

PRESSBOOK

Jean-Michel OTHONIEL

Forbes

March 2018

In "Dark Matters," An Exhibition By Jean-Michel Othoniel, Nature Flourishes Wildly

F forbes.com/sites/briennewalsh/2018/03/31/in-dark-matters-an-exhibition-by-jean-michel-othoniel-nature-flourishes-wildly

March 31, 2018

Brienne Walsh, Contributor Opinions expressed by Forbes Contributors are their own.



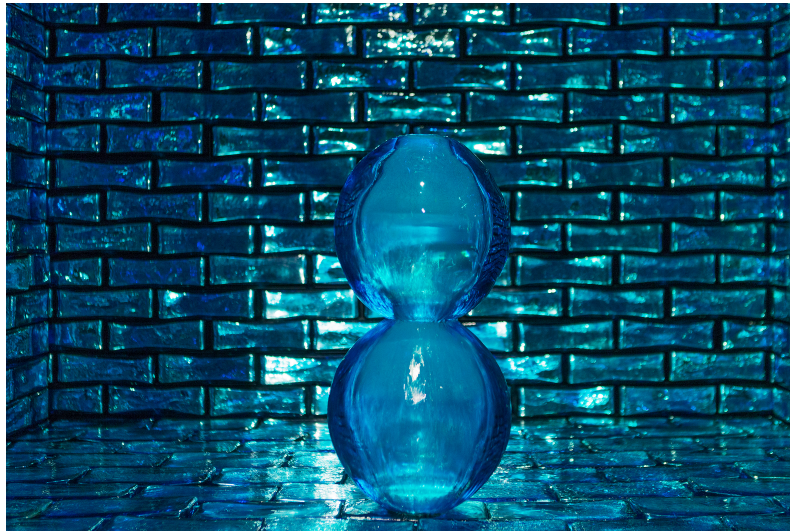
Guillaume Ziccarelli / Courtesy Perrotin

Jean-Michel Othoniel

View of the exhibition Dark Matters at Perrotin New York (March 3 – April 15, 2018)

The first thing that struck me, upon entering the first floor of "Dark Matters," an exhibition of new works by Jean-Michel Othoniel open at Galerie Perrotin in New York through April 15, 2018, was that I wish I had encountered the works in a lush, quiet garden rather than in a white-walled gallery.

The works themselves intimate this sort of experience. Two floor installations made of amber and blue mirrored bricks hand-blown in Firozabad, India, and laid out as if to form a road, mirror each other on either side of the gallery. Entitled *Precious Stonewall* (2014) and *Precious Stonewall* (2017), the works reference the brick facades of the Stonewall Inn, where the modern gay rights movement was birthed in the 1970s. The room is split by *Grotta Azzura* (2017), a tiny room carved into the wall that contains a water fountain; the opening to the room is just big enough for a small child. My own 18-month-old, who accompanied me to the exhibition, was enraptured by it. Even though the environment was otherwise sterile, in remembering the exhibition, I hear songbirds, I feel the warmth of the sun, I imagine sitting beside the bricks and feeling like an aristocrat in some 19th century novel.



Guillaume Ziccarelli / Courtesy Perrotin

Jean-Michel Othoniel

View of the exhibition Dark Matters at Perrotin New York (March 3 – April 15, 2018)

"[The work] is about the idea of gardens," Jean-Michel Othoniel himself confirmed when I met up with him a few minutes after entering the space. "It's what you find in different countries, in Arabic countries and Spanish countries. It's very contemplative."

Soft-spoken and gentle, it was the third time I had interviewed Othoniel. The first was in 2012 upon the occasion of his mid-career retrospective at the Brooklyn Museum, which I covered for *Art in America*. The second was to preview the show at Perrotin, which inaugurates the gallery's monumental new third floor space. And the third was when the show itself was open.

From speaking to him before, I know that Othoniel's practice is rooted in the late 1980s and early 1990s, when many of his peers were dying from AIDS. His embrace of materials like beads and mirrors, and bright, glossy color typically considered feminine, are a way of aestheticizing—and in that way, putting on a pedestal—the flamboyance associated with gay males. Over time, his ideas have taken root in new directions. Now Othoniel is concerned with mathematics, with natural disasters, with creating glistening cities of blown glass.



Guillaume Ziccarelli / Courtesy Perrotin

Jean-Michel Othoniel

View of the exhibition Dark Matters at Perrotin New York (March 3 – April 15, 2018)