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May 1988

PETERBOROUGH CATHEDRAL - PAINTED CEILING - NAVE

INSPECTION REPORT:

Date: 17 + 18 May 1988

Inspection executed from North- and South Gallery with binoculars  
- ceiling constantly floodlit.

Brief inspection of upper side of ceiling construction  
(Canvas facing after timber repair in 1926)

Series of b+w detail photos and colour slides.

A thermohygrograph had been installed for the two days at the  
east end of the South gallery.

Readings: Temp.: 13<sup>o</sup>c at night, 14<sup>o</sup>c at day  
R.H. : 74% " , 72% "

Measurements: 62,20 m x 10,60 m

160 diagonally boarded panels of approx. 1,5 x 2,6 m

The wood is reported to be oak (inclusive repairs?)

The visible 245 bolts seem to be part of the timber construction,  
The boards (slightly overlapping) are fixed by nails.

Earlier Restorations: c1740-50

1835

1926 (repair of timber above)

General remarks:

The over- and repainting of the earlier restorations is especially noticeable from the gallery, with the shiny and blooming areas reflecting the spot lights.

There seems to be a great percentage of reconstruction notably in the decorative framework. The repainting appears blueish grey compared with the brown black layer underneath, often the scroll-work design is not completed.

How many of the original boards had been replaced and when, is more difficult to establish. One example: At the west end, south side panels 0-5, Row IV, the boarding does not correspond to the design as elsewhere, and there are clear marks in red chalk or pencil on the white ground to construct and outline the decorative pattern. In how far the figurative painting is affected by overpainting can only be assumed where the boards are clearly renewed, otherwise it would need a close inspection.

There are a number of graffitti and inscriptions referring to the 1834-5 restoration:

Panel 13-14, I: 1835 W. STALLARD

Centre panel 19: C.O. BLEY 1834, RD LAYTON, SEXTON

33-34, II: Gilbert

N-E corner extension: BLEY

Graffitti at the west end, dating from 1827, 1870, 1879 together with illegible names, may not refer to repair work, as this area becomes accessible once the vertical boards there are removed.

Condition:

Support: The structural repair of 1926 was necessary after infestation with death watch beetle. Indeed a small number of boards with flight holes can be spotted, possibly a result of this damage.

There are many holes, cracks, damaged board ends, unsympathetic repairs and dislocated boards, especially noticeable and affecting the general appearance in the centre of some of the figurative paintwork:

22 S, 30 N, 39

Some boards even seem to hang loose with the nails no longer in place (are the boards secured from above?

The one or other screw has penetrated the surface)

Paint layer: There is no obvious sign of deterioration such as flaking or dusting paint, which may be a result of the drastic treatment of those areas during earlier restorations.

In what way the original painting has survived underneath and if it is affected or rather protected by the over-paint can only be investigated at close distance, involving cleaning tests and further analysis.

The accumulation of dirt and grime must be substantiell as can be judged from better protected areas, where the white background has been preserved clearer.

Certainly the decoration of the later additions, the extension eastwards and the vertical surrounding boards are hardly recognizable from ground level.

## Conclusions:

The restoration of the ceiling is such an enormous and highly responsible task that it can only be achieved in a phased programme.

There may be several ways to approach it and most important further information must be gained from a close distance examination (from a scaffolding).

Conservation and repair must have priority, only then (some) aesthetic improvements may be envisaged.

The suggested treatment programme would include:

- Photographic documentation.
- Examination of the timber construction from above.

### 1) Conservation and repair of the support

- Repair of holes, cracks and gaps
- treatment of wood (if necessary)
- securing of loose boards
- reconstruction of dislodged areas
- improvement of unsympathetic repair work.

### 2) Conservation of paint layer

- Surface cleaning of dirt and grime
- removal of discoloured varnish if possible and necessary.
- removal of overpainting
- consolidation of paint layer
- protective layer (if adequate)


Only after further tests it can be discussed, if overpainting can be removed, which may then necessitate minor "cosmetic" retouchings, namely in the decorative framework.




30 May 1988  
W. Gartner



Condition report:

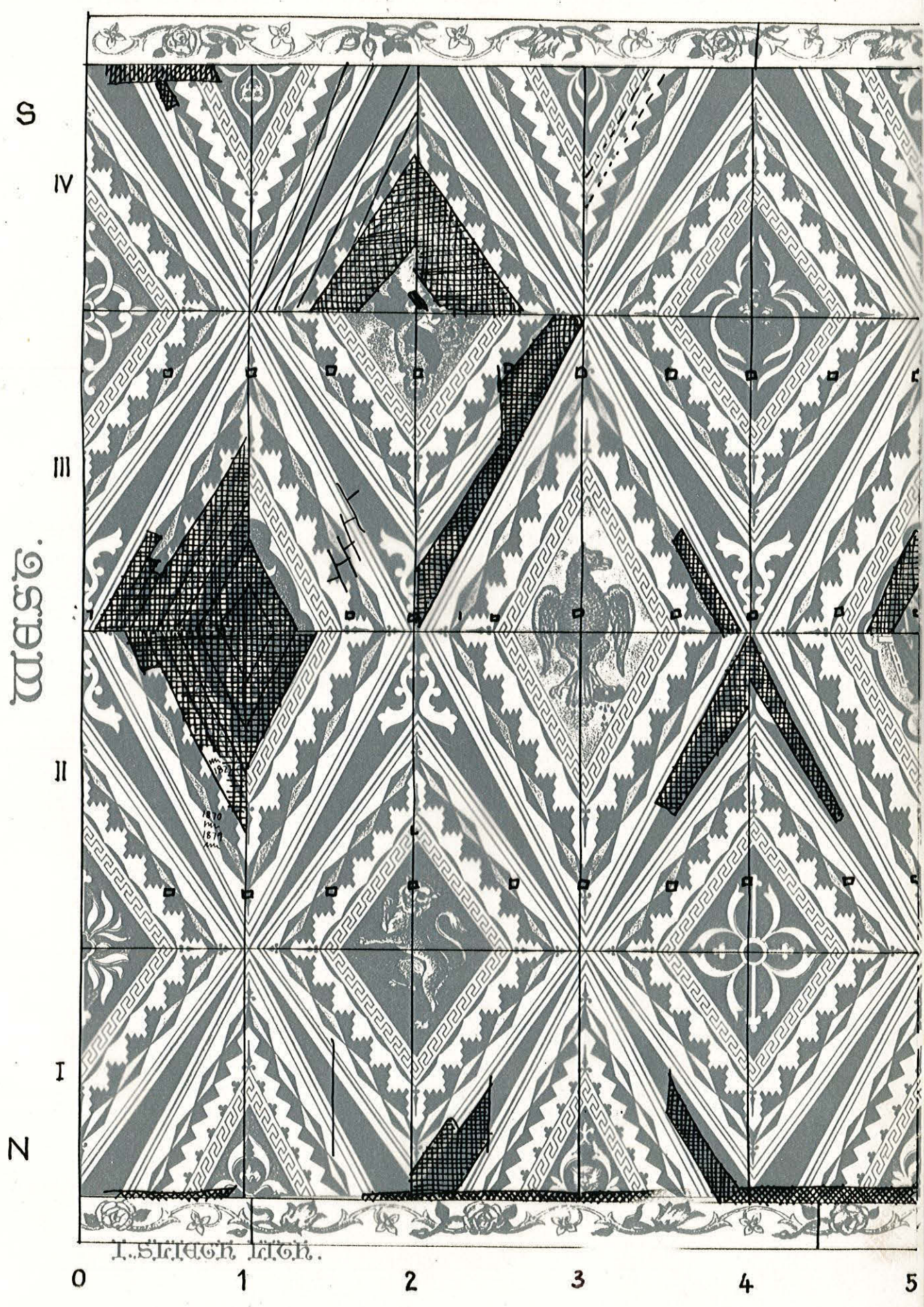
Key:

 Supposed repair  
of the boards  
inclusive repainting

 Holes, cracks, gaps

 Damage caused by  
woodboring insects

  Bolts



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III

II

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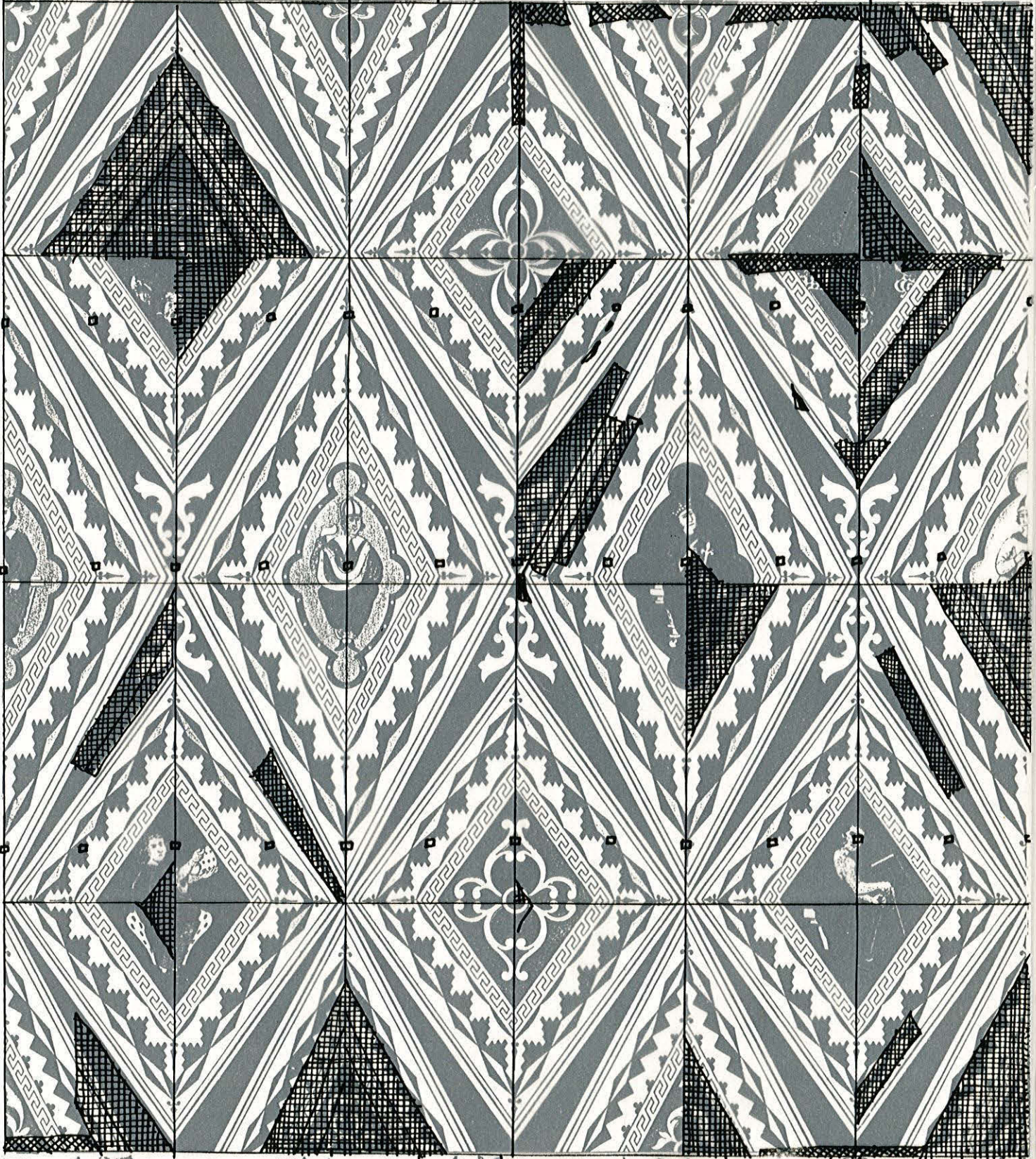
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I. Strachan & Co.



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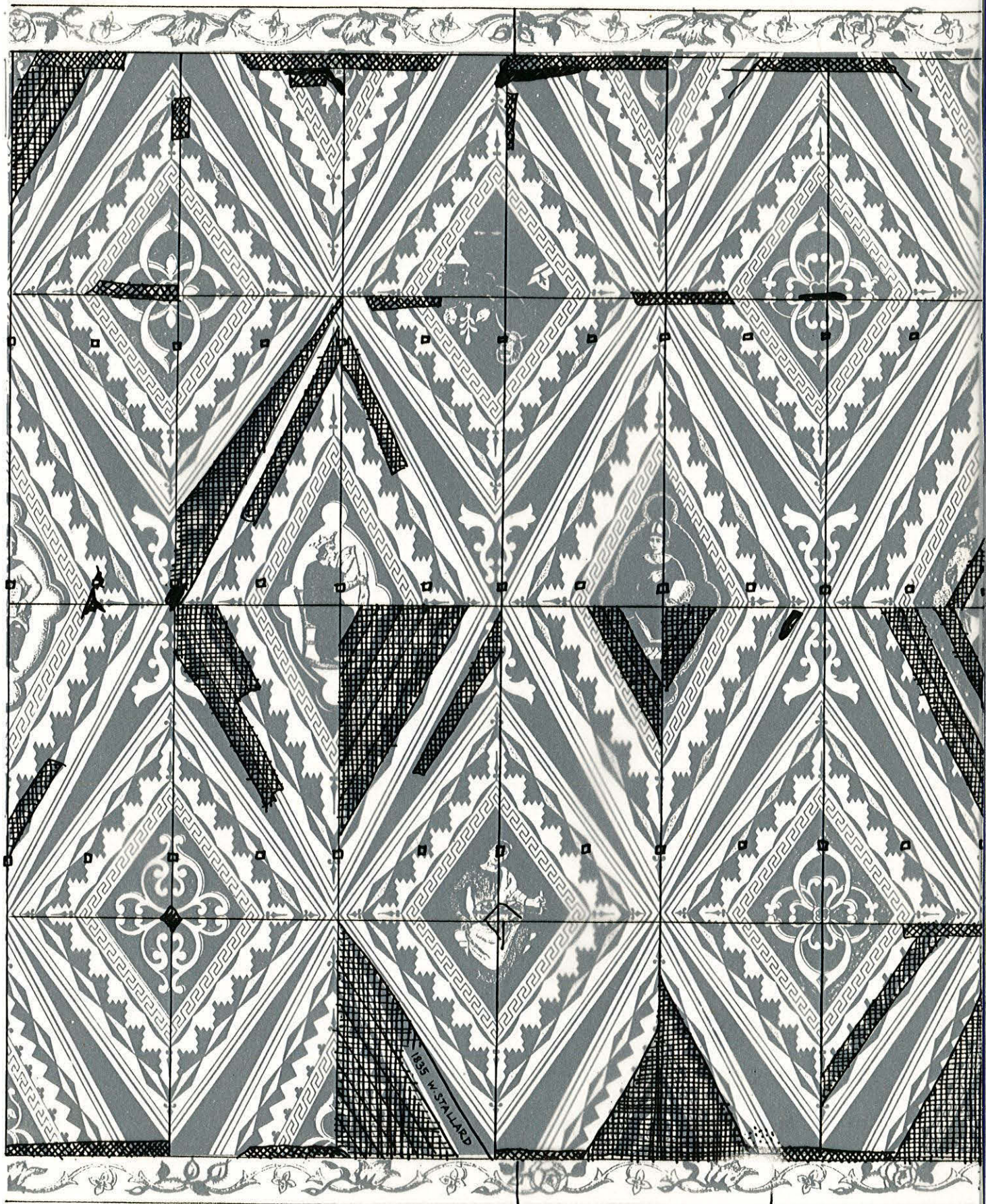
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# ANCIENT CELLS



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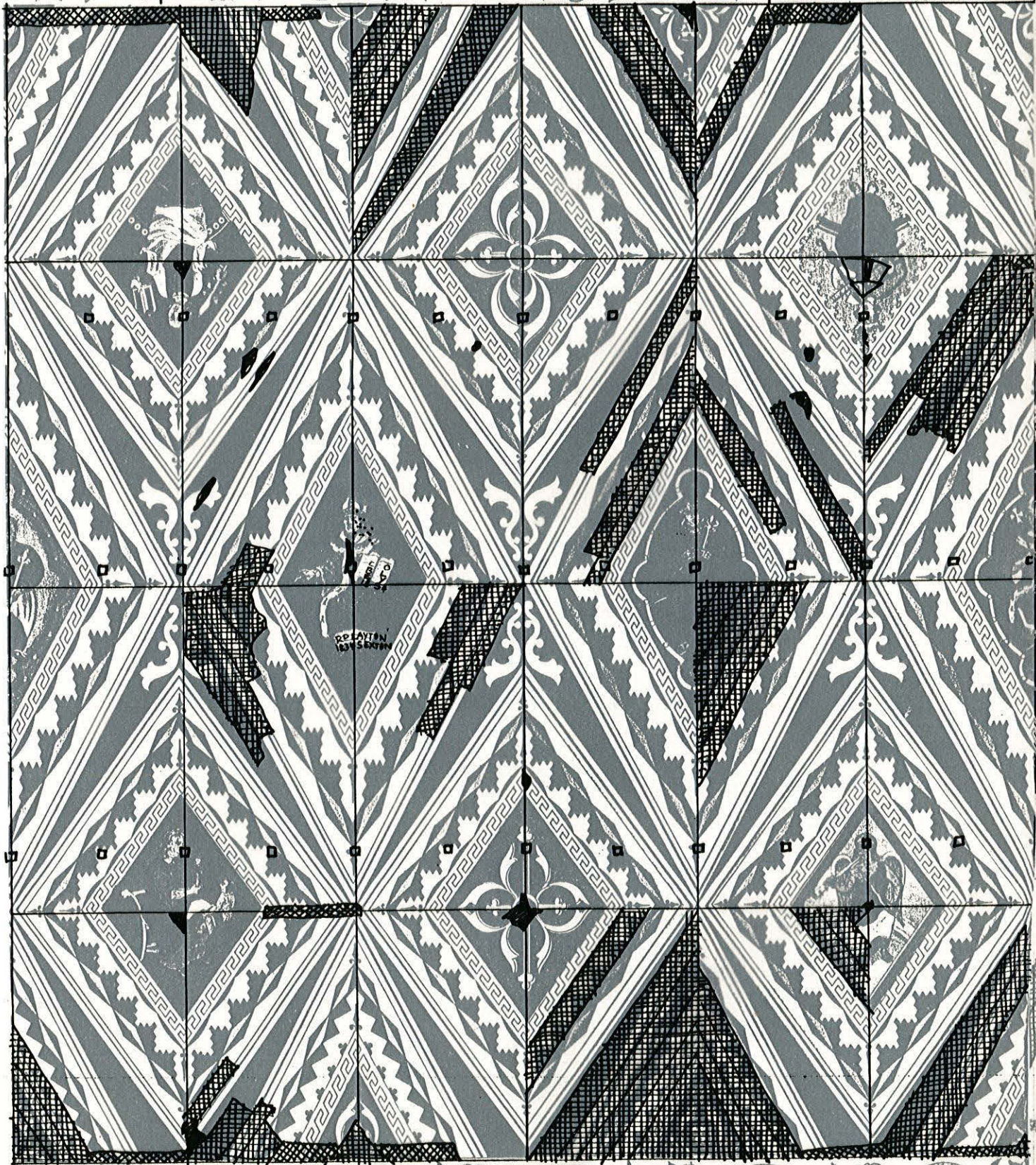
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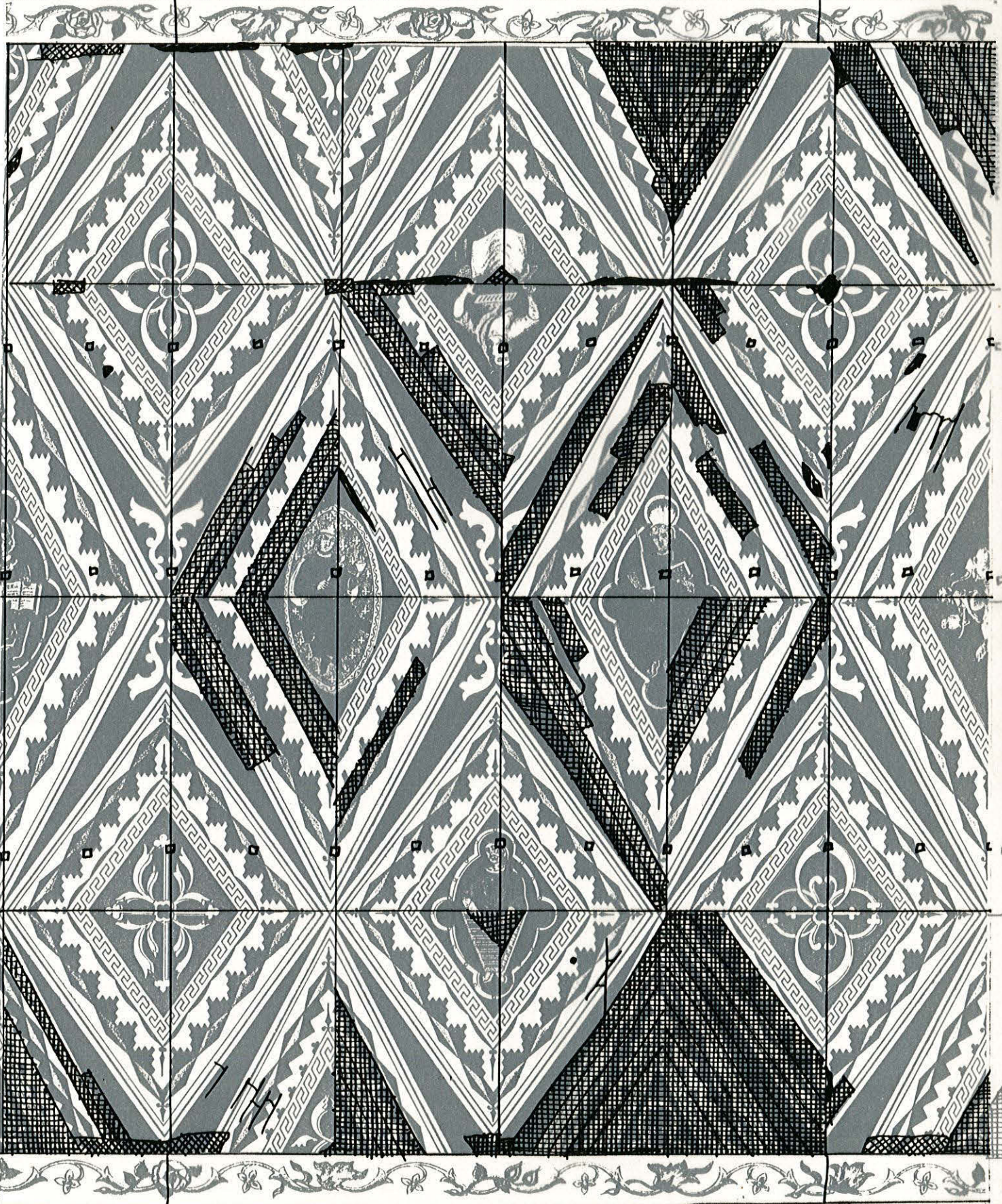
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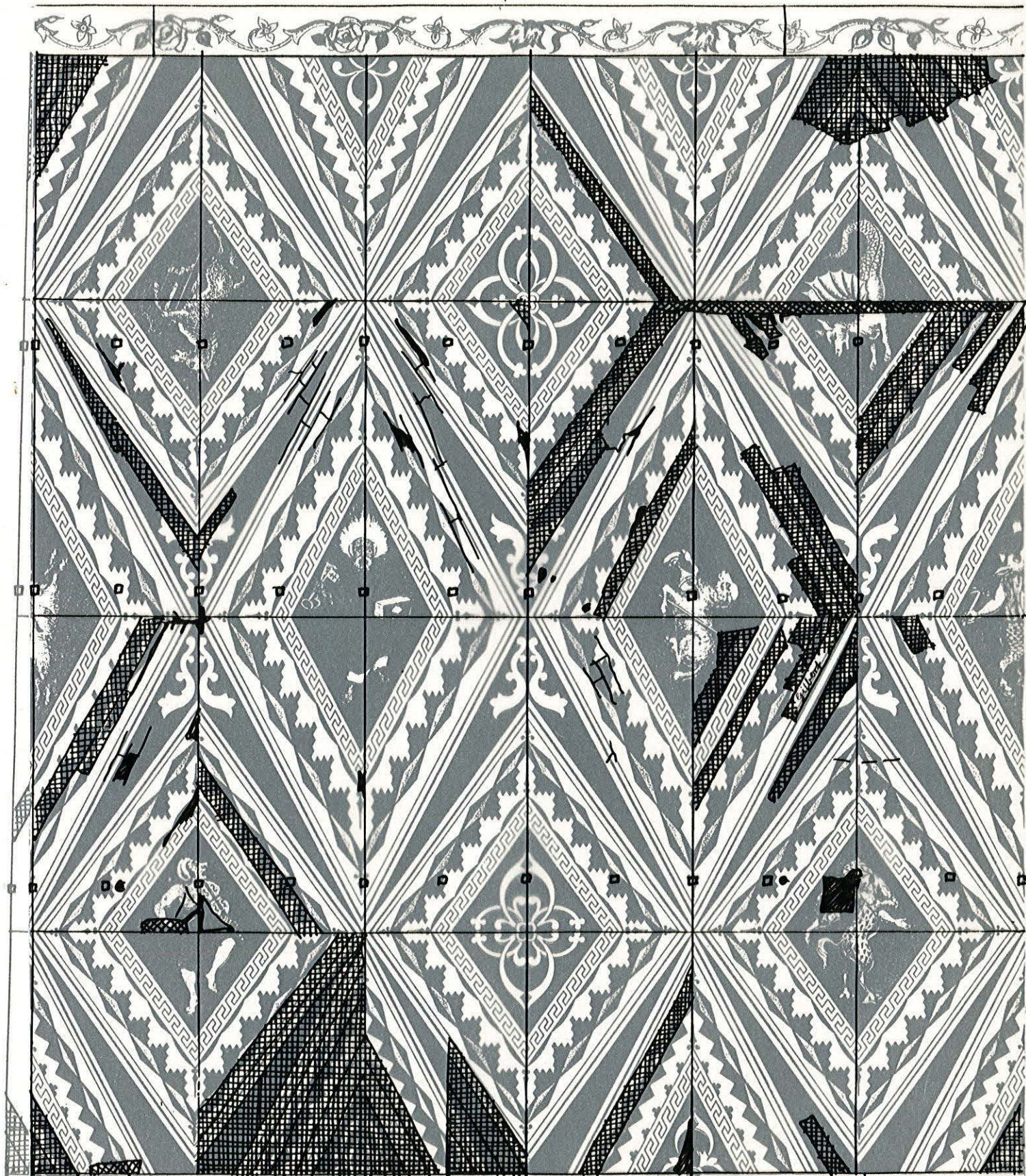
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# Gr. CATHEDRAL.





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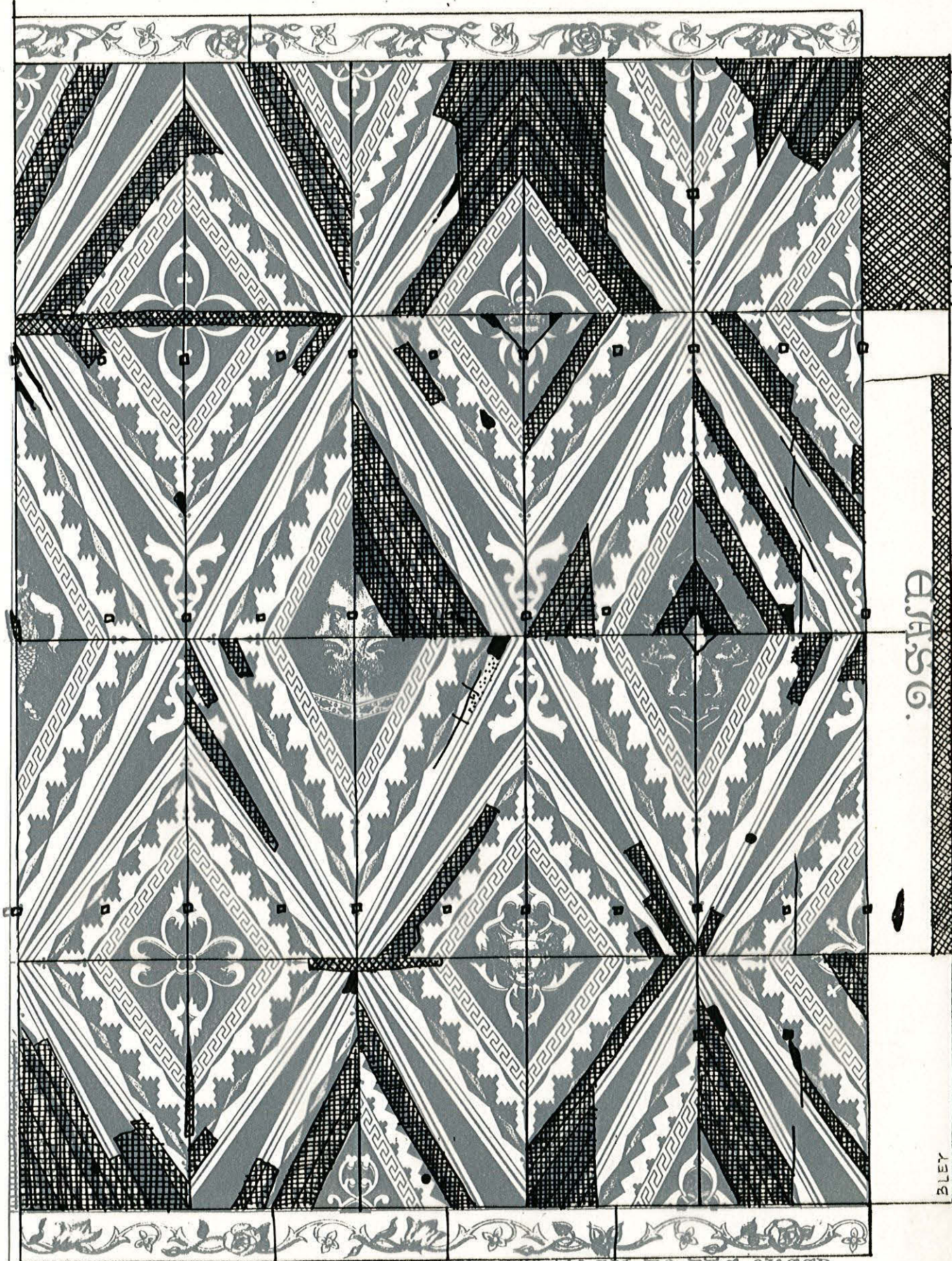
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A.1556.

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DAVIDSON, ARCHT. & CO. 60 CH. QUARR.

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