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## Largest, Most Complex Light Sculpture by Leo Villareal Debuts at National Gallery of Art, Washington



Leo Villareal programs *Multiverse* (2008), a new light sculpture that he created for the underground walkway between the East and West Buildings of the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC.

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Washington, DC—*Multiverse*, the largest and most complex light sculpture created by American artist Leo Villareal (b. 1967) may now be experienced by visitors as they pass through the Concourse walkway between the East and West Buildings of the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC. Commissioned by the Gallery and on view for one year, the work features approximately 41,000 computer-programmed LED nodes that run through channels along the entire 200-foot-long space. The development of this LED (light-emitting diode) project began three years ago and the installation created by Villareal specifically for this location began last September.

"*Multiverse* creates an exuberant and mesmerizing environment which transforms the

experience of its space, and several thousand visitors to the Gallery have seen this very special installation by Leo Villareal since it was debuted in late November," said Earl A. Powell III, director, National Gallery of Art. "We are extremely grateful to the board members who generously funded this project, to the members of our staff who worked diligently on it over the last three years, and to Leo for creating this beautiful work."

## **Support**

*Multiverse* 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. The sculpture, on loan from the artist, courtesy of Conner Contemporary Art, is scheduled to remain on view until November 2009.

## **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 was installed in the existing architecture, the artist programmed sequences through his custom-designed software to create abstract configurations of light. 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 project was overseen by Molly Donovan, associate curator in the department of modern and contemporary art, National Gallery of Art.

## **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 systems of Peter Halley's paintings.

## **Web Site**

The Gallery has created a special Web feature at [www.nga.gov/villareal](http://www.nga.gov/villareal) (<http://www.nga.gov/villareal>) 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.

## **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 MPS 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 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**

Recently, the Gallery commissioned another site-specific work—*Roof* (2004–2005)—a sculpture created by British artist Andy Goldsworthy consisting of nine stacked-slate hollow domes with centered oculi located along the north perimeter of the East Building.

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## 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 along 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. With the exception of the atrium and library, the galleries in the East Building will be closing gradually beginning in July 2013 and will remain closed for approximately three years for Master Facilities Plan and renovations. For specific updates on gallery closings, visit [www.nga.gov/renovation](http://www.nga.gov/renovation) (<http://www.nga.gov/renovation>).

For information call (202) 737-4215 or the Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD) at (202) 842-6176, or visit the Gallery's website at [www.nga.gov](http://www.nga.gov). Follow the Gallery on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/NationalGalleryofArt](http://www.facebook.com/NationalGalleryofArt) and on Twitter at [twitter.com/ngadc](http://twitter.com/ngadc).

Visitors will be asked to present all carried items for inspection upon entering. 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 by 26 inches cannot be accepted by the Gallery or its checkrooms.

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