

HANNATJIE VANDER WAT

IN RETRO

SEVENTY-YEAR CAREER SURVEY (1943 - 2013)

10 May - 22 June 2013

smac
art gallery

SMAC Art Gallery is proud to present a major retrospective exhibition devoted to the artistic career of Hannatjie van der Wat, coinciding with the artist's upcoming 90th birthday.

Van der Wat emerged in the 1960s receiving critical recognition as she began to explore the dynamics of form and colour through painterly and later, post-painterly, geometric abstract compositions. Van der Wat is one of a handful of South African female artists from her generation who embraced abstraction, forging a unique place for herself in the story of South African art.

Hannatjie van der Wat: IN RETRO – A Seventy-Year Career Survey (1943 – 2013) is the first comprehensive review of Van der Wat's art since her 1977 retrospective exhibition in Johannesburg. Bringing together more than a hundred works from public and private collections, the exhibition covers the different periods and various stylistic approaches in her career, beginning with her early formative and scholastic works dating from 1943. After her renewed studies under the artist Sidney Goldblatt (b. 1919-1979), Van der Wat's work evolved from Abstract Expressionism (1963 – 1965) to 'analytical abstractions' (1966 -1967) and geometric hard-edge paintings (1968 – 1977). Van der Wat's geometric abstract works are widely considered to be the highlight of her oeuvre. The artist returned to organic forms in the late seventies, and since the eighties her work is characterized by large colour-saturated canvasses. Throughout, Van der Wat has continued to simultaneously produce colourful paintings consisting of dense painterly surfaces, as well as methodical geometric designs in vibrant colours. Van der Wat often chooses to present her geometric paintings, especially the modular series, in the form of dramatic, monumental installations. She has also successfully turned her hand to ceramic sculptural works and public sculpture.

It is both significant and ironic that Hannatjie van der Wat has received more official recognition for her work in Brazil, than in her own country. In 1994, Van der Wat was awarded a Diploma Academico Honoris Causa from the Brazilian Academy of Fine Arts in Rio de Janeiro, the highest degree for an artist to receive, and in 1997 she was the ninth recipient of their Grande Medalha da Honra, which she shared with the architect Oscar Niemeyer (b. 1907 – 2012). She was honoured again in 2006, when she was named as one of the Ten Women of the Year by the Brazilian National Council of Women, nominated in the Arts Category. These acknowledgements bestowed on Van der Wat from Brazil, emphasise the parallels which remain to be explored between this peculiar generation of African artists and others on the same southern wavelength across the Atlantic.

IN RETRO encapsulates the art of Hannatjie van der Wat, which forms an intrinsic part of a specific period and aesthetic in South African art history. The attraction to this aesthetic meant that van der Wat would continually return, *in retro*, to various styles of abstract painting throughout her career. Van der Wat continues to paint at the age of 89, affirming an unwavering dedication to her art which has lasted for more than seventy years.



Hannatjie van der Wat featured in Vogue South Africa 1966

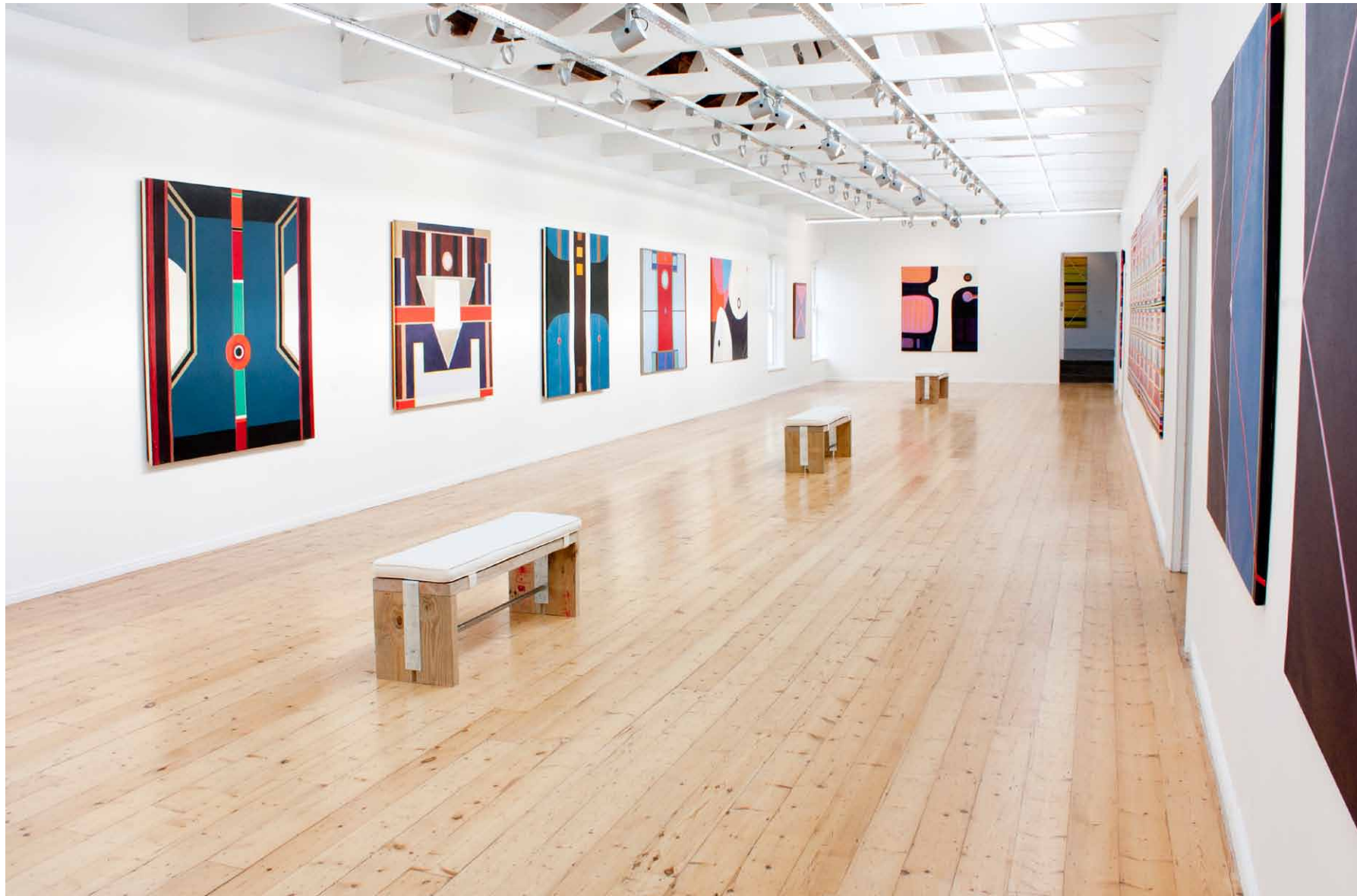
Hannatje van der Wat: *IN RETRO* | Installation View | Sala Grande



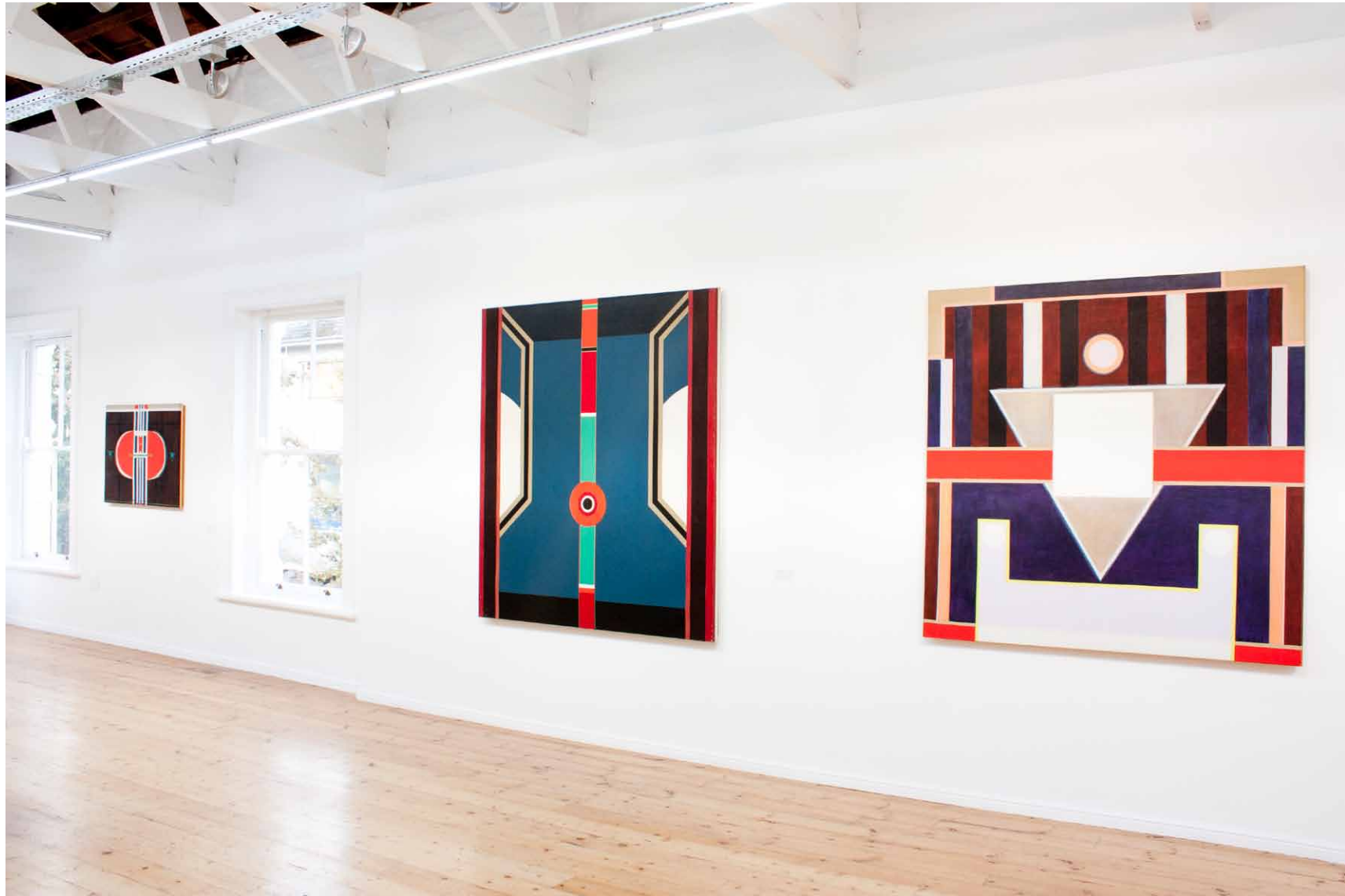
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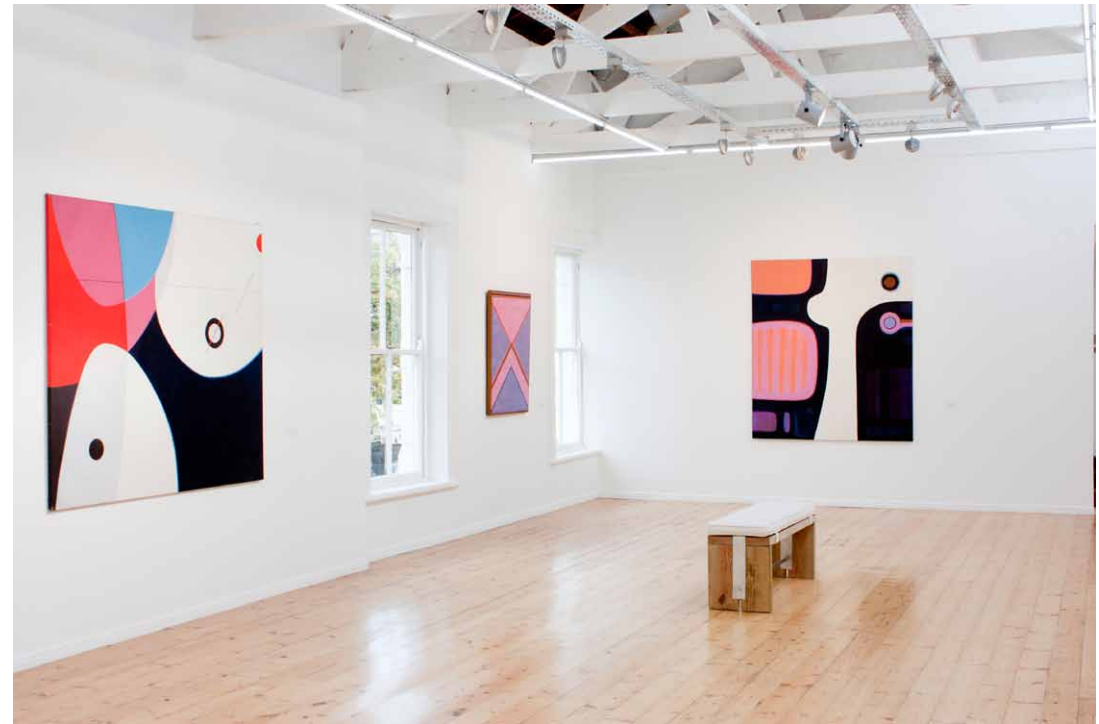
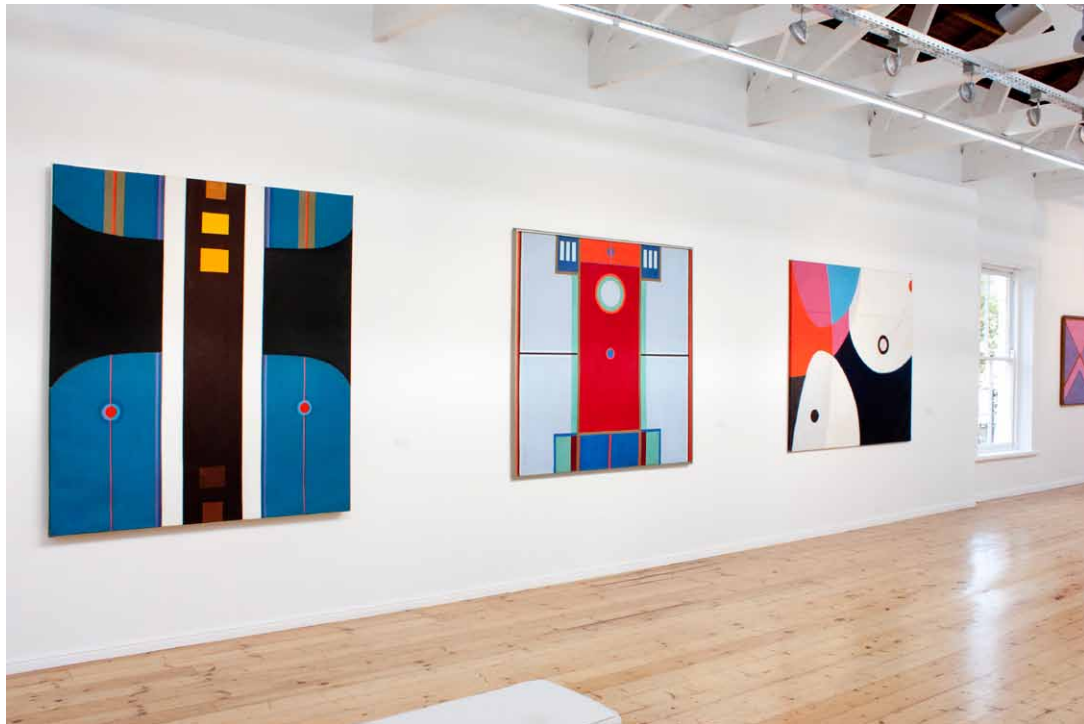
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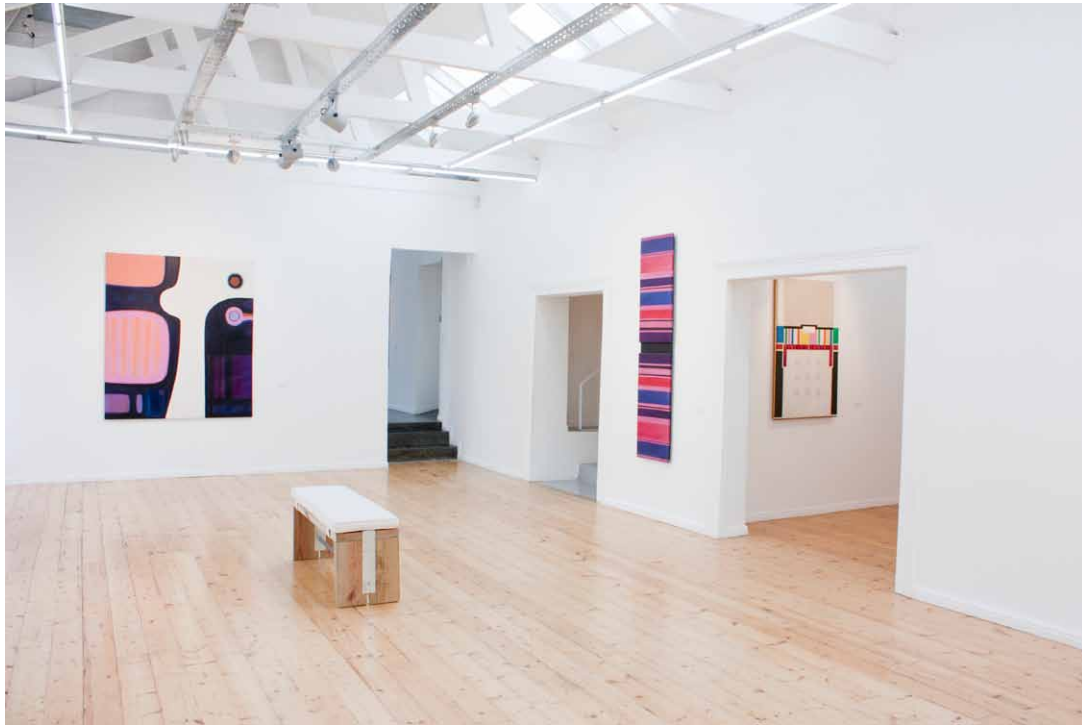
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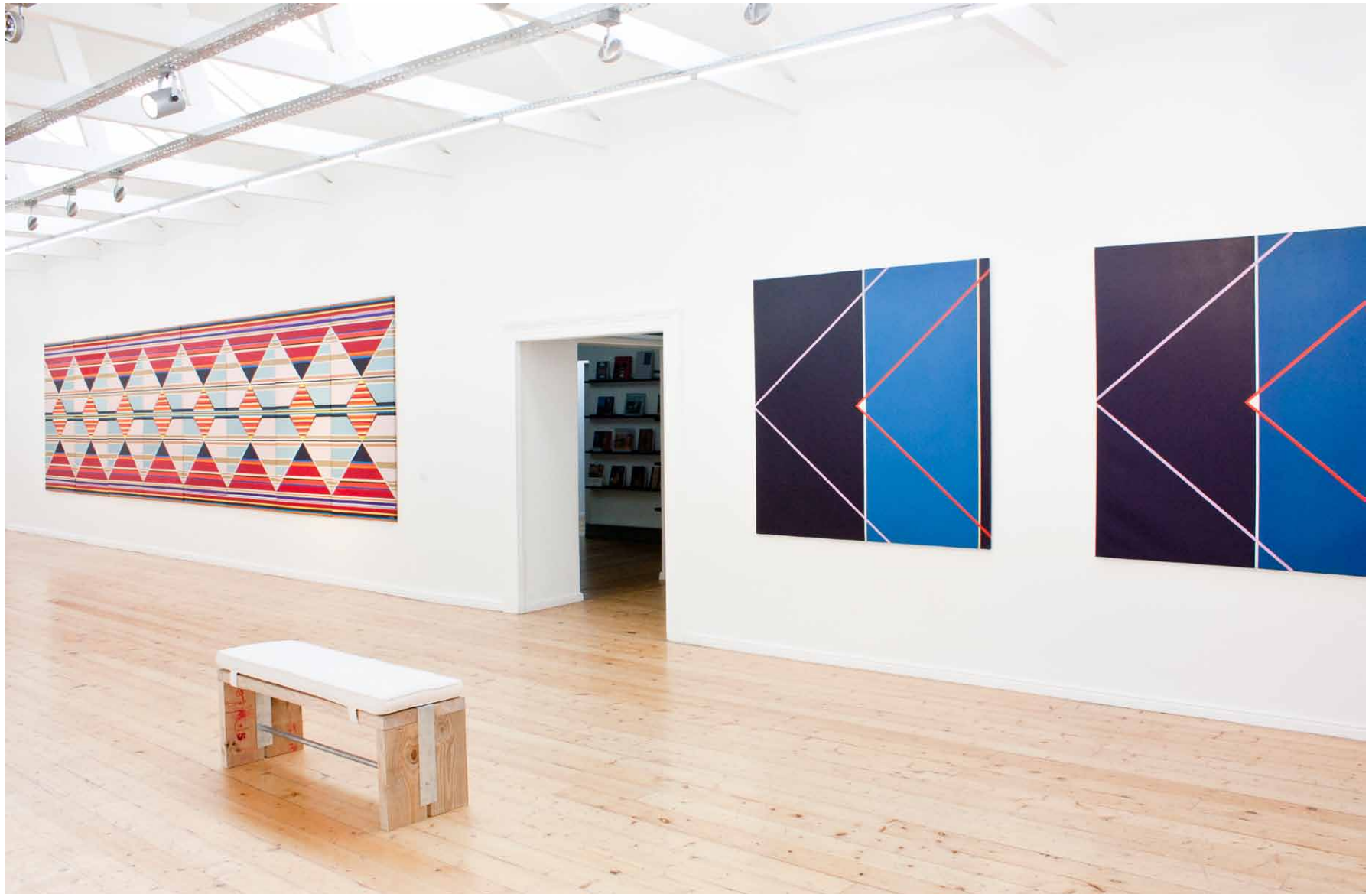
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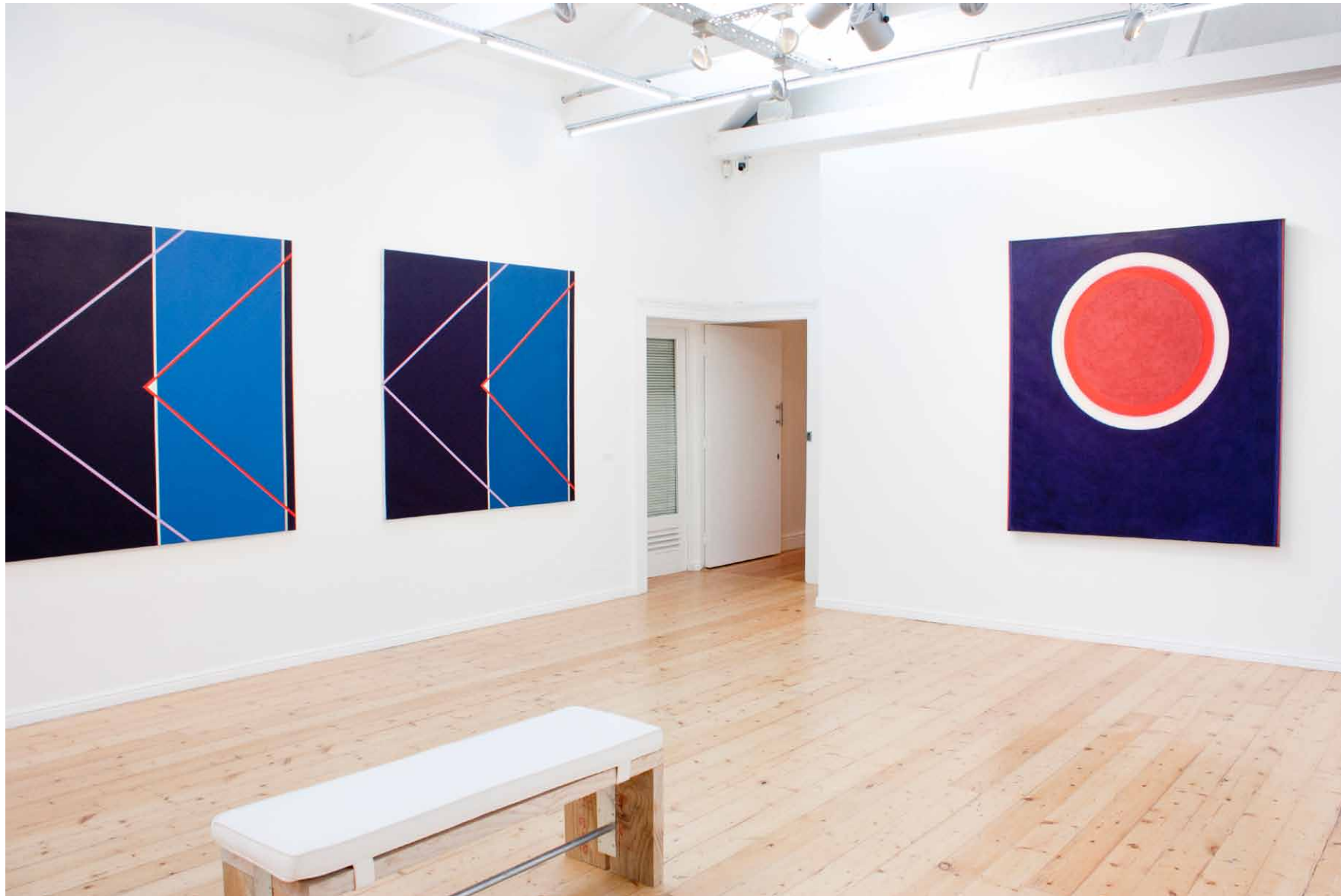
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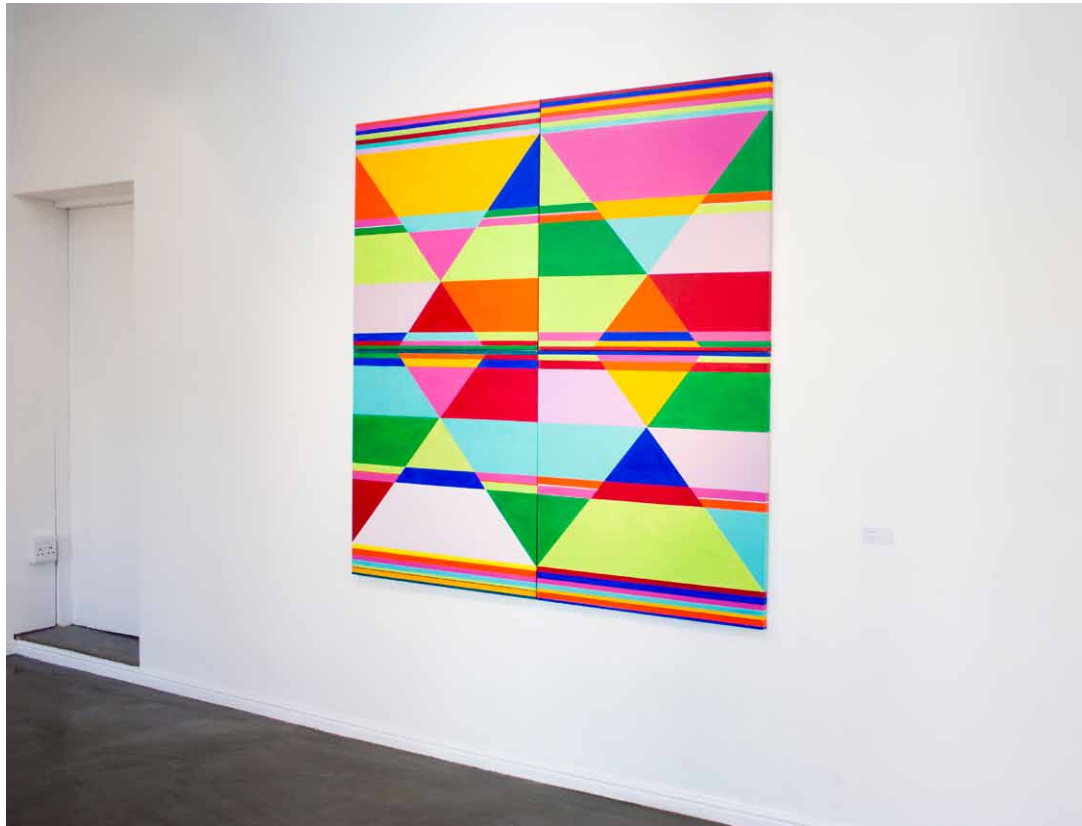
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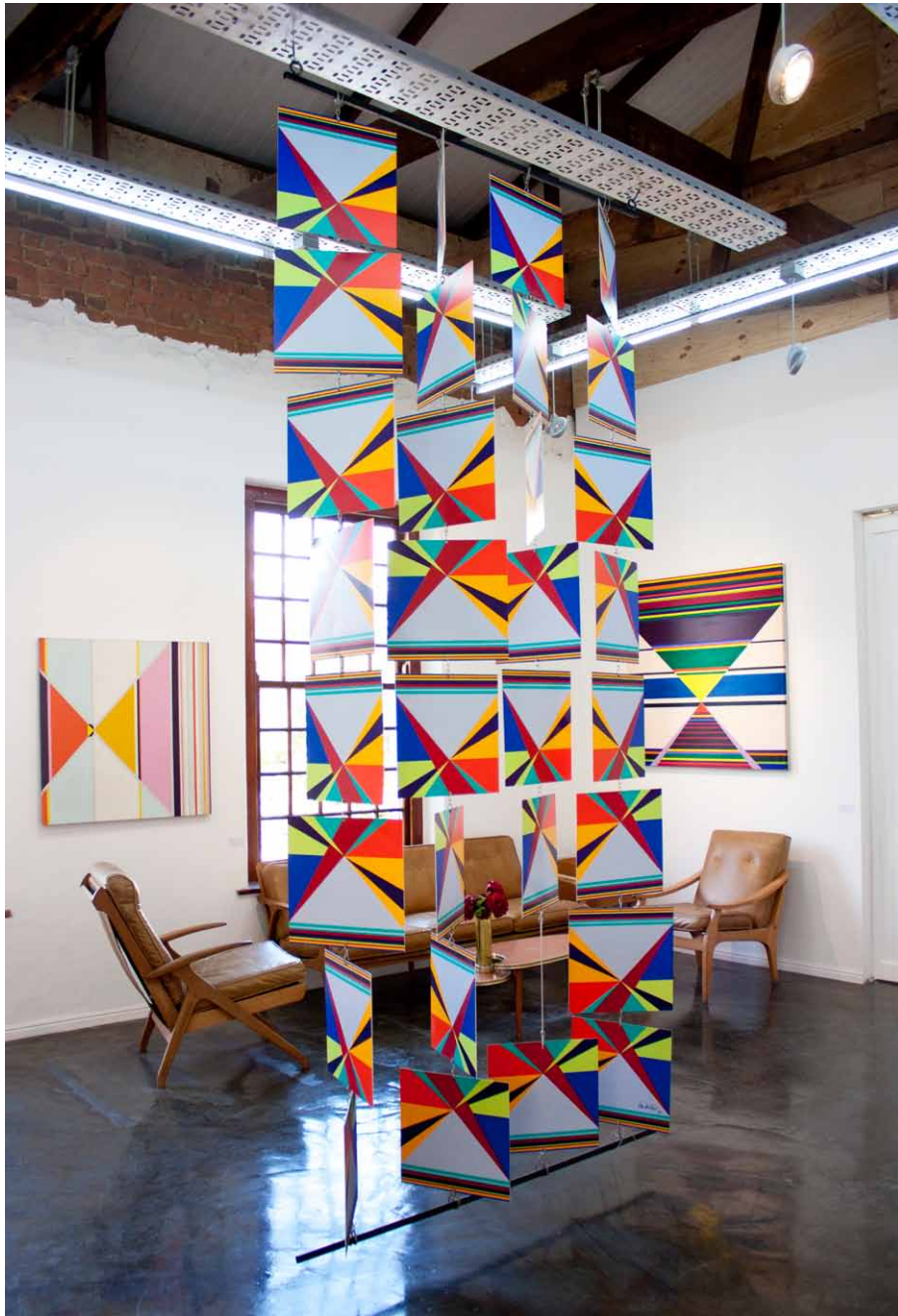
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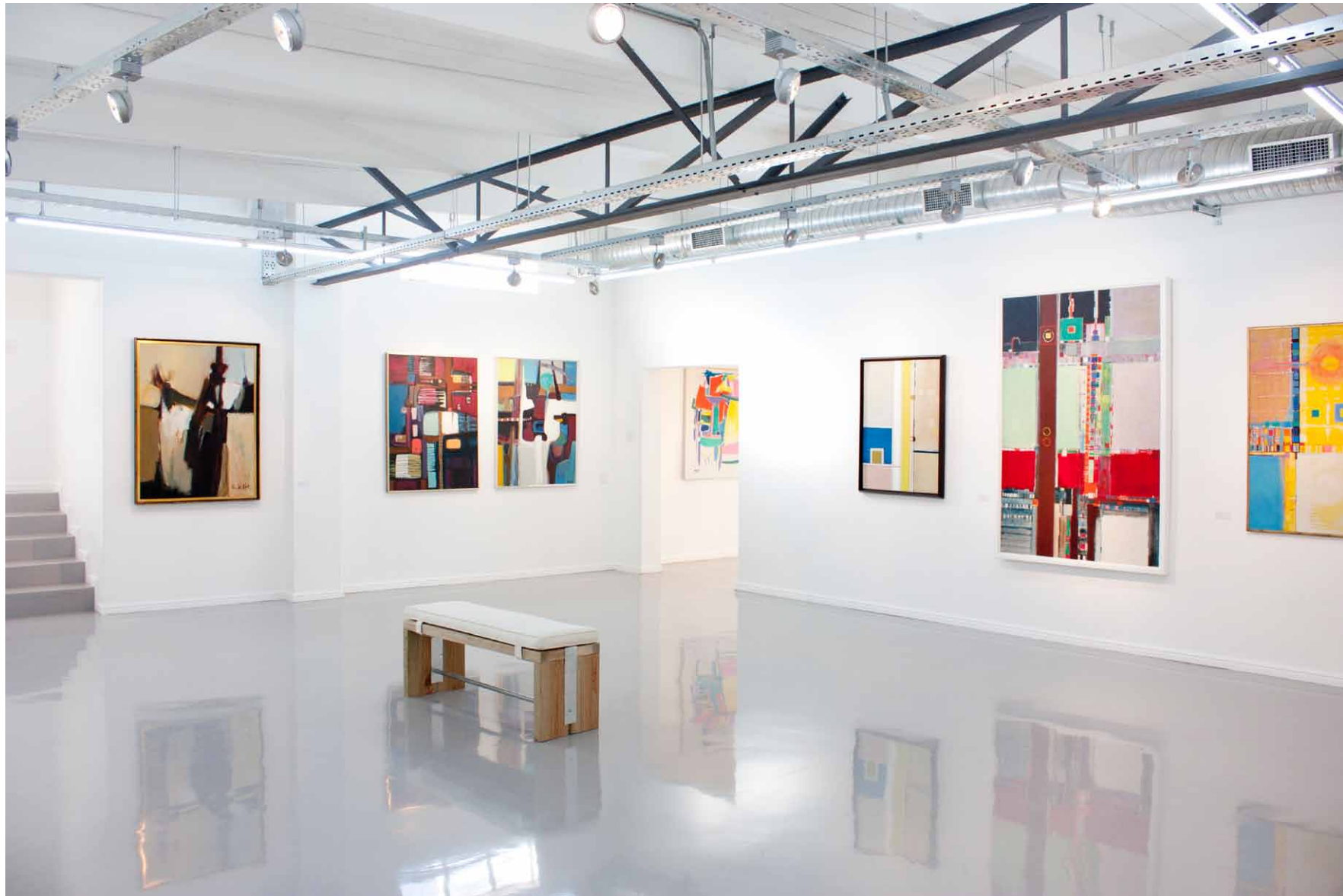
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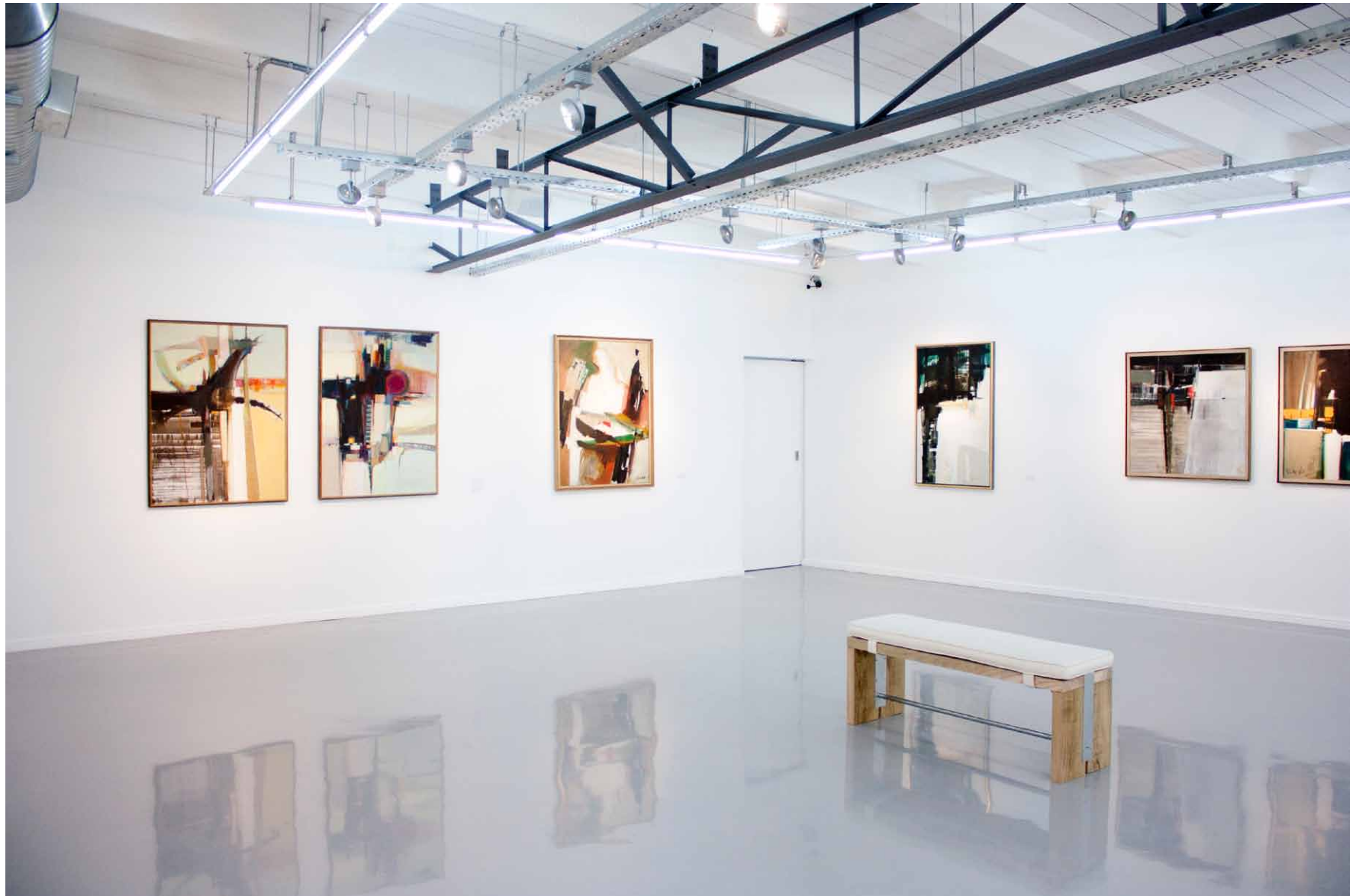
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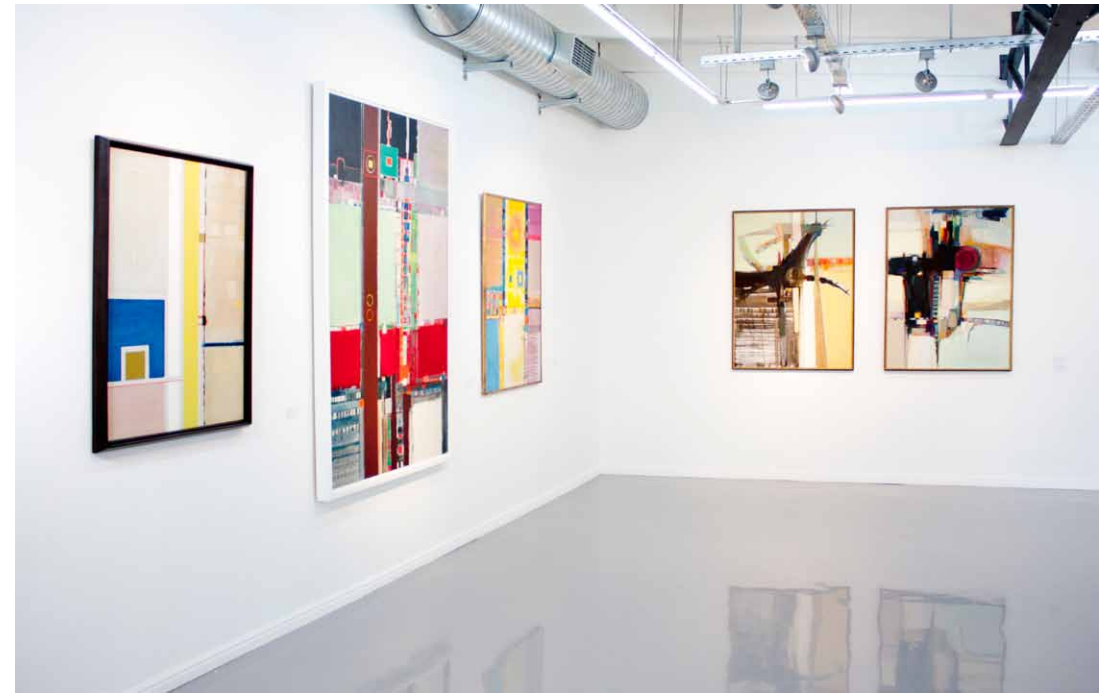
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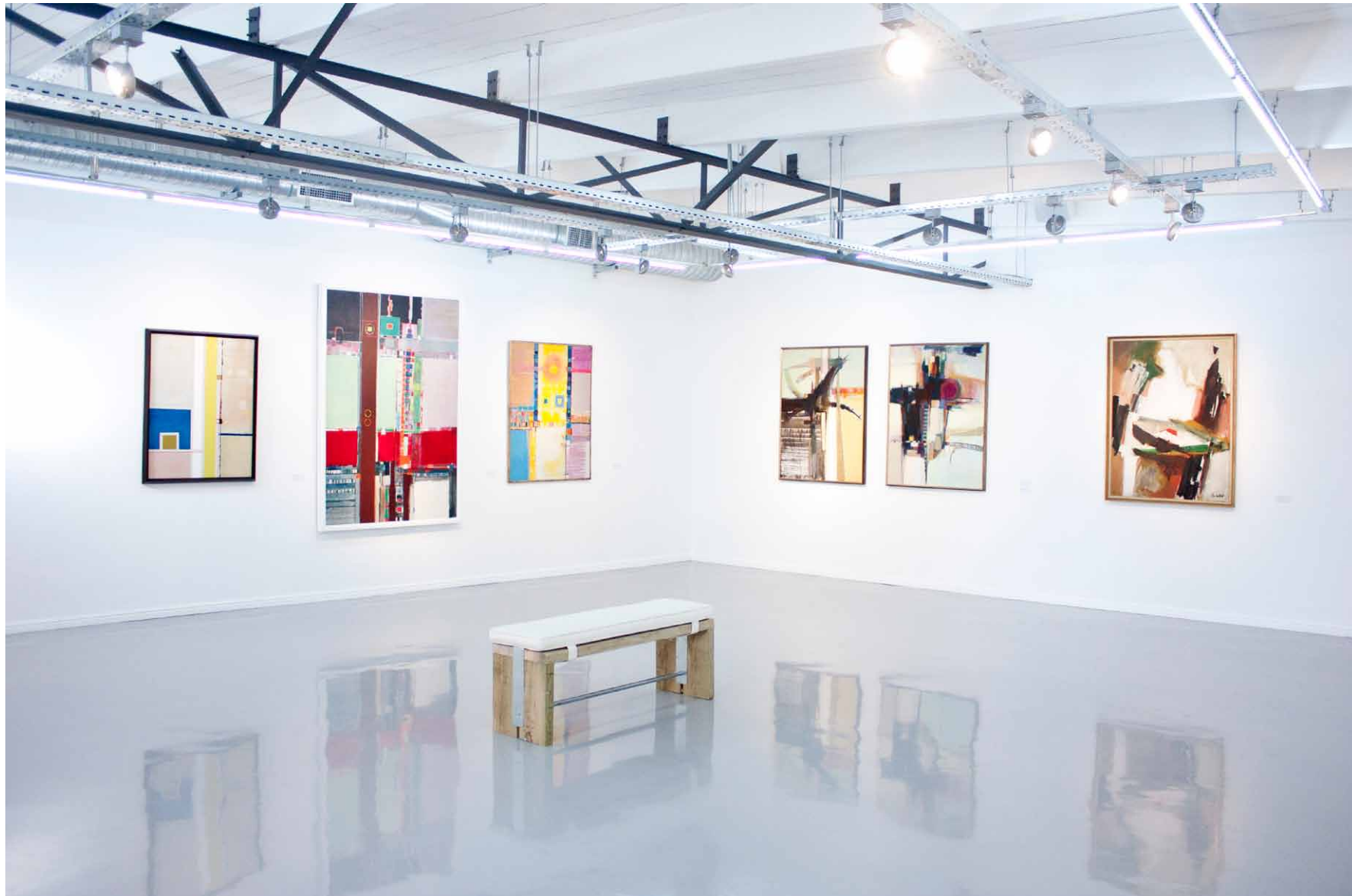
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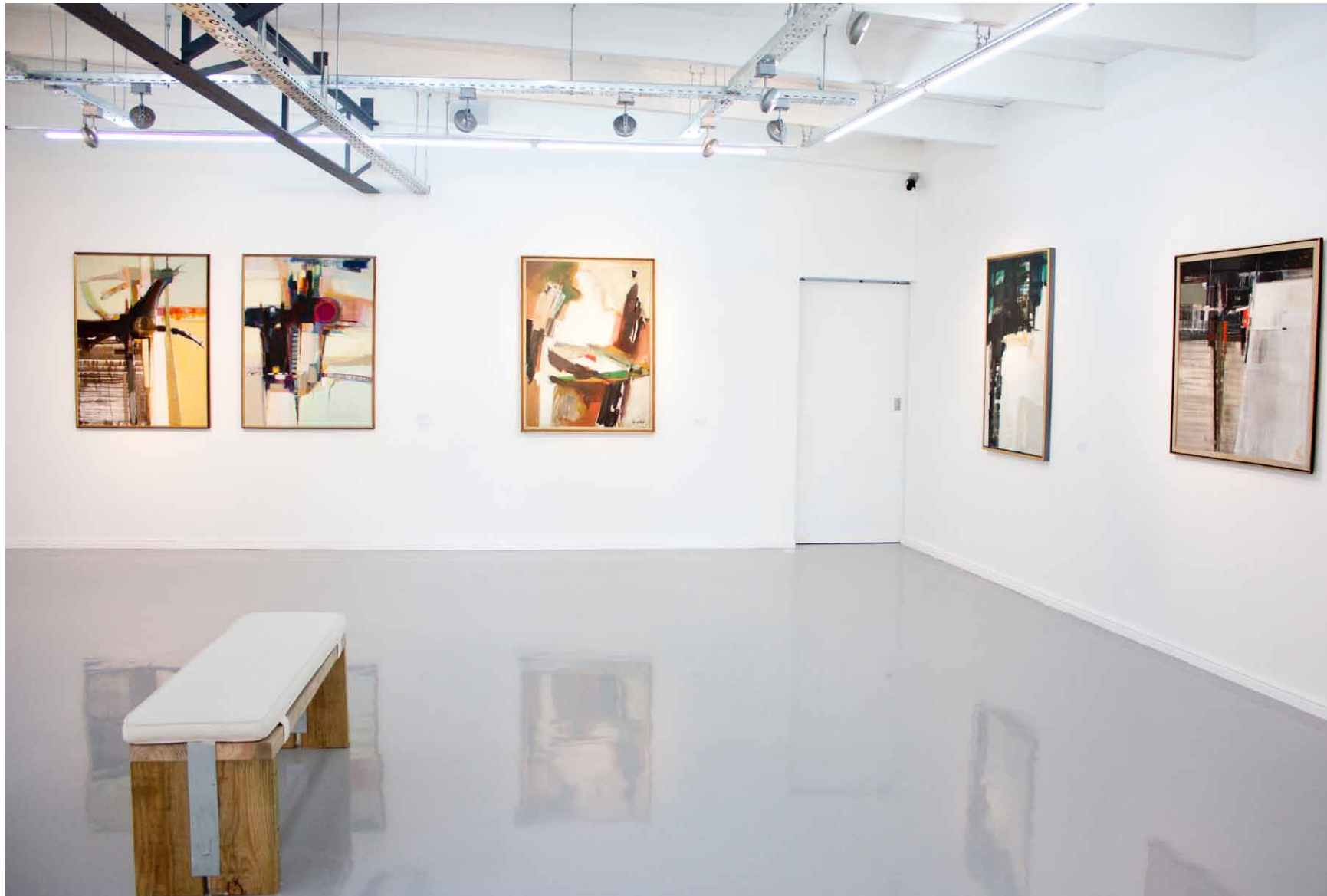
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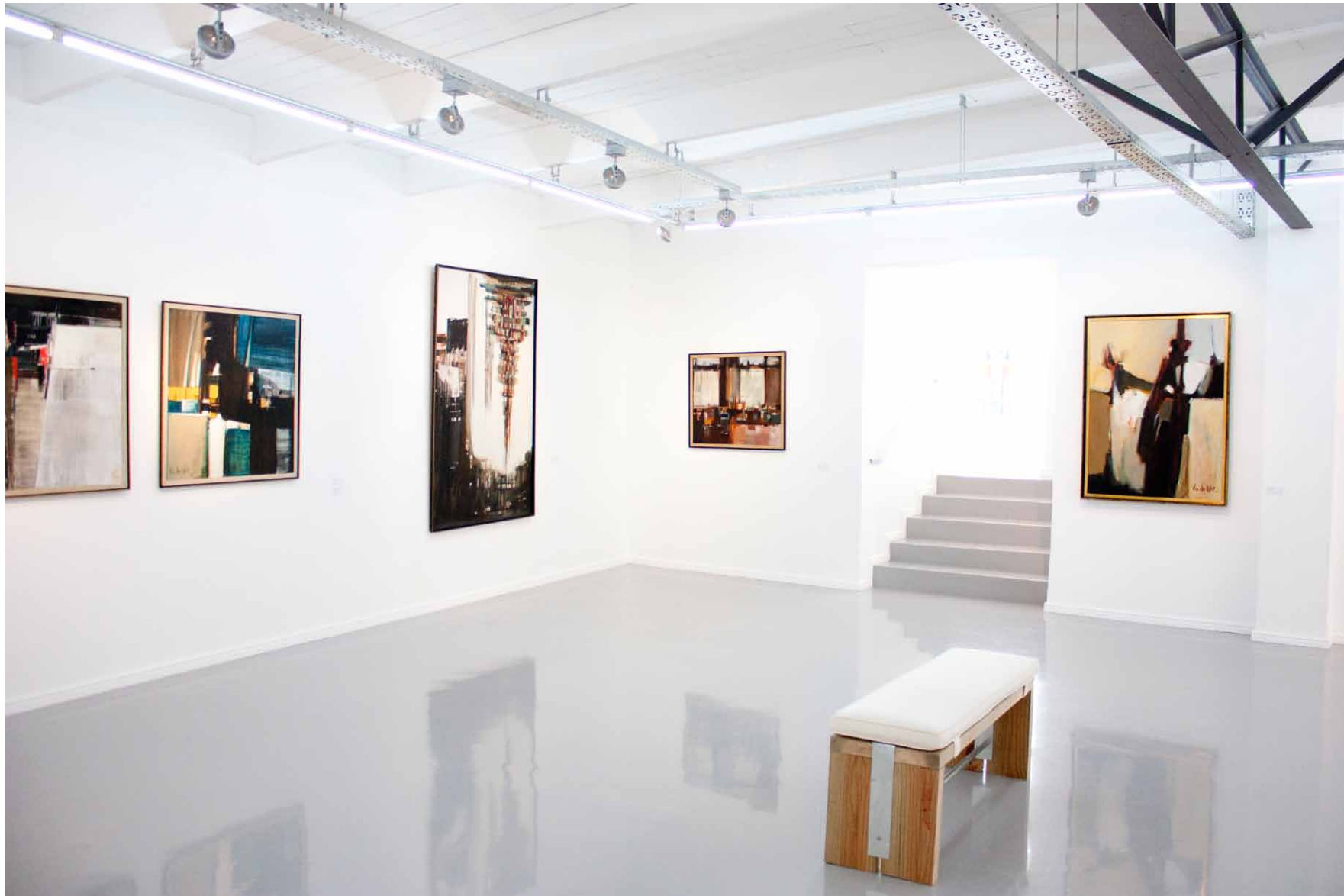
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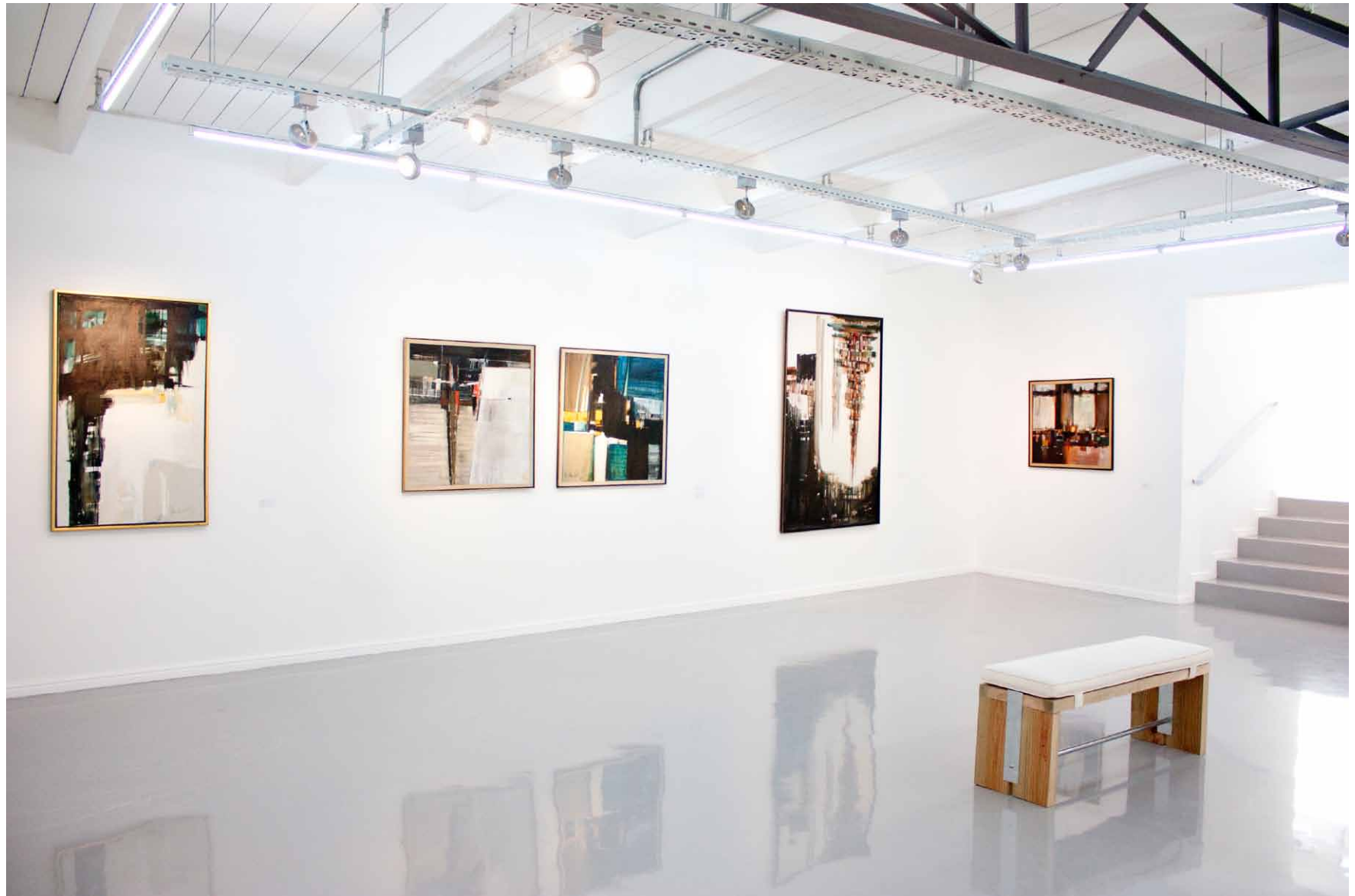
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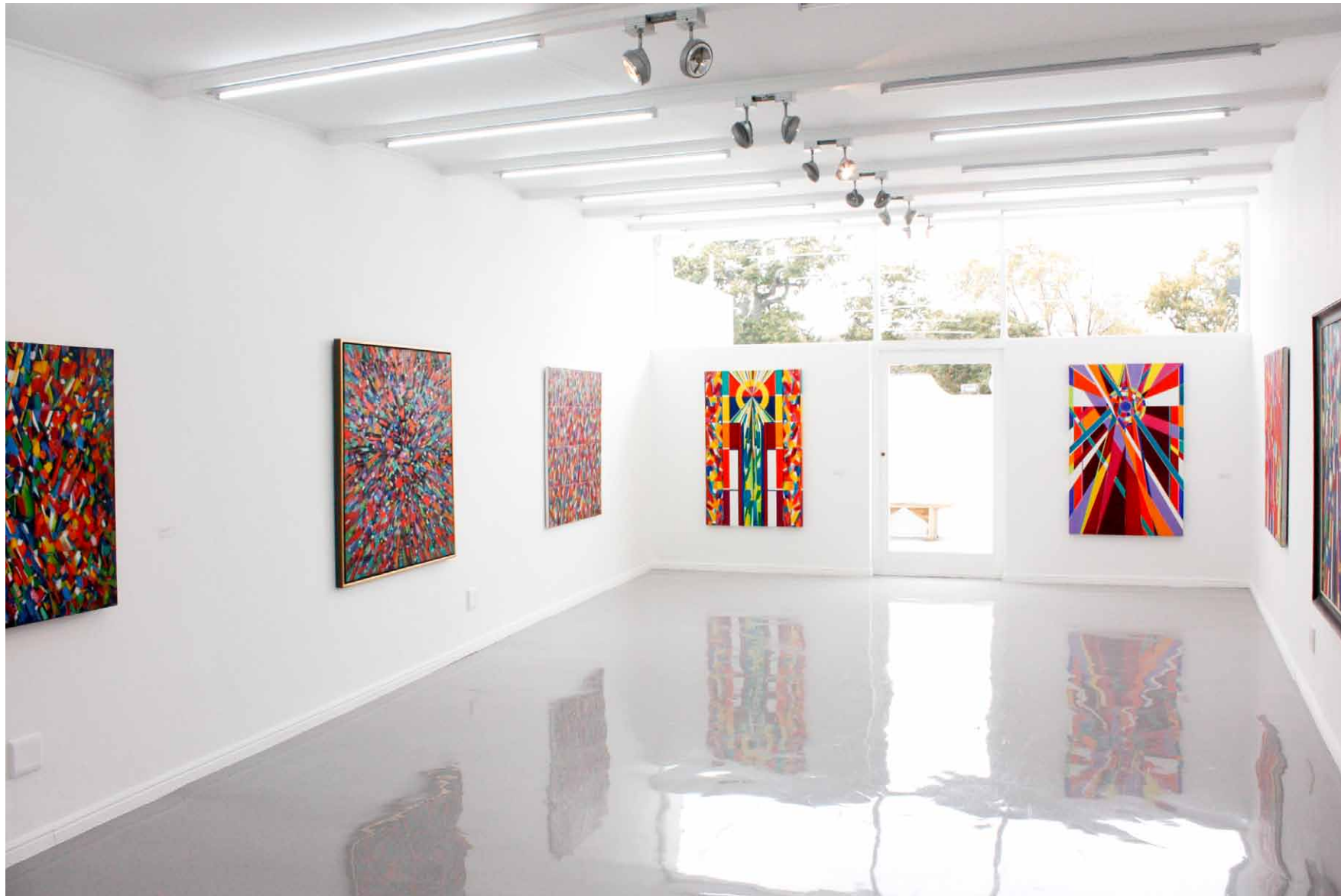
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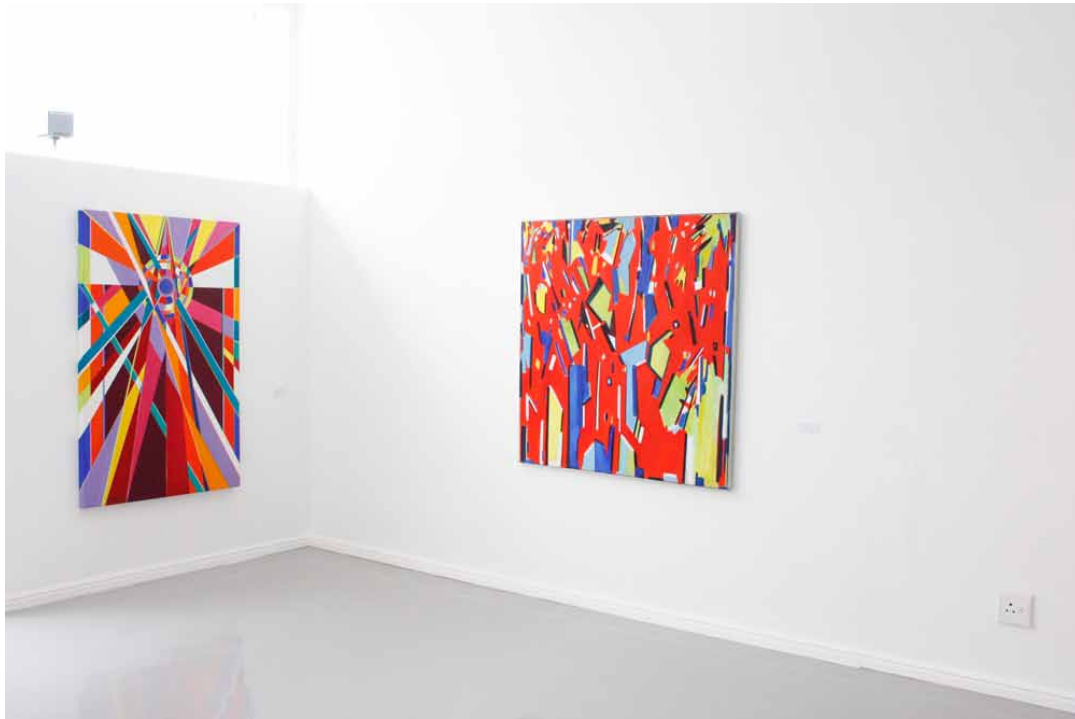
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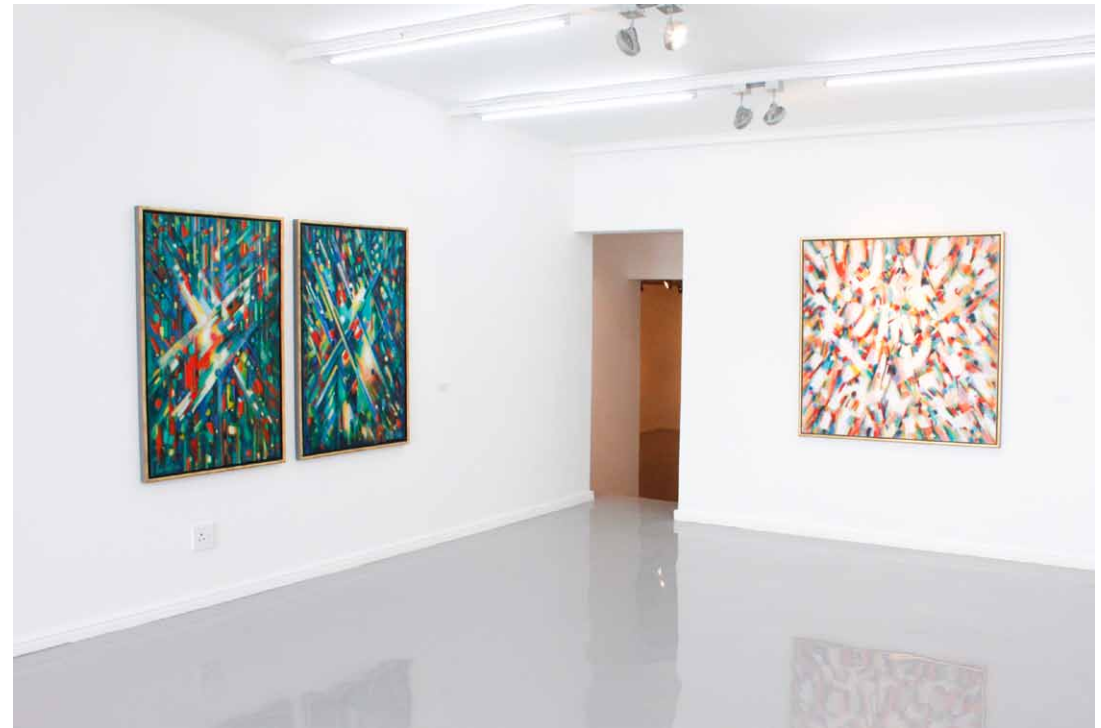
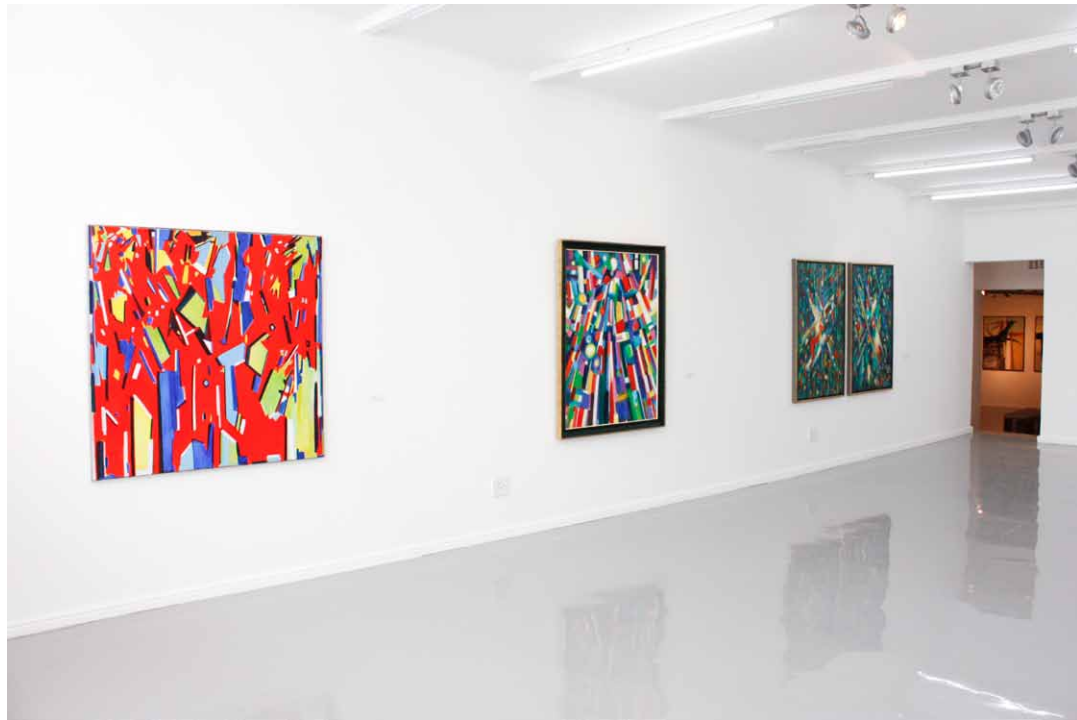
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