



《장-미셸 오토니엘-정원과 정원》

Jean-Michel Othoniel - Treasure Gardens

from June 16 to August 7, 2022

An exhibition held simultaneously at

Seoul Museum of Art &

Deoksugung Palace Garden, Seoul

From June 16 to August 7, 2022, Jean-Michel Othoniel will present, for the first time in Korea, a series of new works. The Seoul Museum of Art is surrounded by gardens, including one belonging to the imperial palace, and is the artist's honor and privilege to show a series of sculptures in this garden, placed on the water.

The metaphor of the garden is at the heart of the artist's work, and the artist's works are displayed in these very real gardens that we pass through to reach the museum. Suspended from the trees or posed on the water, his monumental sculptures, made of gigantic pearls covered with gold leaf or with metal polished to a mirror finish, welcome the visitor as if in an enchanted fairy-tale. The artist has always linked the sensory garden to his spiritual garden. The garden of a thousand species at the Deoksugung Palace, also known as the "*Palace of virtue and longevity*," offers him the perfect setting for his poetic reveries.

Jean-Michel Othoniel has always been fascinated by flowers and their stories, and he invites us here to contemplate his *Golden Lotus*, installed on the water, and to meditate in front of his rosaries, suspended from tree branches like forbidden fruit. These artworks reflect the pure and the sacred, the beautiful and the enchanted.

The exhibition *Treasure Gardens* continues in the museum galleries. We are greeted by two large-format abstract sculptures – self-supporting knots placed alongside the staircase like two guardians of a consecrated site. In the center of the entrance, a giant *Lotus Knot* in pearls covered in gold, is on display; this work immediately situates the exhibition in the realm of majesty and contemplation.

In the first gallery, the artist reveals his great love of flowers in large paintings made on a background of white gold leaf. These works reflect his passion for roses, particularly apparent in the paintings he created for the Musée du Louvre in Paris, but also in a new series created especially for Seoul inspired by the plum blossom, a symbol of resistance and fertility. Like the flowers themselves, these canvases herald the end of winter and the joy of rebirth, the end of a difficult period and the hope for a better world.

In the second gallery, visitors are welcomed by an immense *Blue River* composed of thousands of hand-blown silvery, shimmering glass bricks. Aquamarine blue in color, this brick floor acts as a dazzling base for a large installation entitled *Noeuds*, which gathers together more than twenty works in the shape of suspended knots. Symbols of infinity, they are multiplied in the thousands of reflections seen in the mirrored beads with which they are composed. With these mathematical knots, Jean-Michel Othoniel comes together with Korean culture and its heritage through the traditional art of *maedup*, weaving in this way his fantastic web between cultures and freeing imagination from all boundaries. On the walls of the same gallery hangs a new series of his *Precious Stonewalls*, small, uniform blocks elaborated in infinite combinations, each with the same number of glass bricks. These minimal works, shimmering with color, diffract the light like altars emanating a sacred flame.

The last room is articulated around a monumental work, a pile of metal bricks forming a shelter. *Agora* is a den, a grotto offering visitors the possibility to enter, to distance themselves from the world, to feel protected or to come together, perhaps just for the simple pleasure of meeting, listening and sharing.

Around this major work, a brand-new series of minimalistic works entitled *Oracle* concludes the exhibition. Linear modules of color hung on the walls, they recall minimalist sculptures by Donald Judd or Carl Andre, and propose visitors the moment of suspended time needed to interpret the prophetic word.

The artist is passionate about the signs nature offers us – the sound of wind in the leaves, of birds in flight, of the marvels that surrounds us and that we must learn to know again; Othoniel has long been working to re-enchant the world.

**Deoksugung
Palace Garden**

The Gardens

*LOTUS
NECKLACES*

.....

Seoul Museum of Art

Under the sign of Infinite Knots

Paintings

*LA ROSE DU LOUVRE
PLUM BLOSSOM*

Installation

*WILD KNOTS
BLUE RIVER
PRECIOUS STONEWALLS
AGORA
ORACLES*

List of works

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Jean-Michel Othoniel

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Seoul Museum of Art

PRESENTATION

An exhibition sponsored by Christian Dior Parfums as part of its *Cultural Gardens* initiative.

Christian Dior
PARFUMS

LOTUS

Gold Lotus, stainless steel, gold leaf, variable dimensions, 2018-2021



During his numerous trips to Korea, Jean-Michel Othoniel was struck by the omnipresence of the lotus flower in gardens as well as in paintings, sculptures and traditional architectural motifs. A symbol of enlightenment, truth and serenity, this flower is also very important in the Buddhist world. This powerful symbol of spiritual enlightenment led the artist to explore a dimension for this exhibition that was more abstract, more radical. He focused his intervention in the gardens on works whose materiality is deeply symbolic, mirrors and gold.

Jean-Michel Othoniel explores here a poetic minimalism in which the beauty and strangeness of dreams take shape, and in a world where the real becomes enchanted. As in works by Ellsworth Kelly, the abstract figures in his work were born from observing reality *Through the Looking-Glass*. His sculptures of golden pearls placed on the lake in the imperial garden appear to us as large Lotus knots straight out of a fairy tale or dream.

NECKLACES

Gold necklaces, stainless steel, gold leaf, variable dimensions, 2021



Sculptures in the form of necklaces are one of the artist's hallmarks. Often shown outdoors, they adorn numerous parks and gardens around the world.

In Seoul, the gardens surrounding the museum clearly lend themselves to a series of installations in the trees. Othoniel likes to confront his works with nature itself, thus giving the strength of minerals back to the materials that animate his sculptures, glass or gold leaf.

In the garden of the imperial city, the delicate twisted pine tree are adorned with three golden necklaces. These necklace-sculptures were specially created to respond to the small size of these delicate trees. This subtle intervention in the landscape is visible only from the shore of the central pond; in the great tradition of scholar gardens, these bonsai trees were planted in the center of the island as works of nature to admire. Precious necklaces that look as if they had been left behind by giants, they make the island into a place of mystery, a "treasure island" where dreams become reality. Very close to the museum, another garden hosts a monumental installation around a large ancestral tree. Covered with seven golden necklaces, this majestic tree is a reminder of the "Wish Tree," an object of offerings; people are invited to write their wishes on strips of paper and tie them to its branches. Here, each necklace is itself a wish, a secret desire, a promise of eternity.

UNDER THE SIGN OF INFINITE KNOTS

Nœuds Miroirs, Stainless steel, variable dimensions, 2021

Gold Lotus, Steel, aluminum, gold leaf, variable dimensions, 2015



The exhibition *Treasure Gardens* at the SeMA is placed against the background of infinity. Two large abstract sculptures positioned on either side of the main staircase, self-supporting knots made of mirror-polished metal, act as guardians of the history that unfolds within the museum and an homage to the art of *maedup*. By looking at them closely, you can see their image infinitely multiplied, and all the reflections of the world around us are contained in them.

In the center of the entrance stands the giant *Gold Lotus*, made in beads covered with gold. This work was made especially for Korea during the artist's first exhibition at the Kukje Gallery. It is a mobile sculpture which, when installed outdoors, is designed to move with the wind. It immediately places the exhibition under the sign of majesty and contemplation.

Paintings

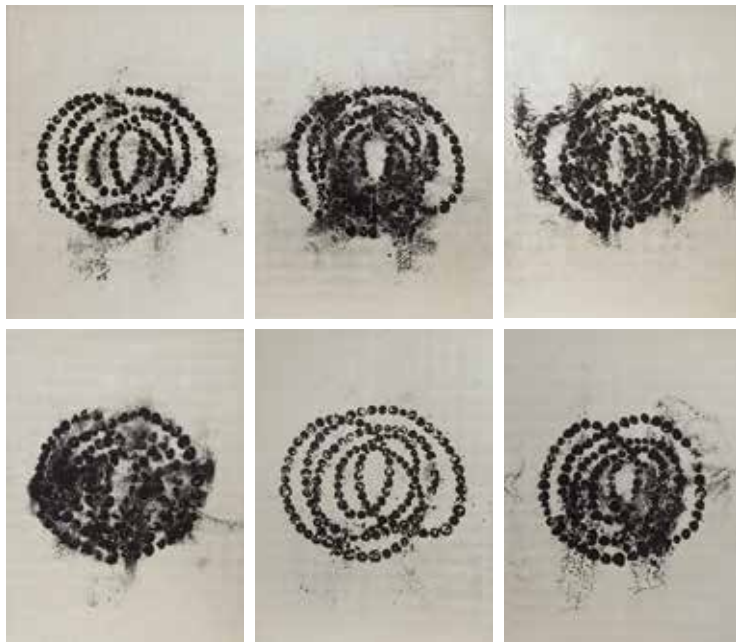
“Flowers play a very important role in my work. My obsession with the hidden meaning of flowers and their symbolism offers me a new way of looking at the world. For me, reality remains a source of perpetual wonder.”

— Jean-Michel Othoniel

The *Herbier Merveilleux*, a book written by the artist on the symbolism of flowers throughout the history of art, bears witness to his poetic approach to nature. Flowers play a key role in his artistic practice, and his depictions of them in paintings and sculptures have given birth to abstract shapes and motifs suffused with the energy of signs of the infinite. The power of the painted gesture and the radical use of the colors black or red are reminiscent of the Asian art of calligraphy, but here, thick ink is deposited in a single layer on the gold leaf. These monotypes may not have a similar rapidity of gesture, but they convey the same vibrancy thanks to their powerful sense of contrast, engagement and abstraction.

LA ‘ROSE DU LOUVRE’

Paintings on canvas, black ink on white gold leaf, 164x124 cm, 2019



“I loved the two years I spent roaming the halls of the Louvre in search of a flower that could become the symbol of the greatest museum in the world.” — Jean-Michel Othoniel

Painted in black ink on white gold leaf, these six canvases were inspired by a rose found in the collections of the Louvre Museum: the rose depicted by Rubens in his painting evoking the marriage between Marie de Medici and the French king Henri IV in the year 1600.

For Jean-Michel Othoniel, this rose is the flower emblematic of the Louvre. Queen among flowers, triumphant, symbol of power and passion, this rose, painted with great freedom, speaks to us of a woman’s destiny, of her beauty, of her love stronger than death, of the history of France, of the history of the museum.

Paintings

PLUM BLOSSOM

Paintings on canvas, red and yellow ink on white gold leaf, 164x124 cm, 2022



These three new paintings, which include a huge triptych, enable the artist to explore the importance of the plum blossom in Korean culture.

The plum tree is the first tree to blossom in the spring and therefore represents life, resistance and tenacity. It is a symbol of fertility and renewal. This is how Jean-Michel Othoniel evoked this flower in the edition of his *Herbier Merveilleux* published in 2019 with the Louvre.

The three paintings that emerged from his research are for the first time two-tone, in red and golden yellow. The triptych's large size marks an important step in the artist's approach to pictorial creation, in which painting becomes landscape. Red fading to pale pink in these abstract shapes brings to mind the plum blossom itself. Golden yellows, which suggest the pistils and pollen emerging from the blossoms, move from one canvas to another like drips of paint carried by wind.

Installation

LES NOEUDS SAUVAGES (WILD KNOTS)

Mirrored glass, stainless steel, variable dimensions, 2019-2022



These thirteen sculptures made of mirrored beads are inspired by reflection theory and wild knots. Today, these works are installed like a constellation above the great blue river composed of more than 7,400 aquamarine-colored glass bricks.

Produced during a period of almost eight years under the watchful eye of Aubin Arroyo, a talented Mexican mathematician, these sculptures, in the shape of Borromean knots, reflect us and themselves endlessly.

In 2015, Aubin Arroyo, who discovered Jean-Michel Othoniel's works on the Internet, contacted the artist and shared with him the research on wild knots and theories of reflection that he had been calculating and analyzing for more than fifteen years. Born of these mathematical formulas, the mathematician's virtual images strangely resembled the images of the artist's sculptures.

What were the chances that these two apparently distinct worlds would cross paths, between mathematics and art, between the rational and the intuitive? Since then, the pair have begun a dialogue that has also taken shape in exhibitions and conferences (in Mexico City, Buenos Aires, Montreal, Paris and now Seoul). This scientific exchange made it possible for Othoniel to develop his free forms into a universal poetic, to master and anticipate the multiple reflections of mirror glass, to approach the notion of infinity and, through the discovery of infinitely small reflections, to come closer to the cosmos.

These complex sculptures were designed by the artist and very meticulously crafted in blown glass thanks to the virtuosity of master glass artists. They appear like poetic depictions of the universe.

Installation

In this exhibition, which brings together several sculptures made of glass or metal bricks, Jean-Michel Othoniel affirms the use of a new modular element in his work, the brick. Like pearls, bricks are a common denominator in many cultures around the world. These universal modules have contributed to the positive response the artist's work has received on many different continents. Othoniel began working with glass bricks in 2009, after a journey to India, where he worked for the first time with artisan glassblowers in Firozabad. There, he was struck by the stacks of bricks people accumulated on the road in the hopes of one day building their own houses. He also discovered countless votive altars near the temples, parallelepipeds built with mud bricks and covered with offerings and necklaces of multicolored flowers. Feeding his recent research and generating material for new "*obsessions*," bricks enable the artist to reach the architectural scale he had been always looked for in his sculpture, to create a new relationship to space in keeping with his search for enigmatic minimalism. He strives to rethink the way his work is inscribed in the landscape by radicalizing his relationship to geometry. To do so, he creates spaces that can be penetrated, places that create a new relationship to the body - grottoes, paths, walls, agoras, doors -, thereby synthesizing the recurring themes in his work – presence and absence, shadow and lights, the hidden and the revealed.

LA RIVIÈRE BLEUE (BLUE RIVER)

Indian blue mirrored glass, 2.62 x 6.9 x 0.6 m, 2022



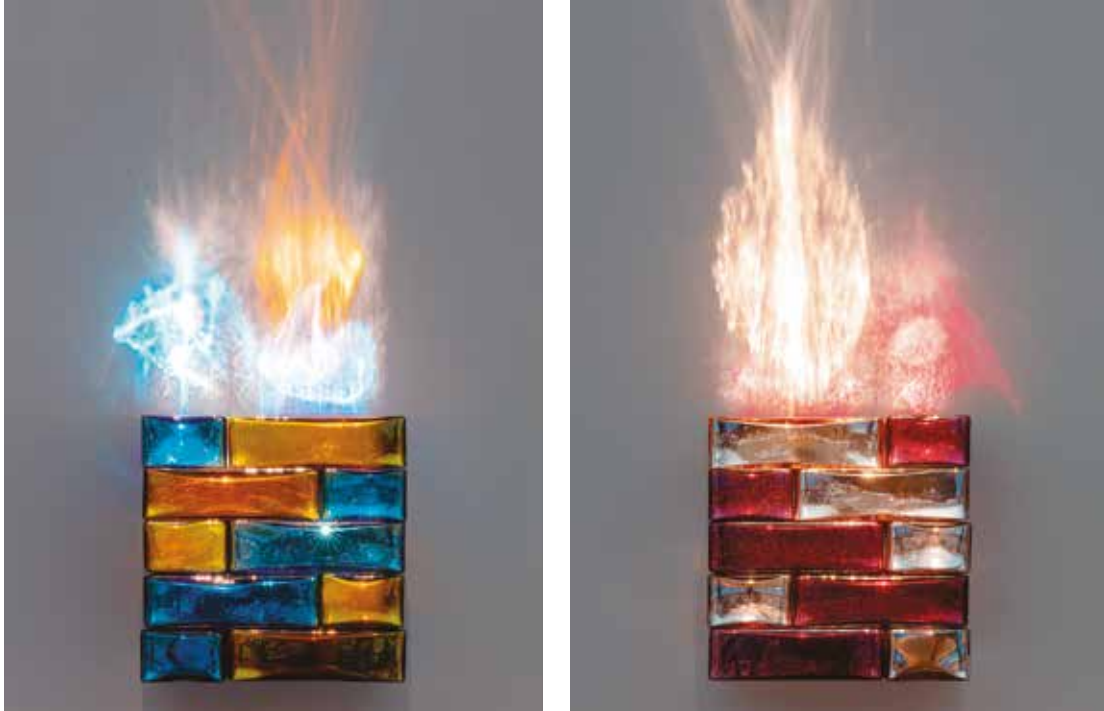
The sculpture *Blue River* presented at the SEMA is the largest the artist has ever created. It unfurls its azure bed over twenty-six meters long and seven meters wide. The color, Indian "*Firozi*" blue, is a coppery blue that embraces multiple references to Mediterranean culture and to the cradle of Indo-European civilization, seen from Greece to Egypt, from Spain to Iran via the blue coating of the *Tower of Babel*. In Korea, blue celadon is the symbol of a new, imaginary universe opening up onto Asia. This sculpture is like a carpet. Calm as a lake, it is reminiscent of still water and has the symbolic value of a mirror between worlds; a real or magical world, it suggests a big, quiet eye around which the poetry of reflections is established.

Thirteen glass sculptures with infinite reflections are suspended above this large, blue-brick mirror and envelop it in their shimmering light. Water and dreams are strongly linked in the artist's universe, from the lakes of the scholar gardens to the black, mirror-like surface of *Obsidienne*. For Jean-Michel Othoniel, reflections are always a promise of enchantment.

Installation

PRECIOUS STONEWALLS

Indian mirrored glass bricks in various colors, variable dimensions, 2021



This series of *Precious Stonewalls*, produced in two colors, was first shown at the Kukje Gallery in Korea in 2021. These works were imagined in drawings made during lockdown, like a diary in which a new emotion emerges each day from a new combination of colored bricks. In an extension of this diary, now being shown in the museum, these works recount the desire to find new hope every single day, to seek inside ourselves the power of enchantment in order to face the world. These are fundamentally optimistic works that clearly manifest the power of the intimate over the political. The artist's previous *Precious Stonewalls* are larger, monochromatic works that resemble windows for contemplation. The new colors presented in Seoul, from Indian pink to saffron yellow, evoke imaginary journeys; in these works, the magic of precious stones is also summoned in hues of emerald green and honeyed amber. If, as in Philip Guston's paintings, a single brick can be as a revolutionary object tossed by demonstrators, then here, by stacking bricks and gathering them together, Othoniel makes constructions that serve as a bastion against disillusionment with the world.

Installation

“When I create a glass tornado or tsunami, it has to do with what is happening in the world. But it is not something deliberate. On the contrary, it is something that seeps slowly into my work and that reveals itself to me progressively. Each work generates new ideas. Today’s conflicts and climate-related issues come to the surface in my work, although this is not intentional. Perhaps it could be said that the works are the site where the ideas take shape.”

— Jean-Michel Othoniel

AGORA

Polished stainless steel bricks, 300x430 cm, 2019



Agora can be seen as the synthesis of the ideas borne by the exhibition, and express the artist’s desire *“to move increasingly towards architecture, the creation of spaces.”* At once a grotto and a burial mound, a futuristic shape and a work that has emerged from the collective memory, this work, with its soft reflections, offers up a shelter, a space of dialogue and encounter, expression and freedom. It encourages public speaking as well as the private sharing of secrets.

“For a long time, I wanted to build a kind of agora, a space where free speech would be protected by the status of the artwork.”

Between sculpture and architecture, both monumental and intimate, this work emanates a poetic and sensual power that goes beyond its political dimension. Its 2,750 polished stainless-steel bricks combine the smoothness of skin and the solidity of armor. While pursuing his vast enterprise to *“establish a relationship of wonderment with regard to the world”* and to *“re-enchant”* reality, the artist – with this contemporary utopia, between sculpture and architecture – gives shape to a new hope, affirming beauty as a political and spiritual act.

Installation

ORACLES

Indian mirrored-glass bricks in various colors, stainless steel, variable dimensions, 2022.



Oracles brings together works that are amongst Jean-Michel Othoniel's purest, most poetic creations. He displays here the characteristics of a visionary, of a "seer," exquisitely sensitive to all that surrounds him. *"There is a strong oracular presence to my work. There is something intuitive in my works, but also something of the order of revelation. I believe all artists have a powerful intuition"*, he says of his series *Oracles*.

These linear modules of bricks are radically minimalistic. Evoking the rigor of works by Donald Judd, these brick assemblages suggest a series of phrases punctuated by elements in relief. The play of glass bricks unfurls on the wall like a sequence of coded messages. By concluding his exhibition with an enigma, the artist thereby invites the public to dream of new works to come.

《장-미셸 오토니엘-정원과 정원》
Jean-Michel Othoniel-Treasure Gardens

LIST OF WORKS

Deoksugung Palace Garden

Collier Or, 2021

(Gold necklace)

Stainless steel, gold leaf
91 x 50 x 10 cm
21IN043

Collier Or, 2021

(Gold necklace)

Stainless steel, gold leaf
95 x 50 x 10 cm
21IN141

Collier Or, 2021

(Gold necklace)

Stainless steel, gold leaf
90 x 50 x 10 cm
21IN143

Collier Or, 2021

(Gold necklace)

Stainless steel, gold leaf
150 x 160 x 145 cm
18IN094

Bouton de Rose, 2021

(Rosebud)

Stainless steel, gold leaf
111 x 75 x 78 cm
21IN032

Gold Lotus, 2021

Stainless steel, gold leaf
142 x 135 x 122 cm
21IN038

Gold Rose, 2021

Stainless steel, gold leaf
120 x 180 x 190 cm
21IN039

《장-미셸 오토니엘-정원과 정원》
Jean-Michel Othoniel-Treasure Gardens

LIST OF WORKS

Seoul Museum of Art

Le Nœud de Babel, 2021
(Babel knot)

Stainless steel
195 x 130 x 125 cm
21IN018

The Knot of the Imaginary, 2021

Stainless steel
180 x 165 x 135 cm
21IN033

Gold Lotus, 2015

Steel, Aluminum cast, gold leaf, painting
425 x 300 x 300 cm
15IN020

La Rose du Louvre, 2019
(The Rose of Louvre)

Painting on canvas, black ink on white gold leaf
164 x 124 x 5 cm
19IN039

La Rose du Louvre, 2019
(The Rose of Louvre)

Painting on canvas, black ink on white gold leaf
164 x 124 x 5 cm
19IN048

La Rose du Louvre, 2019
(The Rose of Louvre)

Painting on canvas, black ink on white gold leaf
164 x 124 x 5 cm
19IN033

La Rose du Louvre, 2019
(The Rose of Louvre)

Painting on canvas, black ink on white gold leaf
164 x 124 x 5 cm
19IN124

La Rose du Louvre, 2019
(The Rose of Louvre)

Painting on canvas, black ink on white gold leaf
164 x 124 x 5 cm
19IN127

La Rose du Louvre, 2019
(The Rose of Louvre)

Painting on canvas, black ink on white gold leaf
164 x 124 x 5 cm
19IN165

Plum Blossom, 2022

Painting on canvas, black ink on white gold leaf
164 x 124 x 5 cm
22IN058

Plum Blossom, 2022

Painting on canvas, black ink on white gold leaf
164 x 124 x 5 cm
22IN059

Plum Blossom (Triptych), 2022

Painting on canvas, black ink on white gold leaf
164 x 372 x 5 cm
22IN060

Collier autoporté miroir, 2021
(Self standing mirror necklace)

Stainless steel
292 x 148 x 250 cm
20IN154

Rivière bleue, 2022

Blue Indian glass bricks
2,62 x 6,9 x 6 m
22IN041

Purple Lotus knot, 2015

Violet mirrored glass, stainless steel
142 x 135 x 122 cm
15IN019

Pink Lotus, 2016

Pink mirrored glass, stainless steel
130 x 150 x 100 cm
15IN017

Noeud Sauvage, 2022
(Wild knot)

Violet mirrored glass, stainless steel
90 x 90 x 90 cm
22IN002

Noeud Sauvage, 2020
(Wild knot)

Mirrored glass, stainless steel
105 x 90 x 90 cm
18IN073

Noeud Sauvage, 2022
(Wild knot)

Amber and green mirrored glass, stainless steel
90 x 90 x 90 cm
22IN005

Noeud Sauvage, 2021
(Wild knot)

Amber mirrored glass, stainless steel
90 x 90 x 90 cm
18IN093

Noeud RSI, 2019
(RSI Knot)

Mirrored glass, stainless steel
72 x 65 x 35 cm
19IN070

Mon Coeur serré, 2019
(My heavy heart)

Purple mirrored glass, stainless steel
145 x 150 x 70 cm
19IN071

Ranunculaceae Knot, 2019

Green mirrored glass, stainless steel
70 x 40 x 70 cm
19IN074

Noeud Sauvage, 2020
(Wild knot)

Blue mirrored glass, stainless steel
110 x 106 x 83 cm
18IN104

Noeud Sauvage, 2021
(Wild knot)

Green mirrored glass, stainless steel
90 x 90 x 90 cm
18IN113

Amber Knot, 2022

Amber mirrored glass, stainless steel
130 x 150 x 75 cm
22IN010

Noeud Versailles, 2022
(Versailles knot)

Stainless Steel
90 x 85 x 60 cm
22IN011

Le Nœud de Lacan, 2022
(Lacan knot)

Stainless steel, paint
150 x 135 x 50 cm
22IN009

Noeud gris dégradé miroir, 2012
(Gradient gray mirror Knot)

Mirrored glass, stainless steel
130 x 150 x 100 cm
12IN017

Noeud Noir Infini, 2015
(Black infinite knot)

Black mirrored glass, stainless steel
90 x 90 x 55 cm
14IN081

Noeud Sauvage, 2020
(Wild knot)

Mirrored glass, stainless steel
90 x 90 x 90 cm
18IN115

Noeud miroir, 2021
(Mirrored knot)

Stainless steel
200 x 225 x 125 cm
21IN035

《장-미셸 오토니엘-정원과 정원》
Jean-Michel Othoniel-Treasure Gardens

LIST OF WORKS

Seoul Museum of Art

Noeud miroir, 2021
(*Mirrored knot*)

Stainless steel
210 x 170 x 120 cm
21IN036

Noeud miroir, 2021
(*Mirrored knot*)

Stainless steel
210 x 170 x 120 cm
21IN037

The Knot of the Real, 2021

Stainless steel
200 x 210 x 145 cm
21IN034

Noeud, 2022
(*Knot*)

Stainless steel
95 x 90 x 55 cm
21IN002

Precious Stonewall, 2022

Green and Emerald Indian mirrored glass, wood
33 x 32 x 22 cm
21IN183

Precious Stonewall, 2022

Blue and Rose Indian mirrored glass, wood
33 x 32 x 22 cm
21IN184

Precious Stonewall, 2022

Emerald and grey Indian mirrored glass, wood
33 x 32 x 22 cm
21IN187

Precious Stonewall, 2022

Yellow and Green Indian mirrored glass, wood
33 x 32 x 22 cm
21IN190

Precious Stonewall, 2022

Pink and Fuchsia Indian mirrored glass, wood
33 x 32 x 22 cm
22IN062

Precious Stonewall, 2022

Amber and Grey Indian mirrored glass, wood
33 x 32 x 22 cm
22IN063

Precious Stonewall, 2022

Amber and Blue Indian mirrored glass, wood
33 x 32 x 22 cm
22IN064

Precious Stonewall, 2022

Amber and Pink Indian mirrored glass, wood
33 x 32 x 22 cm
22IN065

Precious Stonewall, 2022

Emerald and Blue Indian mirrored glass, wood
33 x 32 x 22 cm
22IN066

Precious Stonewall, 2022

Grey and Blue Indian mirrored glass, wood
33 x 32 x 22 cm
22IN067

Precious Stonewall, 2022

Blue and Green Indian mirrored glass, wood
33 x 32 x 22 cm
21IN226

Precious Stonewall, 2022

Yellow and Blue mirrored Indian glass, wood
33 x 32 x 22 cm
22IN074

Precious Stonewall, 2022

Emerald mirrored Indian glass, wood
183 x 120 x 22 cm
22IN024

Precious Stonewall, 2022

Pink Indian mirrored glass, wood
79 x 55 x 22 cm
22IN070

Precious Stonewall, 2022

Yellow Indian mirrored glass, wood
79 x 55 x 22 cm
22IN072

Precious Stonewall, 2022

Light Green Indian mirrored glass, wood
79 x 55 x 22 cm
22IN071

Precious Stonewall, 2022

Amber Indian mirrored glass, wood
46 x 33 x 22 cm
22IN068

Precious Stonewall, 2022

Blue Indian mirrored glass, wood
46 x 33 x 22 cm
22IN069

Precious Stonewall, 2022

Fuchsia Indian mirrored glass, wood
46 x 33 x 22 cm
22IN025

Agora, 2019

Stainless steel
300 x 430 x 370 cm
18IN124

Oracle, 2022

Powdered Pink Indian glass bricks,
stainless steel, 13 x 146 x 22 cm
21IN223

Oracle, 2022

Green Indian glass bricks, stainless steel
13 x 146 x 22 cm
21IN229

Oracle, 2022

Grey Indian mirrored glass, stainless steel
35 x 207 x 22 cm
21IN222

Oracle, 2022

Pink Indian glass bricks, stainless steel
13 x 207 x 22 cm
22IN073

Oracle, 2022

Amber Indian glass bricks, stainless steel
27 x 272 x 22 cm
22IN076

Collier Or, 2021

(*Gold necklace*)
Stainless steel, gold leaf
90 x 50 x 10 cm
21IN144

Collier Or, 2021

(*Gold necklace*)
Stainless steel, gold leaf
76 x 47 x 10 cm
21IN145

Collier Or, 2021

(*Gold necklace*)
Stainless steel, gold leaf
75 x 47 x 10 cm
21IN146

Collier Or, 2021

(*Gold necklace*)
Stainless steel, gold leaf
73 x 47 x 10 cm
21IN147

Collier Or, 2021

(*Gold necklace*)
Stainless steel, gold leaf
70 x 47 x 10 cm
21IN149

Collier Or, 2021

(*Gold necklace*)
Stainless steel, gold leaf
60 x 40 x 10 cm
61138

Collier Or, 2021

(*Gold necklace*)
Stainless steel
58 x 40 x 10 cm
21IN154

Biography

JEAN-MICHEL OTHONIEL



Born in 1964 in Saint-Etienne, France, Jean-Michel Othoniel has been inventing a universe with multiple contours since the late 1980s. His works can be found in the world's best contemporary art museums, foundations and private collections.

More recently, his work has taken on an architectural dimension, engaging with gardens or historical sites through public or private commissions around the world. Favoring materials with poetic and sensitive properties, Jean-Michel Othoniel began making sculptures in wax or sulfur in the early 1990s that were presented by Jan Hoet at the *Documenta in Kassel* in 1992. The following year, he marked a major turning point in his work when he began using glass. Collaborating with the finest artisan glassblowers in Murano, he explored the properties of a material that has since become his hallmark. The delicacy of glass and the subtlety of its colors played an important role in the artist's vast project: to poeticize and re-enchant the world.

In 1996, he was granted an artist's residency at the Villa Medici in Rome, Italy. During this period, he began to create a dialogue between his works and the landscape, suspending giant necklaces in the Villa Medici gardens, in the trees in the Venetian garden at the Peggy Guggenheim Collection (1997) or at the Alhambra, Palace of the Generalife, in Granada, Spain (1999).

In 2000, Jean-Michel Othoniel received his first public commission: to transform the Parisian subway station at Palais-Royal - Musée du Louvre into *Le Kiosque des Noctambules* (The Kiosk of the Nightwalkers). Since then, his work has been shown equally in the public space and in museums.

In 2003, for the exhibition "*Crystal Palace*," presented at the Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain in Paris and at the MOCA in Miami, he worked in Venice, Italy, and in Marseille, France, producing blown-glass shapes that became enigmatic sculptures, between jewelry, architecture and erotic objects.

The following year, in 2004, an invitation from the Musée du Louvre to exhibit in its Mesopotamian galleries, in the context of the exhibition “*Counterpoint*,” offered him the opportunity to produce his first freestanding necklaces, including the large-scale *Rivière Blanche* (White River), which was subsequently acquired by the Musée d’art moderne de la Ville de Paris. Travelling is a recurring theme in his work. The idea of the voyage was reflected in the project *Le Petit Théâtre de Peau d’Âne* (2004, in the Centre Pompidou collection), an installation inspired by the tiny puppets he discovered in the home of Pierre Loti that was later presented onstage in different theaters. Further exploring the art of reconciling opposites, the artist staged a dialogue between the poetic and the political in his *Bateau de Larmes* (Boat of Tears) – a tribute to exiled people, it is made out of a salvaged Cuban refugee boat found in Miami and covered with a cascade of colored beads that are transformed into huge clear crystal tears. This work was shown in Basel at Art Unlimited 2005.

In 2010, Jean-Michel Othoniel’s first exhibition was held in Korea, at the Kukje Gallery. That same year, during a visit to India, he worked with master glassmakers in Firozabad, producing a series of works that would be presented in 2011, in his important retrospective at the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris entitled “*My Way*.” Retracing his artistic journey, from his graduation from the École des Beaux-Arts de Cergy-Pontoise in 1988 to his most recent works, this exhibition revealed the multiplicity of his practices and inspirations. After its presentation in Paris, “*My Way*” was shown at the Leeum Samsung Museum of Art/Plateau in Seoul, then in 2012 at the Hara Museum of Contemporary Art in Tokyo, the Macao Museum of Art in Macao and the Brooklyn Museum in New York.

In 2012, an invitation from the Musée national Eugène Delacroix in Paris offered him the opportunity to dialogue with this historic site in a series of sculptures inspired by the architecture of flowers and pages from his book *L’Herbier Merveilleux*.

In the spring of 2013, the Mori Art Museum in Tokyo commissioned *Kin no Kokoro*, a monumental heart of gilded bronze beads installed in the museum’s Japanese Mohri Garden to celebrate its tenth anniversary, enabling him to initiate a dialogue between the recurring themes in his work and sacred symbols in East Asia.

The year 2015 was marked by the realization of an exceptional project: the transformation, in collaboration with the landscape designer Louis Benech, of the *Water Theatre Grove* in the gardens at the Château de Versailles. The artist created three fountain sculptures in gilded glass, inspired by the work of King Louis XIV’s dance master and choreographer. Entitled *Les Belles Danses* (The Beautiful Dances), this project was the first permanent installation by a contemporary artist ever commissioned for the palace.

In September 2016, Jean-Michel Othoniel unveiled a total and monumental work of art, *Le Trésor de la cathédrale d’Angoulême* (The Treasury of the Angoulême Cathedral), which he worked on for more than eight years.

In 2018, he created *Alfa*, an installation for the new National Museum of Qatar, designed by architect Jean Nouvel. For this project, conceived on the same monumental scale as the building, he designed 114 fountain sculptures spraying water that evokes the fluid shapes in Arabic calligraphy.

In September 2019, at the Musée du Louvre, Jean-Michel Othoniel presented a new series of paintings for the walls of the Cour Puget sculpture courtyard, created specifically for the thirtieth anniversary of the pyramid. Since then, the museum decided to make these works part of its permanent collection.

In 2021, on the invitation of the Petit Palais, Othoniel took over its garden and the galleries housing its permanent collections and presented an exhibition that brought the museum’s architecture into play. “*Le Théorème de Narcisse*” (The Theorem of Narcissus) offered visitors a journey of wonderment. At the same time, the artist inaugurated a new public artwork, his *Tour d’Or Blanc* (The Tower of White Gold), in Amboise, France, created in collaboration with the winegrowers in the Loire Valley.

In 2021, the artist was also honored in an official ceremony marking his induction into the *Académie des Beaux-Arts*, dedicated to the fine arts, which encourages artistic creation and ensures the defense of France’s cultural heritage.

SEOUL MUSEUM OF ART

A Future(s) Shaped by Many, A Museum Connecting Everyone



The Seoul Museum of Art (SeMA), located in the center of Seoul, is space for all to meet and experience the joy of art. SeMA envisions a future where we all build collective memories and develop social and cultural values together. With seven branches spread across the city that interest intersect with, complement, and reinforce each other by responding to changes in art and society SeMA is “Seoul’s Network Museum” that continues to grow every day.

The Seoul Museum of Art [Photo: Kim YongKwan]



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