

Jean-Michel Othoniel Solo Exhibition *Wonder Blocks* at Kukje Gallery

Exhibition Dates: March 10 – April 16, 2023

Venue: Kukje Gallery *Hanok*

Kukje Gallery is pleased to present *Wonder Blocks*, a solo exhibition of the French contemporary artist Jean-Michel Othoniel, on view at Kukje Gallery's *Hanok* from March 10 through April 16, 2023. Following Othoniel's solo show *NEW WORKS* at Kukje Gallery Seoul in December 2020 and *Jean-Michel Othoniel: Treasure Gardens*, a solo exhibition in June 2022 at the Seoul Museum of Art and Deoksugung Palace Garden, Othoniel will return to Kukje Gallery's *Hanok* with a group of new works, continuing to nurture his close bond with Korean audiences.

Known for his material ingenuity, characteristic elements in the artist's visual language include his frequent use of glass, as well as forms found in nature, such as pearls and hexahedral shapes. As the title of the show acknowledges, the exhibition is composed primarily of block-shaped works, wherein the modular unit of glass bricks comes together to complete a larger single form. The glass brick—which, in addition to the new work *Wonder Block*, is also found in the wall-installed *Precious Stonewall* and *Oracle* series—has been a central feature in the artist's creative practice. This interest in bricks dates back to the early 1990s, when Othoniel started experimenting with materials such as sulfur, wax, and glass that, while easily transformable, were reversible, being able at any time to be put back to their original state. *La Brique de soufre* (1990), a brick work made out of sulfur-covered terracotta was produced around this time. Since then, the artist has adopted the brick as a formal element of his artistic vocabulary, cherishing the principal role it has played in all generations and countries in the development of human civilization.

Glass bricks take another formative step forward with this exhibition; Othoniel's refined and simple minimalistic sculptures are no longer hanging on the wall, but are transformed into freestanding shapes, emphasizing the independence of the work itself. Grouped under the shared title *Wonder Block*, Othoniel has placed five large works in the viewing room, and five smaller *Wonder Blocks* in the bookstore. Using the two different spaces in the *Hanok*, Othoniel provides differing contexts to interpret the scale and complexity of the multifaceted shapes. While the glass bricks that compose Othoniel's work are produced only in Firozabad, a city in India, the unique Firozi blue color has long been beloved throughout the region. Mirrored glass, unlike transparent glass, reflects the surrounding light and emits both a natural charm and ambient sense of color. The *Hanok*, filled with these marvelous glowing forms, will turn into a "wonderland," enchanting visitors with mystic visions.

About the Artist

Born in 1964 in St. Étienne, France, Jean-Michel Othoniel now lives and works in Paris. From 1985, before graduating from the École Nationale Supérieure d'Arts, Cergy-Pontoise in 1989, he actively exhibited sculptures, installations, and media works. Othoniel received international recognition after his participation in DOCUMENTA IX (1992) in Kassel, Germany, where the artist showcased his groundbreaking sulfur sculpture. In 2000, Othoniel received his first public commission to transform the Parisian subway station Palais-Royal–Musée du Louvre in celebration of its 100th anniversary, for which he installed *Le Kiosque des Noctambules*, made of Murano glass and aluminum. In 2015, the Palace of Versailles welcomed the artist's *Les Belles Danses* as the first permanent installation inside its gardens. In 2019, Othoniel was commissioned to create *La Rose du Louvre* by the Louvre Museum, and the original paintings remain permanently in the collection and in situ.

Recent major solo exhibitions include *Treasure Gardens* (Seoul Museum of Art, Deoksugung Palace Garden, 2022); *Le rêve de l'eau* (Palais Idéal du Facteur Cheval, Hauterives, 2022); *The Narcissus Theorem* (Petit Palais, Paris, 2021); *NEW WORKS* (Kukje Gallery, Seoul, 2020); *Nudos Salvajes, Arte y Matematicas* (Centre Culturel Néstor Kirchner, Buenos Aires, 2019); *Motion - Emotion* (Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, Montreal, 2018); *Face à l'obscurité - Facing Darkness* (Musée d'Art Moderne et Contemporain de Saint Etienne Métropole, Saint-Priest-en-Jarez, 2018); *Géométries Amoureuses* (Centre Régional d'Art Contemporain d'Occitanie, Sète; Carré Sainte-Anne, Montpellier, 2017); *Invisibility Faces* (Goetheanum, Dornach, 2015); and *Jean-Michel Othoniel: Secret Flower Sculptures* (Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston, 2015). Othoniel has also participated in numerous group exhibitions at institutions including the Contemporary Arts Museum Houston (2019); Musée des Beaux-Arts de Caen (2019); Centre Pompidou, Paris (2018); Grand Palais, Paris (2017); Palais de Tokyo, Paris (2015), and Bass Museum of Art, Miami Beach (2014). His works are housed in numerous renowned collections such as the Centre Pompidou, Fondation Cartier pour l'Art Contemporain, and the Louvre Museum, Paris; Museum of Modern Art and New York Public Library, New York; Boghossian Foundation, Brussels; Leeum Museum of Art, Seoul; Budi Tek-Yuz Museum, Shanghai; and the Peggy Guggenheim Collection, Venice.



Jean-Michel Othoniel (b. 1964)

Wonder Block

2022

Aquamarine blue and pink Indian mirrored glass, stainless steel

20 x 20 x 22 cm

Courtesy of the artist and Kukje Gallery

Photo: Othoniel Studio

Image provided by Kukje Gallery



Jean-Michel Othoniel (b. 1964)

Wonder Block

2023

Aquamarine blue and pink Indian mirrored glass, stainless steel

120 x 33 x 33 cm

Courtesy of the artist and Kukje Gallery

Photo: Othoniel Studio

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Kukje Gallery *Hanok* Jean-Michel Othoniel solo exhibition
Wonder Blocks installation view



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KUKJE GALLERY | COMMUNICATIONS

T +82 2 3210 9821 | press@kukjegallery.com

KUKJE GALLERY

54 SAMCHEONG-RO, JONGNO-GU SEOUL, 03053 KOREA
T + 82 2 735 8449 | F + 82 2 733 4879 | WWW.KUKJEGALLERY.COM

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