MAD. SQ. ART 2012.
LEO VILLAREAL
BUCKYBALL

October 25, 2012 – February 1, 2013
Madison Square Park
Presented by the Madison Square Park Conservancy
Foreword
Debbie Landau, President
Madison Square Park Conservancy

Artist Statement
Leo Villareal

LEO VILLAREAL: COMPOSER OF LIGHT
Barbara London
Associate Curator, Department of Media and Performance Art
The Museum of Modern Art, New York

Acknowledgments
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 thoughtfully. 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
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 (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.
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.

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.
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 Square 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 smartphones 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.
## SELECTED PUBLIC COLLECTIONS

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

## GROUP EXHIBITIONS AND PROJECTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Exhibition/Project</th>
<th>Location</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Contemplating the Void: Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum</td>
<td>New York, NY</td>
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<td>2009</td>
<td>Conversations in Luminosity: The Future of Film</td>
<td>Tennessee, USA</td>
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<td>2008</td>
<td>That Way Then, This is Now</td>
<td>Aichi Triennale, Japan</td>
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<td>2007</td>
<td>Digital Stories, Centro Galego de Arte Contemporaneo</td>
<td>Portugal</td>
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<td>2006</td>
<td>Extreme Abstraction, Albright Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, NY</td>
<td>Greater New York, NY</td>
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<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Visual Music, Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art</td>
<td>Venice, Italy</td>
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<td>2004</td>
<td>Optimus Manifestations of Optimism in Contemporary Art</td>
<td>Ballroom Marfa, Texas</td>
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<td>2003</td>
<td>Joshua Tree of Life, High Desert Test Sites, Joshua Tree</td>
<td>CA</td>
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<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Sculpture Now, Palm Beach Institute of Contemporary Art</td>
<td>Palm Beach, FL</td>
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<td>2001</td>
<td>Light @ the Jewish Museum, New York</td>
<td>New York, NY</td>
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<td>2000</td>
<td>Perfect 10: Ten Years in Soho</td>
<td>Sandra Gering Gallery, New York, NY</td>
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<td>1999</td>
<td>The Next Perfect 10</td>
<td>Socrates Sculpture Park, Long Island City</td>
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## SOLO EXHIBITIONS AND PROJECTS

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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Exhibition/Project</th>
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<td>2007</td>
<td>New Work, Gering &amp; Lopez Gallery</td>
<td>New York, NY</td>
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<td>2005</td>
<td>Galeria Javier Lopez, Madrid, Spain</td>
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<td>2004</td>
<td>Chasing Rainbows, Sandra Gering Gallery, NY</td>
<td>Cincinnati, OH</td>
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<td>2003</td>
<td>Chasing Rainbows, Sandra Gering Gallery, NY</td>
<td>Cincinnati, OH</td>
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<td>2002</td>
<td>Conner Contemporary Art, Washington, D.C.</td>
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<td>2001</td>
<td>Multiverse, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.</td>
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## EDUCATION

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<td>New York University, M.F.A.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Yale University, B.A.</td>
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## SITE-SPECIFIC COMMISSIONS

- The Bay Lights, Bay Bridge, San Francisco, CA
- BUCKYBALL, commissioned by the Madison Square Park Conservancy, Madison Square Park, New York
- Cosmos, Johnson Museum of Art, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY
- MTA Arts for Transit and Urban Design, Bleecker Street Station, New York, NY
- Cylinder II, The New Art of Mass, Massachusetts, The Netherlands
- Line, MoMA PS1, Long Island City, NY
- Radiant Pathway, Rice University, Houston, TX
- Sky (Tampa), Tampa Museum of Art, Tampa, FL
- Skyscape, United States Federal Courthouse, El Paso, TX
- Thr3ewl0rd, 180 K Street, Washington, D.C.
- Diagonal Grid, Bonnau Music House, Istanbul, Turkey
- Multiverse, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.
- Microcosm, Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art, Overland Park, KS
- Stars, Brooklyn Academy of Music, Brooklyn, NY
- Untitled, Kinship & Lostshirt, Washington, D.C.
- Light Map, Permanent installation for Albright Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, NY
- Set and Drift, Lower Manhattan Cultural Council, Governors Island, NY
- Chasing Rainbows, Perry Capital, New York, NY
- The Core Club, New York, NY
- Glasgow Art in Architecture project, new federal courthouse by architect Antonio Prieto, El Paseo, TX
- Chasing Rainbows / Never Have, Yale University, New Haven, CT
- Superluster, MoMA PS1, Long Island City, NY
- Printema de Septiembre, Toulouse, France
- Lightscapes, Palm Beach Institute of Contemporary Art, Palm Beach, FL
- Art Among The Stars, Grand Central Station, New York, NY
- Art in General On Canaan, Project 1: Art in General, New York, NY
- Arte Contemporaneo Internazionale, Museo di Arte Moderno, Mexico City
- Massless Medium: Explorations in Sensory Immersion, Creative Time in The Anchorage, Brooklyn, NY
- KIMK Reenergize Zone, Mobly tour, traveling video installation

## SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- Optical Optimism, Galerie Simonne Stern, New Orleans, LA
- Exposure: The Future of Film Festival, USA
- Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, Williamstown, MA
- The Bay Lights, Bay Bridge, San Francisco, CA
- Light @ the Jewish Museum, New York, NY
We are grateful for the support of Mad. Sq. Art from Gering & López Gallery, FITZ & CO, Forest City Ratner Companies, Thornton Tomasetti, and Pentagram.

Special thanks to John Barry, Laura Bloom, Michael Byrne, Russell Calabrese, Manhattan Borough Parks Commissioner Ernie Gehr, Surveillance, and Shannon Plumb.

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, security, and cultural programs for park visitors of all ages, including Mad. Sq. Art.

Major Support for Mad. Sq. Art is provided by Liane Ginsberg, Agnes Gund, Toby Devan Lewis, Dorothy Lichtenstein, Tiffany & Co., The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Sorgente Group, and Anonymous. Substantial support is provided by Martha and Bruce Atwater, Melva Bucksbaum and Raymond Leary, The Henry Luce Foundation, Melissa S. Mayer, Ronald A. Pizzuti, The Rudin Family, Lizzie and Jonathan Tisch, Tishman Speyer, the Joseph S. and Diane H. Steinberg Charitable Trust, and the Sol LeWitt Fund for Artist Work. Additional support is provided by Tom Berger, Danny and Audrey Mayer, Jamie Welch and Fiona Angelini, Leslie and Howard Zemsky, and NYC & Company.

Extensive exhibition support for BUCKYBALL is provided by Bloomberg. Delta Air Lines is the Official Airline Sponsor of Mad. Sq. Art. Ace Hotel New York is the Official Hotel Partner of Mad. Sq. Park. This project is also supported in part with public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, in partnership with the City Council.

For more information, visit madisonsquarepark.org.

Michael R. Bloomberg, Mayor
Patricia E. Harris, First Deputy Mayor
Richard Koshalek, Commissioner, Cultural Affairs
Toby Devan Lewis, Commissioner, Parks & Recreation

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