

ARTWORK **SKY**

ARTIST **LEO VILLAREAL**

SCHEDULED FOR COMPLETION IN 2010
U.S. COURTHOUSE
EL PASO, TEXAS

For the lobby of the new federal courthouse in El Paso, light artist Leo Villareal is creating a large-scale digital mural that will evoke the rich chromatic spectrum of the southwestern sky. This constantly shifting field of color, appropriately titled *Sky*, will reference the sun's daily trajectory. At times it will appear blue and white, suggesting gently moving clouds. At other times, a bolder palette will mimic the brilliant hues of sunrise and sunset. The pulsing color and pattern changes will be seemingly random and unpredictable, producing a mesmerizing effect.

Sky will consist of light-emitting diodes (LEDs) mounted to the wall horizontally in an 11-by-30-foot arrangement, as if to give the viewer an impressionistic version of the sky through an imaginary picture window. A translucent screen will diffuse the light and blend the individual red, green, and blue colors. The sequence and color value of the LEDs will be controlled by a complex computer code written by Villareal. By modulating the values of each LED, millions of different hues can be created, producing countless color combinations. In the artist's words, "this digital mural synthesizes the organic and the technological, visually manifesting an animated portrait of the sky."

The work will be installed across from the upper lobby in the public lounge area of the courthouse. Here visitors will be able to stop, take a moment to sit, and immerse themselves in the rhythm of the shifting colors. Viewers will also glimpse the artwork from the lower lobby through the glass railings of the upper level, and from the outdoor plaza through the glass entry. Reflecting on the work's visibility from outside the building, Villareal remarked, "The work will have a strong presence, a softly breathing and pulsing force that brings a feeling of 'life' to the building."

Field (2007), a comparable work consisting of computer-controlled LEDs and a diffusion screen, is pictured on the following pages to give an idea of what Villareal's commission for the federal courthouse will look like once it is installed. Like *Field*, *Sky* will display undulating colors that entrance the viewer. Unlike *Field*, however, which is intended for a gallery or museum setting, *Sky* is site-specific, taking its cues from El Paso's exquisite desert firmament. NA

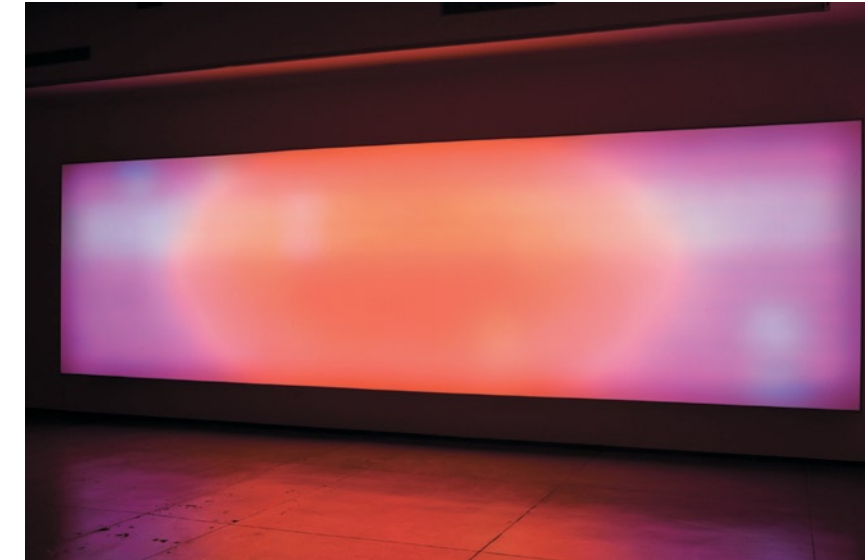
VILLAREAL



Leo Villareal was born in Albuquerque, New Mexico, in 1967; raised in El Paso, Texas; and currently lives in New York. He earned a BA in sculpture from Yale University in 1990 and an MPS from Tisch School of the Arts' Interactive Telecommunications Program at New York University in 1994.

For more than a decade, Villareal has been developing a unique body of work that integrates customized digital software with multicolored light. Most recently this has been in the form of LEDs fronted with a diffusion material. Conceptually, his work is inspired by complex mathematical theories, especially the idea that underlying structures and rules govern everything around us. For each artwork, he writes specific conditions and rules into the computer code and then lets the piece evolve visually within that established framework. This marriage of mathematical theory, digital technology, and visual art results in sumptuous kinetic light sculptures that undulate with a panoply of color patterns. The installations often seem to have a living quality—breathing, throbbing, and pulsating—creating an immersive sensory experience for the viewer.

Other site-specific installations created by Villareal include: *Supercluster* (2004), a massive 45-by-120-foot grid of six hundred and forty sequenced LED clusters covering the façade of the P.S. 1 Contemporary Art Center in Long Island City, New York; and *Light Matrix for Albright-Knox* (2005), a permanent LED installation for the Albright-Knox Art Gallery in Buffalo, New York. In addition to being a practicing visual artist and programmer, Villareal has also served as a curator, arranging numerous group shows for other artists.



HAVING GROWN UP IN EL PASO AND NEARBY CIUDAD JUAREZ, THE VASTNESS OF THE 'BIG SKY COUNTRY' HAS PLAYED A SIGNIFICANT ROLE IN FORMING MY VISION. THIS ARTWORK PRESENTS SOMETHING UNIVERSAL THAT EVERYONE CAN UNDERSTAND AND FEEL AN EMOTIONAL CONNECTION TO AND WITH. THE SKY IS ETERNAL AND EVER CHANGING, REFLECTING ON THE NOTION OF 'DEEP TIME.' - LEO VILLAREAL

MEDIUM LEDS, CUSTOM ELECTRONICS, TRANSLUCENT DIFFUSION SCREEN
DIMENSIONS 11 FT X 30 FT