

# JEAN-MICHEL OTHONIEL

## DAZZLING TRILOGY

SELECTED WORKS FROM THE COLLECTION

04.15.2026 \_\_\_\_\_ 09.06.2026

Marking the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Espaces Louis Vuitton and the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Fondation Louis Vuitton's Hors-les-murs programme, the Espace Louis Vuitton Beijing unveils an exhibition which presents installation works by French artist Jean-Michel Othoniel. The Hors-les-murs programme showcases holdings of the Collection at the Espaces Louis Vuitton in Tokyo, Munich, Venice, Beijing, Seoul and Osaka, thereby embodying the Fondation Louis Vuitton's mission to mount international projects and reach a broader global audience.

After experimenting with photography, sulphur, and obsidian, Jean-Michel Othoniel encounters glass in 1996, a shift he describes as moving from "shadow" to "light." Since then, glass has become the central medium of a practice grounded in collaboration with artisans and in a close engagement with material processes. Whether working within traditional craft workshops or contemporary technological environments, Othoniel embraces the unpredictable moments that arise through making moments, in which accident, gesture, and transformation shape the final work.

Poetry and literature play a fundamental role in the artist's thought process. Inspired by French psychiatrist and psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan, Othoniel conceives exhibitions as emotional and spatial compositions. His works draw on diverse references – from devotional objects and folk craft traditions to spiritual symbolism and personal memory – creating environments in which fragility becomes a poetic force rather than a sign of weakness. Regardless of scale, each piece embodies his ambition: to erect monuments to human fragility. Within these forms reside the key driving forces of his *œuvres* – poetry, history, beauty, and love.

The exhibition brings together works that reveal this breadth of references. In *Lágrimas* (2002), glass bottles filled with water suspend delicate forms that shimmer like tears, evoking spaces of prayer and contemplation. In *Le Bateau de Larmes [The Boat of Tears]* (2004), a small boat discovered on the shores of Miami (USA) becomes a tribute to migration and memory, crowned with luminous glass beads that transform tragedy into hope.

In the final room, two major works enter into dialogue. *White Wild Lei* (2009), a monumental necklace inspired by the Hawaiian gesture of welcoming strangers with flowers, evokes the sacred form of the mandorla and honours those who remain present through memory. Nearby, *Rivière Rose* (2026), a site-specific installation created for the exhibition, spreads across the floor like a luminous pink river composed of hand-cast glass bricks. Together, these works invite visitors into a contemplative landscape shaped by light, colour, and movement – an environment where beauty, in Othoniel's words, has the power to protect itself.

### **About the artist**

Jean-Michel Othoniel (born in 1964 in Saint-Étienne, France) is a contemporary artist based in Paris, France. In the mid-1980s, he studied at the École d'art de Cergy (France), where he systematically explored conceptual art and material experimentation. From this early period, he developed a keen interest in alchemy, transformation, and the poetic resonance of matter. Subsequently, through various residencies and grant programmes – most notably his pivotal residency at the Villa Medici in Rome (Italy) in 1996 – he expanded his artistic horizons, shifting from an intimate practice centred on books, manuscripts, and process-oriented his practice to a body of work responsive to urban, historical, and natural spaces. He has long maintained a studio in Paris, collaborating with master glassmakers, metalworkers, and engineering teams to propel his work from the studio into public spaces and international institutional venues within a cross-disciplinary context.

His œuvre consistently revolves around themes of desire, fragility, healing, and transformation. From the late 1980s to the early 1990s, he experimented with materials such as sulphur, wax, and lead – binding "books" – emphasizing time, trace, and the alchemical symbolism of matter. Following his encounter with the Venetian glass tradition in 1993, blown glass became his signature medium: transparency, mirror-like surfaces, and gemstone hues allow light and colour to be shaped, strung together into enlarged bead "necklaces," knotted garlands, and trellis structures, creating volumes that are both intimate and monumental. He gradually transitioned from small-scale objects to large public installations – suspended beads, fountains, and garden constructions, reinterpreting Baroque exuberance with contemporary clarity. Water, botany, and historical landscapes frequently serve as interlocutors; through modular repetition, mirror reflections, and mathematical structures, his works oscillate between ornamentation and monumentality, inviting viewers to experience "passage" and "rebirth" through reflection and traversal. Mirrors incorporate the spectator into the work, transforming the space into a theatre bearing emotion, memory, and movement.

Othoniel has held major solo exhibitions at the Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain (Paris, France, 2003), the Centre Pompidou (Paris, France, 2011), the Brooklyn Museum (New York, USA, 2012) and the Petit Palais (Paris, France, 2021) among others. His landmark public commissions include *Le Kiosque des noctambules* (2000) for the Palais Royal – Musée du Louvre metro station in Paris (France), the gardens of the Château de Versailles (France, 2015), *Le Théorème de Narcisse* for the Petit Palais (Paris, France, 2021). In 2019, he created *Alfa*, a monumental installation of 114 fountain sculptures, for the new National Museum of Qatar (NMoQ), designed by French architect Jean Nouvel. His works are held in major institutional collections such as the Centre Pompidou, the Musée d'Art moderne de Paris (France), the Brooklyn Museum (New York, USA), establishing his international reputation for integrating masterful craftsmanship with public engagement, shaping a poetics of space through light and colour.

### **About the Fondation Louis Vuitton**

The Fondation Louis Vuitton serves the public interest and is exclusively dedicated to contemporary art and artists, as well as 20<sup>th</sup>-century works to which their inspirations can be traced. The Collection and the exhibitions it organises seek to engage a broad public. The magnificent building created by the Canadian-American architect Frank Gehry, and already recognised as an emblematic example of 21<sup>st</sup>-century architecture, constitutes the Fondation's seminal artistic statement. Since its opening in October 2014, the Fondation has welcomed more than eleven million visitors from France and around the world.

The Fondation Louis Vuitton commits to engage in international initiatives, both at the Fondation and in partnership with public and private institutions, such as the Pushkin Museum in Moscow and the Hermitage Museum in Saint Petersburg (*Icons of Modern Art The Shchukin Collection* in 2016 and *The Morozov Collection* in 2021), the MoMA in New York (*Being Modern: MoMA in Paris*), the Courtauld Institute of Art in London (*The Courtauld Collection. A Vision for Impressionism*), the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art and the Baltimore Museum of Art (*Joan Mitchell Retrospective*) among others. The Fondation also developed a specific "Hors-les-murs" programme taking place within the Espaces Louis Vuitton in Tokyo, Munich, Venice, Beijing, Seoul and Osaka, presenting exhibitions of artworks from the Collection. These exhibitions are open to the public free of charge.

### **Espace Louis Vuitton Beijing**

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Open from Monday to Sunday, from 11:00 am to 7:00 pm  
Open on national holidays. Free entry

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