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Jose Dávila

The Simple Act of Positioning

Sean Kelly, New York

April 17 – May 30, 2026

Opening reception: Thursday, April 16, 6-8pm

Sean Kelly is delighted to present *The Simple Act of Positioning*, José Dávila's fifth solo exhibition with the gallery. With this new body of work, Dávila continues his sustained investigation into one of sculpture's most elemental gestures: the fundamental act of placing one thing in relation to another. Rather than transforming materials through carving or modeling, he works through deliberate acts of positioning, arranging elements so that relationships, tensions, and meanings emerge between them. The exhibition will be on view from April 16 through May 30, 2026, with an opening reception on Thursday, April 16, from 6–8pm. The artist will be present.

Dávila approaches sculpture not simply as an object, but as a situation in which meaning arises through the relationships between materials. His work employs stones, concrete forms, industrial materials, steel beams, sandbags, and geometric volumes, brought together in configurations that appear both precise and improbable. Each element retains its material identity, yet through their arrangement, the works register weight, gravity, and balance in newly perceived ways.

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This approach resonates with a long lineage within the history of sculpture. Early constructions such as the standing stones of Carnac, in France, or the stone circle of Castlerigg, in England, derived their power not from the transformation of material but from the careful placement of stones within the landscape. Through alignment and orientation, rocks became structures that helped humans situate themselves in relation to space, time, and the cosmos.

In the twentieth century, artists including Marcel Duchamp and Jannis Kounellis further demonstrated how meaning can emerge through acts of selection and placement. Duchamp's readymades revealed that repositioning an object could radically shift its significance, while Kounellis explored how materials such as coal, steel, or burlap acquire historical and symbolic weight when placed within carefully constructed contexts.

Dávila continues this dialogue whilst foregrounding it in the physical realities of weight and gravity. In the studio, materials are moved, rotated, stacked, and repositioned until a relation appears that feels both precarious and inevitable. Gravity becomes an active collaborator in this process: once an object is placed, its consequences are real, and stability is never entirely guaranteed.

In *The Simple Act of Positioning*, the sculptures create situations in which materials encounter one another, and new relationships become visible. In this sense, Dávila's work returns to a gesture that lies close to the origin of sculpture itself: the simple act of placing one thing beside another, allowing matter, space, and human attention to converge.

Jose Dávila has presented solo exhibitions at the Museum Haus Konstruktiv, Zürich, Switzerland; Dallas Contemporary, Texas, United States; JUMEX Museum, Mexico City, Mexico; Hamburg Kunsthalle, Hamburg, Germany and the Museo del Novecento, Florence, Italy, amongst others. His work is in the permanent collection of numerous institutions including the Museo Universitario Arte Contemporáneo (MUAC), Mexico City, Mexico; Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid, Spain; Inhotim, Brumadinho, Brazil; the Perez Art Museum, Miami, Florida, United States; the Buffalo AKG Art Museum, Buffalo, New York, United States; the San Antonio Museum of Art, San Antonio, Texas, United States, the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, United States; the Centre Pompidou, Paris, France; Hamburg Kunsthalle, Hamburg, Germany; and the Museum of Modern Art, Luxembourg, Germany. Dávila was the winner of the 2016 BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art's New Annual Artists' Award, Artists honoree of the Hirshhorn Museum in Washington DC in 2016, the 2014 EFG ArtNexus Latin America Art Award. Dávila has been the recipient of support from the Andy Warhol Foundation, a Kunstwerke residency in Berlin, Germany and the National Grant for young artists by the Mexican Arts Council (FONCA) in 2000. In 2023, Hatje Cantz published a major monograph illustrating the past twenty years of Dávila's practice.

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Publication



Jose Dávila

Essays by Pedro Alonzo, Louisa Elderton, Frauke V. Josenhans, Patricia Martín, David Raskin, and Karen Stein, Interview with Sabine Schaschl, Edited by Jeffrey Grove, Sean Kelly Gallery

In a practice spanning nearly two decades, Jose Dávila has created an expressive body of work that explores the visual tropes and iconic symbols of art, architecture, and urban design. Initially trained as an architect and self-educated as a visual artist, Dávila creates sculptures, installations and photographic works that simultaneously emulate, critique, and pay homage to 20th-century avantgarde art and architecture, referencing artists and architects from Luis Barragán to Josef Albers and Donald Judd. This monograph assesses the full scope of Dávila's practice in all media for the first time and includes texts attesting to the historical and social dimensions of Dávila's art. Essays address the artist's early pieces, his exercises on balance, sculpture, graphics and paintings, and his works in public space.

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For additional information on Jose Davila, please visit skny.com

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Image: Jose Dávila, *Fundamental Concern*, 2026, Travertine marble, metal, automotive paint, rocks, and boulder, 250.8 x 56 x 81.2 cm, 571.05 kg, Unique Photo: Agustín Acre © Jose Dávila Courtesy: the artist and Sean Kelly, New York