

EVAN NESBIT
/'kɑːræzəm/



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ROBERTS & TILTON

Sensitive Surfaces

Gaby Collins Fernandez

To treat painting as a mirror, and art as a representation of the world that can be decoded, is a great assumption. The codes are there, indicating thickets of information and familiar enigmas, but if the work is related to life, the experience will be of the same kind of immersive, inchoate soup as is produced by the experience of repeating your name enough times that the confluence of “Gaby” and “me” is ludicrous, or in the surprise of managing to tickle your own skin. Here, the only pertinent tool is focus because it is able to – momentarily – parse received data while not compromising the shifting boundaries of space and stuff.

An alternative: let’s treat art as a moment of clarity in a mode which is analogous to life. Art is made of the same materials as everything else; it is of the world and close to me. But it also creates enough distance to make a comparison, enough of a separation to build a relationship. We move back and forth between these two assertions. Art’s ability to make any kind of claim comes from this dual implicatedness, very-close-to and very-far-away-from.

Oscillation runs the risk of boredom, confusion, impatience, incurring the social wrath towards flip-floppers. It is hardly a conversational practice because you can’t answer back to between. There is a frustration: *just choose*; stop wasting our time and live your life accordingly, onward, forward. As with any binary, the terms begin to feel arbitrary. *Why* “front” and “back” and not “westward” and “eastward,” “left” and “right,” even “shown” and “hidden?” Flip enough and the mind seems to hold on to the sides and the flip. It’s a sleight of hand; the time it takes to move from back to front makes a space. It becomes clear that we need fronts and backs knowing that the words are bad, too evenly split. Stabilize a few definitions first, in order to more accurately experience an intertwining – of what? Towards what?

Evan Nesbit’s paintings make a claim for a kind of inevitable and yet irreducible dependency. The “pend” in depend is the same as in pendant, pending, a hanging or suspension, so “depend,” a hanging influenced by the weight of what is attached. The literalism of the paintings’ fronts being their backs creates a surface which is neither painting’s traditional “front” nor “back,” while retaining the memory of both. When an image appears in the work, it is made of – requires – paint and painting gestures, but the point of paint and painting gestures isn’t to make an image. Image hovers alongside the work’s materiality the way blueness hovers prismatically “around” the color-uninterested atomic structure of the sky. Gesture is a record, but also decorative. Painting lives and dies with its substrate.

The logic of the paintings has to do with an unreciprocal inversion. It is not a matter of simply turning things around. In the turning, there are a number of elements which remain unaccounted for in the paintings’ making and how they look, or which become exposed. (What is the psychology of working additively on what is, essentially, the negative of a painting? The netting of the substrate catches the physical shift, becomes a grid, a behavioral map.) The lack of reciprocity of ostensibly commensurate gestures is a rhythm I recognize from life, where attempts to measure what friends “do” for each other quickly fall short. Or even in the stark difference in how it feels to hold someone and how it feels to be held. To think of gestures as independent in the world seems ridiculous. The dependence at work in this kind of admission feels like a kind of owning up, a decidedly un-deluded approach to the sensorial realities of our bodies.

One reason why talking about painting in this way is so important is because of vision’s longtime alliance with perspective, that is, the outward quality of vision: organization, placement, differentiation, order. To understand vision as tactile is to make it a surface, and a sensitive surface at that. Imagine a world of outstretched retinas instead of ocular object-qualities. The effect would be to relinquish the claim of vision to reason, rationality, truth via observation. The touch-quality of vision is already colloquial in the language of gazes, be they shy, violating, direct, averted, quizzical, arousing, suggestive. It requires only an expansion of the imagination to extend this kind of understanding.

The paintings also stretch the two-dimensionality of surface into the temporal realm. Rather than assert the paintings’ objecthood, Evan’s focus on surface inversions allows me to read even the dimensional experience of the work as surface. There’s a loosening of the hold that the rectangle usually has over viewership because the edges of the work do not demarcate the ends of the painting. Once this boundary has been blurred, the arbitrariness of excluding the wall, my own retina, my skin, your skin, the room, etc., is undeniable. Every surface is active.

/'kæræzəm/ - Chiasm

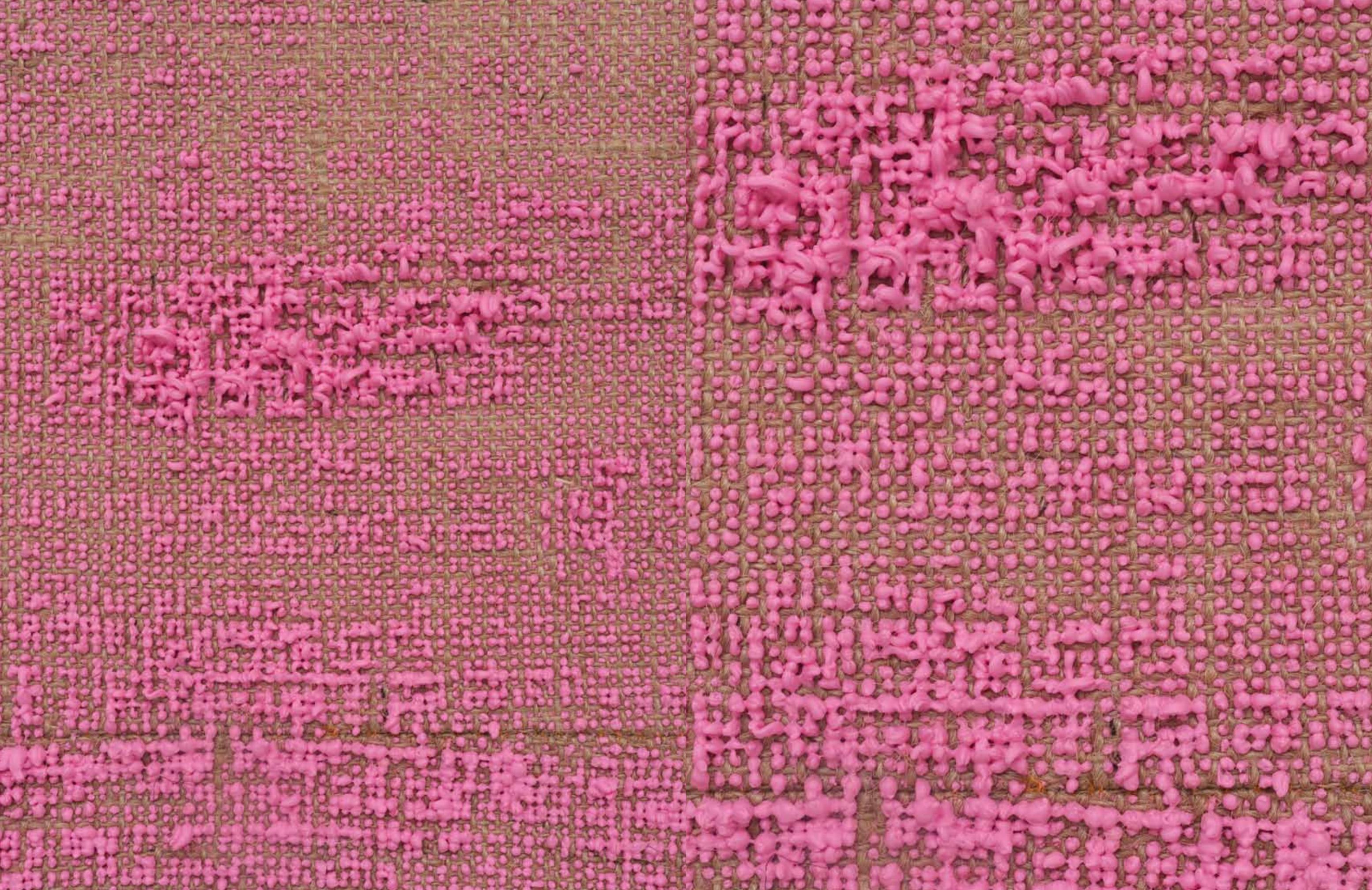
n. pl. chi-as-ma, or chi-as-ma-ta also, chi-asms

1. From the text, *The Intertwining – The Chiasm*, by French phenomenologist Merleau-Ponty. Within this text Merleau-Ponty describes haptic and sensorial experiences of our body as the primary site for understanding and engaging within the world. Our bodies are enveloped within this world and our consciousness stitched and seemed together through tactile and sensate experience.

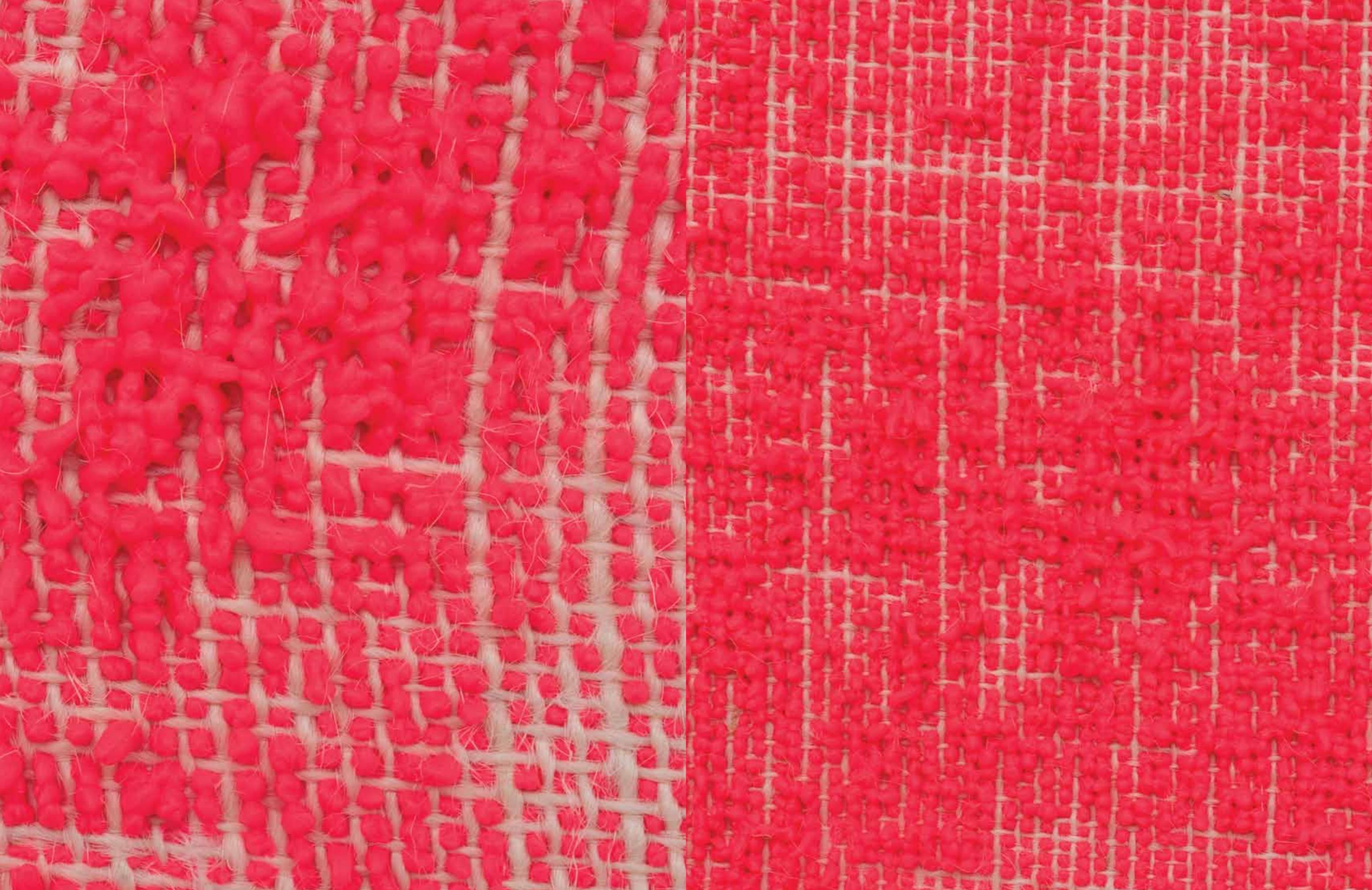
2. *Optical chiasm* The first point of contact between out left and right optical nerves in the brain to produce our stereoscopic perception.

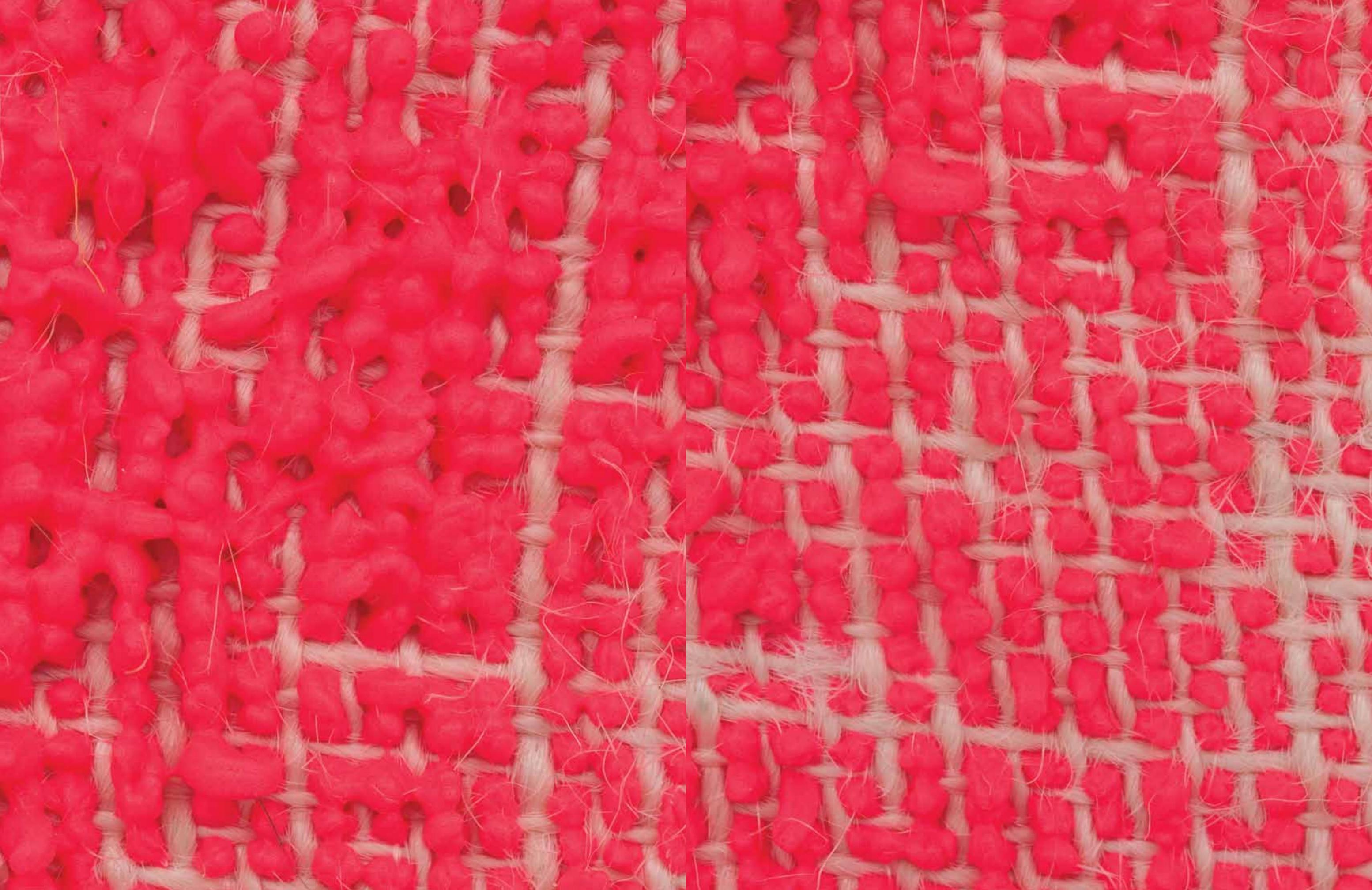
[Origin: Maurice Merleau-Ponty (French: [mɔʁis mɛʁlɔpɔ̃ti] 1908 - 1961)]

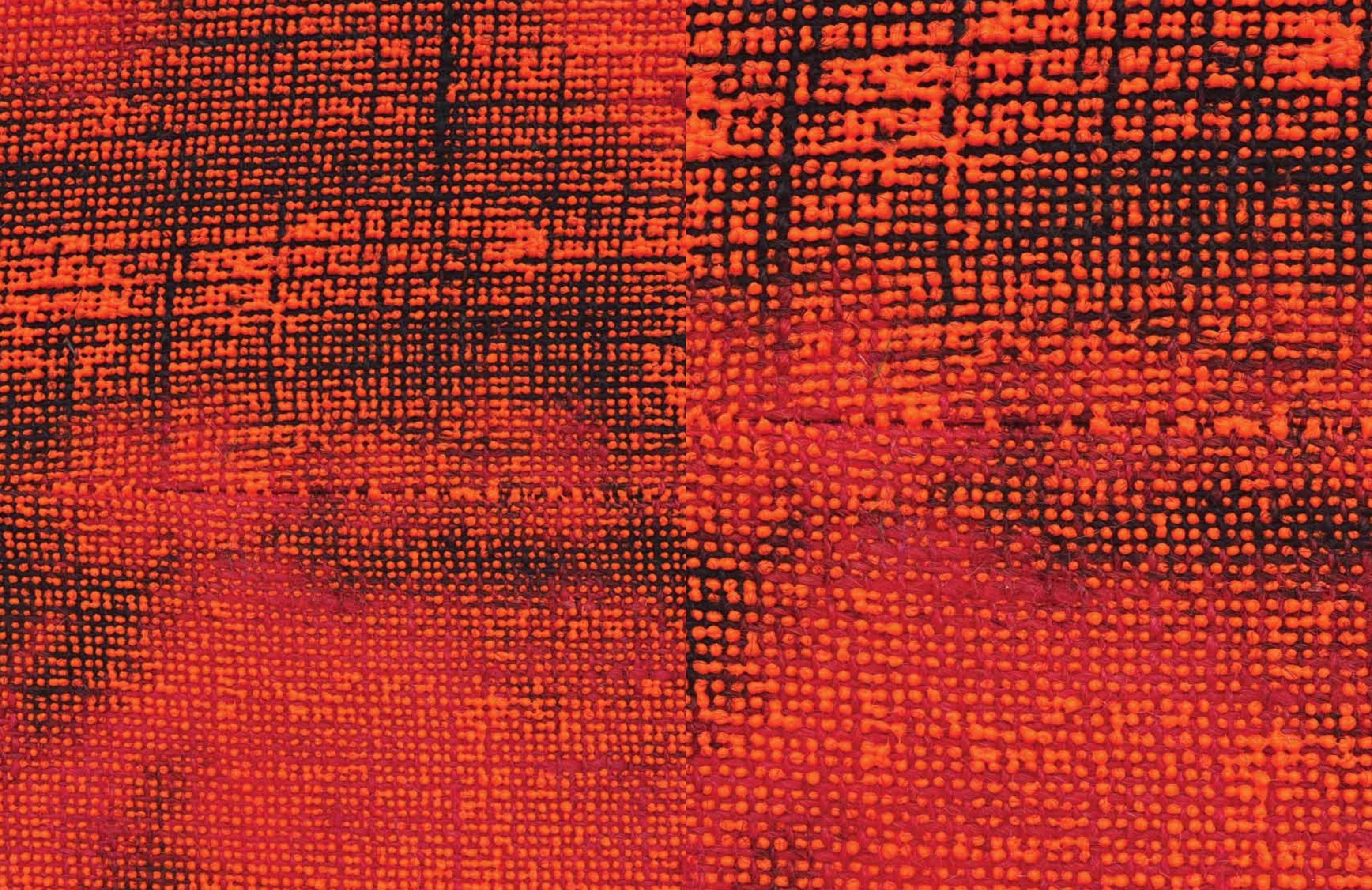
chi-as'mal, chi-as'mic, chi'as-matic (-māt'ik) adj.



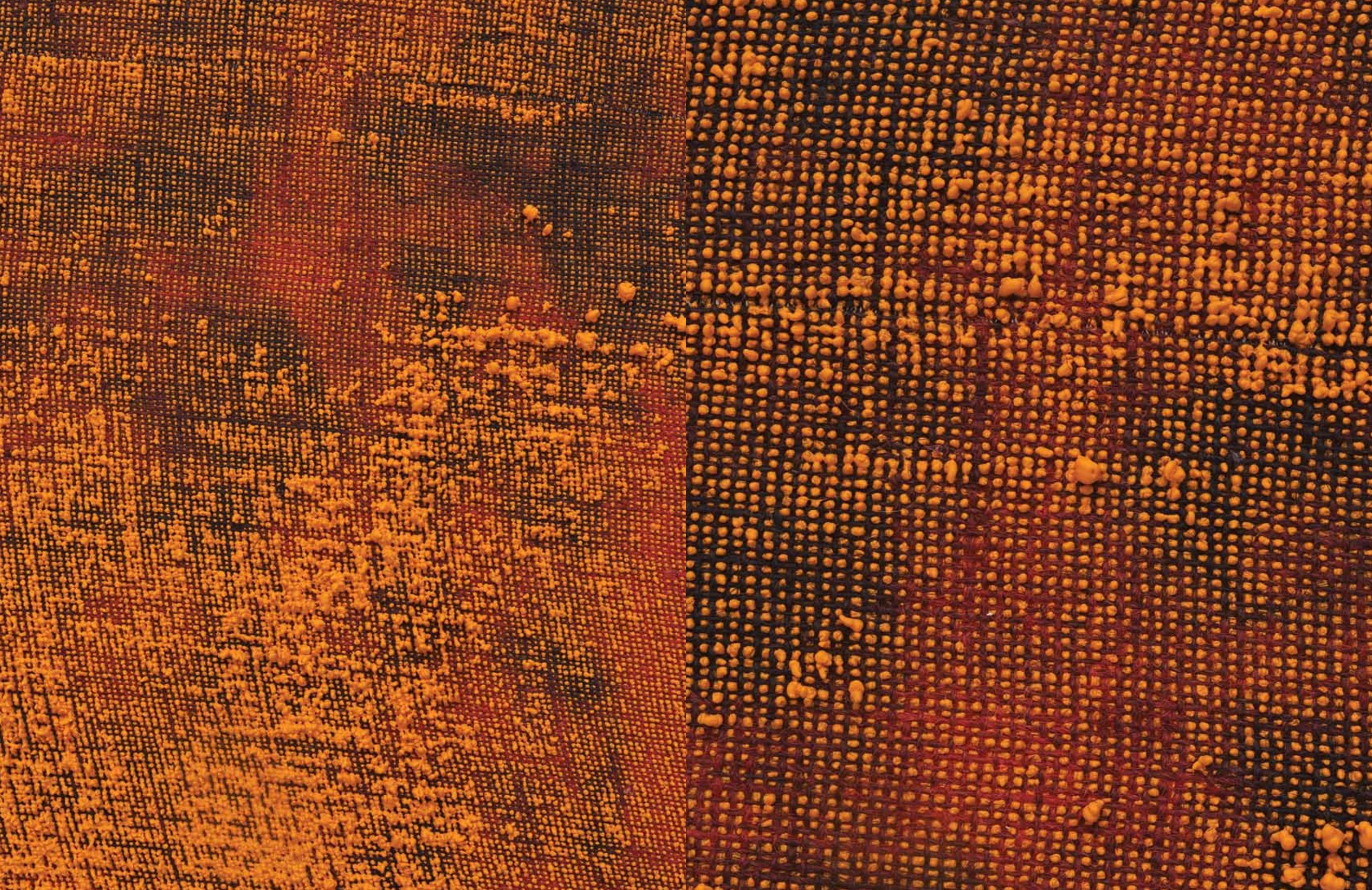


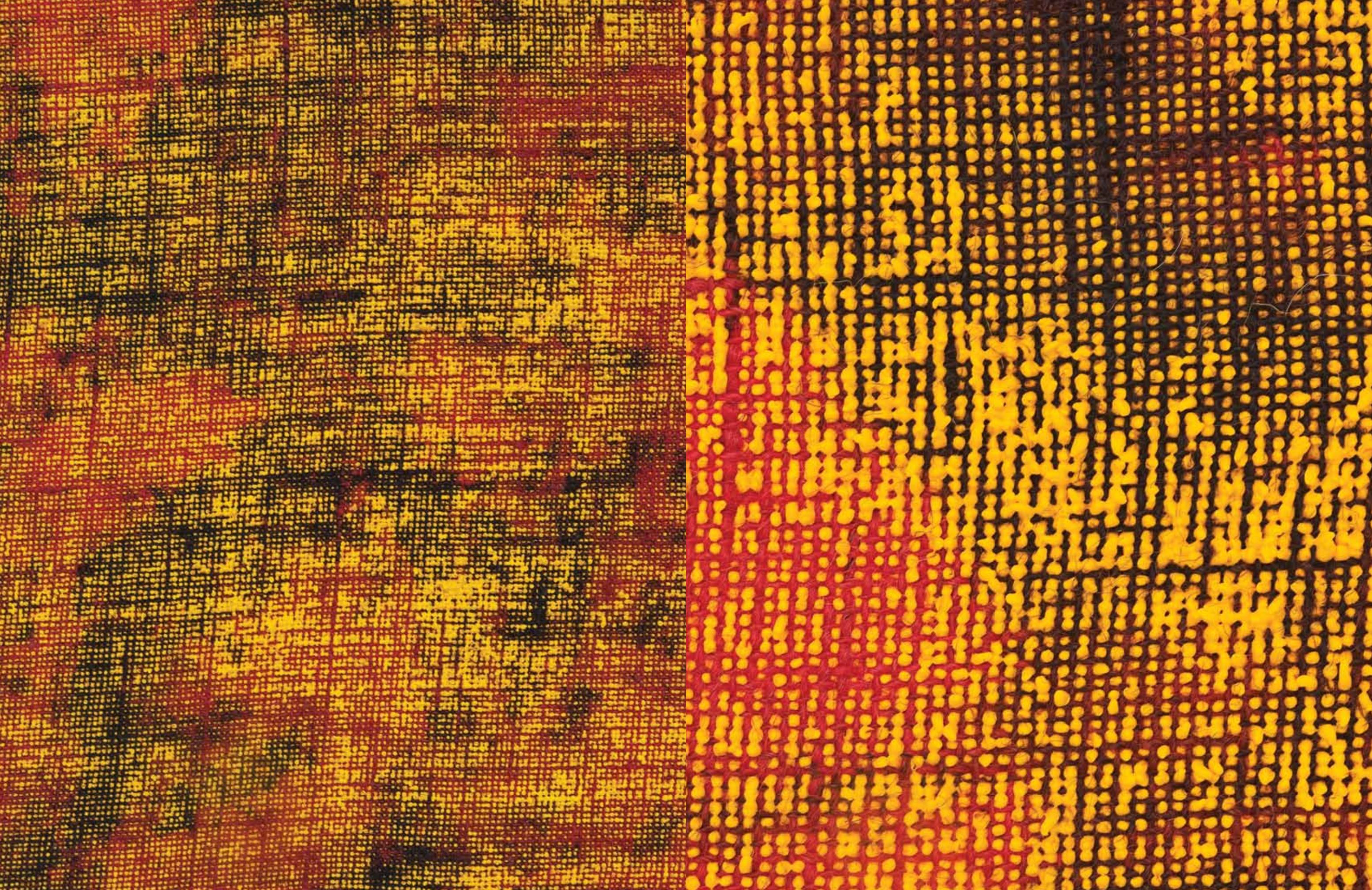


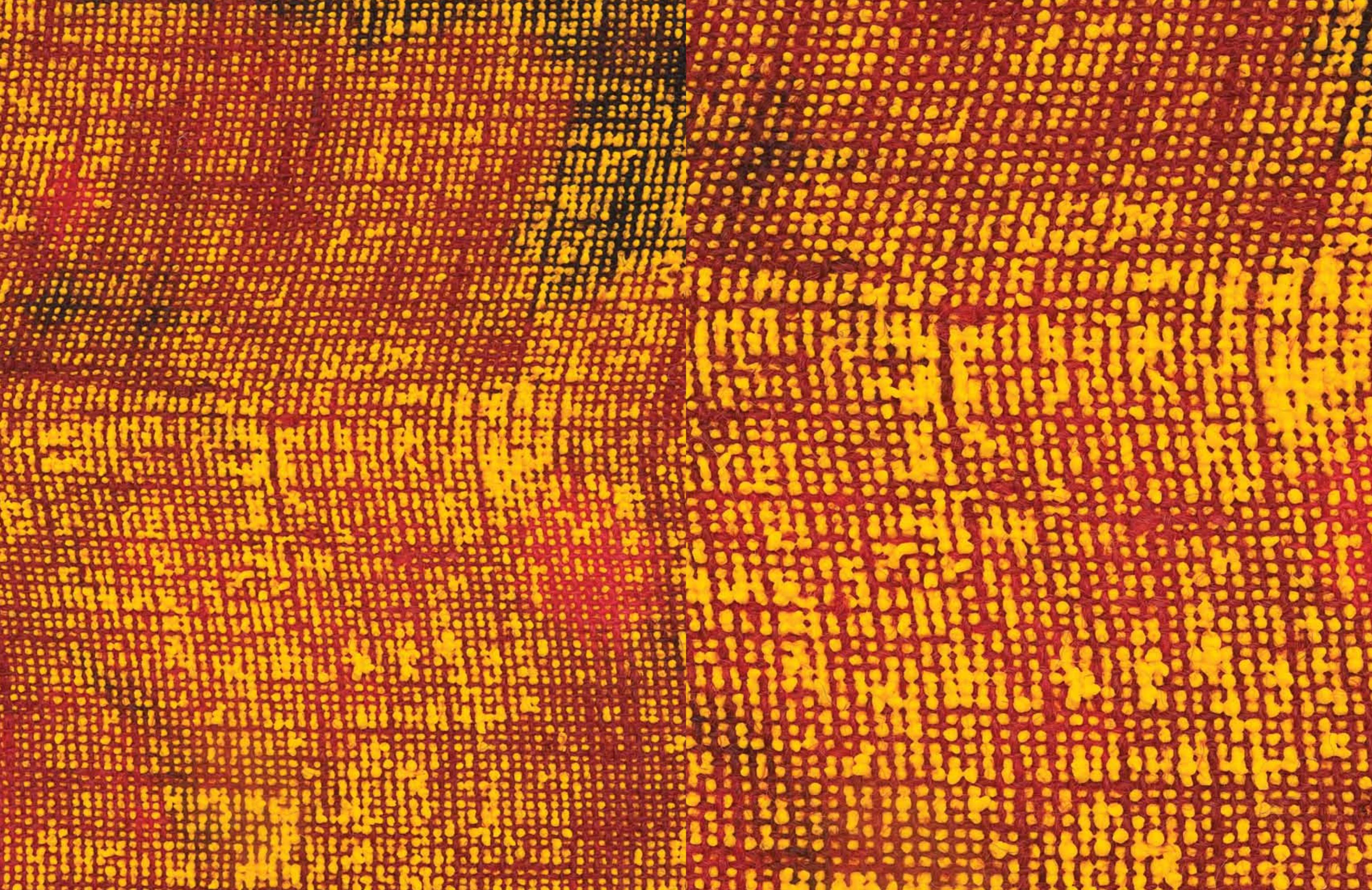


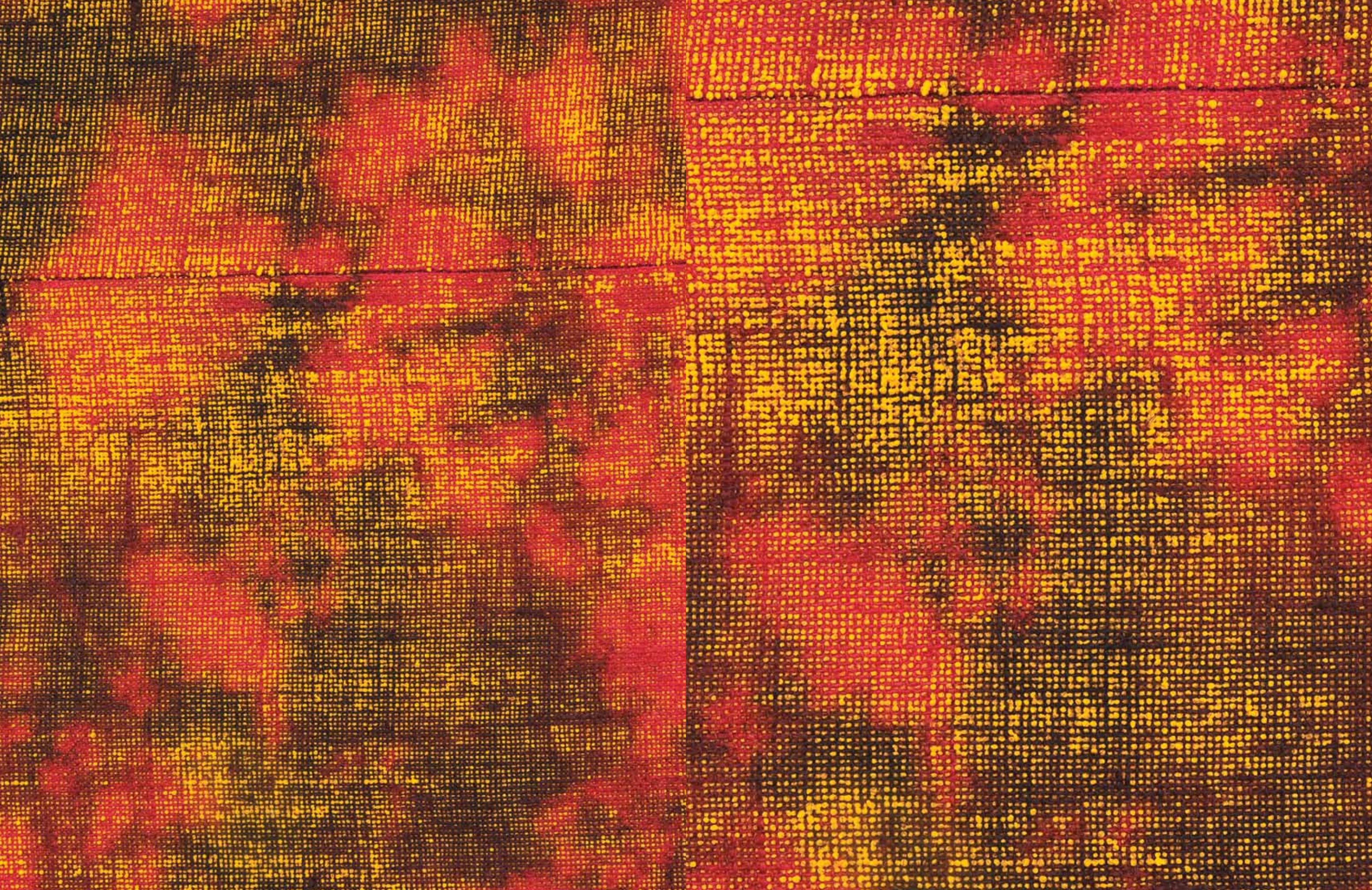


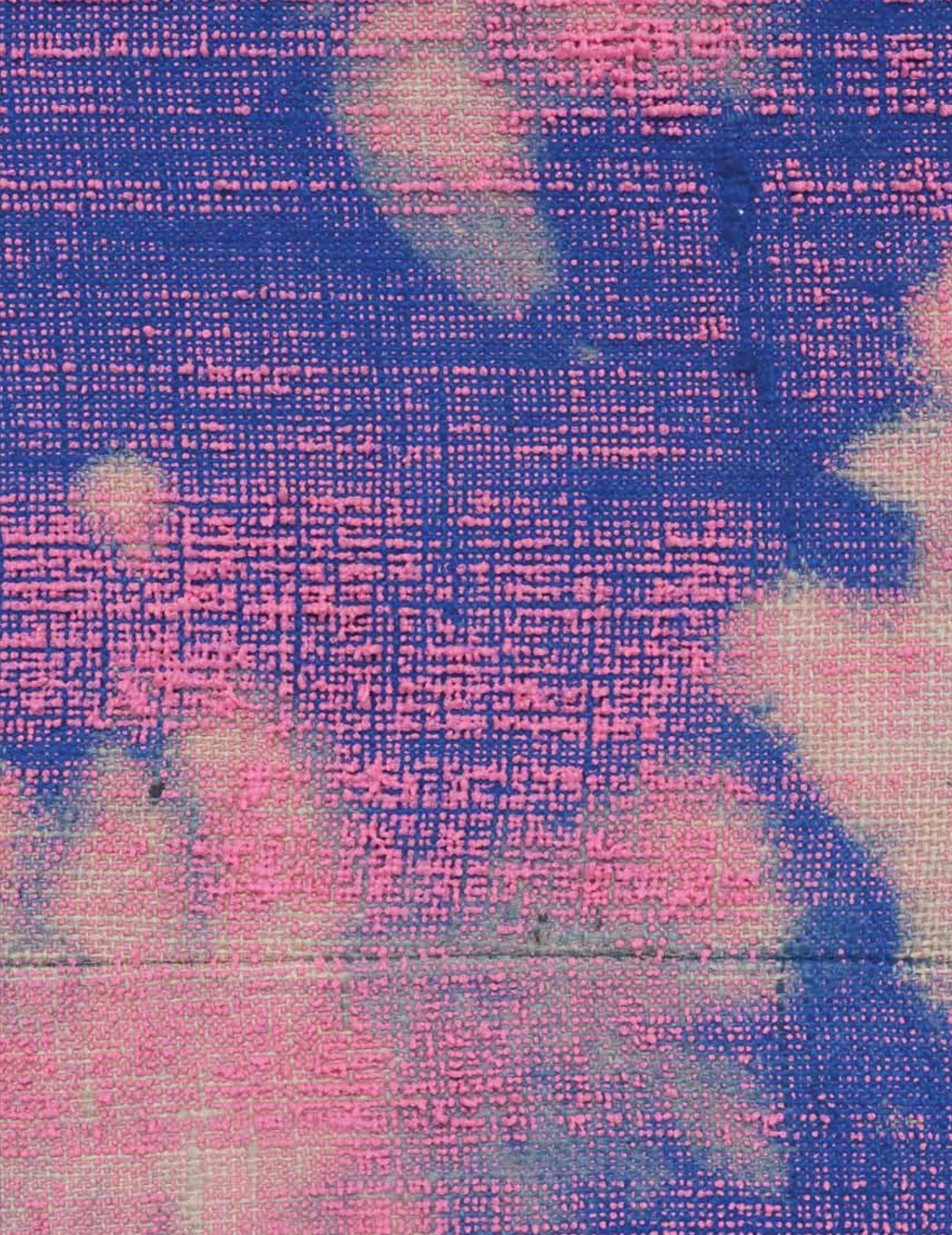


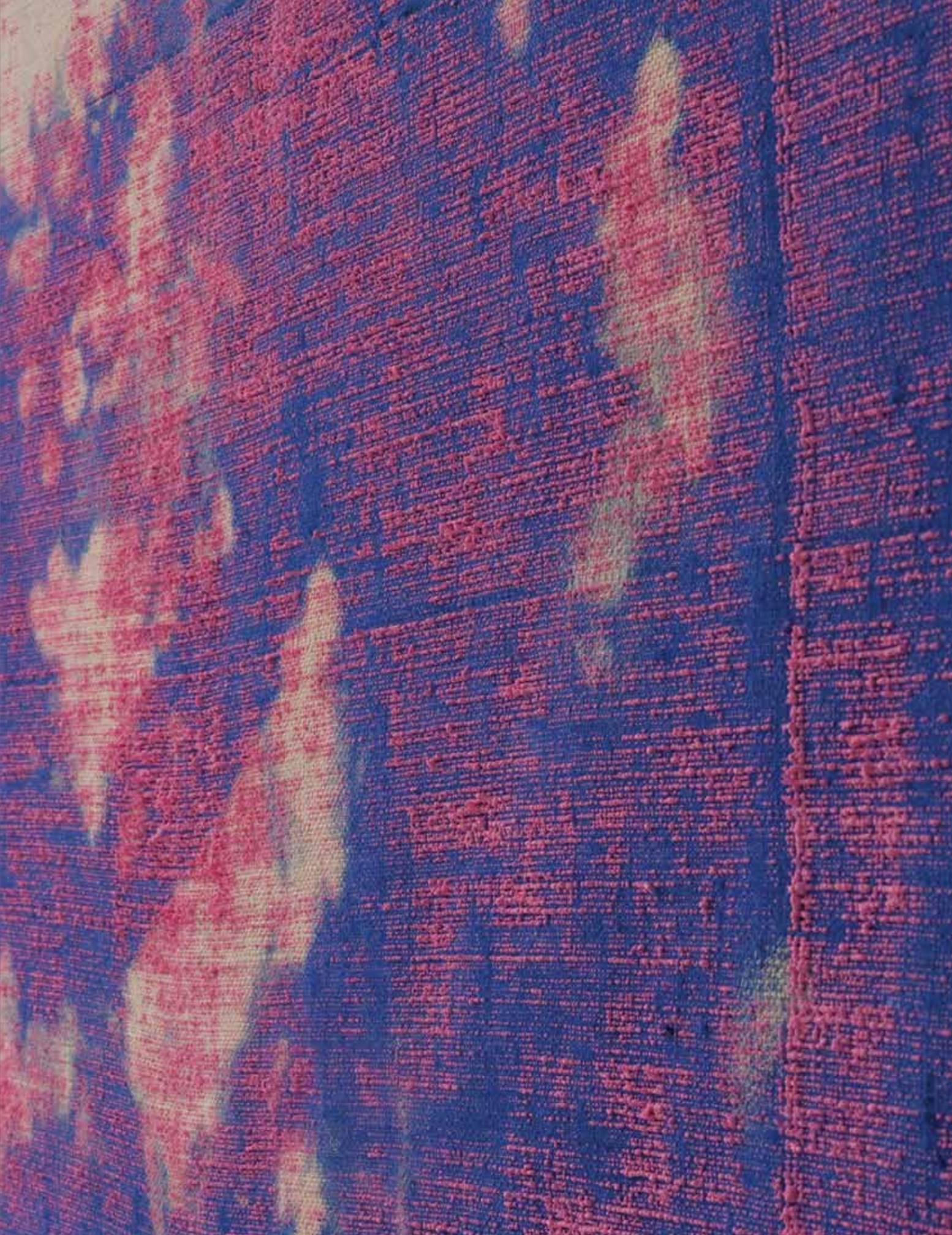


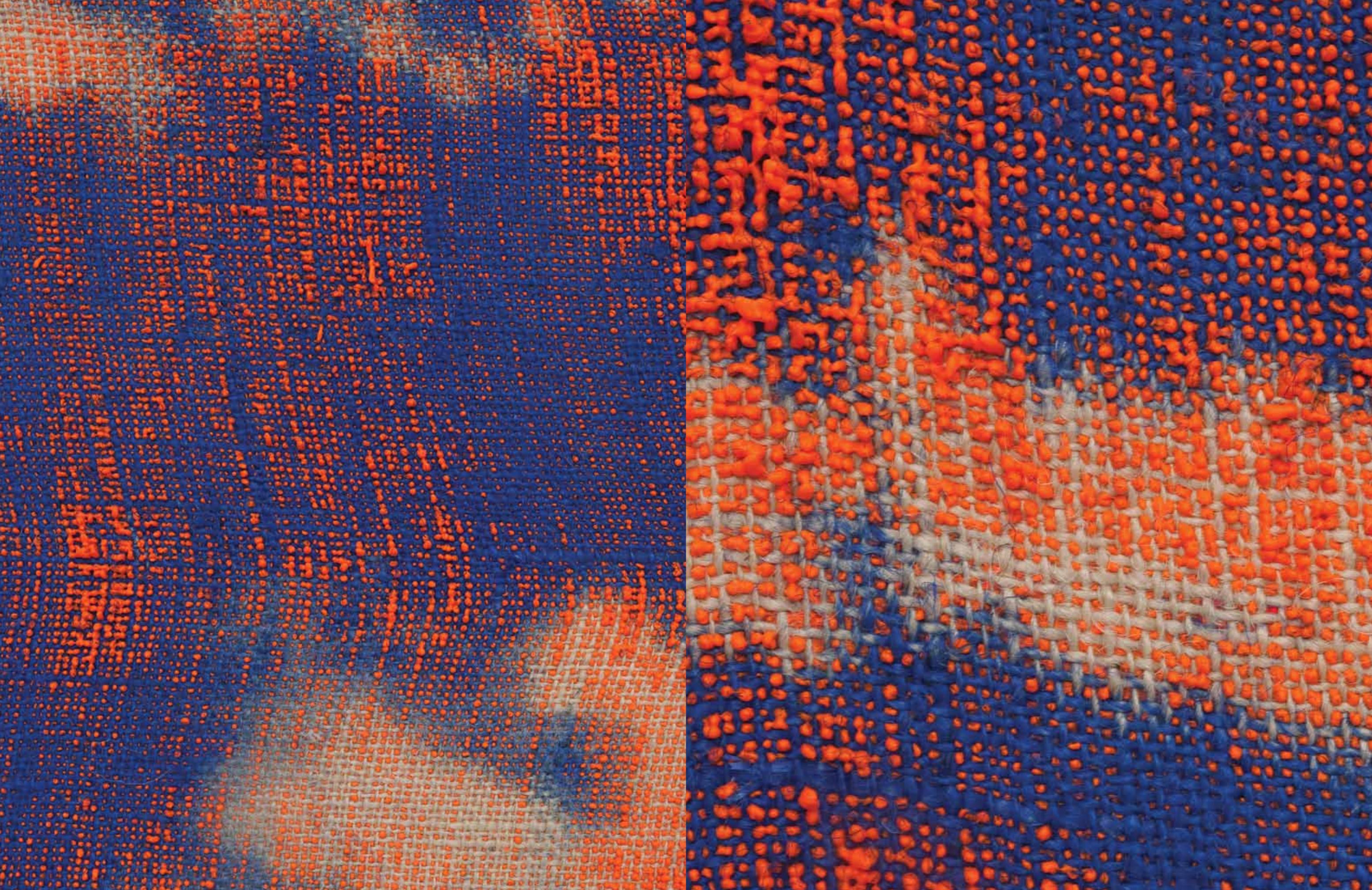


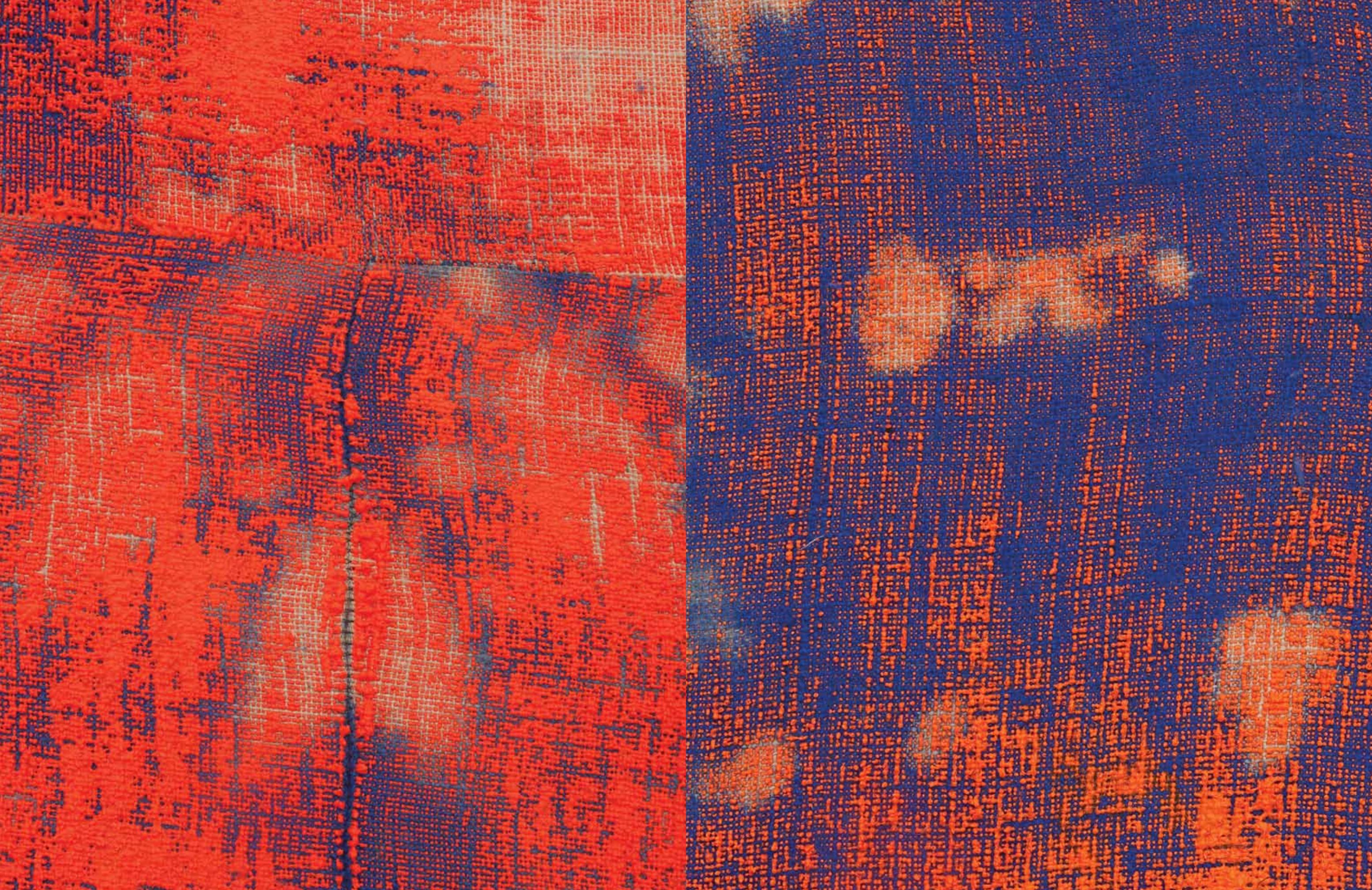


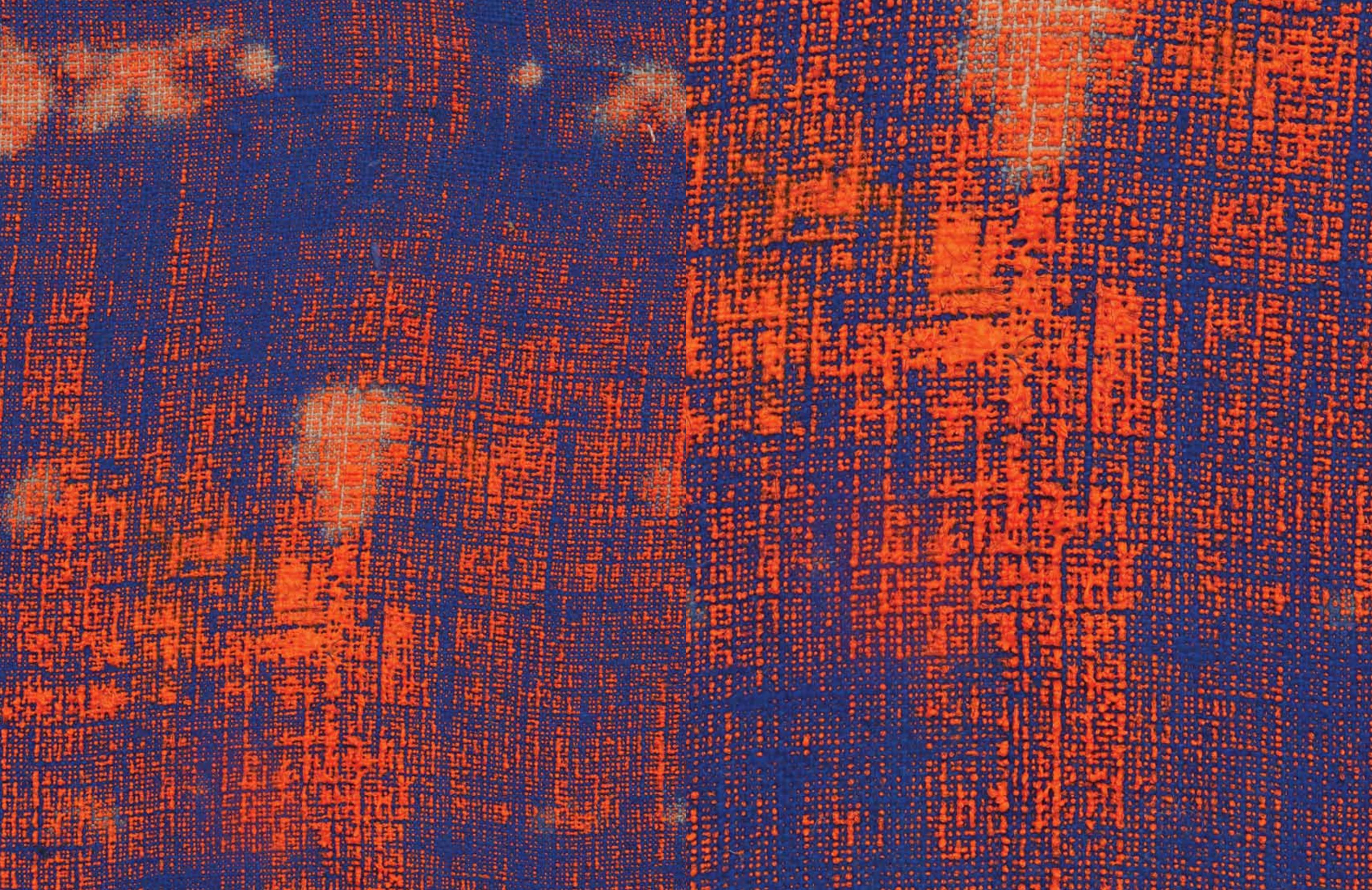


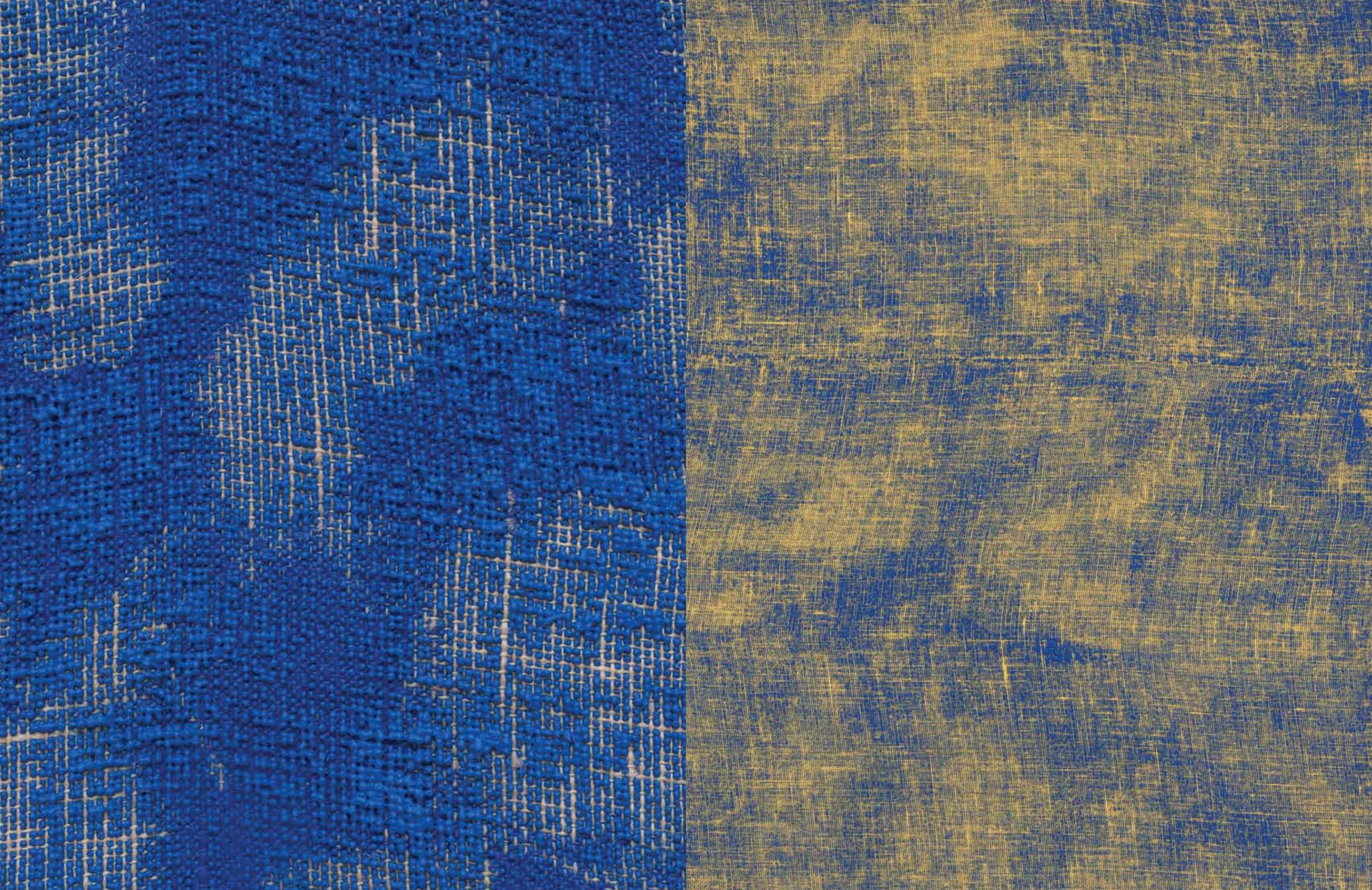
















Porosity (Blue), 2014
Acrylic and burlap
79 x 68 in (200.66 x 172.72 cm)



Porosity (Daisy Bell), 2014
Acrylic, dye and burlap
79 x 68 in (200.66 x 172.72 cm)



Porosity (50/50), 2013
Acrylic and burlap
79 x 68 in (200.66 x 172.72 cm)



Porosity (Bay Leaves and Sandalwood Study), 2014
Acrylic and burlap
44 x 36 in (109.22 x 91.44 cm)



Porosity (BLk yLo), 2013
Acrylic and burlap
79 x 68 in (200.66 x 172.72 cm)



Porosity (Manic Panic), 2014
Acrylic, dye and burlap
79 x 68 in (200.66 x 172.72 cm)



Porosity (Bay Leaves and Sandalwood II), 2014
Acrylic, dye and burlap
79 x 68 in (200.66 x 172.72 cm)



Porosity (Flo/PINK), 2014
Acrylic and burlap
60 x 48 in (152.4 x 121.92 cm)



Porosity (BLu/yLo), 2014
Acrylic and burlap
60 x 48 in (152.4 x 121.92 cm)



Porosity (Pink), 2014
Acrylic and burlap
79 x 68 in (200.66 x 172.72 cm)



Porosity (Black), 2014
Acrylic and burlap
62.5 x 51 in (158.75 x 129.54 cm)



Porosity (Blood Cells), 2014
Acrylic and burlap
62.5 x 51 in (158.75 x 129.54 cm)



Porosity (Saccadic), 2014
Acrylic and burlap
60 x 48 in (152.4 x 121.92 cm)



Untitled (YELLOW), 2014
Acrylic and burlap
60 x 48 in (152.4 x 121.92 cm)



Porosity (Bay Leaves and Sandalwood), 2014
Acrylic, dye and burlap
79 x 68 in (200.66 x 172.72 cm)



Porosity (Push), 2014
Acrylic and burlap
62.5 x 51 in (158.75 x 129.54 cm)



Porosity (Red/Orange), 2013
Acrylic and burlap
45.12 x 37.38 in (114.6 x 94.9 cm)



Untitled (GRN/YLO), 2013
Acrylic, dye and burlap
50 x 38 in (127 x 96.52 cm)



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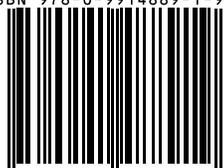
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