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**SCULPTOR LEO VILLAREAL TO INSTALL NEW
SITE-SPECIFIC WORK AT NATIONAL GALLERY OF
ART, WASHINGTON; INSTALLATION BEGINS IN
EARLY SEPTEMBER**



left: Still image of digital simulation of the National Gallery of Art installation by Leo Villareal; right: sculptor Leo Villareal. Photo by James Ewing

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Washington, DC—By late fall 2008, beautiful, rhythmic patterns of white lights will surround visitors as they pass through the concourse walkway between the East and West Buildings of the National Gallery of Art. The week of September 8 will mark the beginning of the installation of Leo Villareal's LED (light-emitting diode) project, designed specifically for this location. Commissioned by the Gallery and on view for one year, the work will feature approximately 42,000 computer-programmed LED nodes that will run through channels along the entire 200-foot length space.

A digital simulation of the completed work will be on view at the east end of the Concourse throughout the installation process. Traffic on the moving walkway will be intermittently halted while the work is being installed. However, visitors will always be able to pass through the space and view the work in progress.

On Sunday, September 7, at 2 p.m., Villareal will join Molly Donovan, associate curator of modern and contemporary art, in a conversation about his career and the Gallery installation. This is part of the

Gallery's "Conversations with Artists" program and will take place in the East Building Auditorium. Admission is free and seating is on a first-come basis.

Support

The installation is generously funded by Victoria and Roger Sant and by Sharon and Jay Rockefeller. Philanthropists Victoria P. Sant, president of the Gallery, and Sharon P. Rockefeller, president and CEO of WETA, are Gallery trustees and members of the Collectors Committee, a group of leading collectors from across the country who support the Gallery's acquisition of modern and contemporary art.

Installation

Villareal's work features movement and light, qualities that make this installation particularly well-suited for the Gallery's underground walkway, an area through which thousands of people pass daily. Once the appropriate hardware is installed, the artist will program sequences through his custom-designed software to create abstract configurations of light through the electronic circuitry. His programming both instructs the lights and allows for an element of chance. While it is possible that a pattern will repeat during a viewer's experience, it is highly unlikely. Still, the eye will seek patterns in the motion, a perceptual effect of the hypnotic trailing lights.

The use of the science of vision in Villareal's work recalls an early moment in the history of 20th-century art, when painters in Europe and America applied color and music theory to their practice using a basic vocabulary of color, line, and shape. To these formal elements Villareal has added motion—through LED technology—to create mesmerizing, kinetic gestures.

The installation will be located in the East Building Concourse between the cascading fountain and the post-World War II and contemporary galleries, which feature earlier examples of systems-based works by artists such as Sol LeWitt, Alfred Jensen, On Kawara, and Robert Morris.

Overview

Throughout the last four decades, a growing number of artists have explored the use of light to frame and create spaces in the built

environment. These include Dan Flavin's space-defining fluorescent light sculptures, James Turrell's color-saturated voids, Jenny Holzer's LED-generated texts, and Felix Gonzales-Torres' strings of lightbulbs. While Villareal's art acknowledges these artistic forbearers, his concepts relate most closely to the instructional wall drawings of Sol LeWitt and the circuitry of Peter Halley's paintings.

Web Site

The Gallery has created a special Web feature that includes a 3-D simulation of the installation, as well as an interview with the artist in his studio in which he talks about his background, influences, process, and the installation at the Gallery. Visit www.nga.gov/villareal.

The Artist

Born in 1967 in Albuquerque, NM, Villareal began experimenting with light, sound, and video while studying set design and sculpture at Yale University, where he received his BA. He earned his MS in the design of new media, computational media, and embedded computing from New York University's pioneering interactive telecommunications program at the Tisch School of the Arts. He also learned the programming skills that enable him to push LED technology far past familiar commercial applications.

Based in New York, Villareal has been included in numerous solo and group exhibitions, and has made numerous site-specific commissions throughout the world, at major cultural institutions such as P.S.1 MoMA, New York; Brooklyn Academy of Music; Albright Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, NY; and the Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art, Overland Park, KS.

Site-Specific Commissions at the National Gallery of Art

The Gallery commissioned several site-specific works for the East Building's opening in 1978, including the largest mobile ever created by Alexander Calder. Most recently, the Gallery commissioned another work of art—*Roof* (2004–2005)—a sculpture created by British artist Andy Goldsworthy, also for the East Building. Located along the north perimeter, it comprises nine stacked-slate, low-profile hollow domes, five-and-a-half-feet-high and 27 feet in diameter with centered oculi two feet in diameter.

General Information

The National Gallery of Art and its Sculpture Garden are at all times free to the public. They are located on the National Mall between 3rd and 9th Streets at Constitution Avenue NW, and are open Monday through Saturday from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and Sunday from 11:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. The Gallery is closed on December 25 and January 1. For information call (202) 737-4215 or the Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD) at (202) 842-6176, or visit the Gallery's Web site at www.nga.gov.

Visitors will be asked to present all carried items for inspection upon entering the East and West Buildings. Checkrooms are free of charge and located at each entrance. Luggage and other oversized bags must be presented at the 4th Street entrances to the East or West Building to permit x-ray screening and must be deposited in the checkrooms at those entrances. For the safety of visitors and the works of art, nothing may be carried into the Gallery on a visitor's back. Any bag or other items that cannot be carried reasonably and safely in some other manner must be left in the checkrooms. Items larger than 17 x 26 inches cannot be accepted by the Gallery or its checkrooms.

For additional press information please call or send inquiries to:

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