

Set in Stone

Curated by Emma Kronman
Organized in collaboration with Galerie Kugel, Paris

May 12–June 26, 2026
34 East 69th Street, New York



Workshop of Tiziano Minio. Il letto di Policleto in white marble relief, Venice, c. 1540-1550
© Galerie Kugel. Courtesy Galerie Kugel

David Zwirner is pleased to announce *Set in Stone*, an expansive group exhibition organized in collaboration with Galerie Kugel, the renowned Parisian gallery of pre-twentieth-century art. Curated by Emma Kronman, this presentation at David Zwirner's East 69th Street location in New York places a considered group of paintings and sculpture by modern and contemporary artists from the gallery's program in conversation with Galerie Kugel's holdings of antique hardstone objects dating from classical antiquity through the nineteenth century.

Inspired by some of the qualities that have influenced artists over history to work with stone, the exhibition centers on four themes that speak to process and appearance—*luminosity*, *translucency*, *assemblage*, and *colorlessness*—and illustrates these complementary concerns through unexpected juxtapositions of medium and technique. While the works on view range widely in how each artist makes use of light, color, texture, and scale, the presentation suggests insightful resonances among this diversity and demonstrates the continued relevance of such formal investigations. In pursuit of visual splendor and material complexity, these artists find a shared visual language that spans millennia, geography, and cultural contexts.

As curator Emma Kronman states, “*Set in Stone* is organized around the premise that those who make art are connected—even when separated by continents and centuries—through a shared interest in the material world and in the pursuit of elevating that which is already found in nature through human intervention. We hope the opportunity to consider the works presented together here will inspire curiosity and invite new ways of thinking and seeing.”

Among a group of works whose components are saturated with intense color, emphasizing the luminous potential of their materials, a brilliant green malachite sculpture from the nineteenth century along with highly burnished works in alabaster, lapis lazuli, and porphyry provide elegant counterpoints to the richly layered canvases of Suzan Frecon, Liu Ye, and Victor Man. Composed of materials of varying opacities, other works showcase the dynamic effects of the passage of light: a seventeenth-century amber tankard and a Roman sardonyx vase from the first century BCE display different translucencies depending on their proximity to light, while William Eggleston’s iconic photograph *Untitled* (1974)—created, of course, through the artist’s control of light—shows the brilliance of sunshine above the clouds when filtered through a glass of cola on a window-adjacent airplane tray. Also displayed here are examples of Giorgio Morandi’s still life paintings from the 1940s, whose emphasis on tonal variation, reductive forms, and spatial ambiguity reflects the artist’s longstanding concern with space, light, color, and form over subject matter—aspects that had a profound influence on modern and contemporary art and resonate throughout the exhibition.

Construction and assembly reveal themselves as equally significant aspects of many works on view, ranging from the intricate embroidery of natural and metallic threads in an important pictorial weaving by Anni Albers from 1950 to the stunning combination of alabaster and gilt bronze in an Italian eighteenth-century figurative sculpture. Elsewhere in the exhibition, works are distinguished by their absence of color. Complexity and drama are heightened in the classical image of the Bed of Polykleitos, seen here in a striking and intimately scaled white marble relief from sixteenth-century Venice. Nearby, a small-scale painting by Robert Ryman from the mid-1960s exemplifies the artist’s sustained exploration of the physical properties of white paint. These works sensitively explore the visual and experiential qualities of their medium in dialogue with their surroundings, together presenting a meditation on material and form that transcends the constrictions of time and place.

Representing six generations of art dealers, Paris-based Galerie Kugel is widely recognized as a leader in pre-twentieth-century art. Operating at the intersection of quality, materiality, and rarity, the gallery is known for its rigorous standards of attribution and provenance research. With a focus on craftsmanship and expertise, Galerie Kugel approaches each object as a singular work defined as much by its technical mastery as by its historical and conceptual significance. The gallery has contributed to enriching major private and public collections worldwide, with important rediscoveries in recent years acquired by major institutions including The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; The Frick Collection, New York; and Musée du Louvre, Paris.

Emma Kronman is an independent curator and art advisor based in New York. Over the past fifteen years, Kronman has become a trusted expert in the Old Masters field. Her art historical knowledge also extends into the twenty-first century, and she advises clients whose collections span ancient to contemporary art. Prior to working as an advisor, Kronman served as Christie’s head of sale for Old

Master paintings in New York, and was a specialist in the department for six years. She received an MA at London's Courtauld Institute, where she studied thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Italian paintings, and a BA in art history from Yale University.

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