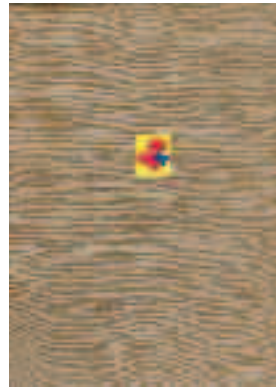
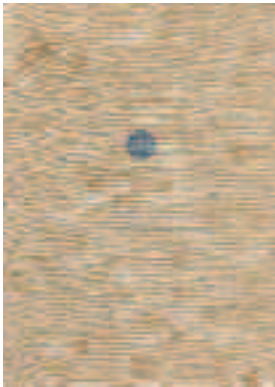
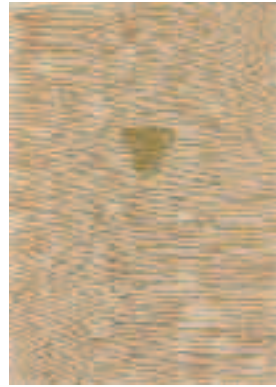
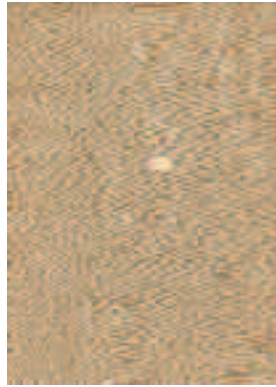
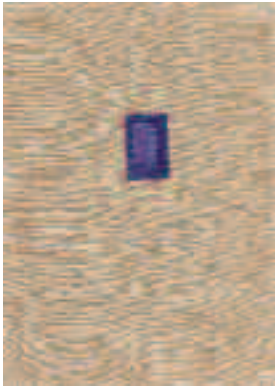


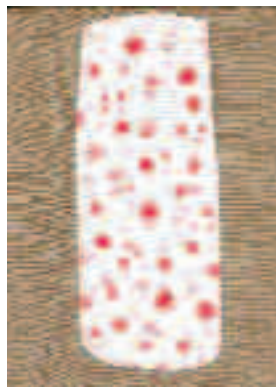
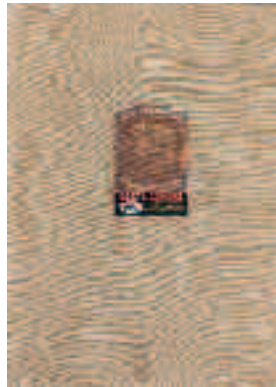
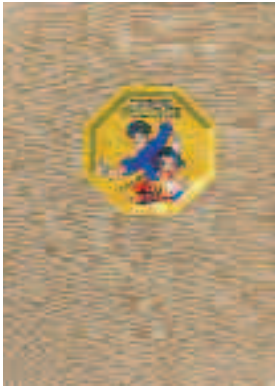


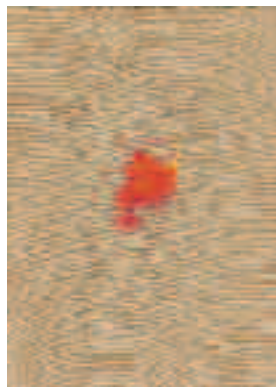
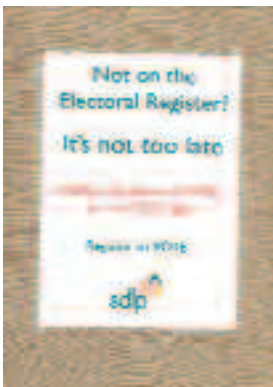
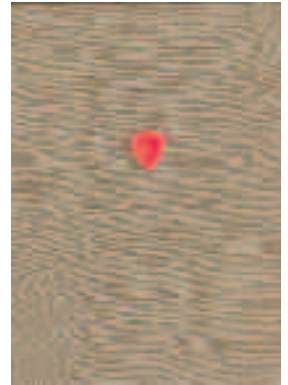
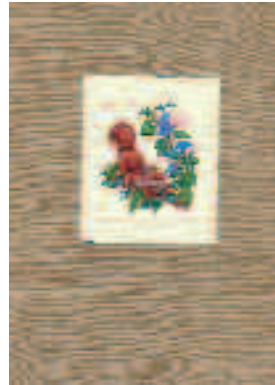




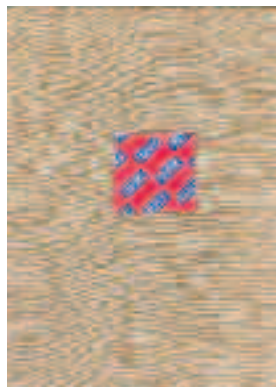
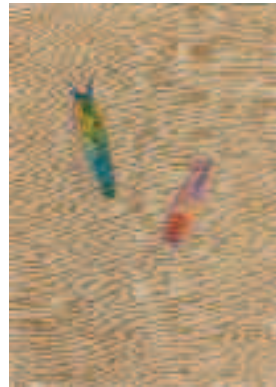
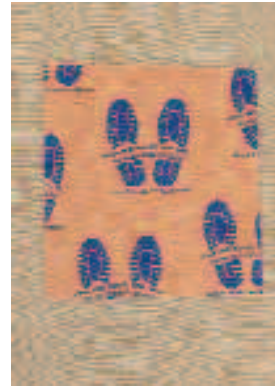


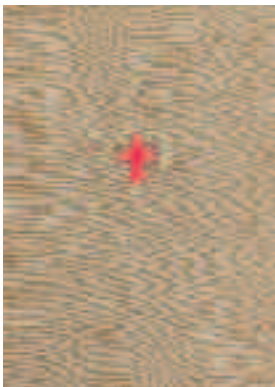
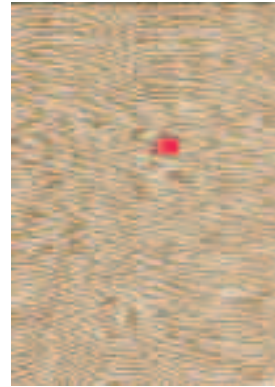
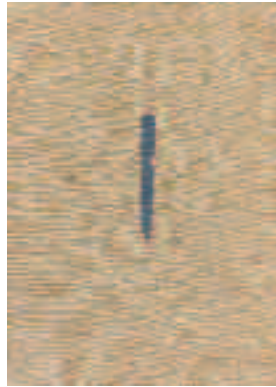
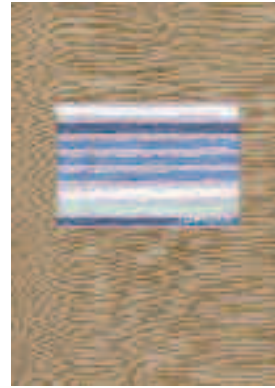
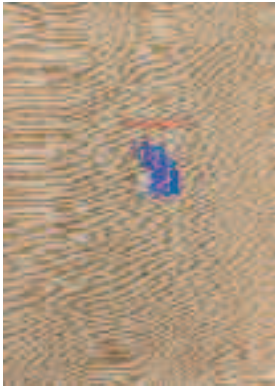


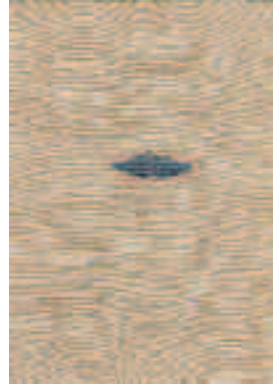
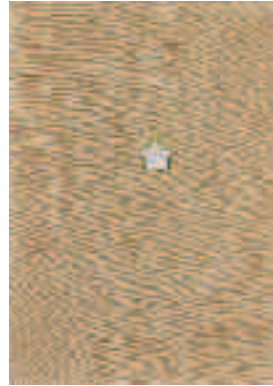












## Colin Darke on David Mabb's *Rhythm 69*

Since the early eighties, David Mabb has constructed his paintings through the juxtaposition, overlaying and mutual obscuring of complementary and contradictory elements. From his David Salle-like assemblages, with overtly political content, through his reworkings of Robert Delaunay's Eiffel Tower paintings with their subject replaced with Tatlin's *Elegy to the Third International*, to his defiling of William Morris designs, he has used painting as a dialectical process, exploring the historical significance of visual language.

Mabb's work with Morris designs has been dominated by his use of Russian suprematist/constructivist imagery. He has used many of Kazimir Malevich's works - both cubo-futurist and suprematist - and fabric designs by Liubov Popova and Varvara Stepanova. *Rhythm 69* appropriates sixty-nine images, made in 1970, which come from the storyboard of an unmade film by Hans Richter. This script was itself based on a film proposal for Richter by Malevich in 1927, after seeing the former's *Rhythm 21* (1921) and *Rhythm 23* (1923).

In Malevich, there are some sentiments with which Morris would surely have had some sympathy:

*"The masters of [antiquity and the Renaissance] depicted man in his complete form, both outward and inward. Man was assembled, and his inward state was expressed. But despite their enormous skill, they did not, however, perfect the savage's idea: The reflection of nature on canvas, as in a mirror."*<sup>1</sup>

And others which may have filled him with horror:

*"Idealism and the demands of the aesthetic sense are the instruments of torture. The idealisation of the human form is the mortification of the many lines of living muscle. Aestheticism is the garbage of intuitive feeling."*<sup>2</sup>

Despite his support for the revolution, Malevich was, at heart, a spiritualist, making paintings for individual contemplation, like the Russian icons to which they refer. *Black Square* (1913), when first exhibited, was hung across a corner of the gallery space, just as religious paintings are traditionally placed in Russian homes. In *Black Square, Red Square* (1915), the two forms replace Mary and the infant Christ she holds (secularly reidentified in the painting's original title *Painterly Realism. Boy with Knapsack - Colour Masses in the Fourth Dimension*). His work is timeless, eschewing any real notion of history, equating his practice with that of the "savage".

<sup>1</sup> Kazimir Malevich, *From Cubism and Futurism to Suprematism: The New Painterly Realism*. 1915. Quoted in John E Bowlt, *Russian Art of the Avant Garde*. London, 1988

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

El Lissitzky, on the other hand, when appropriating in 1922 the black and red square for his interactive children's book *Suprematist Story of Two Squares in Six Constructions*, gives the characters new materialist<sup>3</sup> identities, transforming them into signs for Menshevism and Bolshevism, carrying out the 1917 revolutions. The geometric forms of Suprematism and Constructivism, then, already contain within themselves opposing characteristics. For Malevich, spirit, individuality, immutability. For Lissitzky, materialism, collectivism, historical dynamism.

Mabb's marrying of these complexities with the designs of William Morris confuses things even more. Morris' designs were ideologically constructed from a very different viewpoint. The constructivists on the whole identified, from a modernist perspective, a positive potential in industrialisation, seeing the (pre-Stalinist) workers' state as a vehicle for freeing the worker from the alienation of labour and breaking down the distinction between manual and intellectual production. Morris, however, was faced with nineteenth-century English industry's dark satanic mills. His dream of dignity of and through labour, in a pre-revolutionary world, was centred in the medieval-style workshop, where both the design and production of beautiful goods emerged from the communion between human beings and their natural surroundings.

The designs for interior decoration which came out of Morris & Co relates its founder's ideal of a relationship based on the rationality of a modern human society unified with the ordered spontaneity of the natural world. This concurs with Malevich's desire to mirror nature, but conflicts with his notion of intuitive aesthetics as garbage.

*In Rhythm 69*, Mabb merges Richter's Malevich-based storyboard with sixty-nine hand-printed Morris wallpaper samples. Richter's forms - squares, rectangles and circles - are painted onto the paper, attempting to obscure their floral designs. These, however, retaliate, pushing through and crawling over the shapes. The conflicting entities - flat, geometric, simple, architectonic, versus decorative, organic, complex, natural - struggle against each other, neither achieving dominance, so each painting is at the same time neither and both of its constituent parts. But we find, after some contemplation, a kind of unexpected congruence. The flatness of the printed colours now complements that of Mabb's interventions. The painted squares and rectangles highlight Morris' reliance on geometry to create the recurrence of pattern necessary for the printing of the wallpapers' designs.

<sup>3</sup> Despite the fact that they appear from outer space!

<sup>4</sup> Morris addresses the dilemma thus: What we have to do to meet this difficulty is to create due paper-stainers' flowers and leaves, forms that are obviously fit for printing with a block; to mask the construction of our pattern enough to prevent people from counting the repeats of our pattern, while we manage to lull their curiosity to trace it out; to be careful to cover our ground equably.

William Morris, *The Lesser Arts of Life*, 1882, quoted in Christine Poulson (ed), *William Morris on Art & Design*, Sheffield, 1996

So, even in Morris' workshop-based production methods, repetition and geometry are determining factors in creating his natural forms<sup>4</sup>, while Richter's shapes are able to float freely from their central position. This questioning of formal judgments is echoed at the ideological level, with the contradictions inherent in the suprematist form coming into conflict with the exposed paradoxes in the work of Morris. The utopian socialism of the latter clashes with the experienced reality of the Russian Revolution.

The most apparent contradiction in William Morris is that thrown up by the revolutionary ideology to which he adhered and the reality of the nineteenth-century capitalist mode of production which surrounded it. This led me - erroneously and lazily - to conclude that Morris' utopianism stemmed from his optimistic belief in the possibility of creating discrete pockets of socialism within the structures of the bourgeois market. Mabb put me straight by directing me to an essay he wrote about his work in 2006, in which he says:

“My initial interest in William Morris arose from two apparent sets of contradictions. The first is the tension between Morris' later politics and his business. He became Britain's own indigenous Marxist, the Trotsky or Gramsci of London's Hammersmith, but he was also the designer of interiors for the wealthy British. While there may be no easy reconciliation between these two aspects of his project, the utopianism of his designs makes the contradiction productive: there is no escape within capital, only its overthrow, something Morris came to understand later in his life.

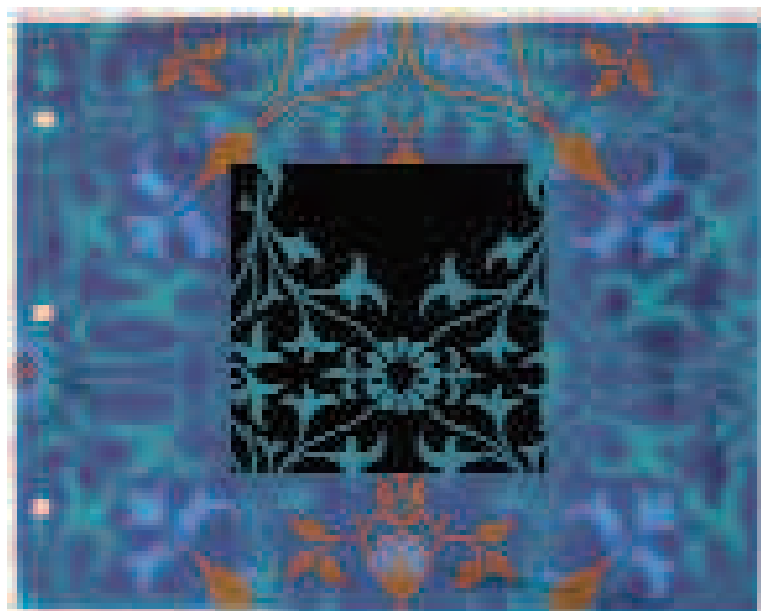
The second, more sustainable, contradiction is that it is possible to be torn apart by the aesthetics of Morris: to like and be seduced by his designs while simultaneously finding the politics of their consumption unacceptable. When first produced the patterns were hand woven or woodblock printed to the highest technical standards possible, and were only affordable to the wealthy middle and upper classes.

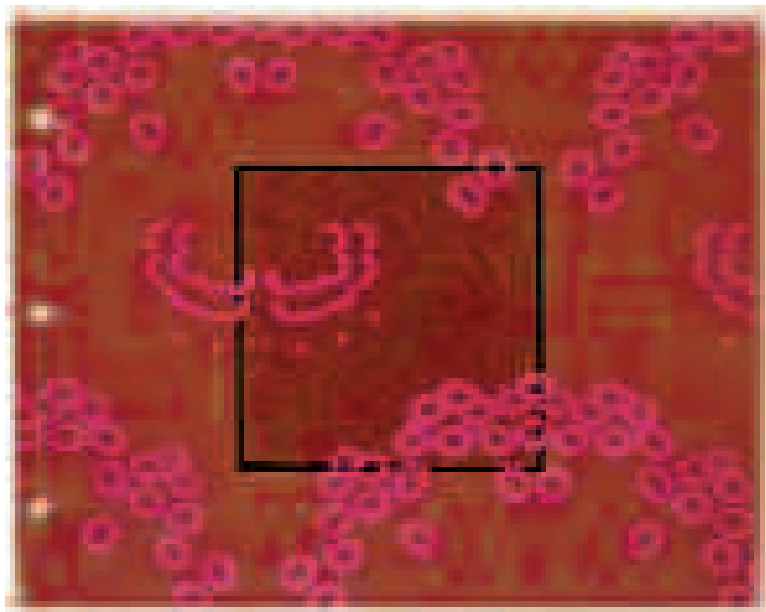
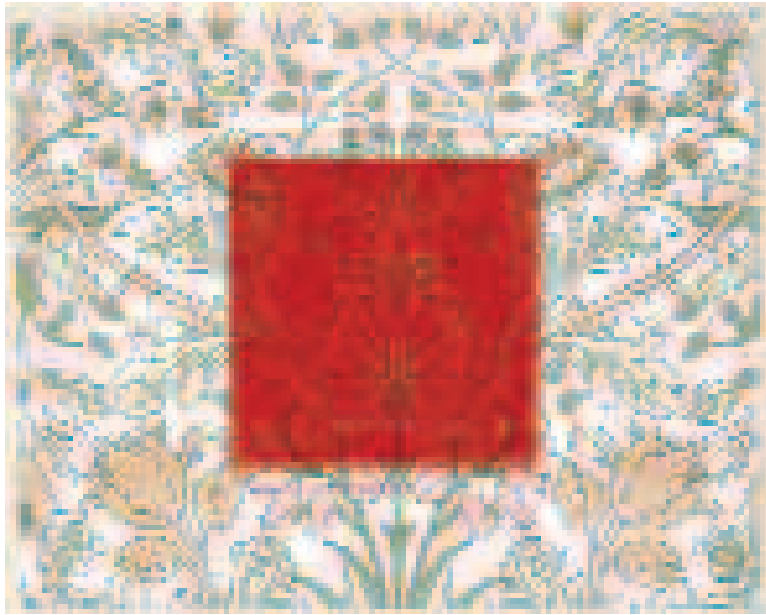
The meanings of Morris' designs have changed over time; now widely available through relatively cheap Sanderson copies in Britain and the USA, they have come to represent the values of suburbia, the middle classes and the aesthetically conservative.”<sup>5</sup>

Suprematism/constructivism, on the other hand, was formed in tandem with the movement towards, and the realisation of, the proletarian revolution. In the few years before Stalin's counter-revolution, the nascent de-commodification of production was making itself visible through the work of Russia's avant-garde.

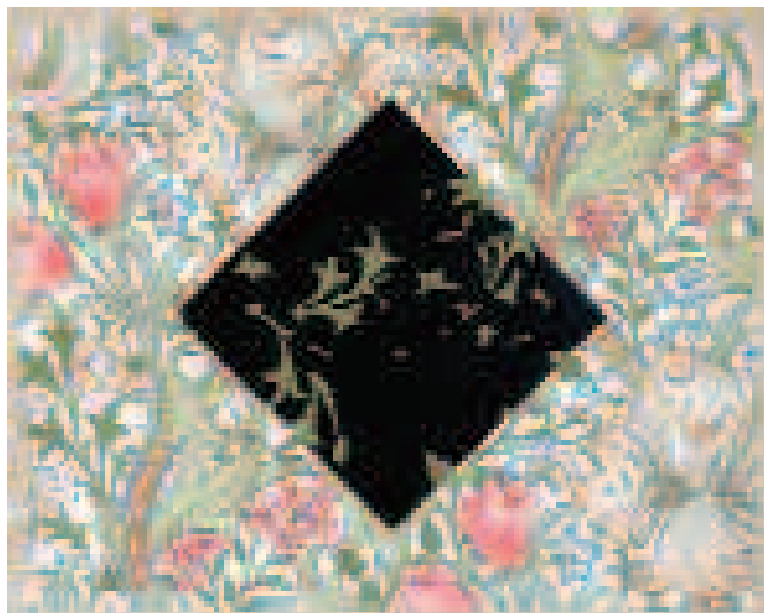
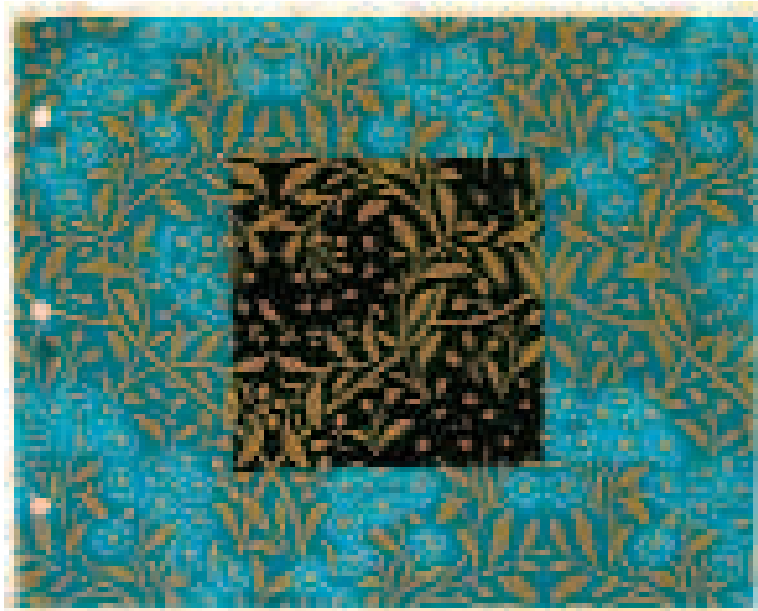
Mabb's dialectical approach to art production reveals the duality of art as use-value and exchange-value (object form and commodity form) through his clash of these stylistic and ideological practices. Just as eyes turn as the guest arrives wearing a striped shirt with tweed, the discordant *Rhythm 69* focuses our attention on the substance of the aesthetic in its historical context.

<sup>5</sup> David Mabb, Catalogue essay for exhibition *Art Into Everyday Life*, Contemporary Art Centre, Vilnius, 2006

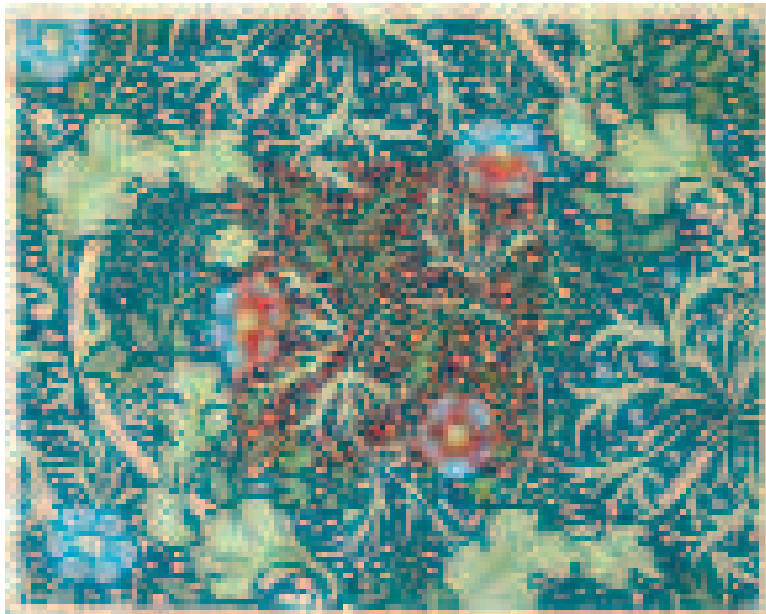


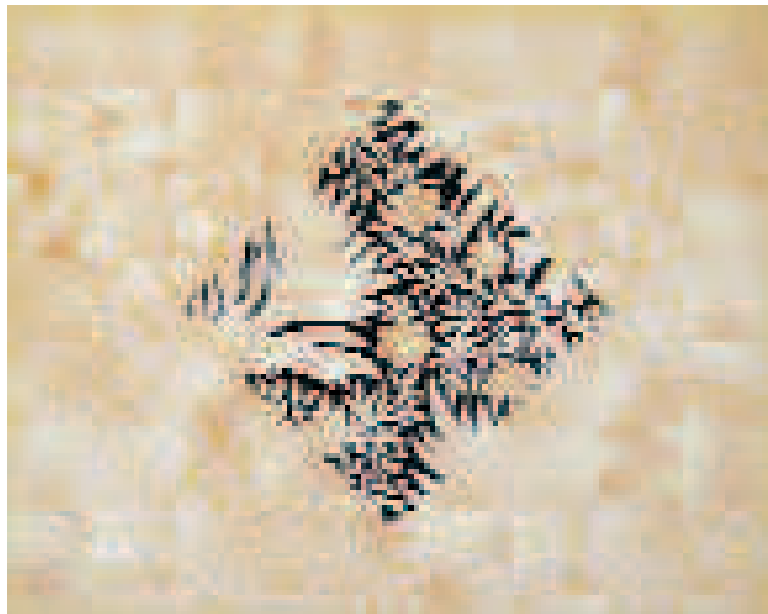
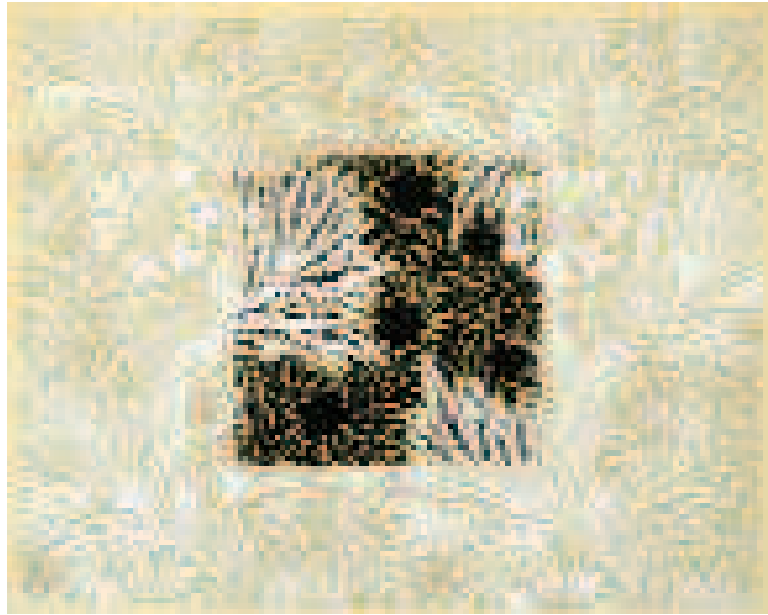


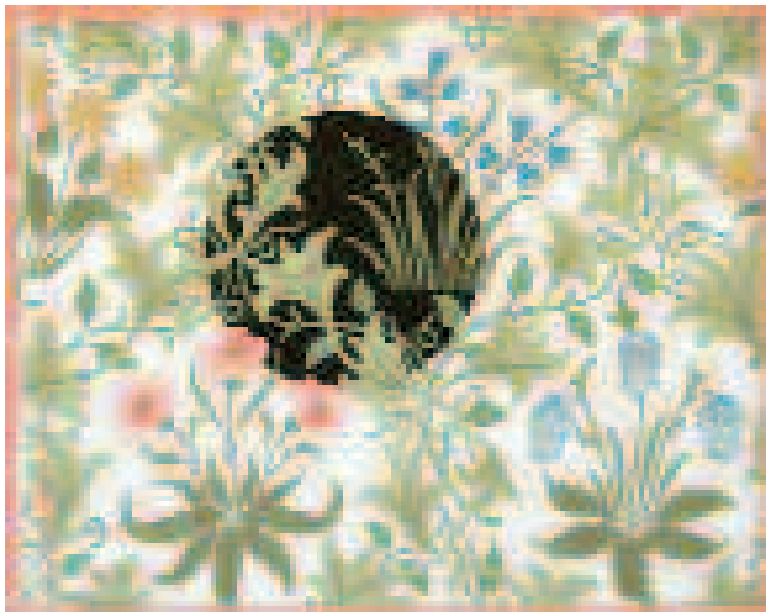
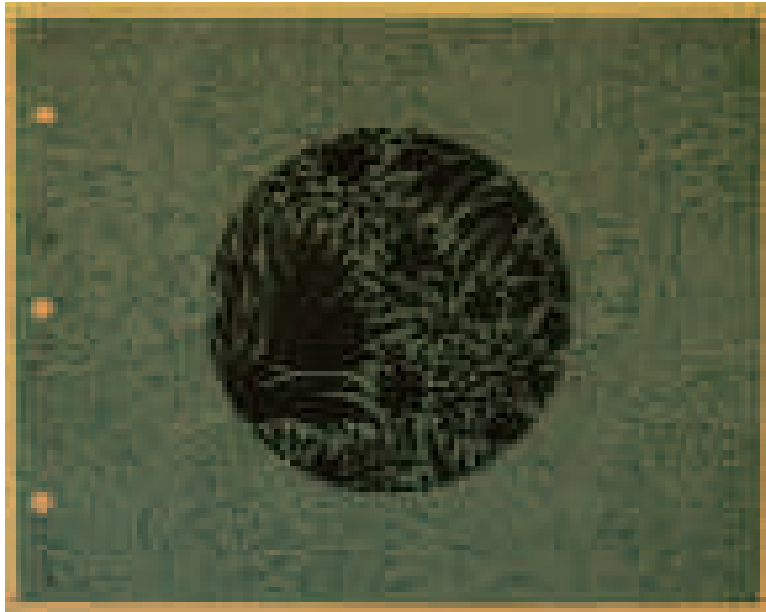


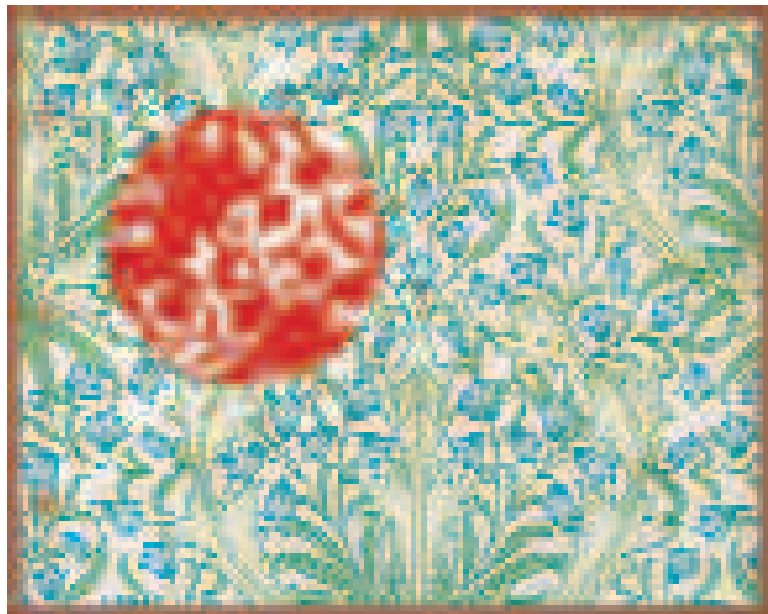
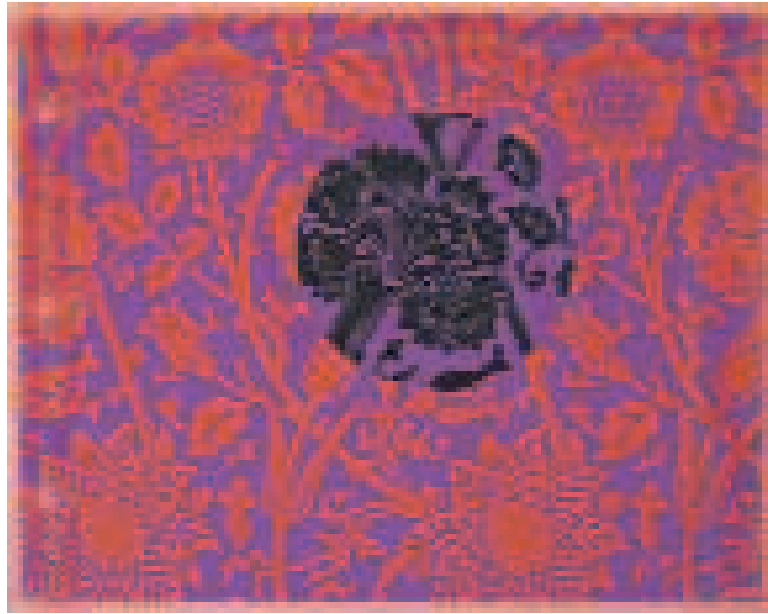


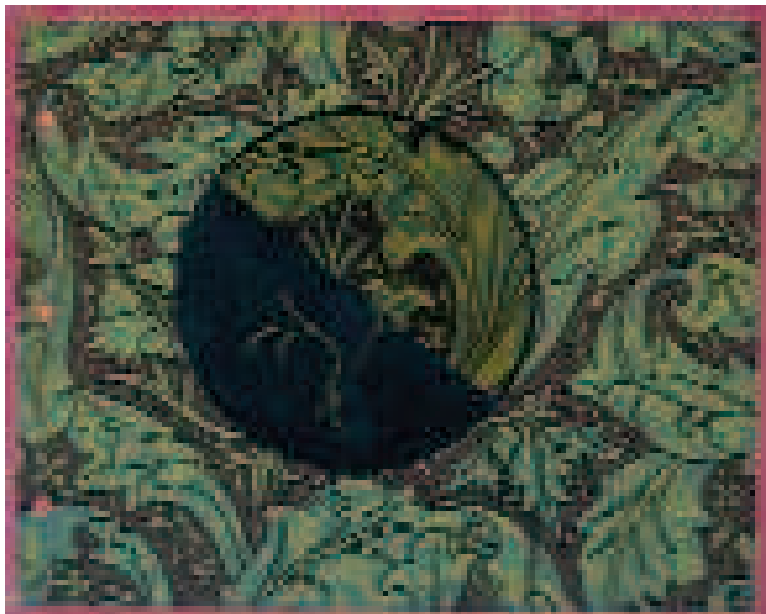


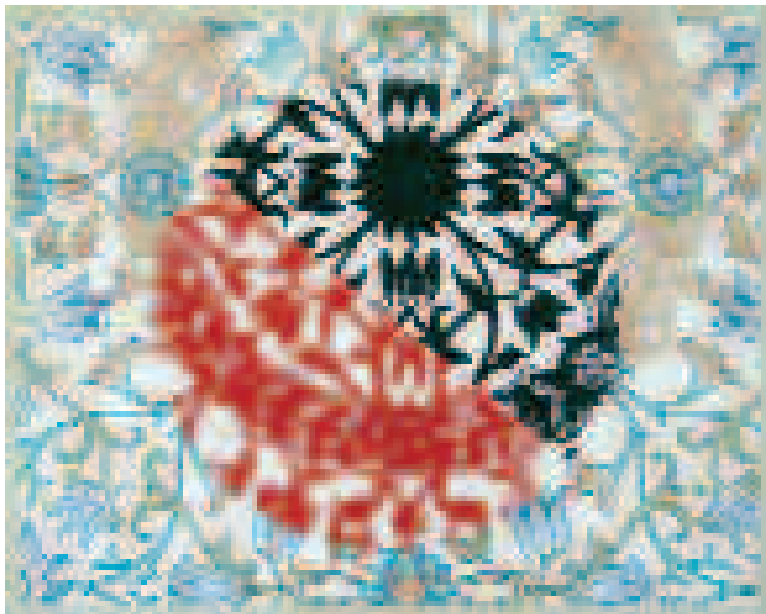
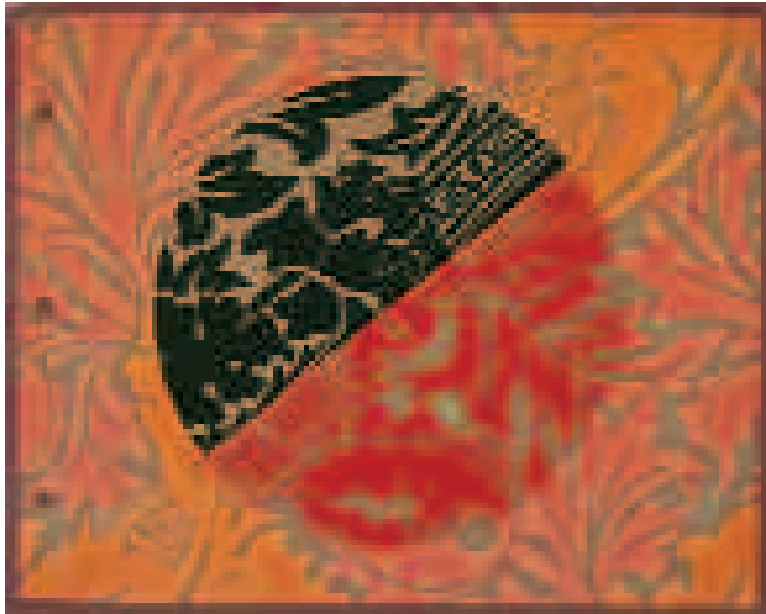




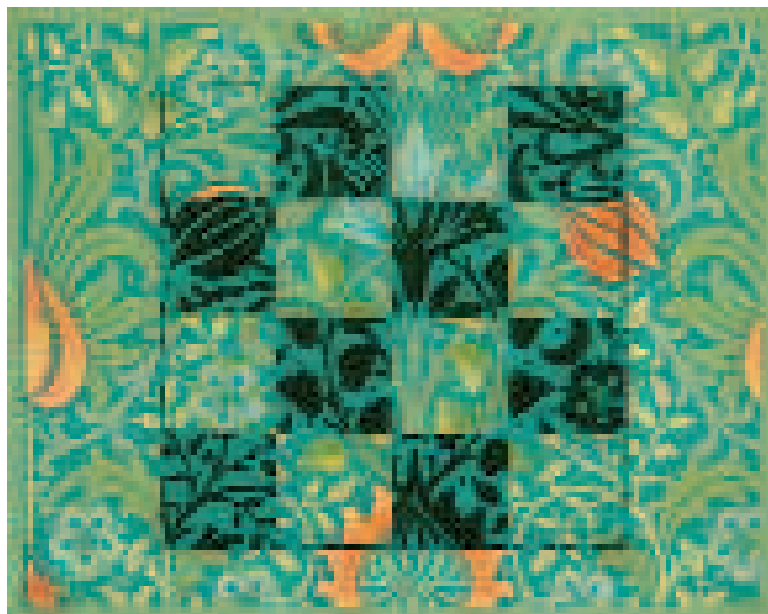
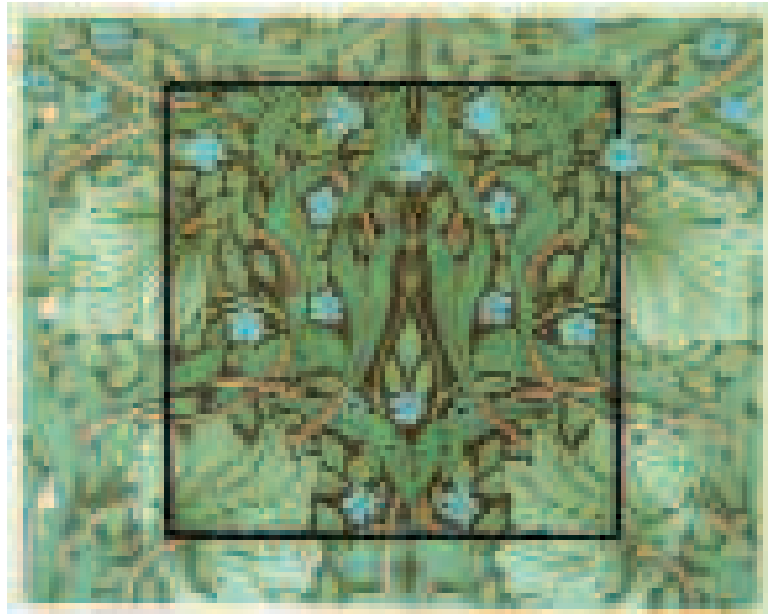


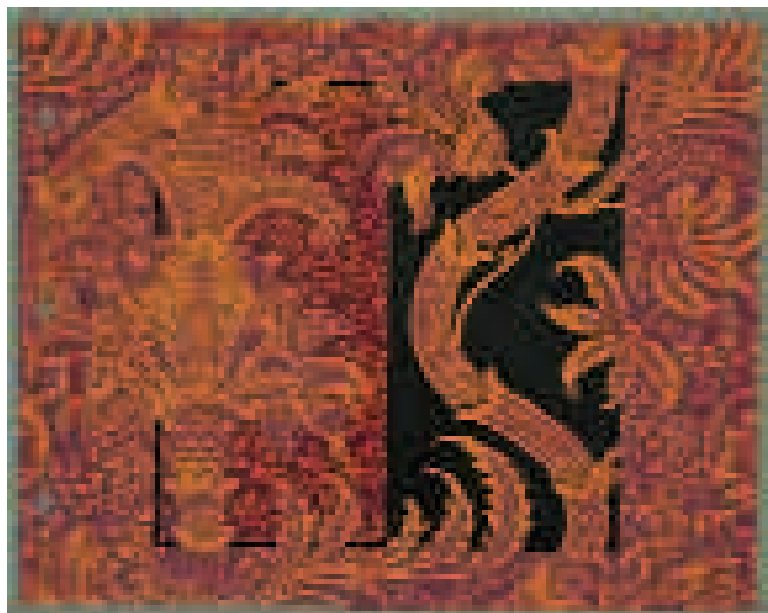
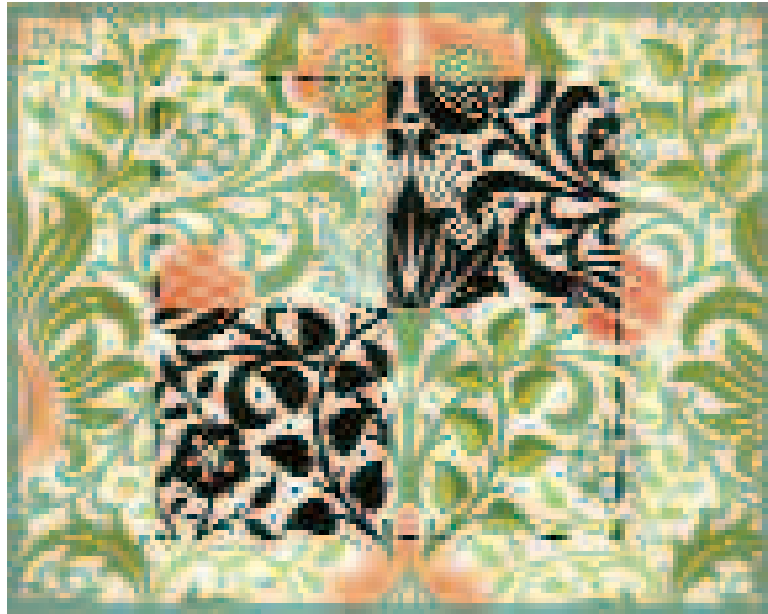




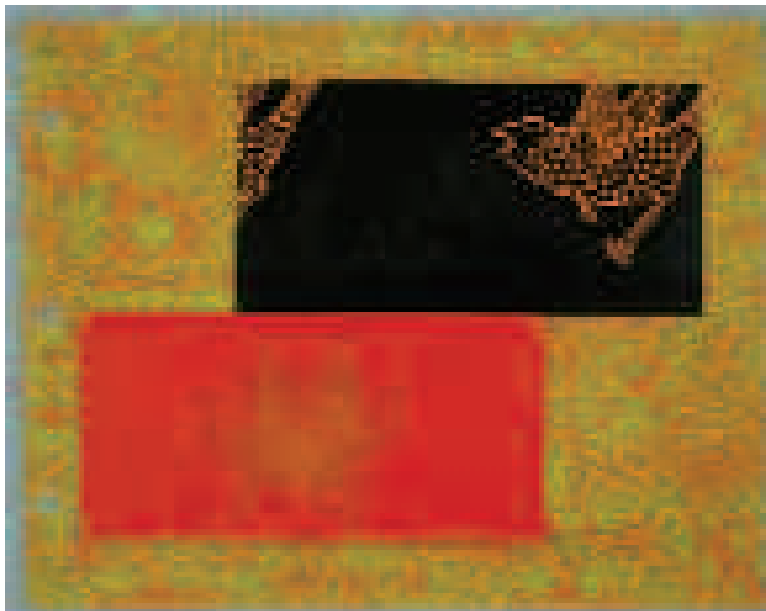


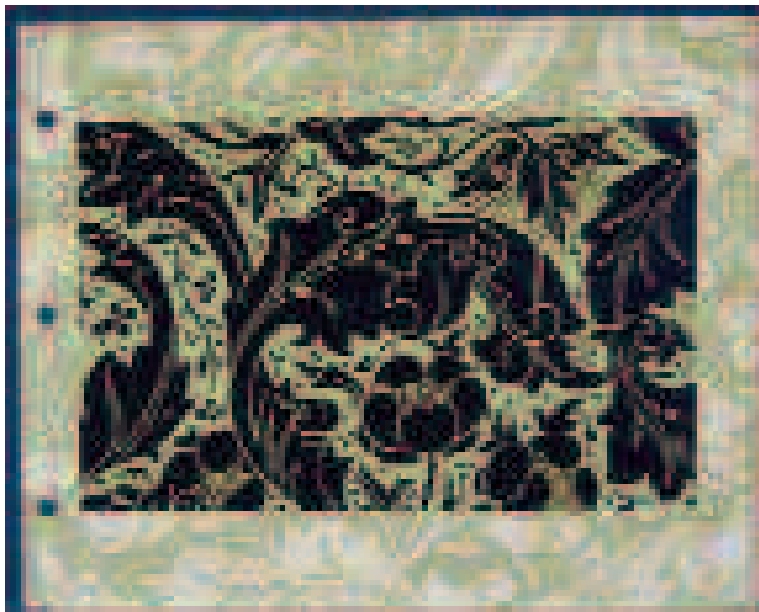
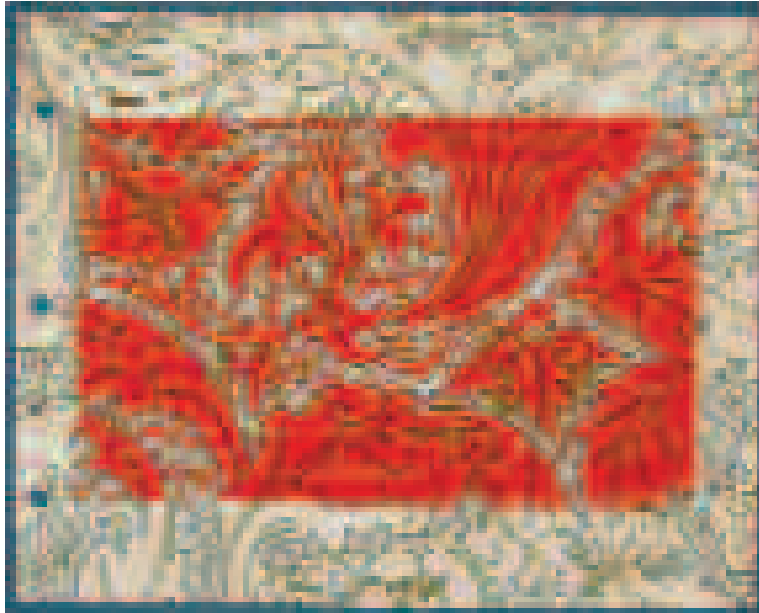


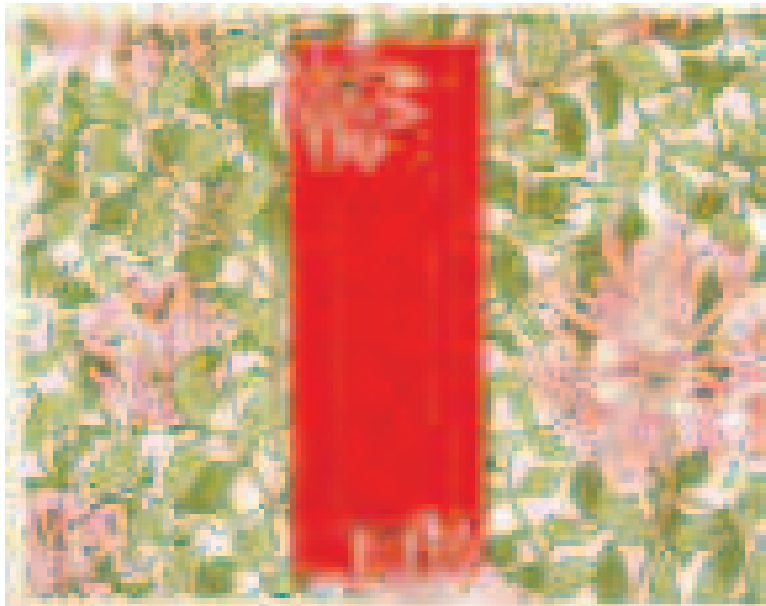
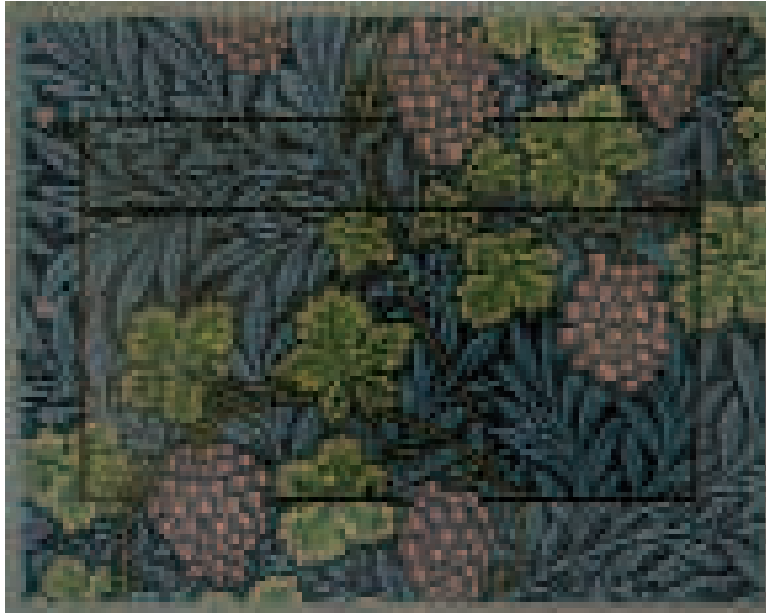




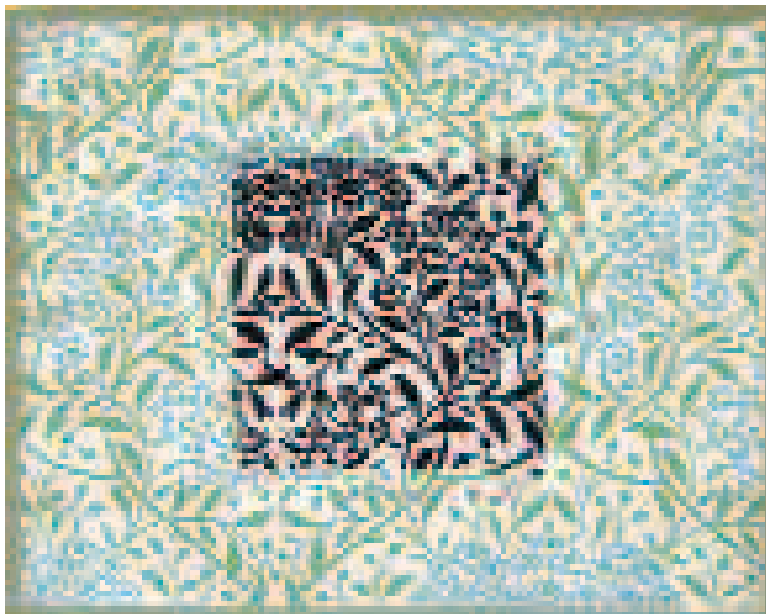
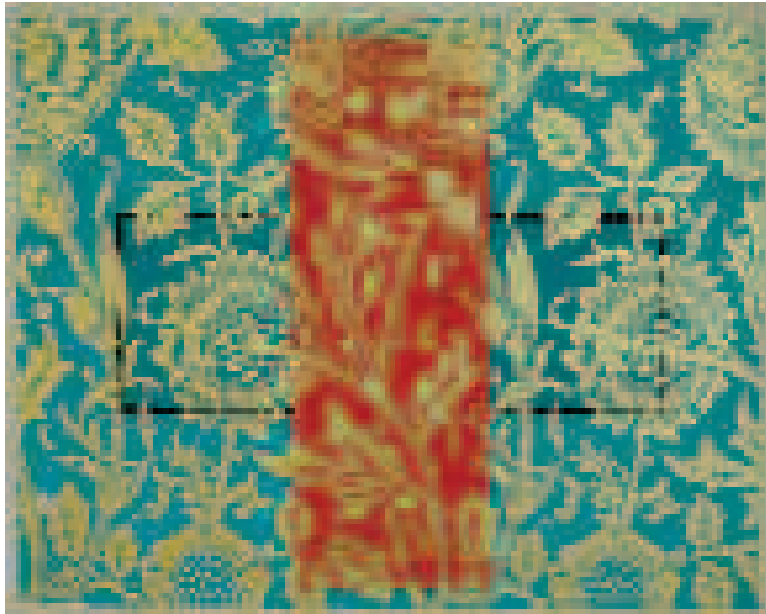




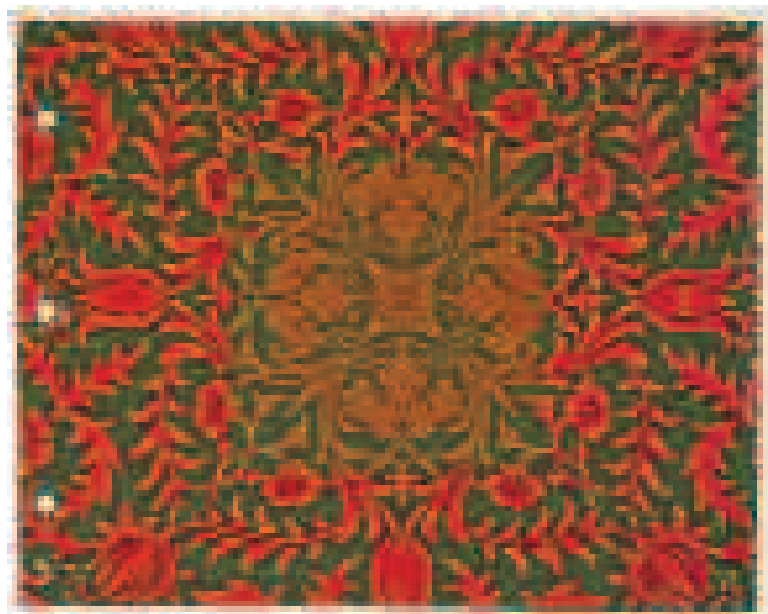
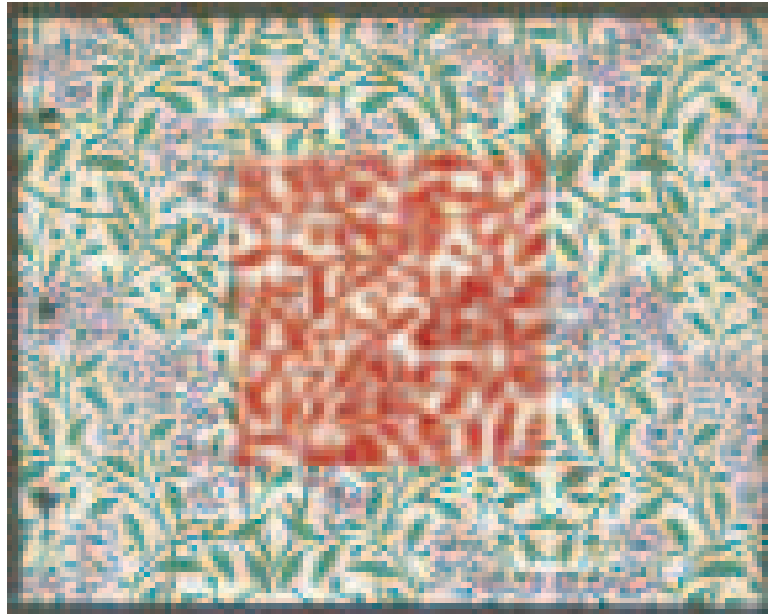


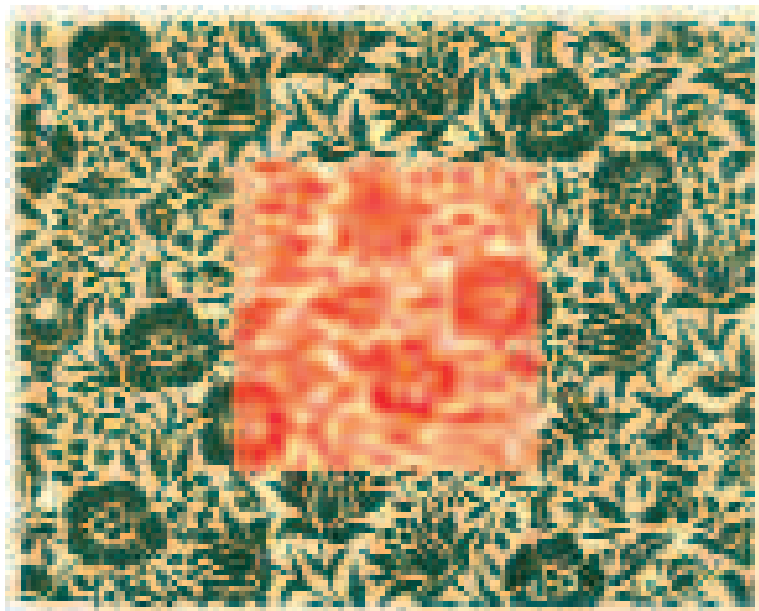
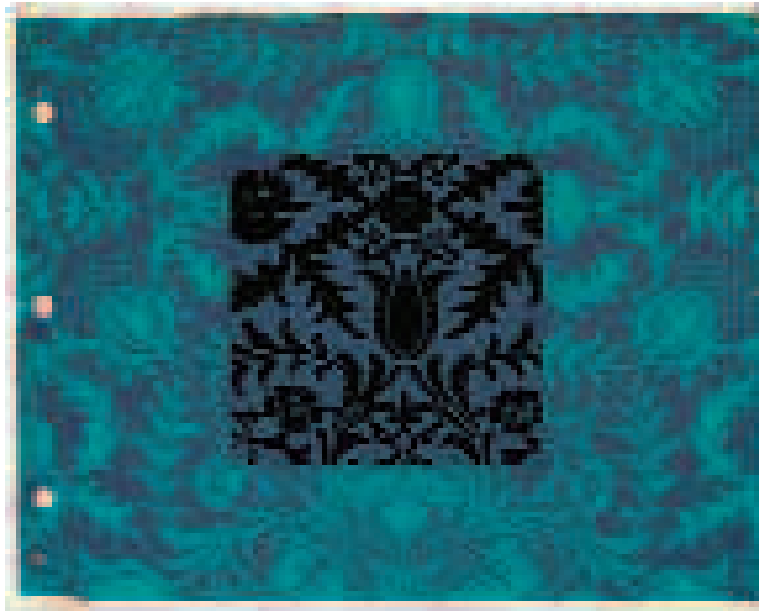


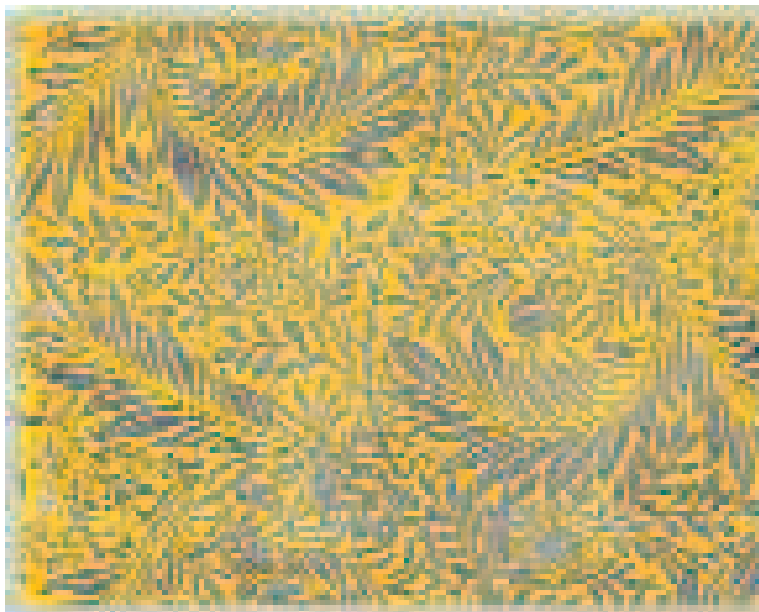
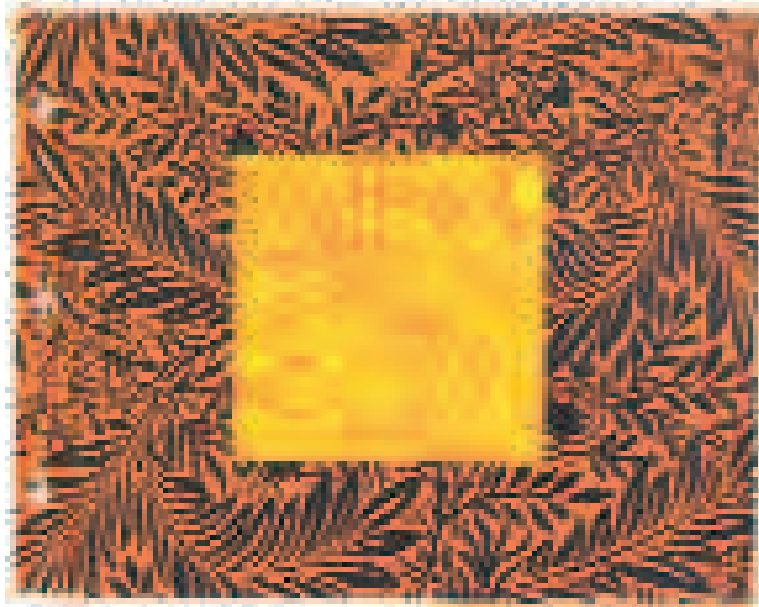


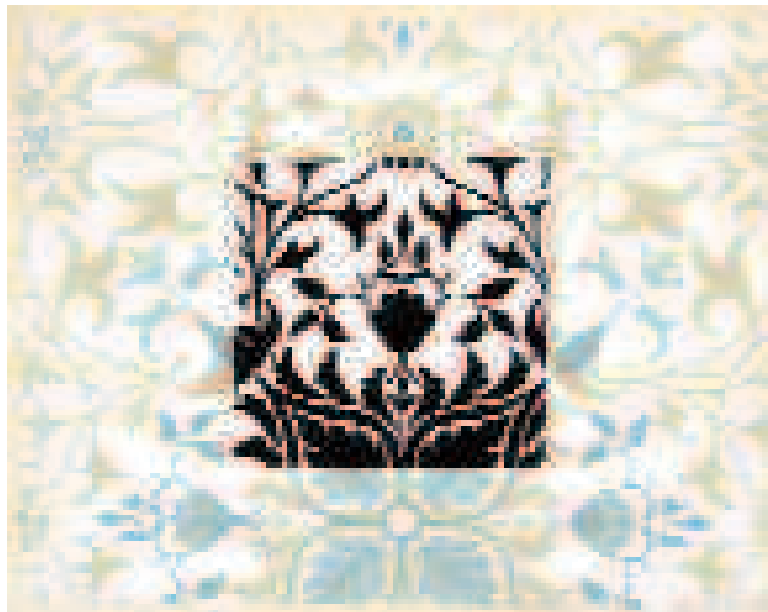
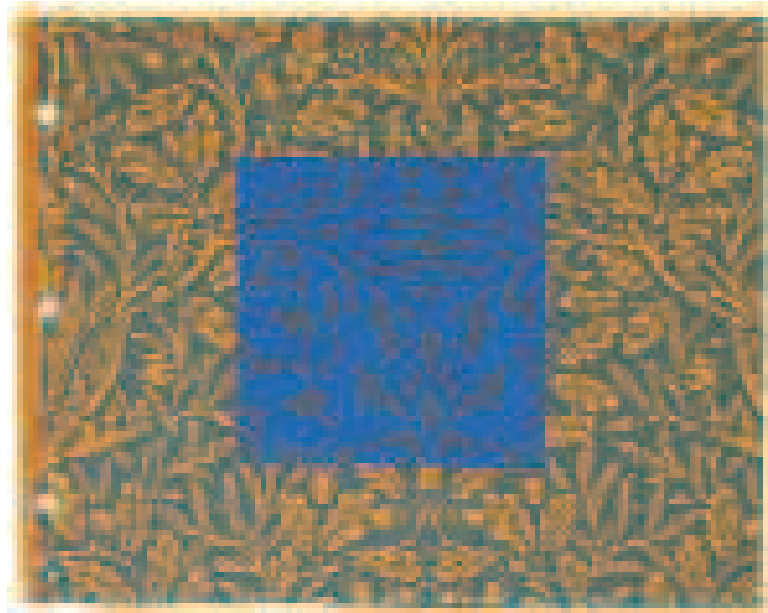


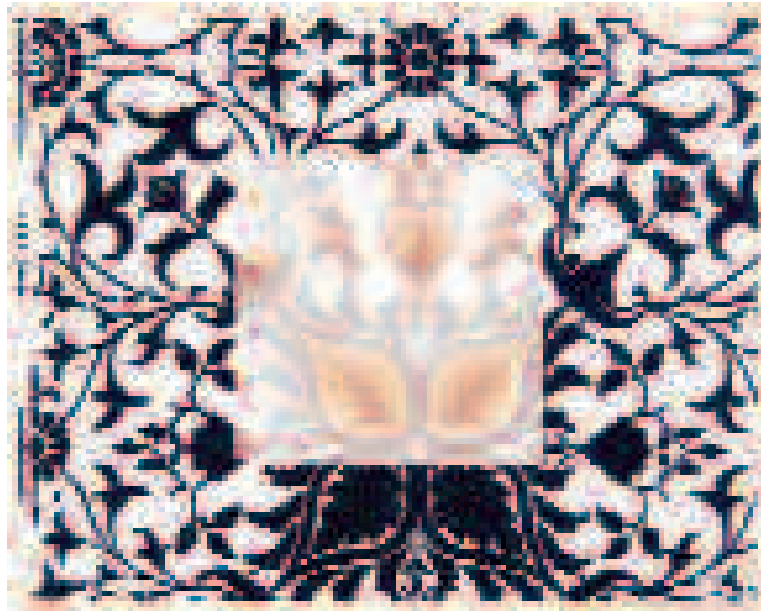




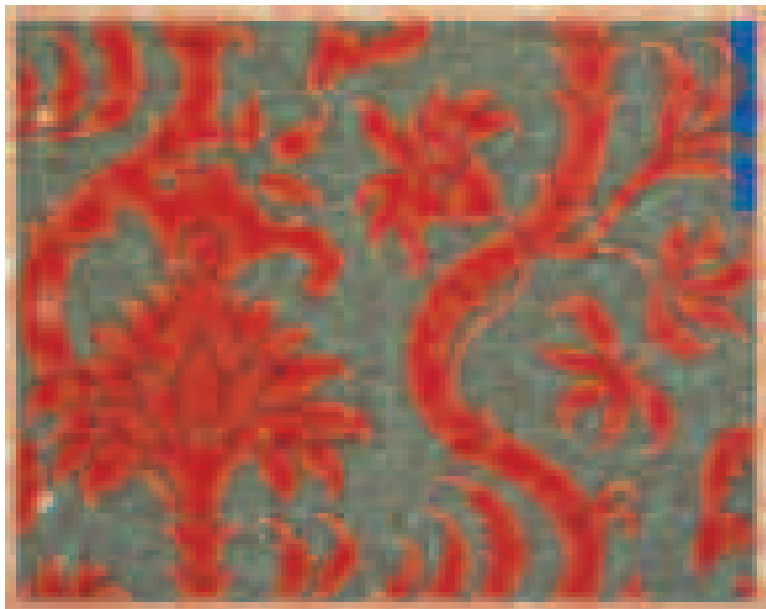


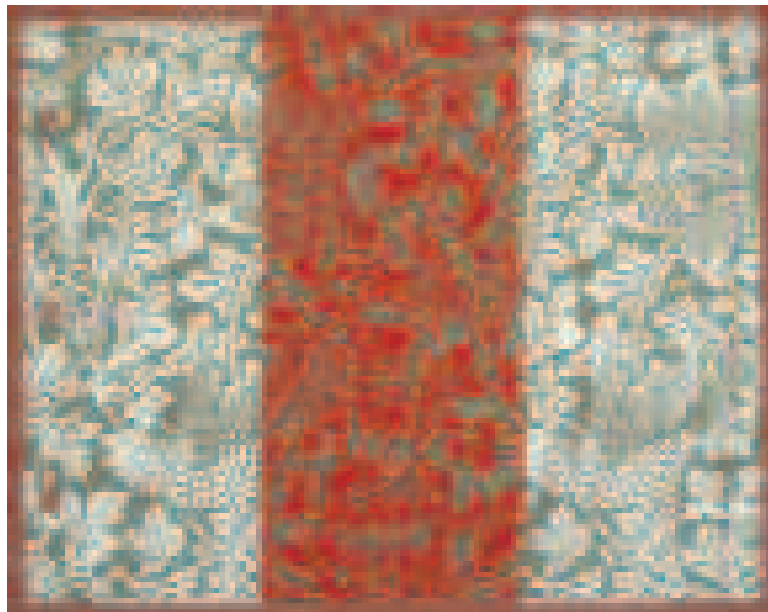
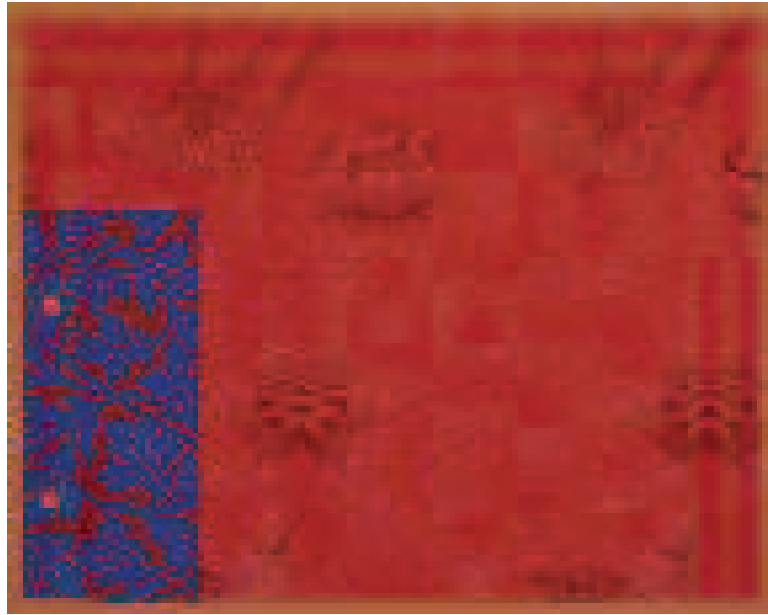




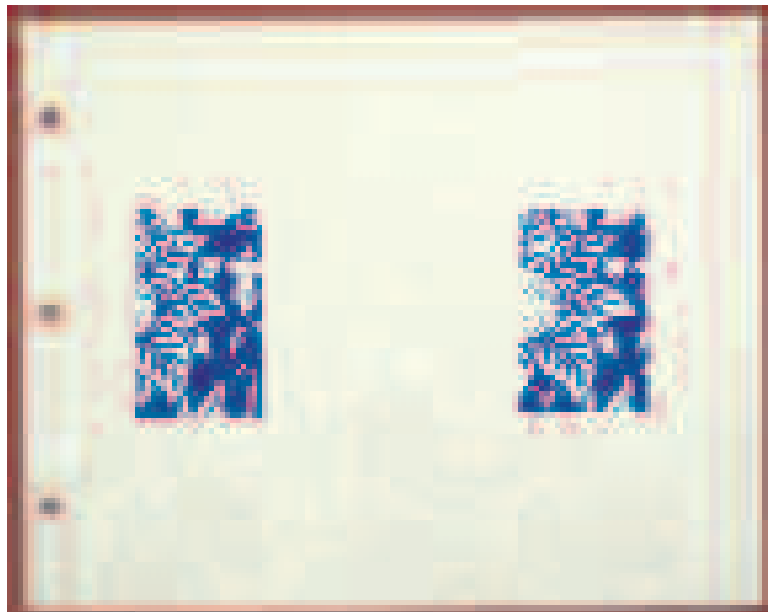
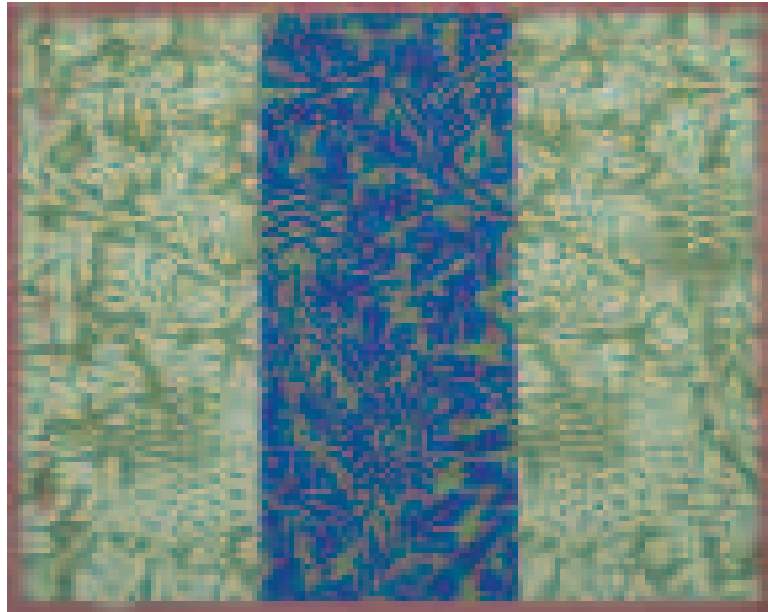


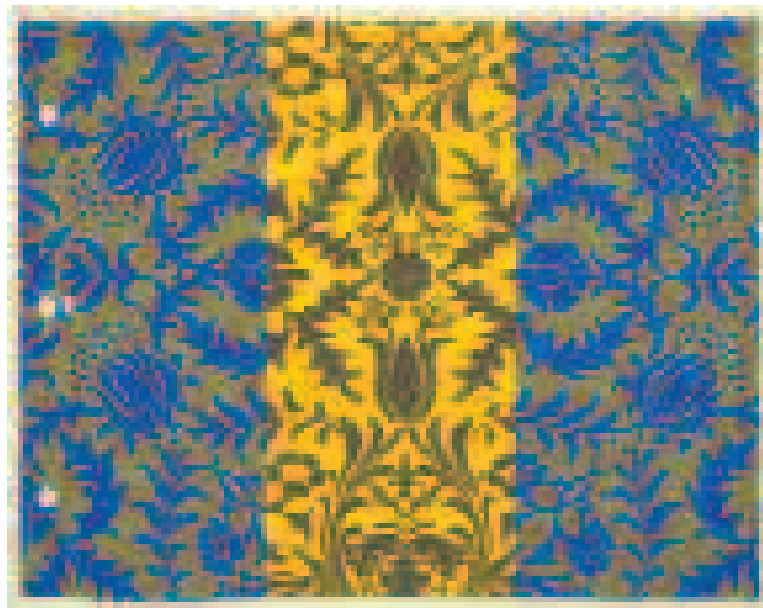


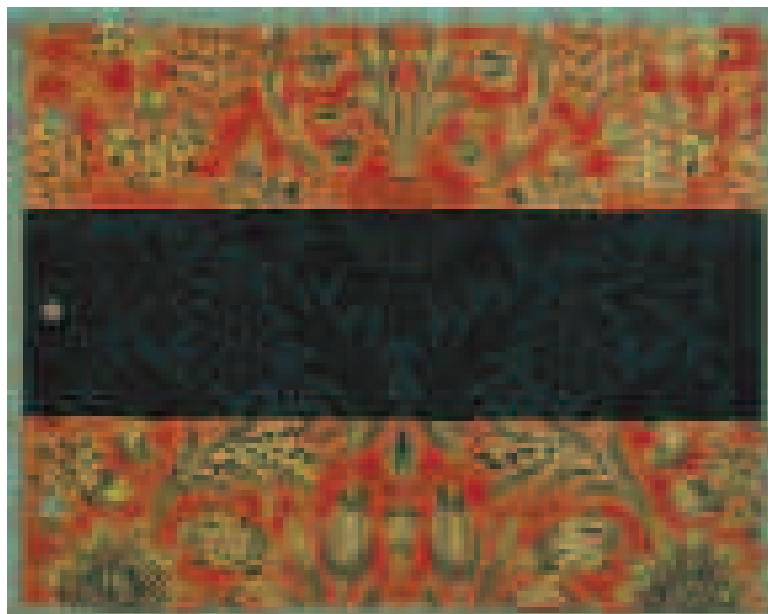
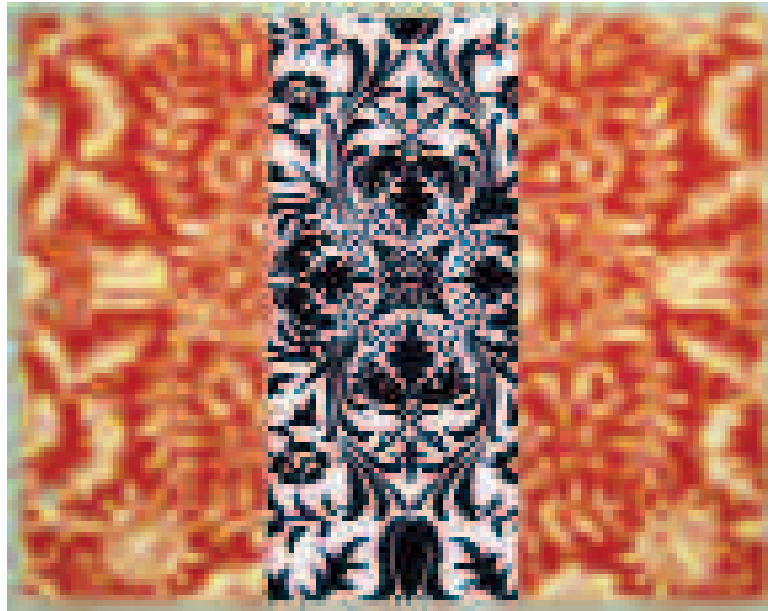


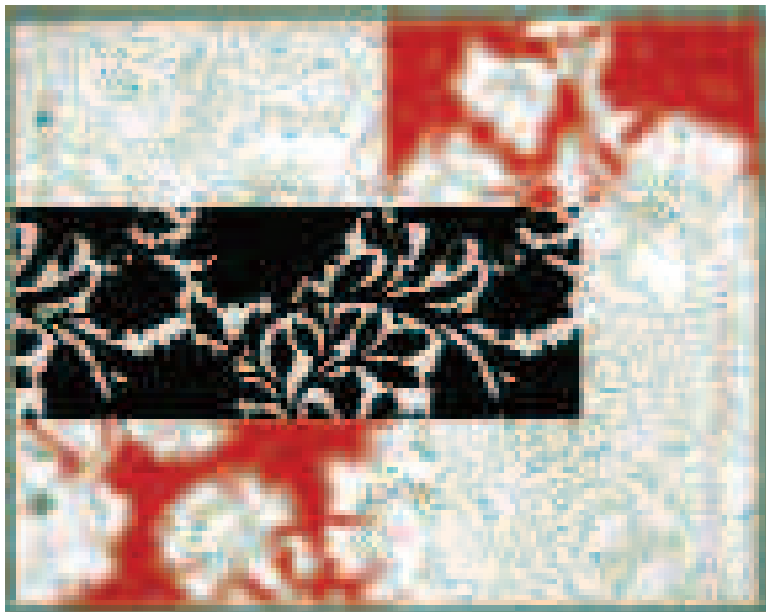


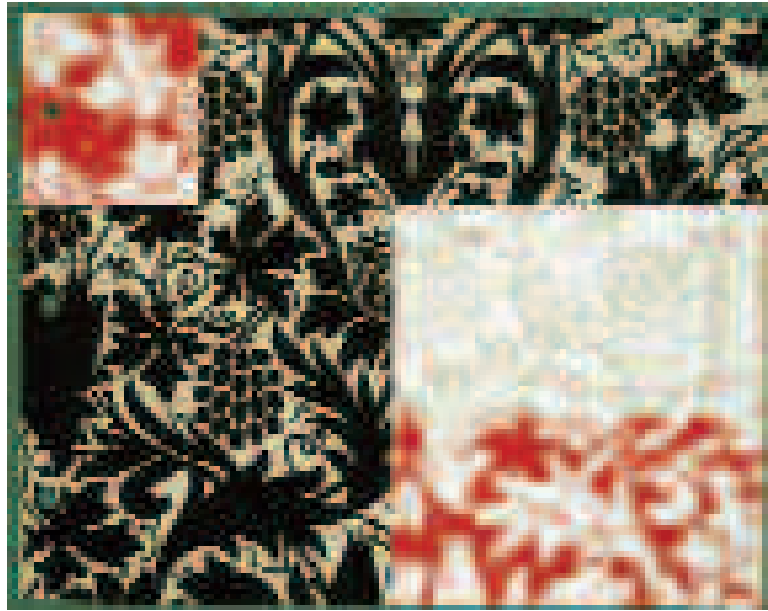


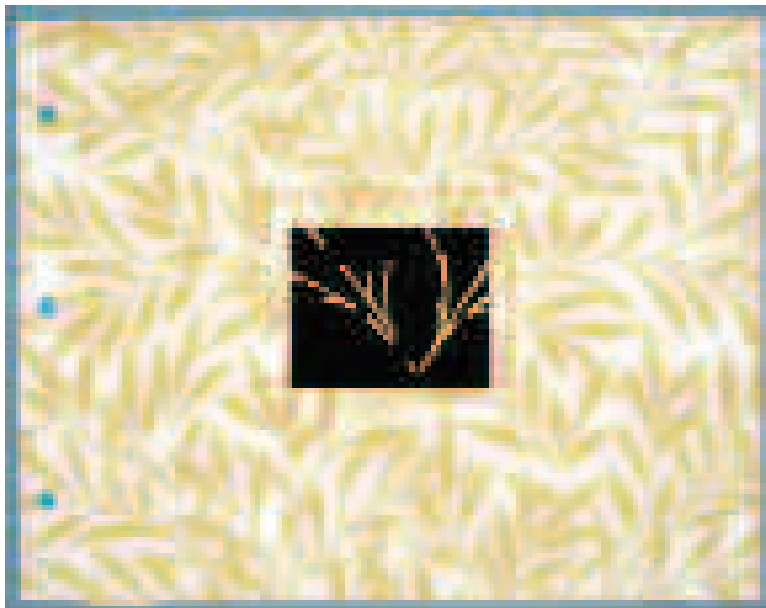
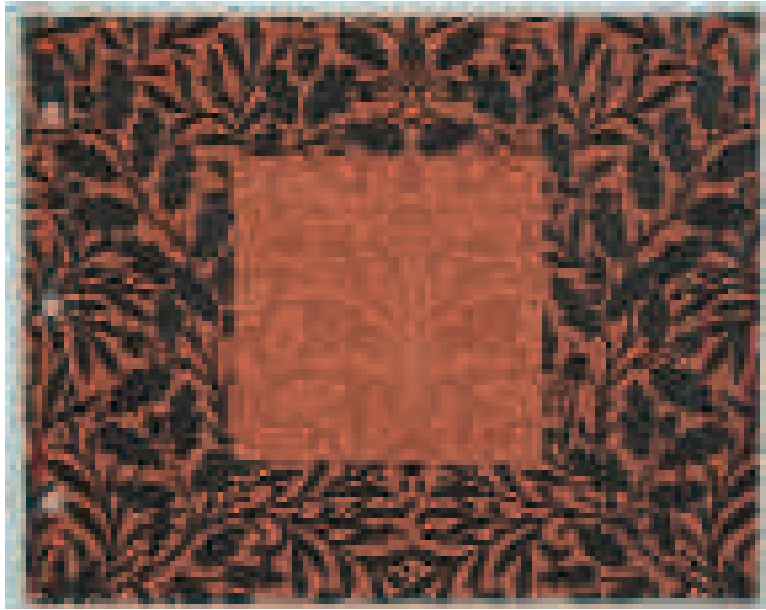


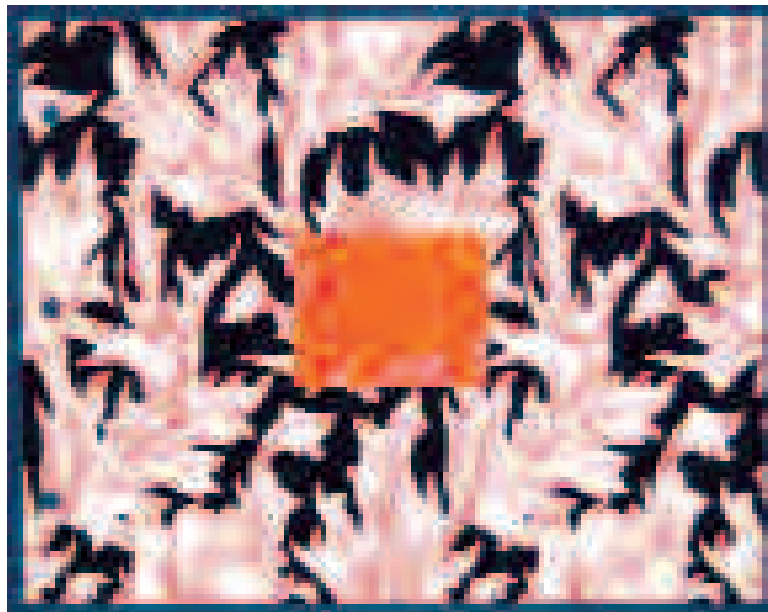
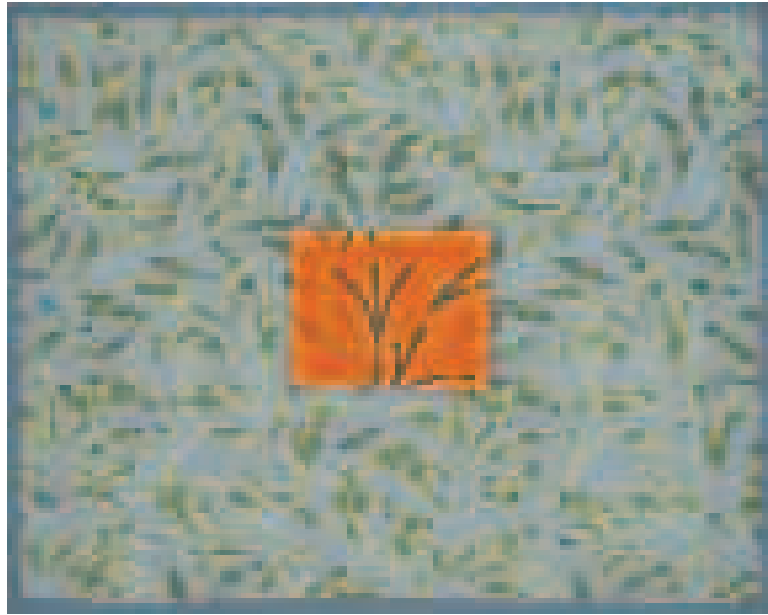


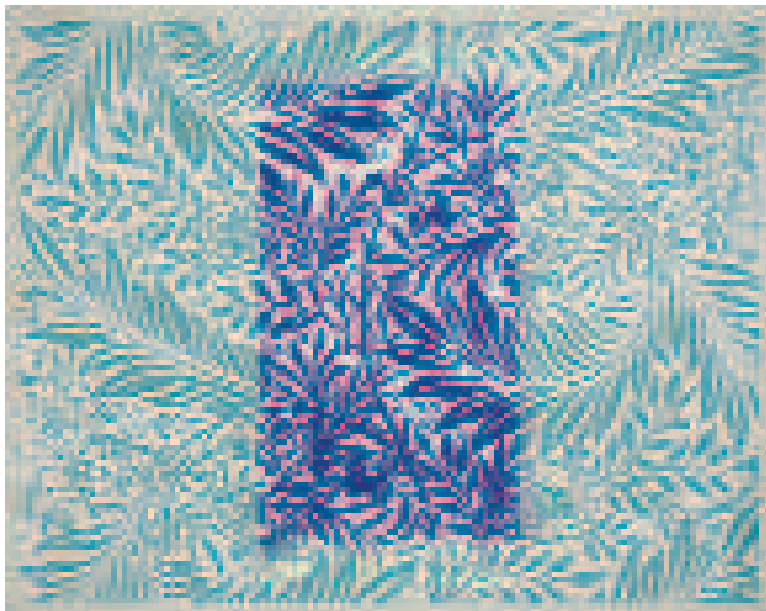
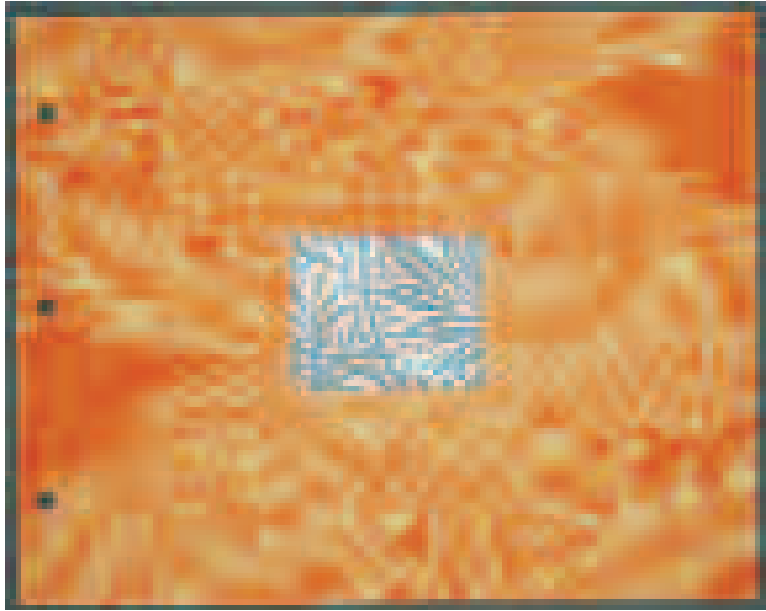




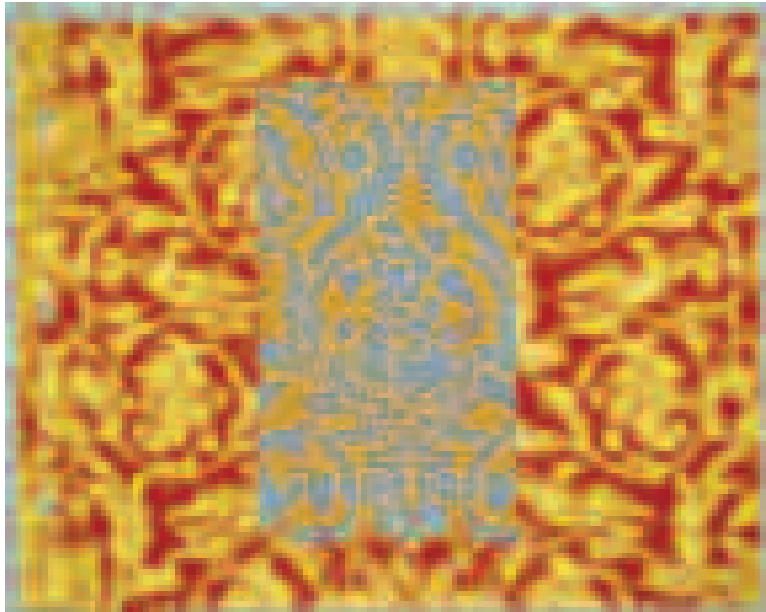












### *Commodity Form*

*The Capital Paintings* are hung in a grid - a formalist, rationalist containment whose order and discipline can be seen as a metaphor for the regulative practices of the industrialised capitalist state. Depending on the space, they can be hung in one block, or three blocks (one block for each volume), in one line or three lines (one line for each volume). This is somewhat like *Rhythm 69*, which can be hung in two different formats that bring forth different readings of the work. If *Rhythm 69* is hung horizontally across the wall, the installation emphasises the bookness of the work as the pages are read left to right. However, if the paintings are hung vertically the work is read from top to bottom and the hang emphasises the filmic qualities of the work.

At the Golden Thread Gallery, both works are hung in the horizontal format. *Rhythm 69* is installed on either side of the middle wall and *The Capital Paintings* are installed around the outside walls. But they are run or read in different directions to each other. *The Capital Paintings* begin, seen from the front door, in the left hand gallery and can be read from left to right. *Rhythm 69* begins in the right hand gallery and can also be read from left to right. This installation has the effect that where on one work ends the other begins on the opposite wall.

Each painting of *The Capital Paintings* and *Rhythm 69* depicts a commodity, whether it is the altered patterns of Morris' handmade wallpaper or the discarded flotsam of modern capitalism; but each work is itself also a commodity. The permutations of the commodity under what used to be called late capitalism seem infinite, an accumulation growing without an end in sight. *Commodity Form* momentarily freezes a fragment of this immensity for reflection.

## *Biographies*

**Colin Darke** studied Fine Art at Goldsmiths College, graduating in 1980. After moving to Derry in 1988, his work initially attempted to address the northern conflict, applying leftist texts to the form of the Republican “comm.”, or prisoner’s letter. This led to text pieces written directly onto gallery walls and, subsequently, wall drawings consisting of found images. These looked at relationships between art production and the social and economic contexts within which it is carried out. In more recent work, this has included questions surrounding the commodification of art.

His last text piece, titled *Capital* (2000-2003), consisted of writing Marx’s three-volume economic work of the same name onto 480 two-dimensional commodities. This piece formed the basis of *The Capital Paintings* (2004-2007). The latter was developed through considering the Duchampian readymade from the perspective of elements of Marxist economics, as outlined in *Capital*.

Previous group exhibitions include: *A Measured Quietude*, Drawing Center, New York (1999); Manifesta 3, Ljubljana (2000); *Something Else*, Touring, Finland (2002); Venice Biennale (2003); Busan Biennale (2004). He has held solo shows in Derry, London, Ontario and, earlier this year, in Temple Bar Gallery in Dublin.

**David Mabb** studied Fine Art at Goldsmiths College (1980) and Chelsea School of Art (1981).

He has been working with the textile and wallpaper designs of 19th Century interior designer, writer and activist William Morris since 1998. Mabb’s interest in Morris stems from the social and political implications of his work, the continued relevance of his politics and the continuing market for his designs. Many of Mabb’s interpretations or reconfigurations of Morris’ designs have foregrounded the relationship between Morris’ own utopian thinking and other forms of modernist cultural production.

His solo exhibitions include *The Decorating Business*, Oakville Galleries, Ontario (2000), *A Factory As It Might Be or The Hall Of Flowers*, Art Gallery of Windsor, Ontario (2003), *William Morris, “ministering to the swinish luxury of the rich”*, Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester (2004), *Morris in Jaipur: The work of Art in the Context of Hand-made Reproduction*, Jaipur International Festival and British Council, New Delhi (2005) and *Art into Everyday Life*, Contemporary Art Centre, Vilnius (2006).

David Mabb teaches at Goldsmiths College, University of London.

### *Acknowledgements*

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I would like to thank Colin Darke and David Mabb for their invaluable contributions to the realisation of this project. I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the continued support of the funding bodies, the Arts Council of Northern Ireland - National Lottery, Belfast City Council, and the members of staff that administer them. Also I wish to thank Robinson McIlwaine Architects, Hylands Gallery, Belfast, Temple Bar Gallery and Studios, Dublin and Goldsmiths College, London, for their generous support.

Finally I would like to especially thank all the staff here at the Golden Thread Gallery, Ruth Graham, Deirdre McKenna, and Sarah McAvera.

Peter Richards, Curator and Gallery Director

This Book has been produced by the Golden Thread Gallery, on Hello Silk paper,  
using Helvetica Typeface throughout to a design by DPM Solutions, Belfast  
in a limited edition of 1000 in March 2008  
of which the first 100 are signed by Colin Darke, David Mabb and Gallery Director.  
It was printed by Nicholson & Bass Ltd, Belfast  
and cloth bound by Robinson & Mornin, Belfast



Colin Darke  
The Captial Paintings, No. 288