



Exhibition view of *Precious Stonewall* (#9), 2021. Sculpture: Blue and amber Indian mirrored glass, wood. 33 x 32 x 22 cm. Photo : Claire Dorn. Courtesy of the artist & Perrotin. © Jean-Michel Othoniel / ADAGP, Paris, 2022

## JEAN-MICHEL OTHONIEL

January 15 – February 26, 2022

Perrotin Hong Kong is pleased to present a solo exhibition by Jean-Michel Othoniel, marking his second gallery presentation in Hong Kong.

Oscillating between fragility and strength, the infinite and the tangible, rationality and sensuality, Othoniel's artworks embrace and transcend opposites in order to expand our conception of reality, reconciling contradictions and opening up realms of wonders. Since 1993, the French artist has been working in collaboration with some of the finest glassblowers in the world on the formal and chemical properties of glass, exploring its manifold possible metamorphoses and substantial variability. A product derived from the transfiguration of matter and melted sand, glass, in essence, is rooted within nature and reflects the exuberance of its potentials and beauty. Similarly, and like an alchemist, Othoniel sublimates natural elements, recomposing and transforming them according to his emotions and to the cultural context he is working in.

At Perrotin Hong Kong, Othoniel proposes two contrasting yet connected universes with his signature bodies of work: the rigorous and systematic configurations of *Precious Stonewall* sculptures made in collaboration with Indian glassmakers; and the ethereal and translucent glass bead compositions, blown in the Italian island of Murano, where the finest glass has been produced since the thirteenth century. In between, the floating and enigmatic *Wild Knot* (*Noeud Sauvage*, 2021) casts an overall cosmic radiance on the exhibition, embracing all its featured elements in its inclusive circular movement.

## 尚-米歇爾·歐托尼耶

2022年1月15日至2月26日

貝浩登（香港）榮幸呈獻法國藝術家尚-米歇爾·歐托尼耶（Jean-Michel Othoniel）的最新個展，此為藝術家在香港空間舉辦的第二次展覽。

遊走於脆弱與堅韌、無限與有形、理性與感性之間，歐托尼耶的作品展現對種種對立的包容，從而擴闊我們對現實的理解，重修各種矛盾，並啟發觀者探尋美好的萬事萬物。自1993年起，歐托尼耶便與世上頂尖的玻璃吹製師合作，共同研究玻璃形體和化學上的特質，探索其變形的多樣性以及難以估量的可變性。玻璃由物質的變形和熔化的沙子轉化而成，與大自然本為一體，本能地昭示自然界無限的潛力和美態。歐托尼耶根據自身的情感和身處的文化脈絡，像煉金術士般將自然元素昇華、重組、改造。

是次展覽中，歐托尼耶以其標誌性作品提出兩個對比鮮明卻又相互關聯的宇宙。藝術家與印度玻璃工匠合製的《珍石牆》（*Precious Stonewall*）磚塊雕塑系列，以結構嚴謹、井然的姿態呈現；在意大利穆拉諾島（當地自13世紀起以出產精美玻璃工藝品聞名）製作的半透明玻璃珠串則散發著空靈美感。介乎兩者之間，作品《野結》（*Noeud Sauvage*, 2021）則以抽象迷幻的玻璃造型懸浮於展廳中央，在燈光下，向四周空間折射出宇宙般的光芒。

裝置在第一個展廳牆上的《珍石牆》雕塑，由不同顏色的玻璃磚排列而成，創造出靜穆的畫面。歐托尼耶在印度古都阿格拉附近駐留後開始創作此系列。磚頭向來予人堅固無比、永恆不變的形



*Wild Knot*, 2021. 90 × 90 × 90 cm. Mirrored glass, stainless steel. Photo: Claire Dorn. Courtesy of the artist and Perrotin. © Jean-Michel Othoniel / Adagp, Paris, 2022.

Developed after a residency in India near the ancient capital of Agra, Othoniel's *Precious Stonewall* series, mounted onto the walls of the first exhibition room, consists of glass bricks of various sizes and colors that the artist assembles to create voluminous tableaux. A symbol of the human's ability to construct civilizations and empires, bricks are universally associated with strength and immutability. In contrast, Othoniel's glass bricks are fragile and non-functional: they cannot be piled up and could not therefore hold anything, only giving the illusion of stability and force. A hint to the vulnerability of today's world during pandemic times, the series also refers to the frailty of every breakthrough in social transformation, and in particular to the precarious empowerment of the gay community. While bricks are historically linked to revolutionary movements, the brick house of the Stonewall Inn in New York city and the Stonewall riots are remembered as a catalyst for the gay rights movement in the United States, and around the world, from the late 1960s. For the artist, these bricks are precious because they embody such emancipatory moments that ultimately contribute to transforming our society yet could be reversed at any time. His own glowing bricks could be perceived as lighthouses that would keep us awake in the obscurity of turbulent times. As always with Othoniel, this underlying sociopolitical layer is hidden behind the sheer beauty of the pieces, which recall, in their own colorful and poetical manner, the compositions of minimalist artworks, based on the infinite interplay between elementary geometric shapes.

As a counterpoint, and displayed in the middle of the same room, *Wild Knot* (2021) breaks the linear forms of the bricks and imposes a metaphysical dimension to the ensemble. A constellation of white and red glass beads, the work belongs to a series that began in 2015 when the artist met with Mexican mathematician Aubin Arroyo. The shape of the sculpture recalls the "Borromean knot," a fascinating entanglement of three interlocked rings with unique mathematic features. As a symbol, it was notably used by French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan to describe the connection between the imaginary, the symbolic and the real, three necessary and complementary modes of perceiving reality. Located at the junction of these three spheres and embedded at the same time in the scientific and the poetical realms,

象，象徵人類建設文明和帝國的能力。相反地，歐托尼耶以玻璃打造出易碎且欠缺功能性的磚塊，它們無法堆疊和承托任何東西，僅能予觀者一種穩定與力量的錯覺。藝術家藉此暗示，在疫症當下世界如斯脆弱，而在社會轉型中所發生的突破或會不堪一擊，這在同性戀社群賦權上尤其如此。

磚頭在歷史上常常讓人聯想到革命運動。《珍石牆》系列又指位於紐約市的石牆酒吧與其發生的暴動，自 1960 年代末起，便被美國和世界各地的民眾視為同性戀權利運動的催生地。對歐托尼耶來說，玻璃磚塊之所以珍貴是因為它們體現了促進社會改變的解放時刻，然而這些突破亦能隨時逆轉。展廳內發光的玻璃磚塊仿如燈塔般，提醒著觀者即使身處動盪時期，面對著在模糊不清的未來，也須保持清醒。一如歐托尼耶其他作品，純粹的美感背後隱含著藝術家對各種社會政治的感悟。而在創作這些色彩斑斕、極具詩意的作品時，藝術家參考了極簡主義藝術的構圖方式，根據基本幾何圖形能夠無限延伸的特性將磚塊排列。

懸掛在這個展廳中央的《野結》(2021) 則脫離了上述磚塊的線性形態，不但形成強烈的對比，更為展覽整體增加了形而上的維度。這件由紅白色玻璃珠組成的雕塑，屬於 2015 年歐托尼耶與墨西哥數學家奧賓·阿羅約 (Aubin Arroyo) 會面後開始創作的系列。雕塑的形狀靈感取自波羅米昂三環結，一種原本用以解決數學問題的相扣圓環。這個符號其後被法國精神分析學家雅克·拉康 (Jacques Lacan) 利用來描述想像界、象徵界與真實界的關係，並以此作為感知現實世界的基本框架。歐托尼耶懸垂的玻璃珠結處於這三個界域的交匯點，同時穿梭科學和詩意的領域，將無限小與無限大串連在一起，暗示著它們之間相互流動的關係。珠串蜿蜒而迷人的線條，亦讓人想起書法家在空氣中揮毫的動態，彷彿其筆觸瞬間凝固了起來。

繩結藝術在中國傳統文化中源遠流長，這些無盡的繩結具有長壽和永恆的象徵。漢語中的「結」有聯繫的意思，如「團結」、「結婚」。前者意指為了集中力量或實現共同理想而聯合在一起，後者的「結」



*Suspended Lover Alessandrita, Aquamarine and Cobalt*, 2021. Murano glass alessandrita, aquamarine and cobalt, stainless steel. 70 x 15 x 15 cm. Photo: Claire Dorn. Courtesy of the artist and Perrotin. © Jean-Michel Othoniel / Adagp, Paris, 2022.

Othoniel's suspended knot seems to connect the infinitely small to the infinitely large, suggesting a mutual and fluid relationship between them. Curved and sensual, it also recalls the imaginary gesture of a calligrapher whose writing would have crystallized in the air.

In Chinese culture, where the art of knotting is an ancestral custom, these endless knots have a spiritual connotation and symbolize longevity and eternity. The word "knot", or "jié" (結) in Mandarin Chinese, implies a connection: when combined with "tuán" (tuán jié 團結), it means "to unite", and when associated with "hūn" (jié hūn 結婚), it means to marry. "Jié" in this context derives from the tradition of tying strands of hair from a couple during their wedding ceremony in ancient times. In the second room of the gallery, bathed in daylight from a large window, suspended glass sculptures from the series entitled *Suspended Lover (Amant Suspendu, 2021)* could relate to these traditions and to the union of lovers.

Inside the lower and transparent beads of these necklaces are nestled smaller glass spheres whose delicate hues echo the palette of the pieces themselves. The colors of the glass derive from mixing pigments, powdered minerals and metal with melted sand; Othoniel purposefully and carefully chooses the spectrum of his colors to retain authentic and natural shades. This series unfolds in blue and purple tones created with cobalt, amethyst and alexandrite, a rare mineral known for its color-changing properties: purple under daylight, dark grey by nightfall. An additional dimension is offered by a subtle play of light as views of the bay of Victoria Harbour are captured and inverted within the small spheric universes like worlds within worlds. Just like the lenses of a photographer, each bead recreates a miniature of the landscape and multiplies its reflections.

This panorama is particularly meaningful to the artist, who spent one month working from the rooftop of the former Hong Kong Museum of Art thirty years ago, enjoying the same view on Victoria Harbour. Invited for the exhibition *Too French*, he then had to set up an outdoor studio because of the toxic smell emitted from his creative experimentations, based on the use of sulfur. At that time, he was melting his materials



*Suspended Lover Alessandrita, Aquamarine and Amethyst*, 2021. Murano glass alessandrita, aquamarine and amethyst, stainless steel. 70 x 15 x 15 cm. Photo: Claire Dorn. Courtesy of the artist and Perrotin. © Jean-Michel Othoniel / Adagp, Paris, 2022.

則能追溯至古時新人於大婚當日進行的結髮儀式。第二個展廳的《懸浮戀人》(*Amant Suspendu, 2021*) 懸浮玻璃珠串系列，沐浴在穿透大窗的日光之中，遙遙回應這些古老的傳統，並寓意情人的重逢。

在這些珠串最底部的玻璃珠內包含著更為細小的玻璃球體，其細膩的色彩與珠串本身的色調相互呼應。歐托尼耶透過混合顏料、粉狀礦物、金屬和熔化的沙粒，謹慎地調配出這些別出心裁的顏色，以保留真實和自然之感。此次展出的作品以藍色和紫色為主調，利用鈷、紫水晶和亞歷山大變石，一種以其變色特性聞名的稀有礦物製成。亞歷山大變石在日光下呈紫色，夜幕降臨時則呈深灰色。當維多利亞港的景色透過窗戶的光線若隱若現地倒映在這些玻璃珠內，便會構成多個蘊藏萬千世界的小宇宙。就像攝影師的鏡頭一樣，每顆珠子都濃縮了一片風景，卻同時折射出更寬闊的天地。

折射在玻璃珠內的全景對藝術家來說別具意義，因為他在三十年前曾於前香港藝術館的天台上工作了一個月，欣賞了同樣的維港景致。其時歐托尼耶受邀參加《Too French》展覽，由於他使用硫磺進行的實驗性創作釋放出有毒的氣味，因此需建立一個戶外工作室。在實驗中，他親自熔化硫磺等物質，把玩其變形的特性，並創造了一種火山玻璃。這段早期煉金術般的實驗讓歐托尼耶於1992年入選第九屆卡塞爾文獻展 (Documenta IX)，並驅使他日後投身玻璃的創作。香港從此成為他藝術生涯中一個重要的轉捩點，也是他持續的靈感來源。

此展廳的焦點 — 《雙項鍊 (亞歷山大變石、紫水晶、雲母)》 (*Double Collier Alessandrita-Améthyste Mica, 2021*) 為歐托尼耶的標誌性作品之一。作品長約三米，以t美艷的姿態呈現，宛如生物，棲息於展廳的中央。作品散發珍稀珠寶的瑰麗，同時因重量和巨大的尺寸而產生堅固之感。像磚塊一樣，圓珠作為一個單位元素，能夠無休止地串合，反映宇宙的生命形式。除了這些有機特徵外，串珠項鍊亦因應其展出地點的環境和文化脈絡而產生



*Precious Stonewall*, 2021. Green Indian mirrored glass, wood. 79 × 55 × 22 cm. Photo: Claire Dorn. Courtesy of the artist and Perrotin. © Jean-Michel Othoniel / Adagp, Paris, 2022.

himself, creating a form of volcanic glass and already playing with the metamorphosis of matter. Selected for Documenta IX in 1992, he pursued these early alchemical experiences which ultimately led him to glassmaking. As such, Hong Kong represents an essential turning point in his career and a continuous source of inspiration.

The centerpiece of this room, *Double Necklace Alessandrita-Amethyst Mica* (*Double Collier Alessandrita-Améthyste Mica*, 2021) is one of Othoniel's iconic artworks. About three meters long, it unfolds its sensual body like a living creature, combining the preciousness of a rare piece of jewelry with a sense of robustness derived from its weight and gigantic size. Just like bricks, beads emerge as a unitary element that can combine endlessly to reflect living forms of the universe. Beyond its organic features, the necklace motif takes on various meanings according to the context it is exhibited in and the traditional culture it refers to. For Hong Kong, the artist wishes to hint at the spiritual dimension of handblown glass beads, which brings to mind devotion beads used by Buddhists to measure time, to support meditative breathing, or to count the repetitions of prayers, chants, or mantras.

Relentlessly exploring the miracles of nature and the enlivening of matter, Jean-Michel Othoniel's new solo exhibition is an invitation to refresh our gaze and reach out to the wonders of reality.

– Caroline Ha Thuc

**More information >>>**

多種含義。在香港，珠串會容易讓人聯想起用於測量時間、冥想呼吸，或計算誦經持咒次數的佛珠手串，藝術家希望透過他的手工玻璃珠作品與觀者建立精神層面的聯繫。

是次個展延續歐托尼耶對自然界的奇蹟以及物質重生的探索，邀請觀者以全新的視野觀看世界，感受現實的奧妙。

– Caroline Ha Thuc 撰文

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