

MAD. SQ. ART 2012. LEO VILLAREAL *BUCKYBALL*

October 25, 2012 – February 1, 2013
Madison Square Park
Presented by the Madison Square Park Conservancy



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FOREWORD.

BUCKYBALL is the twenty-fourth exhibition presented by Mad. Sq. Art, and as our program enters its second decade, we have illuminated the park this winter with Leo Villareal's captivating commission for Madison Square Park. Leo Villareal is an artist who understands the complexities of presenting work in public spaces, and he does so as effortlessly as he does houghtfully. Whether creating nested geodesic domes for a Beaux-Arts park, lighting a bridge, or adorning the ceiling of a subway station, Villareal brings a unique and artfully scientific approach to his art. The process of creating *BUCKYBALL* for Madison Square Park developed over five years, with each revision and refinement maintaining focus on how the work would engage our audience. *BUCKYBALL* sparks the curiosity of all who see Villareal's nod to Buckminster Fuller at the marriage of art and science. And Villareal's trademark dynamic light sequences excite and enchant from any angle, and especially from the zero-gravity benches at *BUCKYBALL*'s base.

We are often asked what makes for a successful Mad. Sq. Art exhibition. Is it the number of visitors we see in the park? Is it the amount of press an exhibition receives? Is it the variety of questions we answer about the work on view? Or, is a successful exhibition not so easily measured and determinable only after it has ended? *BUCKYBALL* has attracted record audiences to Madison Square Park, many of whom have kept (public) record of their visits by taking photographs, videos, and sharing their experiences through countless outlets online. As a result, *BUCKYBALL* is forever part of New York's landscape. This exhibition has also garnered critical and popular coverage from art, design, and science publications alike, again bringing Mad. Sq. Art to the forefront of contemporary arts programming across media and disciplines. The questions we receive each day from park visitors about the work never fail to shine light on how *BUCKYBALL*, deceptively simple in its form, exposes the complexities of our own understanding and perception. In short, *BUCKYBALL* is the type of exhibition that grabs one's attention, keeps it, and forever remains with us as a thought, an experience, and a memory.

As we look ahead to another successful year of Mad. Sq. Art programming, it gives us great pleasure to reflect on the process of bringing *BUCKYBALL* to Madison Square Park. We thank you, Leo, for giving us a new way to see the park and for making it all the more beautiful this winter.

Debbie Landau
President
Madison Square Park Conservancy

ARTIST STATEMENT. LEO VILLAREAL.

My work is focused on stripping systems down to their essence to better understand the underlying structures and rules that govern how they work. I am interested in lowest common denominators such as pixels or the zeros and ones in binary code. Starting at the beginning, using the simplest forms, I begin to build elements within a framework. My work explores not only the physical but adds the dimension of time, combining both spatial and temporal resolution as forms move, change, interact, and ultimately grow into complex organisms.

Inspired by mathematician John Conway's work with cellular automata and the Game of Life, I've sought to create my own sets of rules. Central to my work is the element of chance. My goal is to create a rich environment in which emergent behavior can occur without a preconceived outcome. I am an active participant, serving as editor in the process through careful selection of compelling sequences. These selections are then further refined through combination with other sequences through simple operations such as addition, subtraction and multiplication. The sequence's opacity, speed, and scale can all be manipulated through custom software. Ultimately, complex compositions are formed and then displayed in random order and for a random amount of time in the final artwork. The visual manifestation of the code in light is at the core of my interest.

With *BUCKYBALL* I am thrilled to have the opportunity to engage with the public in such a beloved and historic Manhattan location. To be surrounded by magnificent architecture and to be part of a program dedicated to engaging and presenting contemporary artists in Madison Square Park is a unique pleasure. *BUCKYBALL* affirms the power of public art to connect people and to create communal experiences all can enjoy.

LEO VILLAREAL: COMPOSER OF LIGHT.

Barbara London
Associate Curator,
Department of Media and Performance Art
The Museum of Modern Art, New York

Leo Villareal (born Albuquerque, 1967) received a B.A. from Yale, and an M.P.S. in interactive technologies from N.Y.U. He is distinguished as the creator of magical symphonies of light. His “emergent art” practice comes out of a lively late twentieth century interdisciplinary methodology in which time-based images, often with sound, meld with their physical environments. Precursors include Joshua White’s blazing light shows that accompanied rock musicians’ performances at Manhattan’s Fillmore East in the late 1960s, and James Turrell’s phenomenological land art work-in-progress, *Roden Crater*.

In Villareal’s hands “color field” abstraction becomes infused with cadenced transition. He develops distinctive temporal compositions by means of computer software and minute LEDs (light-emitting diodes). For several decades from a base in Manhattan, he has adroitly navigated the disparate worlds of contemporary art (with its collectables and exhibitables) and emerging technology (with its chameleon adaptability and boundless applications). Examples include his painterly tableau *Field* (2007), recently exhibited as part of MoMA’s contemporary collection, his environmental *Multiverse* (2008) permanently installed in the National Gallery’s Concourse walkway, and his newly inaugurated celestial *Cosmos* (2012) at Cornell University’s Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art’s Sculpture Court.





Villareal's work evolved as his tool kit became increasingly more refined and precise, in tandem with technology's steady advances. Today he has a palette of over a million colors and greater control over complex patterns that shuttle across brighter and denser specks of LED lighting. The artist and a small production team employ and write computer software applications to program the visual characteristics of his light installations. They adapt chromatic values, duration, and intensity of successive sequences according to a particular location.

Commissioned by the Madison Square Park Conservancy's Mad. Sq. Art program, BUCKYBALL signals Villareal's move into three-dimensionality. The sculpture consists of two nested geodesic spheres, one ten and one twenty-feet in diameter. Each latticed sphere is made up of 180 LED tubes arranged on struts in a series of twelve pentagons and twenty hexagons. Each ball has sixty vertices and ninety edges along which points of light traverse. The balls' overall shape is both a truncated icosahedron and an Archimedean solid (named after one of classical antiquity's leading scientists.) The system is known as a "Fullerene," first identified by scientists in the 1970s as a naturally occurring molecular shape (an allotrope of elemental carbon) in the form of a sphere, ellipsoid or tube. The name pays homage to Buckminster

Fuller (1895-1983), whose geodesic domes the spherical shape resembles. Spherical fullerenes are called "buckyballs," due to their similarity to a soccer ball.

Villareal's *BUCKYBALL* is an open network with its struts glowing. Sitting on a solid nine-foot square metal pedestal and activated from dusk to midnight, the *BUCKYBALL* stretches upwards into the air. In the evening passersby are invited to relax by lying back in one of the artist's specially designed "zero gravity" wood park benches that encircle the base. From a reclined position, viewers gaze upward to contemplate *BUCKYBALL* against the night sky. Their clothing, their faces, and adjacent trees become bathed in the work's radiant glow. Colors—from celestial blue, hot pink, desert sunset red, shooting star white—scuttle across the LEDs. Colors shift in predetermined patterns in randomized order. Suddenly one color takes over and washes everything in sight with its hue, until motion abruptly returns and colors again crisscross the system. Nearby strollers, conversations, dog barks, and traffic sounds supply acoustics for Villareal's visual composition.

Seen up close or from a distance, *BUCKYBALL* triggers viewers' natural impulse to discern patterns and gather meaning from what unfolds before their eyes. For some looking up at *BUCKYBALL*,





impressions might lean toward the celebratory. The work might bring to mind 4th of July fireworks or the pageantry and oompah music associated with parades.

Others’ sensations might verge on the meditative, and evoke the same sense of wonder when observing stars twinkling in a clear night sky. In this case, Villareal’s composition might resemble the immersive sensation that comes with standing before a Mark Rothko painting, closely engaging with Philip Glass’s music, or even of Shavasana breathing after a yoga class.

Tranquil contemplation is central to the objectives of both Mad. Sq. Art and Leo Villareal. Both have a wealth of experience and occupy a respected position in the realm of public art. With great forethought and consideration they created an idyllic light sculpture that unfolds slowly in a treasured, oasis-like New York location. In the inviting atmosphere of Madison quare Park, city dwellers and out-of-towners alike are able to relax, contemplate, take a breath, and feel rejuvenated. The audience leaves the park and returns to the street with its urban dissonance and seemingly out-of-control light show of ads pulsating across flat screens set at subway entrances, video billboards lighting up Times Square, and individual smart phones glowing everywhere. Yet after engaging with *BUCKYBALL*, viewers will be sustained by new impressions, ready to uncover their own original thoughts about the nature of life in a technology-filled environment.







LEO VILLAREAL.



EDUCATION

- 1994

New York University, M.P.S.
Tisch School of the Arts, Interactive Telecommunications Program (ITP)
- 1990

Yale University, B.A.

SOLO EXHIBITIONS AND PROJECTS

- 2012

New Work, Conner Contemporary, Washington, D.C.
- 2011

Volume, Gering & López Gallery, New York, NY
- 2010

Leo Villareal, San Jose Museum of Art, San Jose, CA
Traveling exhibition schedule: Nevada Museum of Art, Reno, NV; Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art, Overland Park, KS; Telfair Museum of Art, Savannah, GA, Madison Museum of Contemporary Art, Madison, WI
Leo Villareal: Recent Works, Tampa Museum of Art, Tampa, FL
- 2009

Stars, Galería Javier López, Madrid, Spain
- 2008

Multiverse, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.
New Work, Conner Contemporary Art, Washington, D.C.

- 2007

New Work, Gering & López Gallery, New York, NY
- 2006

Origin, Conner Contemporary Art, Washington, D.C.
Backdrop, Bloomberg Space, London, England
Galería Javier López, Madrid, Spain
Marc Selwyn Fine Art, Los Angeles, CA
- 2004

Chasing Rainbows, Sandra Gering Gallery, NY
Horizon 24 and Horizon 8, Conner Contemporary Art, Washington, D.C.
- 2003

Finesilver Gallery, San Antonio, TX
- 2002

Sandra Gering Gallery, NY
Conner Contemporary Art, Washington, D.C.

SITE-SPECIFIC COMMISSIONS

- 2013

The Bay Lights, Bay Bridge, San Francisco, CA
- 2012

BUCKYBALL, commissioned by the Madison Square Park Conservancy, Madison Square Park, New York
Cosmos, Johnson Museum of Art, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY
Hive, MTA Arts for Transit and Urban Design, Bleeker Street Station, New York, NY
Cylinder II, TEFAF Maastricht 2012 Art Fair, Maastricht, The Netherlands
Line, MoMA PS1, Long Island City, NY
Radiant Pathway, Rice University, Houston, TX
- 2010

Sky (Tampa), Tampa Museum of Art, Tampa, FL
Sky, United States Federal Courthouse, El Paso, TX
- 2009

Threshold, 1801 K Street, Washington, D.C.
Diagonal Grid, Borusan Music House, Istanbul, Turkey
- 2008

Multiverse, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.
- 2007

Microcosm, Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art, Overland Park, KS
Stars, Brooklyn Academy of Music, Brooklyn, NY
- 2006

Untitled, Kirkpatrick & Lockhart, Washington, D.C.
- 2005

Light Matrix, Permanent installation for Albright Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, NY
Set and Drift, Lower Manhattan Cultural Council, Govenors Island NY
Chasing Rainbows, Perry Capital, New York, NY
The Core Club, New York, NY
- 2004

GSA Art-in-Architecture project, new federal courthouse by architect Antoine Predock, El Paso, TX
Chasing Rainbows / New Haven, Yale University, New Haven, CT
- 2003

Supercluster, MoMA PS1, Long Island City, NY
Printemps de Septembre, Toulouse, France
- 2002

Lightscape, Palm Beach Institute of Contemporary Art, Palm Beach, FL
Art Among The Stars, Grand Central Station, New York, NY
Art In General On Canal: Part II, Art In General, New York, NY
- 2001

Arte Contemporaneo Internacional, Museo de Arte Moderno, Mexico City
Massless Medium: Explorations in Sensory Immersion, Creative Time in The Anchorage, Brooklyn, NY
KMX Reenergize Zone, Moby tour, traveling video installation

GROUP EXHIBITIONS AND PROJECTS

- 2010

Contemplating the Void, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, NY
- 2009

Conversations in Lyrical Abstraction: 1958-2009, Conner Contemporary Art, Washington, DC
- 2008

That Was Then... This is Now, MoMA PS1, Long Island City, NY
- 2007

Digital Stories, Centro Galego de Arte Contemporánea (CGAC), Santiago, Spain
- 2006

Lightworks, Galería Javier López, Madrid, Spain
All Digital, Museum of Contemporary Art, Cleveland, OH
Summer Light, Sandra Gering Gallery, New York, NY
Art in America, Arario Gallery, Seoul, Korea
- 2005

Visual Music, Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles and Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C.
Extreme Abstraction, Albright Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, NY
Greater New York, MoMa PS1, Long Island City, NY
- 2004

Optimo: Manifestations of Optimism in Contemporary Art, Ballroom Marfa, Texas curated by Alexander Gray
Fiction Love: Ultra New Visions in Contemporary Art, Museum of Contemporary Art, Taipei
- 2003

Joshua Tree of Life, High Desert Test Sites, Joshua Tree, CA organized by Andrea Zittel
Winter Light, Socrates Sculpture Park, Long Island City, NY
In the Gloaming, The Fields Sculpture Park, Ghent, NY
Afterimage, Wood Street Galleries, Pittsburgh, PA
Complexity, Federal Reserve, Washington, DC
- 2002

Sculpture Now, Palm Beach Institute of Contemporary Art, Palm Beach, FL
Light x 8, The Jewish Museum, NY
Interstate, Texas Fine Arts Association, Austin, TX
I Just Can't Pretend, Derek Eller Gallery, NY
Optical Optimism, Galerie Simonne Stern, New Orleans, LA
Complexity, Texas Fine Arts Association, Austin, TX
Shine02.org, Online art project sponsored by Amnesty International, organized by Downtown Arts Projects
- 2001

Tirana Biennale, Tirana, Albania (curated by Miltos Manetas)
Eye Candy, Scott White Contemporary Art, La Jolla, CA
Synth, organized by Leo Villareal, White Columns, New York, NY
The Next Perfect 10, Sandra Gering Gallery, New York (traveling)
- 2000

Perfect 10: Ten Years in Soho, Sandra Gering Gallery, New York
Rooms for Listening, CCAC Institute, San Francisco, CA
Collector's Choice, Exit Art, New York
City of Lights, curated by Simon Watson and Downtown Arts Projects, Hermes Boutique, New York
Exposure: The Future of Film Festival, USA Network and Sci-Fi Channel, New York
Optical Optimism, *Galerie Simonne Stern*, New Orleans, LA
The Bunker Project, MTV, New York
Elsewhere, Thread Waxing Space, New York

SELECTED PUBLIC COLLECTIONS

- The Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, NY
Arario Museum, Seoul, Korea
Borusan Music House, Istanbul, Turkey
Brooklyn Academy of Music, Brooklyn, NY
Brooklyn Museum of Art, Brooklyn, NY
IFEMA, Madrid, Spain
Blanton Museum of Art, Austin, TX
K&L Gates, Washington, D.C.
Margulies Collection, Miami, FL
Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY
Naoshima Contemporary Art Museum, Kagawa, Japan
National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.
Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art, Overland Park, KS
Perry Capital, New York, NY
The Related Companies, New York, NY
Somerset Partners, New York, NY
Time Warner Center, New York, NY

PREVIOUS MAD. SQ. ART EXHIBITIONS.

- 2012

Charles Long *Pet Sounds*
- 2011

Jacco Olivier
Alison Saar *Feallan and Fallow*
Jaume Plensa *Echo*
Kota Ezawa *City of Nature*
- 2010

Jim Campbell *Scattered Light*
Antony Gormley *Event Horizon*
Ernie Gehr *Surveillance*
- 2009

Shannon Plumb *The Park*
Jessica Stockholder *Flooded Chambers Maid*
Mel Kendrick *Markers*
Bill Beirne *Madison Square Trapezoids, with Performances by the Vigilant Groundsman*
- 2008

Olia Lialina & Dragan Espenschied
Online Newspapers: New York Edition
Richard Deacon *Assembly*
Tadashi Kawamata *Tree Huts*
Rafael Lozano-Hemmer *Pulse Park*
- 2007

Bill Fontana *Panoramic Echoes*
Roxy Paine *Conjoined, Defunct, Erratic*
William Wegman *Around the Park*
- 2006

Ursula von Rydingsvard *Bowl with Fins, Czara z Babelkami, Damski Czepek, Ted's Desert Reigns*
- 2005

Jene Highstein *Eleven Works*
Sol LeWitt *Circle with Towers, Curved Wall with Towers*
- 2004

Mark di Suvero *Aesope's Fables, Double Tetrahedron, Beyond*
- 2003

Wim Delvoye *Gothic*
- 2002

Dan Graham *Bisected Triangle, Interior Curve*
Mark Dion *Urban Wildlife Observation Unit*
Dalziel + Scullion *Voyager*
- 2001

Navin Rawanchaikul *I ♥ Taxi*
Teresita Fernández *Bamboo Cinema*
Tobias Rehberger *Tsutsumu*
- 2000

Tony Oursler *The Influence Machine*


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For more information, visit madisonsquarepark.org.



MAD. SQ. PK. CONSERVANCY

The Madison Square Park Conservancy is the public/private partnership with New York City Parks & Recreation, dedicated to keeping Madison Square Park a bright, beautiful and active park. The Conservancy raises the funds that support lush and brilliant horticulture, park maintenance and security. The Conservancy also offers a variety of cultural programs for park visitors of all ages, including Mad. Sq. Art.



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