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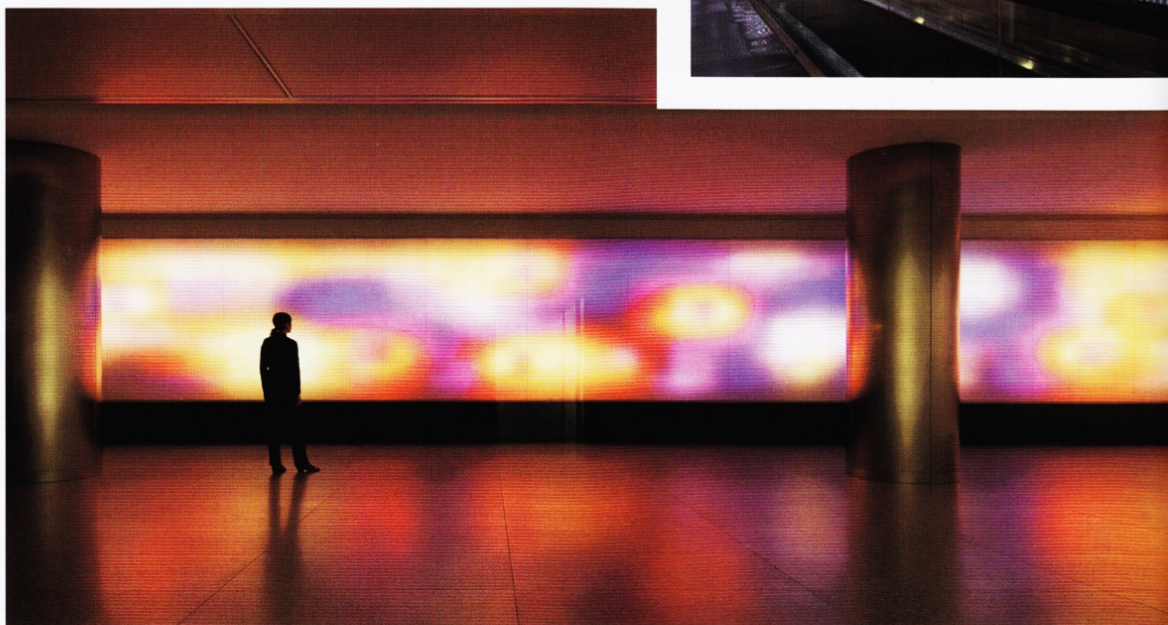
The installation works of artist Leo Villareal, photographed here by James Ewing, are perfectly emblematic of the synthesis of art, design and architecture that's our lifeblood at *Surface*. Elsewhere in the following pages, we quiz the equally multi-disciplinary chief talent at Hermès, a Japanese architect whose work is delicate indeed and a rare partnership between Miuccia Prada and Herzog & de Meuron for a production at New York's Metropolitan Opera. Last but not least, we drop by the workshop of Brazilian bad boys the Campana brothers for a lesson in rule breaking.



ON THE BRIGHT SIDE

Painting architecture with light, an artist programs the next wave of abstract art

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With the opening of the Tampa Museum of Art, Floridians gain not just a new cultural center, but also an ethereal digital sunset courtesy of New York artist Leo Villareal. With a series of multicolored LED fixtures tucked between two layers of perforated aluminum panels in the museum's facade, Villareal's installation, named "Sky (Tampa)," transforms the building at night into a 300-foot-long, 45-foot-high ribbon of pulsating, colored light.

Albuquerque-born Villareal, 43, is fast becoming the art world's most accomplished magician of large-scale light fields. In 2008, he created "Multiverse," a wall and ceiling installation involving 41,000 computer-controlled LEDs at Washington DC's National Gallery of Art, where a 200-foot-long hallway billows with illuminated data clouds. In 2007, he completed "Microcosm" for the Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art in Kansas—a 12,000 LED pixelated kaleidoscope that hangs above the museum's entrance. The San Jose Museum of Art will exhibit a survey of Villareal's rapidly expanding portfolio this August, and he's also at work on what is sure to be an enlightening installation for New York's Broadway-Lafayette subway station.

Villareal, a graduate of New York University's brainy Interactive Telecommunications Program, dabbled in virtual reality technology before finding art. He derives the patterns that play out across his architectural installations from custom software and patient experimentation. "I started out working with rules, different structures and code," he says. "Then I started thinking about patterns you'd find in nature, like waves, and boiling them down to their essence." He also pulls freely from math and science, exploring everything from mathematician John Conway's Game of Life to Sir Isaac Newton's law of universal gravitation to create patterns that appear to come from Mother Nature.

"Leo's work is not just the sum of the lights that are used," says Leigh Conner, owner of Washington DC's Conner Contemporary Art gallery, which represents Villareal. "The actual artwork is the digital code." And even though bits and bytes represent a distinct departure from paintbrush and palette, Conner knew she was witnessing something important the first time she saw Villareal's creations in 2002: "I thought, 'This is it—this is the new way of abstract painting.'" Only this time, the compositions refuse to sit still. villareal.net



CONNECT THE DOTS: Integrated into the Tampa Museum of Art's perforated aluminum facade, Leo Villareal's recently completed "Sky (Tampa)" uses custom software to create an artificial sunset from LEDs; (Opposite, from top) "Multiverse" (2008) builds a digital solar system in a hallway at Washington DC's National Gallery of Art with 41,000 LEDs; "Threshold" (2009) offers a 200-foot-long light field behind diffused glass in the lobby of DC's 1801K office building