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Leo Villareal's *Field* (2007), viewed in the artist's studio, now on exhibition at Gering & López Gallery

WEEKEND UPDATE by Walter Robinson

Below 57th Street on Fifth Avenue is the Crown Building at 730 Fifth Avenue, home to **Playboy Enterprises** as well as the new **Gering & López Gallery**, which opened last month with a show of three new works by digital artist **Leo Villareal** (b. 1967). Despite the august surroundings, dealer **Sandra Gering** has stripped the space down to the bare concrete, for a decidedly industrial effect.

Villareal's light objects fill the space well, especially *Field*, a 24 x 7 ft. lightwork that seems to be a 21st-century version of **Claude Monet's** water lily paintings, randomly cycling through a spectrum of soft-edged color effects, sort of like a tropical sunset in a box. Similarly hypnotic is *Diamond Sea*, a 10 x 15 ft. grid of white lights that moves through an endless series of random patterns, abstract, figurative and systematic. The works are \$300,000 and \$270,000, respectively, and strike me as utterly irresistible. **Hugh Hefner**, come on down!

Gering also predicts, in passing, that the building is likely to become even more of an art destination, especially after American paintings dealer **Deedee Wigmore** moves in.

In the meantime, one floor up is **Greenberg Van Doren Gallery**, which is featuring an exhibition of drawings and photographs by an artist named **Barry Ratoff** (b. 1948). The work that caught my eye was a small neon spelling out the word "ow" in a corner of the entry gallery. A bargain at \$1,000 in an edition of 15, it also expressed my sentiments exactly.

Sadly, **Joe Brainard's** erotic drawings at **Tibor de Nagy**, plus visits to **Marian Goodman**, **Luxe**, the **Project** and other galleries on the East Side have to wait till another day.

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