A Rule-Based Design

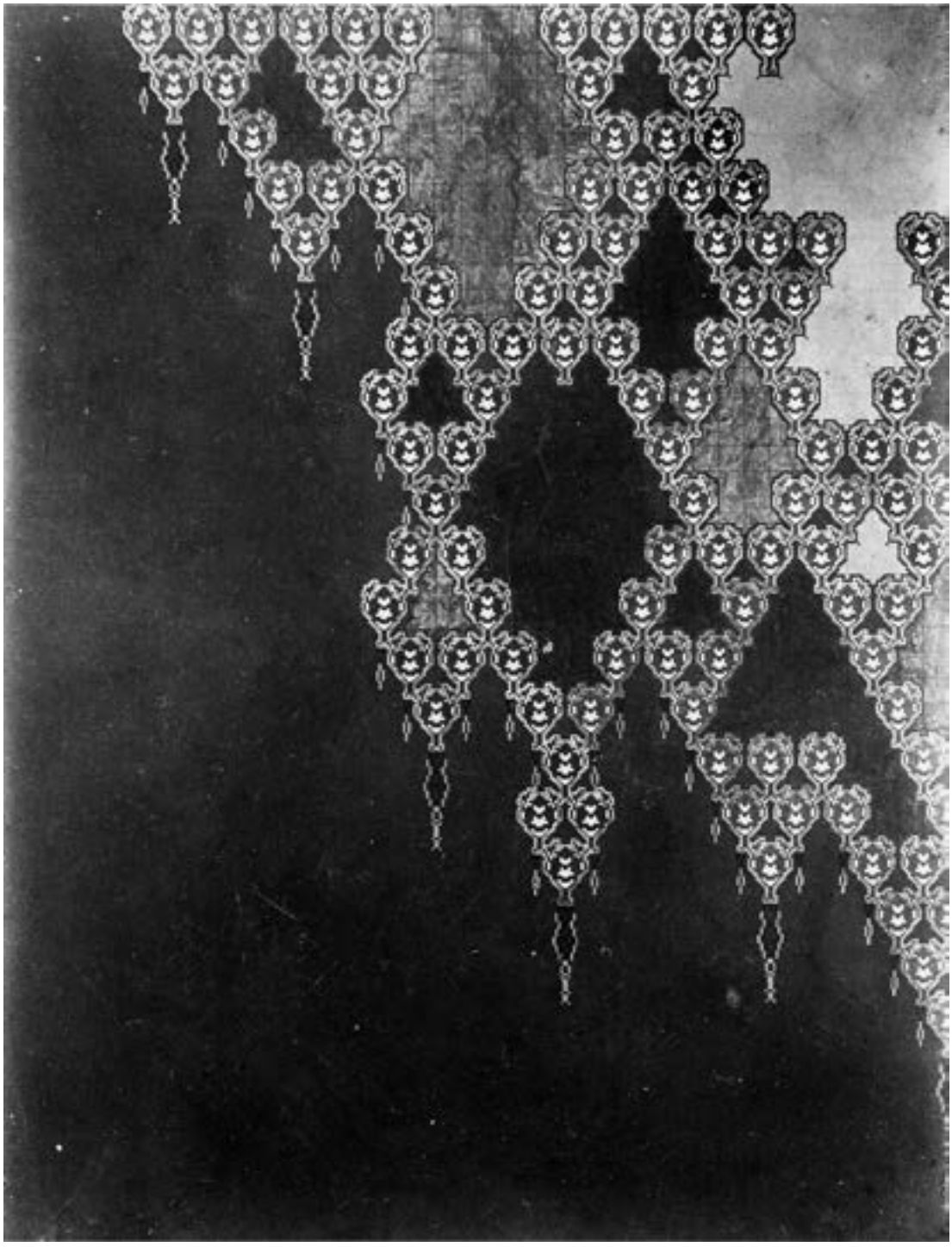

Figure 63. Untitled carpet design, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam.

The Colenbrander collections of the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam include a folder that contains two black-and-white photographs, each of which shows a carpet quarter design. Neither photograph is labeled, but one of the designs is *Tulp 1*. (See the chapter "Tulp 1" for more information on this design.) The name of the second design is unknown, but it certainly looks like a work by Colenbrander. The design, shown in Figure 63, appears to consist of multiple instances of a single motif arranged on a grid over approximately half of the design's area. The space between each group of three motif instances is triangular in shape. The interior spaces lacking motif instances are also triangular in shape. The visual flow of the motif groupings goes "down" the length of the design; this flow is accentuated by groupings of small linear motifs that are placed at their ends. In contrast, the triangular-shaped interior spaces, each of which is filled in with a solid color, point "up" the design's length, in the opposite direction of the motif groupings.

The motif used in this design resembles a motif used extensively in *Tulp 1*, and in fact two portions of the motifs' interior are identical, a further indication that both designs are indeed by Colenbrander. The motifs are also similar in size. However, the ways in which they are used in the two designs are quite different.

In appearance, this design is much more structured and rigid than many of Colenbrander's other designs. By removing instances of the motif at various locations, interior spaces of varying sizes are generated that are self-similar in shape, yet different. The overall effect is that of a experiment with the creation of spaces through motif deletion.

Close examination of this design reveals, however, that its composition is more complex than is apparent at first glance. Fifteen different versions of the motif are used to populate the design, and their utilization is strictly dictated by the presence or absence of adjacent motif instances. In fact, this design can be understood as the visualization of a rule.

Figure 64 shows a digital recreation of the motif used to construct the design. The motif is bilaterally symmetrical, eighteen squares in width, and twenty-six squares in length. The width is significant, because each motif instance is placed two squares apart widthwise from every other instance. In other words, each instance takes up twenty squares of space

Figure 64. Base motif used in design.