

Exhibition: *Eternal Medium: Seeing the World in Stone*

Dates: August 20, 2023—February 11, 2024

Location: Resnick Pavilion



(Image captions on page 3)

(Los Angeles, CA—June 15, 2023) The Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) presents *Eternal Medium: Seeing the World in Stone*, an exhibition that focuses on the role of the imagination in perceiving images in the natural markings of stones. The product of a collaboration between LACMA, the Rosalinde and Arthur Gilbert Collection, and the Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A) in London, this exhibition brings together objects that utilize the natural features of stones and places them alongside similar works in other mediums for context and comparisons. *Eternal Medium* ranges from historical to contemporary with the earliest work from c. 2200–1800 BCE to recent pieces by Analia Saban, Alma Allen, and Ben Gaskell. Featuring a robust selection of 125 works, the exhibition is drawn from LACMA’s collection with loans from the Rosalinde and Arthur Gilbert Collection on loan to the V&A and the V&A’s own collections, as well as public and private collections in California.

“Making sense of enigmatic visual phenomena such as the moon, clouds, and inkblots is a fundamental human ability that excites curiosity and inspires creativity,” said Rosie Mills, The Rosalinde and Arthur Gilbert Foundation Associate Curator, Decorative Arts and Design. “Stone, especially vividly colored and richly patterned stone, is an impressive medium because the right stone can be difficult to source and carve. *Eternal Medium: Seeing the World in Stone* invites visitors to look for themselves as well as consider the works in their cultural and historical contexts.” “This exhibition is the result of a meaningful collaboration between LACMA, the Rosalinde and Arthur Gilbert Collection, and the Victoria and Albert Museum in London,” said Michael Govan, LACMA CEO and Wallis Annenberg Director. “Through the sharing of collections and expertise, this partnership has facilitated new approaches to established subjects. The LACMA/V&A Staff Exchange Program was created in 2017, thanks to the generous support from The Rosalinde and Arthur Gilbert Foundation in Los Angeles, and the Gilbert Trust for the Arts in London. This exchange program is intended to encourage the exploration of new models for research, audience engagement, and scholarship. *Eternal Medium* is the result of this

groundbreaking program.” Tristram Hunt, Director of the V&A and Gilbert Trust for the Arts Trustee said, “The Gilbert collection of works of art made of stone is iconic and comprehensive. It is wonderful to see so many of these treasures come back to LACMA for this exhibition, alongside other works of art from the V&A, and all set in a wider context where visitors can understand the visual and artistic power of stones across continents and centuries.”

Exhibition Organization

The exhibition comprises nine interrelated sections: “Hard” Stones; Sourcing Specimens; Manipulating Multicolored Stones; Seeing Images in Stones; Fooling the Eye; Flora and Fauna; Heaven and Earth; Stone for Stone; and Transcending Stone. Each section considers where the materials came from, demonstrates how their innate characteristics were translated into illusionistic stone pictures and coloristic stone sculptures, and encourages visitors to understand the works in relation to similar images in other media as well as use their own imaginations to complete the imagery suggested by the stones and their markings.

Exhibition Highlights:

Dagger of Emperor Aurangzeb, India, Mughal empire, 1660–61

Imperial khanjars, like this one belonging to the Mughal Emperor, were typically made of precious materials. This particular specimen of nephrite jade retains its burnt-orange skin to add contrast to the horse’s meticulously delineated mane.

Snuffbox in the shape of a dog, Germany, c. 1740–50

In the 18th century, Dresden’s lapidary artists incorporated the naturally occurring patterns of Saxony’s unusually rich and varied minerals into some of the most ingenious designs. For this exquisite snuffbox in the shape of a dog, the stone specimen was carefully selected for the shape and distribution of its dark inclusions that evoke the hound’s spotted fur.

Table, Italy, c. 1870

Contoured stone mosaics are pieced together like a jigsaw puzzle, except that each piece is individually shaped to correspond to the image’s outlines (making the joins invisible). The still life on this tabletop demonstrates the extraordinary illusionism achieved using this technique.

Ben Gaskell, *Breakbox with Split Crystal*, United Kingdom, London, 2016

The exceedingly beautiful fracture in the transparent rock crystal cube was achieved by applying immense force at just the right angle. It celebrates the material's physical properties as well as the artist's technical mastery.

Exhibition Design

Claus Benjamin Freyinger and Andrew Holder of The Los Angeles Design Group (LADG) have created an immersive and contemplative installation design that supports an intimate viewing of the sumptuous and detailed artworks in the *Eternal Medium* exhibition. This collaboration between LACMA and LADG is one of many examples of the museum working with renowned L.A. architects on exhibition design.

Credit

This exhibition was organized by the Los Angeles County Museum of Art.

Presented by The Rosalinde and Arthur Gilbert Foundation.

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About LACMA

Located on the Pacific Rim, LACMA is the largest art museum in the western United States, with a collection of nearly 152,000 objects that illuminate 6,000 years of artistic expression across the globe. Committed to showcasing a multitude of art histories, LACMA exhibits and interprets works of art from new and unexpected points of view that are informed by the region's rich cultural heritage and diverse population. LACMA's spirit of experimentation is reflected in its work with artists, technologists, and thought leaders as well as in its regional, national, and global partnerships to share collections and programs, create pioneering initiatives, and engage new audiences.

Location: 5905 Wilshire Boulevard, Los Angeles, CA 900036. lacma.org

Image captions: *Dagger of Emperor Aurangzeb*, India, Mughal empire, 1660–61, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, from the Nasli and Alice Heeramaneck Collection, Museum Associates purchase, photo © Museum Associates/LACMA; *Snuffbox in the shape of a dog*, Germany, c. 1740–50, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, gift of The Rosalinde and Arthur Gilbert Foundation and the 2022 Decorative Arts and Design Acquisitions Committee (DA²), photo © Museum Associates/LACMA; *Table*, c.1870, photo: © Victoria & Albert Museum, London/ Courtesy the Rosalinde & Arthur Gilbert Collection, on loan to the Victoria & Albert Museum;.Ben Gaskell, *Breakbox with Split Crystal*, 2016, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, gift of the 2020 Decorative Arts and Design Acquisitions Committee (DA²) in memory of Peter Loughrey,photo © Museum Associates/LACMA

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