



*Wisteria*, 2023. Painting on canvas, color inks on white gold leaf. 64<sup>9/16</sup> × 146<sup>7/16</sup> × 1<sup>15/16</sup> inch. Photographer: Tanguy Beurdeley. ©Jean-Michel Othoniel / ADAGP, Paris & ARS, New York, 2023. Courtesy of the artist and Perrotin.

## JEAN-MICHEL OTHONIEL *THE RECONCILIATION OF OPPOSITES*

October 27 - December 22, 2023

Perrotin is pleased to present *The Reconciliation of Opposites*, an exhibition of new paintings and sculptures by Jean-Michel Othoniel, following his recent solo exhibition at the Brooklyn Botanic Garden. Othoniel's enchanting aesthetics revolve around the notion of emotional geometry. Through the repetition of modular elements such as glass bricks or his signature beads, he creates exquisite artworks that reflect the complexity of human nature.

*The Reconciliation of Opposites* explores Othoniel's longstanding interests in the potent symbolism of flowers, as well as materiality, focused specifically on the dual strength and fragility of glass. Across two floors of Perrotin New York, the artist presents works that range from intimate to monumental – lustrous flower paintings on white gold leaf decorate the third floor, while the second floor boasts pieces from his radiant glass brick series, *Precious Stonewall* and *Wonder Block*. The artist's new paintings build upon his signature *Rose* series, expanding his oeuvre with works inspired by various plant species, such as *Wisteria*, depicted in a vivid color palette. While the artist's paintings and *Precious Stonewall* sculptures are installed on the walls of the gallery, his *Wonder Blocks* are transformed into meditative freestanding columns, whose pigments illuminate the space with vibrant flame-like rays. Monumental yet delicate, baroque yet minimal, poetic yet political, his contemplative forms have the power to reconcile opposites.

The following text was written by Daniel Palmer to accompany the exhibition.

Jean-Michel Othoniel's artworks often recall the varied effects of optical devices, utilizing refraction and reflection to evoke the otherworldly qualities that exist around us and within us. Some of his sculptures mirror their environments like Victorian-era gazing globes, while they also speak

of interior, psychological worlds like those envisioned by the fortune teller's crystal ball. Very few of his works act as an undistorted simple mirror, but all help us see and contemplate our outward appearance and subjectivity. Others function like lenses of cameras, telescopes, or binoculars, through which we look outward to view or record a scene. There is also an element of the historic and esoteric in Othoniel's work, recalling tools such as the Claude glass, a convex mirror used by landscape painters and named for Claude Lorrain though it was invented and popularized in the 18th century, also called a black mirror. And yet Othoniel's art addresses our current era, like the increasingly psychologically complex black mirror of the iPhone's polished "Gorilla Glass," and the endless portal to myriad worlds it becomes when powered on. Of course, all of these rely on the most essential and innate of human technologies - the eyes, which perceive as they also reflect and speak to others (like the cliché goes) as the "windows to the soul."

What do the things that we look at say about who we are? The garden is the most telling subject to allow us to consider the question. The artist's continued interest in flowers and gardens as vistas to behold and reflect who we are manifests in Othoniel's newest exhibition at Perrotin gallery as well as his recent public installation at the Brooklyn Botanic Garden, *The Flowers of Hypnosis*. This well-deserved moment of celebration for the artist was the largest display of his work in the United States since his superb 2012 retrospective at the Brooklyn Museum. The outdoor exhibition consisted of six new monumental sculptures placed throughout the park's varied settings in order to elicit deeper connections with the senses. This compelling group of new sculptures continued the artist's long-standing attentiveness to flower blossoms, taking the recurrent forms of gigantic, mirrored beads and golden bead works, as well as his iconic rose motif – a display that is one of the most notable and compelling he has created in recent years.



Installation view of *Jean-Michel Othoniel: The Flowers of Hypnosis* at Brooklyn Botanic Garden, 2023. Photographer: Guillaume Ziccarelli. ©Jean-Michel Othoniel / ADAGP, Paris & ARS, New York. Courtesy of the artist and Perrotin.



*Precious Stonewall*, 2023. Pink and champagne mirrored Indian glass, wood. 13 × 12<sup>5/8</sup> × 8<sup>11/16</sup> inch. Photographer: Claire Dorn. ©Jean-Michel Othoniel / ADAGP, Paris & ARS, New York, 2023. Courtesy of the artist and Perrotin.

Othoniel is achieving new levels of greatness in his work, through consistent evolution and innovation of the primary interests that have remained at the core of his artistic practice for decades. This constancy is evidenced by the brilliant new rose paintings and brick sculptures on view at his Perrotin exhibition. These masterful works reflect the many significant poetic manifestations of gardens and flowers since the beginning of his career, serving as a thread throughout his oeuvre, including some of his most renowned displays in France, especially at the Louvre with *La Rose du Louvre* – six important rose paintings permanently on display there since 2019, and at Versailles with *Les Belles Danses* – the first original work added to the palace grounds since Le Nôtre's work there in the eighteenth century.

With the works in this exhibition, we can also consider the artist's work in dialogue with another great French garden – Claude Monet's garden at Giverny, which has been an enormous inspiration for Othoniel over the years, and to which he has a sensual connection. This historic garden is relevant today for Othoniel for the way its creator lived and created art there. Conceived of as an all-encompassing work of art—a paradise within but apart from the world—it inspired him to transform reality into abstraction through qualities of immersion and absorption. Variation in light, embrace of color, and the richness of dialogue between planarity and three-dimensional space are all enormously important aspects for both artists. Othoniel's 2D works are ultimately about optics as well. The reflections of his sculptures in water, and the cast light and shadow patterns from the three-dimensional beads of his works projected onto their environments, walls, and ceilings activate their surroundings with effects that he has translated into monoprints, works on gold leaf, and the canvas wall works exhibited here.

A similar set of visual complexities and otherworldly spaces are created from the elegant glass bricks that Othoniel has produced with glassmaker artisans from Firozabad, India since 2009. Rather than simply reflecting

light, these works also concentrate it because of the slightly puckered shape of the brick. When combined into his brick altar sculptures, brick wall sculptures, or even environments they create a transcendence that acts as a sculptural portal, captivating us with beauty and transcendence. The altars are steele-like in their form, but their magic lies in the almost alchemical way they transform light into something even more boundless through our ocular perception of their shimmer.

The energy and meaning that Othoniel imbues into these works is a manifestation of his reflection upon the lighter and darker parts of humanity – both as a site for creation and destruction. I see his work as essentially optimistic about art's role in society. His pan-religious, pan-cultural, truly global intention and message is a celebration of our collective existence. Every piece he creates makes clear that he views beauty and light as an antidote to pain, darkness, and suffering. He sees the creative process as a potentially violent crucible through which meaning is formed. An artwork may not end war or famine, nor can it cure disease or avert climate disaster, but Othoniel's creations are a full-throated assertion of an everlasting, unifying hope. They firmly articulate the ultimate aim of our short lives, which is especially evidenced by artists who have dedicated themselves to improving the world through beauty and peace. He and his powerful art should inspire us to make a better day, together.

— Daniel S. Palmer, PhD

**Jean-Michel Othoniel: *The Reconciliation of Opposites*, Perrotin New York, October 27 - December 22, 2023.**

**Jean-Michel Othoniel: *The Flowers of Hypnosis*, Brooklyn Botanic Garden, July 18 - October 22, 2023.**

**[More information about the artist >>>](#)**