

## Leo Villareal *Harmony of the Spheres*

August 25 – October 10, 2020  
229 Hamilton Avenue  
Palo Alto, CA



Leo Villareal, *Instance 7*, 2018 © Leo Villareal, courtesy Pace Gallery

Palo Alto — Pace Gallery is pleased to present *Harmony of the Spheres*, an exhibition bringing together three new LED works by Leo Villareal alongside eight single-panel pieces from his Instance series (2018), on view August 25 – October 10, 2020. This presentation, Villareal's first at Pace in Palo Alto, continues his long-standing relationship with the Bay Area. Highlights of Villareal's projects in the area include the recently unveiled thirty-foot sculpture *Buckyball* (2019), the centerpiece of the entrance plaza at the new Rafael Viñoly-designed Stanford Hospital, and his renowned large-scale installation *The Bay Lights* (2013), a temporary commission which became a permanent, site-specific installation on western span of the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge in 2016 and has since become a staple of the San Francisco-Oakland cityscape.

For his exhibition at Pace, Villareal presents a series of LED panels which draws upon a history of practices engaged with mass imagery, mechanical reproduction, and the materiality of light. Flanking the entrance to the gallery, *Optical Machine III & IV* use LED lights and custom software to translate the layered and sequential logic of systems into beguiling visual experiences that, although abstract, echo the organic behaviors and networks found in nature. Inspired by the rules that govern cellular automata, Villareal develops his own underlying structures that form complex cosmological models.

*Musica Universalis*, the largest work in the exhibition, at just under ten-feet-square, references an ancient philosophical concept that regards proportions in the movements of celestial bodies as a form of music which is not audible but rather a harmonic and mathematical exploration of orbital resonance. Villareal is interested in synesthesia and the remapping of the senses. He creates works that exist purely as light but evoke elaborate sonic worlds.

The artist's Instance series comprises singular units that are networked together into a larger, orchestrated whole. The singular works, in their digital and physical forms, become malleable synchronies wherein the possibility of order, however fleeting and subtle, appears visually across the units before gradually dissipating into a chaotic state. As particle systems, they give a sense that things are expanding and colliding, their compositional qualities alluding to antipodal forms associated with the cosmic and the atomic. For the artist, these allusions arise through the process—as he works with code, he observes their results as “echoes that occur by happenstance,” which he then captures. Ultimately, this places his work between the conscious expression of the artist and the liberation of the work into the realm of artificial life.

Custom-built software and devising rules that promote principles of emergent behavior are integral to Villareal's practice. The works in this exhibition build on the artist's early examinations of artificial and living systems as seen in *The Bay Lights*, here across networked panels and mosaicked tiles that burst with visual force. Together, they provide a rare opportunity to grasp the full breadth of the artist's practice, placing his innovative sculptural works in direct dialogue with large-scale public installations.

*Harmony of the Spheres* precedes the presentation of the specially commissioned version of Villareal's *Star Ceiling* (2019), first exhibited at the Armory in 2019, as part of Oklahoma Contemporary's inaugural exhibition *Bright Golden Haze*, which was slated to open in March 2020 but was postponed due to COVID-19. The show, which includes Pace artists James Turrell and Robert Irwin, explores the way artists have utilized light as material for shaping space, perception, and time. New dates for the exhibition are to be confirmed. In addition, Villareal's *Illuminated River*, a major public artwork presented by The Illuminated River Foundation that will illuminate 14 bridges along the Thames in London with sequenced LED patterns, was inaugurated in July 2019 with four bridges—London, Cannon Street, Southwark and Millennium. The second phase of the artwork, including five more bridges, is on track to be unveiled in spring of 2021.

The exhibition will be on view via reservation. More details about the reservation process for the show are available [here](#).

**Leo Villareal** (b. 1967, Albuquerque, New Mexico) works with LED lights to create complex, rhythmic artworks for both gallery and public settings. He focuses on identifying the governing structures of systems and is interested in base units such as pixels and binary code. His installations are based on custom, artist-created code, which operates in real-time to constantly alter the frequency, intensity, and patterning of light. Villareal has created temporary and permanent lightworks and sculptures for public spaces and museums including the Herbert F. Johnson Museum, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York; National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; and the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge.

Launched in July 2019, Villareal's winning artwork for the 2016 Illuminated River International Design Competition uses light and color in an integrated site-specific composition to enliven the bridges of the River Thames in London. Recent monographic exhibitions include *Early Light* at the El Paso Museum of Art, Texas, (2019–2020); *Particle Chamber* at Moody Center for the Arts, Rice University, Houston, in 2018; *Buckyball* at the Exploratorium, San Francisco in 2016; and a mid-career survey at the San Jose Museum of Art, California in 2010, which travelled to the Nevada Museum of Art, Reno; Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art, Overland Park, Kansas; and Telfair Museum of Art, Savannah, before closing at the Madison Museum of Contemporary Art, Wisconsin, in 2012.

**Pace** is a leading contemporary art gallery representing many of the most significant international artists and estates of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

Under the leadership of President and CEO Marc Glimcher, Pace is a vital force within the art world and plays a critical role in shaping the history, creation, and engagement with modern and contemporary art. Since its founding by Arne Glimcher in 1960, Pace has developed a distinguished legacy for vibrant and dedicated relationships with renowned artists. As the gallery approaches the start of its seventh decade, Pace's mission continues to be inspired by a drive to support the world's most influential and innovative artists and to share their visionary work with people around the world.

Pace advances this mission through its dynamic global program, comprising ambitious exhibitions, artist projects, public installations, institutional collaborations, performances and interdisciplinary projects through Pace Live, and curatorial research and writing. Today, Pace has seven locations worldwide: two galleries in New York—including its newly opened headquarters at 540 West 25th Street, and an adjacent 8,000 sq. ft. exhibition space at 510 West 25th Street—as well as galleries in Palo Alto, London, Geneva, Hong Kong, and Seoul.

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