

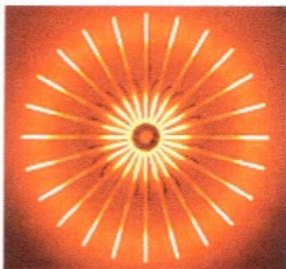
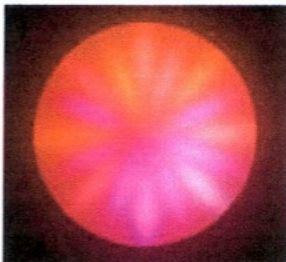
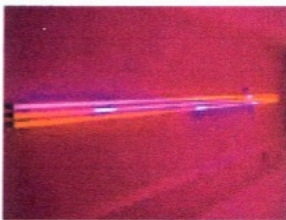
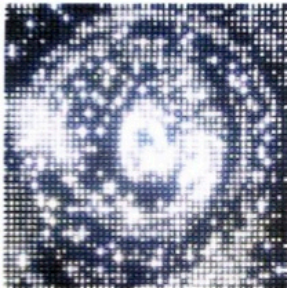
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ONE TO WATCH

August 23, 2006

LEO VILLAREAL



The climax of the Burning Man festival — a tower blazing against the dark desert sky — inspired Leo Villareal to use light in his art. Villareal's video installations and light sculptures explore the power of a spellbinding light source. Having studied interactive television and virtual reality at New York University, the artist creates work that also layers the concept of hypnotic light with digital technology.

Villareal mixes LED light art with software to create geometric light installations. *Bulbox 3.0*, a large cube of white LED lights arranged in a grid, and *Solaris*, a hanging sculpture of colored LED lights arranged in concentric circles, are attached to circuit boards that pulsate the lights in complex mathematical sequences. His installations in galleries and at art fairs often incorporate seating to allow viewers to get lost in the lightscares. He has also staged large outdoor pieces that transform their urban surroundings, such as *Star*, an 18-foot radiating light sculpture, and *Supercluster*, encompassing a wall outside the P.S.1 Contemporary Art Center in Long Island City. Villareal's earlier work used technology to echo forms found in nature. In the video projection *Megaparticle*, he constructs a realm where thousands of glowing particles — which could be interpreted as stars, tadpoles, or snow — zoom across a dark, shapeless world. The pulsing rhythm of *Bulbox 2.0*, a light sculpture, evokes breathing or heartbeats.

In his recent installations *Chasing Rainbows* and *Column 6*, tubes containing thousands of LED lights form patterns of lines. Their shifting color bands suggest what might happen if a Rothko painting drank an electric Kool-Aid acid test. In short, Villareal's work creates a visual language whose abstract yet familiar quality hypnotizes the viewer.

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Villareal is represented by Sandra Gering Gallery in New York, Galeria Javier López in Madrid, and Conner Contemporary Art in Washington, DC, where he will be having a solo show from November 3 through December 16.