

Margaret Lee

margaret-lee.com

closer to right than wrong/ closer to wrong than right

Jack Hanley Gallery, NY

February 12- March 9, 2014

[exhibition link](#)

In finding the balance between one's true desires and realizable good taste - displays of self control can take you very far. Inspiration can be found in the unexpected so keep an open mind. Don't be afraid to borrow and steal as long as you make it your own. Closer to right than wrong / closer to wrong than right... Either way, this one is for me but also for you.

- ML, 2014 NYC



Margaret Lee
“closer to wrong than right/ closer to right than wrong” at Jack Hanley
Gallery, New York, 2014



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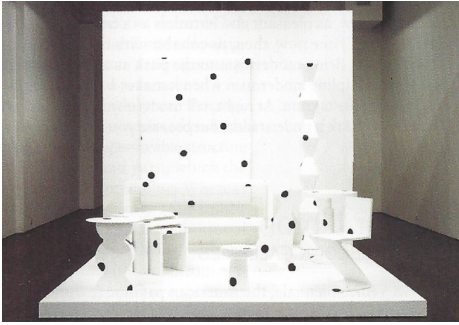


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“closer to wrong than right/ closer to right than wrong” at Jack Hanley
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Margaret Lee

Jack Hanley Gallery



No need to walk in. You could see everything through the window from the street. Atop a platform, before a freestanding wall, several items: a Rietveld chair, a Vitra stool, nesting tables by Superstudio. Hanging from the wall, a painting. Standing to the right, Brancusi's *Endless Column*. Also, a dog—or rather, a cutout silhouette of a dog, its two-dimensional head tilted upward. Everything was painted white, with scattered dots. Black, grapefruit sized dots.

Such was Margaret Lee's "closer to right than wrong / closer to wrong than right," an ensemble of facsimiles fabricated out of MDF and covered in gesso. Apparently Brancusi duplicates are trending: Josephine Meckseper's solo exhibition at Andrea Rosen Gallery this past November featured a wood replica of *Endless Column* within a glamorously dark vitrine. To passersby glancing through the gallery window, Lee's display likely telegraphed a commensurately obvious equivalence between modernist sculptures and department-store commodities, yet her appropriation was at once precise and more eccentric. "Closer to right" recalled the first installation of *Endless Column* after the opening of the Museum of Modern Art's new building in 2004, where it shared a platform with five other Brancusi sculptures. MoMA's Architecture and Design Department deployed a flotilla of similarly scaled platforms to showcase its furniture collection. Writing in these pages, Benjamin H. D. Buchloh alleged that, by yanking *Endless Column* off the ground and jamming it into a cluster, MoMA's curators had subjected its "extraordinary egalitarian radicality" to a "principle of domestication." There's little to suggest that Lee was consciously responding to Buchloh's charged metaphor, but her placement of a prop pup beside an ersatz *Endless Column* certainly roused the dormant implications of a "domesticated" Brancusi—which is to say, a domesticated modernism.

Through prominent as an artist, Lee is arguably better known as a curator and a partner at the gallery 47 Canal. She willfully entangles this triad of professional designations by collaborating on individual works with artists from her gallery, exhibiting with the equally multifaceted Matthew Higgs and Emily Sundblad, and situating the exercise of selection and arrangement at the center of her practice. Often Lee pairs chic, perversely appealing objects—such as a vintage Hermès horse-head ashtray—with casts of fruits and vegetables she paints by hand. At their best, these couplings trigger a low-key, uncanny hum. Confronted here with mainstream modernist totems like Brancusi and Rietveld, Lee dispensed with fruits in favor of a flat dog and black dots. Unfortunately, this Pop stylization of a Dalmatian's distinctive hide behaved less like the fur on Meret Oppenheim's teacup than like the coat coveted by Disney's Cruella De Vil. The effected rendered Superstudio's nesting tables as cartoonish designs within reach, not objects of tantalizing desire.

In their very failure to animate modernism's psychic residues, however, Lee's dots made a statement, a point that those with the professional designation "art historian" shouldn't concede, but should probably consider: For the multitasking artists of Lee's milieu, modernism is housebroken, as pleasant and harmless as a framed poster from Monet's Giverny. Time now, then, to cohabit with modernism as one would with a pet. Bring modernism to the park as a pretense to meet other singles. Discipline modernism when it makes a mess. Post photos of modernism on Instagram. At night, tell modernism your problems—not because you think it understands, but because you find it comforting.

-Colby Chamberlain

Art in America

MAY 2014

EXHIBITION REVIEWS



View of Margaret Lee's installation "closer to right than wrong/closer to wrong than right," 2014, MDF, plywood, oil paint, gesso, canvas; at Jack Hanley.

MARGARET LEE

Jack Hanley

Like many people who look at a lot of art, I am often guilty of "drive-by" viewings—I crane my neck to take in as much as possible via a gallery's window without breaking my stride, or else I pop in and out, assessing the room quickly in a single glance. Margaret Lee's second solo at Jack Hanley Gallery (which has a large, street-level picture window) seemed designed for just this kind of looking: it consisted of a crowded domestic tableau of nine individual sculptures (all works 2014) arranged on a low rectangular plinth in front of a stage backdrop. Lee reproduced several pieces of iconic modernist furniture in fiberboard and gesso, such as the Gerrit Rietveld Zig-Zag chair, a Vitra cork stool and Superstudio's nesting tables. She also included an assortment of art (or at least artlike objects), including (*Endless Column* by Constantin Brancusi), a copy of the titular sculpture, and *Dot Painting*, a loose quotation of Damien Hirst's notoriously repetitive canvases or an allusion to Yayoi Kusama's eccentric environments.

Rounding out the group was a fiberboard model of a sitting Dalmatian, whose markings provided the color scheme for the entire display. Every item, including the canvas, was painted with evenly distributed black polka dots on a white ground. When viewed head-on, the graphic pattern effectively flattened the three-dimensional objects. If glimpsed quickly through a picture window, the installation just might have been mistaken for an especially large image.

Last year, Lee installed a similar, smaller-scale work in the window of P!, a gallery directly across the street from Jack Hanley. Black polka dots adorned a group of fruit-shaped objects that

were arranged on a spotted pedestal. That piece was part of a series of shows at P! dealing with copying and reproduction, and it might be useful to consider both projects from that perspective. In her recent exhibition, not only did Lee copy modern art and design objects and repeat the spot pattern that is becoming her signature, but the overall grouping of objects seemed to invite further reproduction as visitors armed with smartphones inevitably snapped pictures. (Surely many visitors were inclined to take selfies while standing in just the right place so as to appear immersed in Lee's polka dot world.)

The visual flattening of the objects also pointed to a potential flattening of cultural hierarchies. The installation looked like a furniture showroom in which the painting and sculpture were staged in the same way as the "good design" objects and the kitschy dog. Brancusi's austere abstract artwork and Lee's riff on painting mingled with the Design Within Reach knockoffs. But rather than demonstrating how much of contemporary art is merely glorified design, Lee's project effectively elevated everything on view into the rarefied sphere of ambitious art. Indeed, given her rapidly rising stature, Lee's (*Nesting tables* by Superstudio) in Ikea-grade faux wood may one day be more sought-after than any luxury "original."

There is a slickness and easy cynicism in Lee's approach that makes me wary. Yet even as she deftly navigates art-world contradictions, Lee's project dramatizes the instability of art objects. Here "sculpture" and "painting" were pointedly intertwined with other classes of things (architecture, design and kitsch) and looped into extensive networks of image production and reproduction.

—Claire Barliant



Margaret Lee

(Shiro Kuramata Kyoto Round Table) + Dot Painting, 2014

Mdf, oil paint, gesso, canvas, live orchid

sculpture: 27.7 x 23.6 x 23.6 in / 70 x 60 x 60 cm. Painting: 54 x 72 in /
137.2 x 182.9 cm



Margaret Lee

(Shiro Kuramata Kyoto Round Table) + Dot Painting, 2014

Mdf, oil paint, gesso, canvas, live orchid

sculpture: 27.7 x 23.6 x 23.6 in / 70 x 60 x 60 cm. Painting: 54 x 72 in /
137.2 x 182.9 cm



Margaret Lee

Dalmatian I + Dot Painting, 2014

Mdf, oil paint, gesso, canvas

sculpture: 30 x 32 in / 76.2 x 81.3 cm. Painting: 54 x 72 in / 137.2 x 182.9 cm



Margaret Lee

Dalmatian I + Dot Painting, 2014

Mdf, oil paint, gesso, canvas

sculpture: 30 x 32 in / 76.2 x 81.3 cm. Painting: 54 x 72 in / 137.2 x 182.9 cm



Margaret Lee

(Superstudio Nesting tables) + Bonsai + Dot Painting, 2014

Mdf, oil paint, gesso, canvas

table 1: 16 x 16 x 13 in / 40.6 x 40.6 x 51. cm. Table 2: 14 x 14.5 x 13
in / 35.5 x 36.8 x 33 cm. Table 3: 12 x 13.5 x 12 in / 30.5 x 34.3 x



Margaret Lee

(Superstudio Nesting tables) + Bonsai + Dot Painting, 2014

Mdf, oil paint, gesso, canvas

table 1: 16 x 16 x 13 in / 40.6 x 40.6 x 51. cm. Table 2: 14 x 14.5 x 13
in / 35.5 x 36.8 x 33 cm. Table 3: 12 x 13.5 x 12 in / 30.5 x 34.3 x



Margaret Lee

(Superstudio Quaderna Bench and Console Table) + Dot Painting + Watermelon, 2014

Mdf, oil paint, gesso, canvas, plaster, acrylic paint

table: 70.9 x 33 x 16.5 in / 180 x 84 x 42 cm. bench: 59 x 15.4 x 16.5 in / 150 x 39 x 42 cm. Painting: 54 x 72 in / 137.2 x 182.9



Margaret Lee

(Superstudio Quaderna Bench and Console Table) + Dot Painting + Watermelon, 2014

Mdf, oil paint, gesso, canvas, plaster, acrylic paint

table: 70.9 x 33 x 16.5 in / 180 x 84 x 42 cm. bench: 59 x 15.4 x 16.5 in / 150 x 39 x 42 cm. Painting: 54 x 72 in / 137.2 x 182.9



Margaret Lee

(Brancusi I) + Dot Painting, 2014

Mdf, oil paint, gesso, canvas

sculpture: 80 x 9.9 in x 9.6 in / 203.2 x 25.1 x 24.5 cm. Painting: 54 x 72 in / 137.2 x 182.9 cm



Margaret Lee

(Brancusi I) + Dot Painting, 2014

Mdf, oil paint, gesso, canvas

sculpture: 80 x 9.9 in x 9.6 in / 203.2 x 25.1 x 24.5 cm. Painting: 54 x 72 in / 137.2 x 182.9 cm



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Margaret Lee
(*Studio Simon Gavina Constantin*) + *Dot Painting + Lemons + Limes*,
2014

Mdf, oil paint, gesso, canvas

sculpture: 23.2 x 18.9 x 18.9 in / 59 x 48 x 48 cm. Painting: 54 x 72 in /
137.2 x 182.9 cm



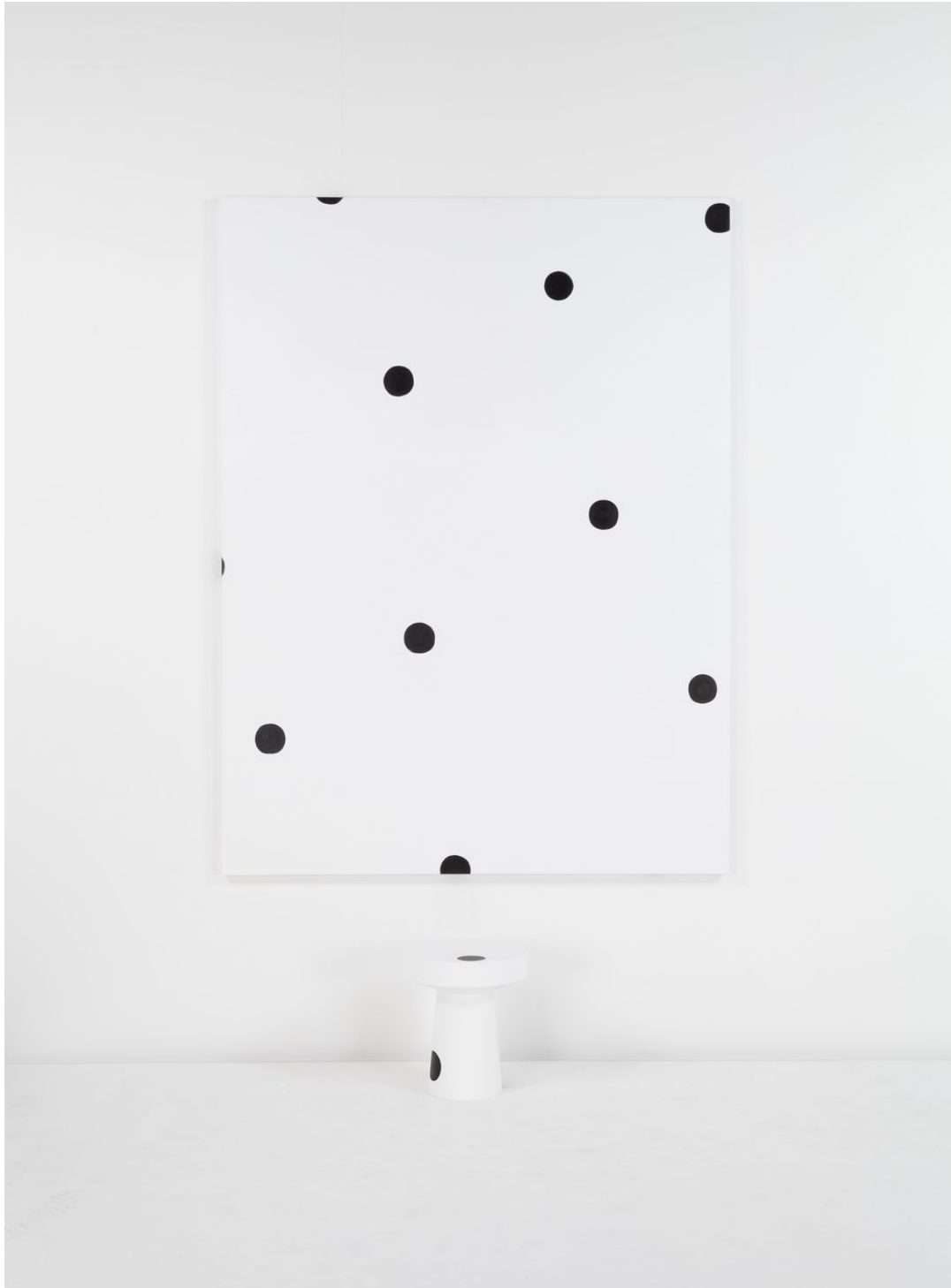
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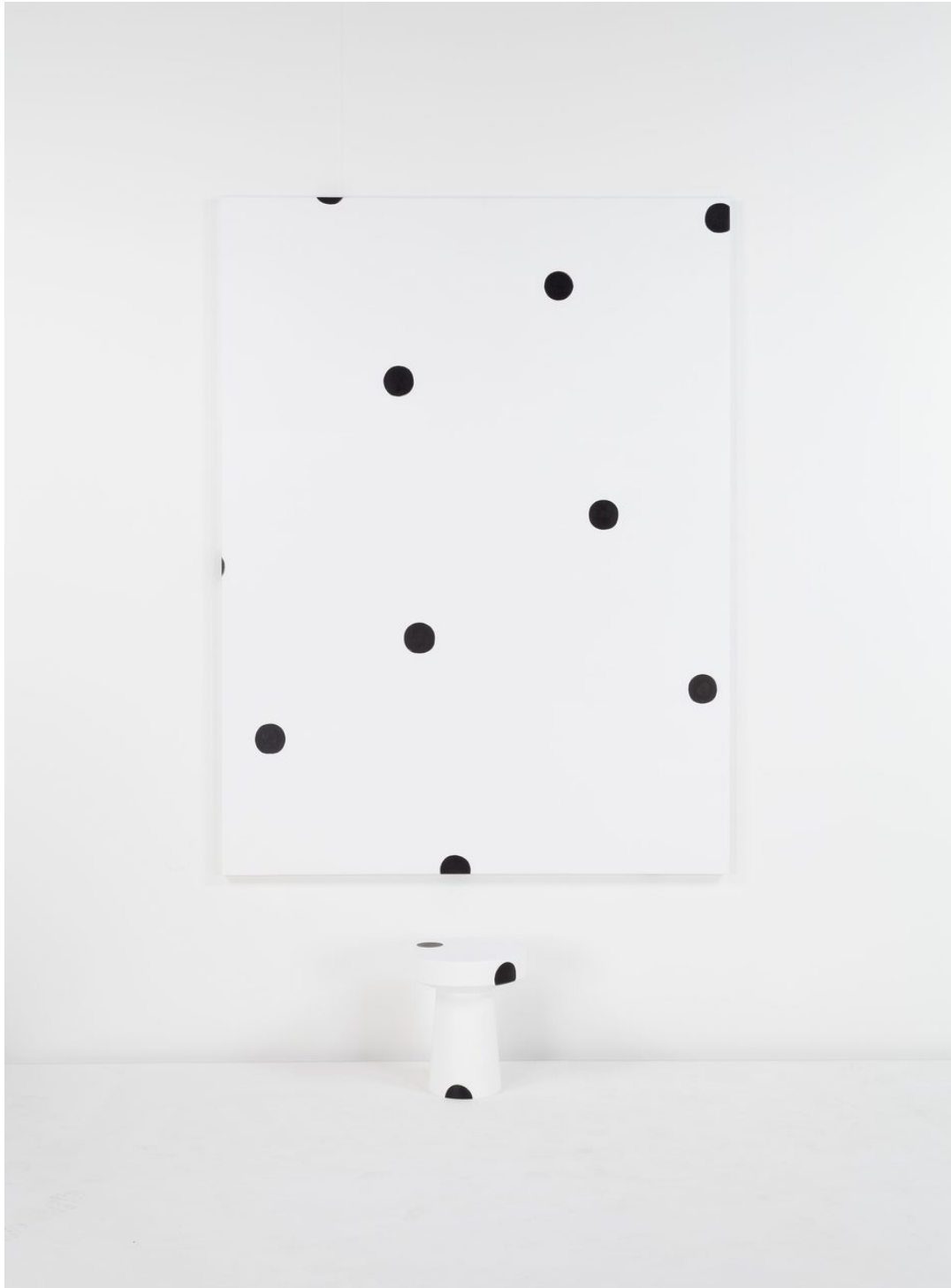


Margaret Lee

(Vitra Cork Stool C) + Dot Painting + Banana, 2014

Mdf, oil paint, gesso, canvas, platser, acrylic paint

sculpture: 13 x 12.25 x 12.25 in / 33 x 31 x 31 cm. Painting: 54 x 72 in
/ 137.2 x 182.9 cm



Margaret Lee

(Vitra Cork Stool C) + Dot Painting + Banana, 2014

Mdf, oil paint, gesso, canvas, platser, acrylic paint

sculpture: 13 x 12.25 x 12.25 in / 33 x 31 x 31 cm. Painting: 54 x 72 in
/ 137.2 x 182.9 cm



Margaret Lee

(Vitra Cork Stool C) + Dot Painting + Banana, 2014

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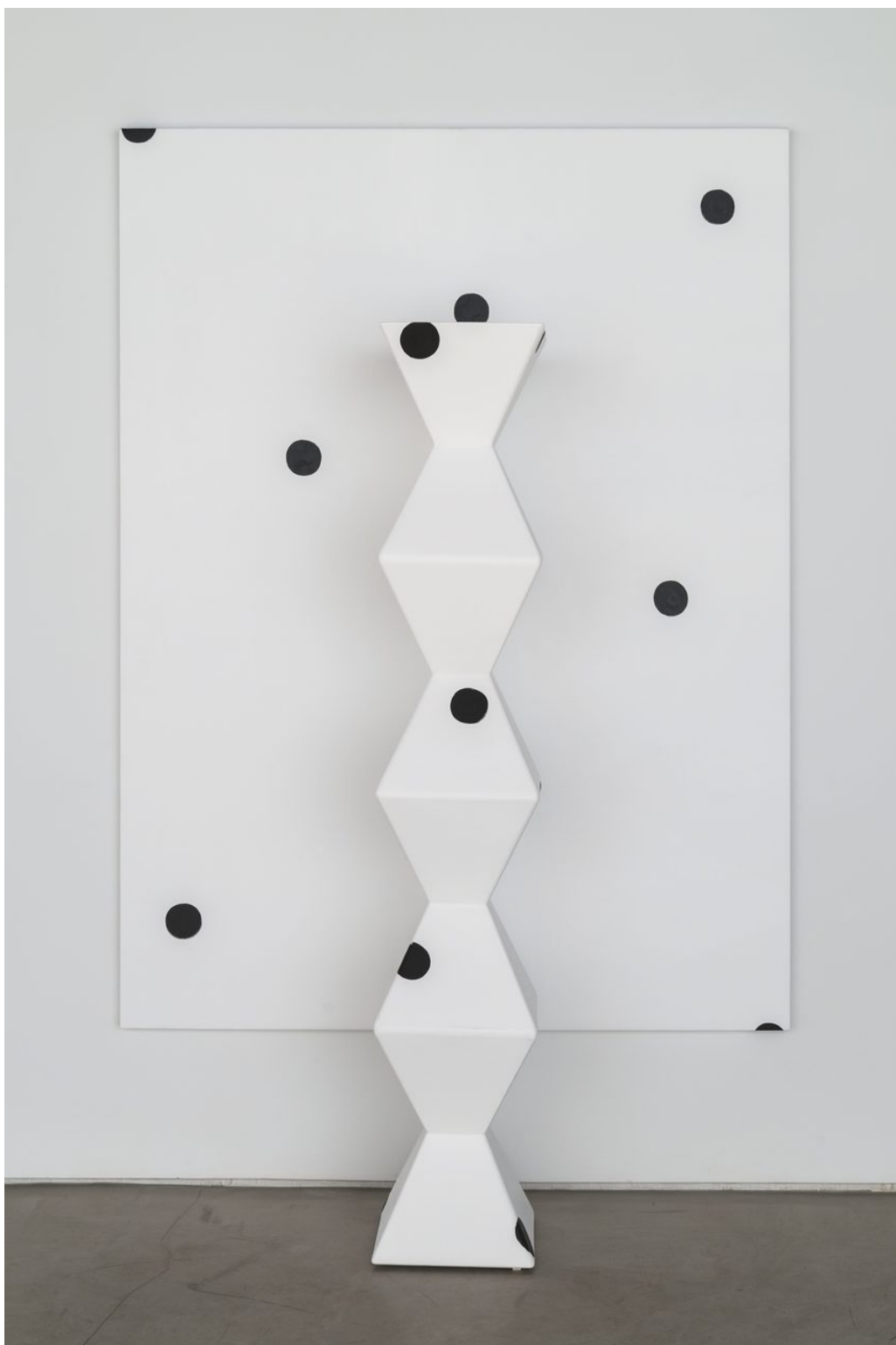


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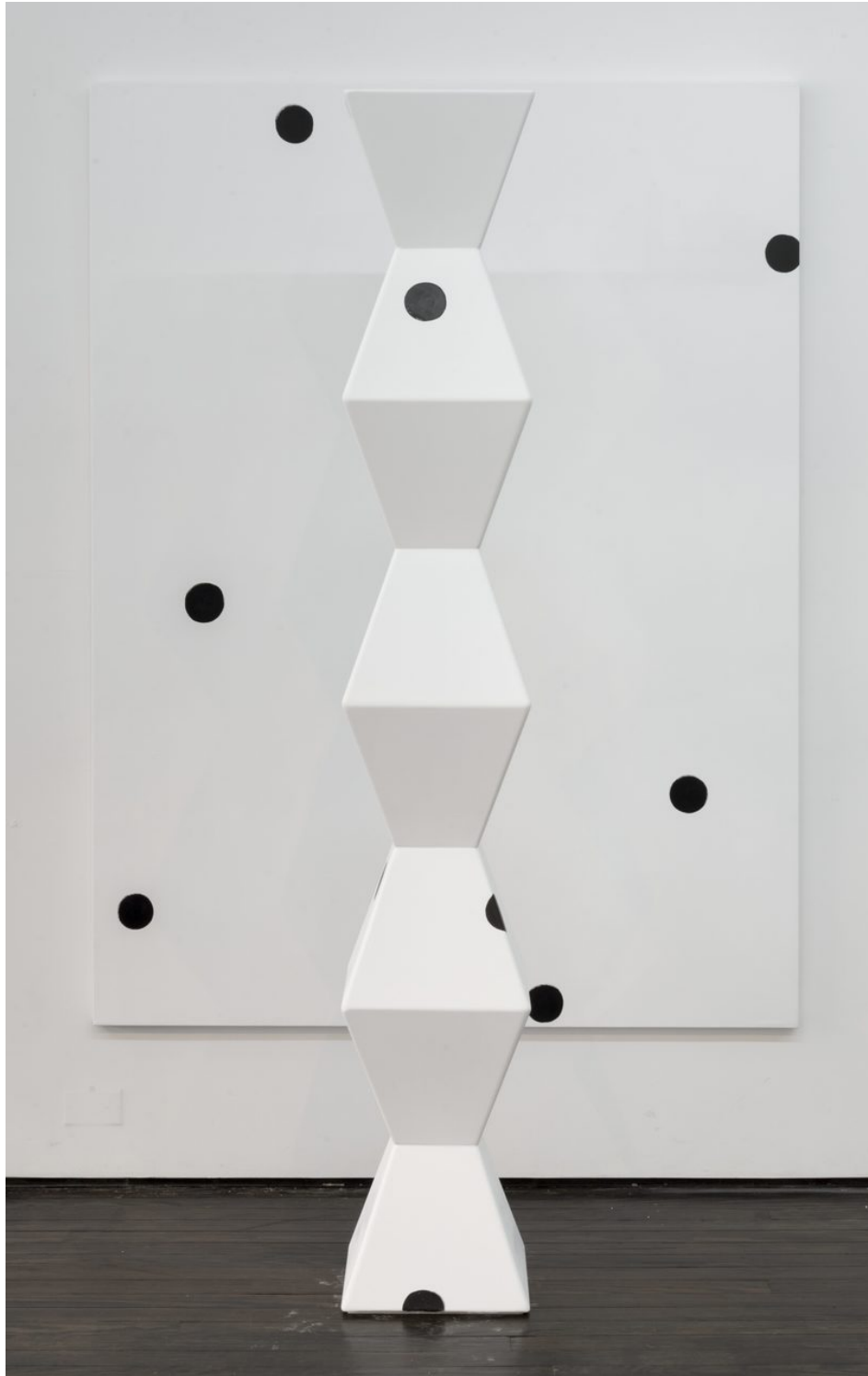
(Vitra Cork Stool C) + Dot Painting + Banana, 2014

Mdf, oil paint, gesso, canvas, platser, acrylic paint

sculpture: 13 x 12.25 x 12.25 in / 33 x 31 x 31 cm. Painting: 54 x 72 in
/ 137.2 x 182.9 cm



Margaret Lee
(Brancusi II) + Dot Painting, 2014
Mdf, oil paint, gesso, canvas



Margaret Lee
(Brancusi III) + Dot Painting, 2014
Mdf, oil paint, gesso, canvas
sculpture: 13 x 13 x 81 in painting: 54 x 72 in