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Jean-Michel OTHONIEL

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"The Flowers of Hypnosis" is a beguiling installation that pairs art with nature.

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Jean-Michel Othoniel's "The Flowers of Hypnosis" at the Brooklyn Botanic Garden. Photo: Michelle Huynh. Courtesy of Dior. © Jean-Michel Othoniel / ADAGP, Paris & ARS, New York 2023.

It's the season for glistening, metallic flowers to bloom in Brooklyn. Come to the Brooklyn Botanic Garden for the majesty of nature (and 12,000 different plants), stay for the French artist Jean-Michel Othoniel's sublime floral sculpture exhibition.

“The Flowers of Hypnosis” opened last month and runs until October 22. It consists of six site-specific pieces and took Othoniel a year to produce. Using his signature strands of hammered steel spheres, Othoniel conjured visions of lotus blossoms and a shiny rose. As per the title, it is meant to be a heady, thought-provoking experience, as well as a journey into Zen.



Jean-Michel Othoniel's "The Flowers of Hypnosis" at the Brooklyn Botanic Garden. Photo: Michelle Huynh. Courtesy of Dior. © Jean-Michel Othoniel / ADAGP, Paris & ARS, New York 2023.

“Nature can be a source of inspiration, contemplation, and beauty,” the artist said in an audio introduction to the show. “It’s very important now as a goal to survive the world to escape reality or to build yourself strong enough to face reality—that’s the power of gardens. In general, my sculptures are here to enchant and to push this feeling of contemplation in a stronger way.”

The enormity and materiality of the flora adds a surreal tinge to the paradisaical surroundings, but at the heart of the project seems to be the artist’s goal to service his surroundings and pay homage to the ecology.



Jean-Michel Othoniel's sculpture *Mirror Lotus* in the Brooklyn Botanic Garden's Lily Pool Terrace.
Photo: Guillaume Ziccarelli. © Jean-Michel Othoniel / ADAGP, Paris & ARS, New York 2023.

“Jean-Michel has a passion for gardens, flowers, and the natural world that reveals itself in his works for ‘The Flowers of Hypnosis,’ which respond to and enhance their garden settings,” said Adrian Benepe, president of the Brooklyn Botanic Garden.

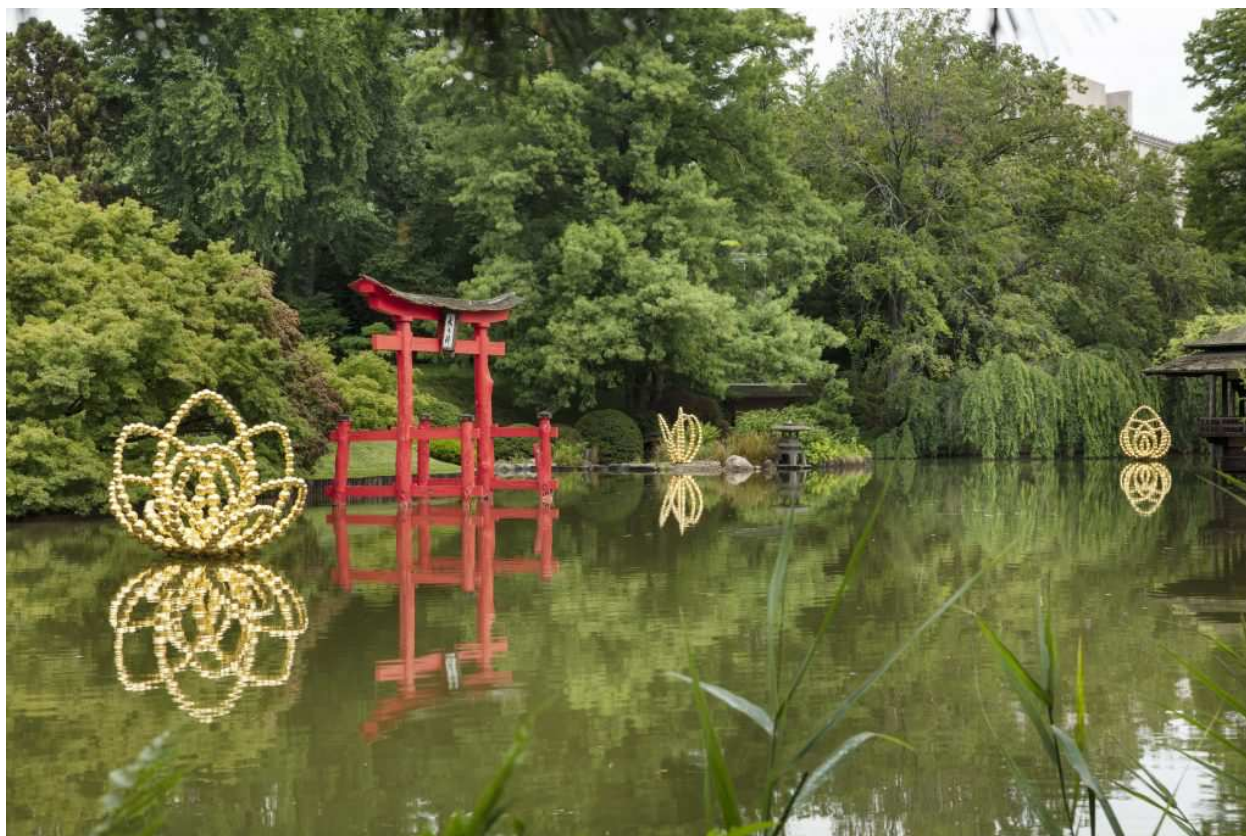
“The Flowers of Hypnosis” is sponsored by Dior as part of its Cultural Gardens initiative, which was formed to “maintain the intense links between creativity and the living world that forged the house’s identity.” A new Othoniel art piece created for the brand will be unveiled at a Dior-hosted event at the gardens on September 7.



The artist Jean-Michel Othoniel. Photo: Guillaume Zicarelli. Courtesy of the artist and Perrotin.

Othoniel's art style might be familiar from his iconic Palais-Royale metro station in Paris. He had a 2012 survey that stopped at the Centre Pompidou, Brooklyn Museum, and other institutions. He has a permanent installation at the Château de Versailles, a dramatic serpentine fountain emerging in the palace's lush garden.

The artist continues to be drawn to the natural world. “Gardens leave a great deal of space for the irrational, the inexplicable, the extravagant,” Othoniel said. “They are places of mystery, magic, and secrecy.”



Three sculptures in Jean-Michel Othoniel's "Gold Lotus" series in the Brooklyn Botanic Garden's Japanese Hill and Pond Garden. Photo: Guillaume Ziccarelli. © Jean-Michel Othoniel / ADAGP, Paris & ARS, New York 2023.

“The Flowers of Hypnosis” is on view at the Japanese Hill and Pond Garden, Fragrance Garden, and Lily Pool Terrace sections of the Brooklyn Botanic Garden.