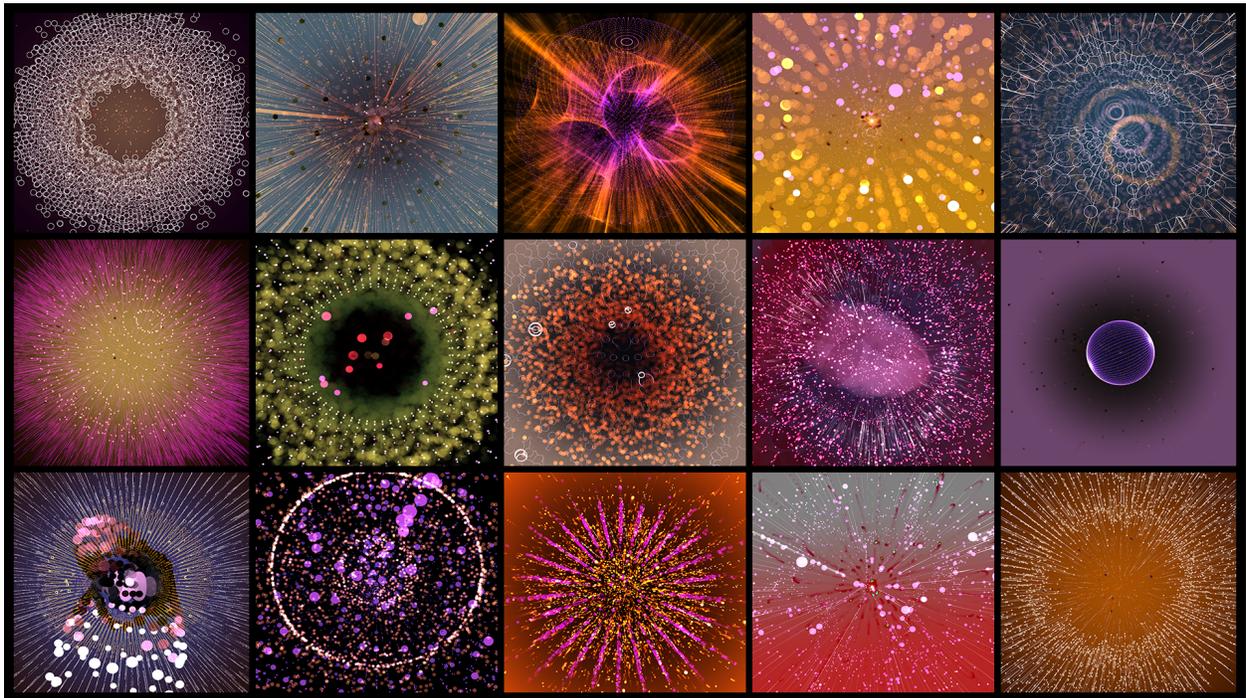


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Sample outputs for *Cosmic Reef* with Art Blocks. © Leo Villareal

Leo Villareal Launches First NFT Project with Generative Platform, Art Blocks

The American light artist and sculptor finds a new source of inspiration on the blockchain

January 11, 2022 (New York) - Leo Villareal is pleased to announce *Cosmic Reef*, the artist's first edition of NFTs, consisting of 1,024 digital works presented on the generative art platform Art Blocks. This collaboration marks a natural evolution in Villareal's practice and is the first work the artist has created to exist in a purely digital form. *Cosmic Reef* will launch on January 24, 2022, at 1:00 PM EST and will be available for purchase on www.artblocks.io

Drawing upon the infinite array of sequences in the natural world, the *Cosmic Reef* NFTs reflect the random order of beauty and symmetry that exists in our universe. The individual works begin with a simple geometry that becomes more complex through composed dynamic layers, each born of a combination of human control and computational chance. Coded using three.js, a JavaScript library used to create and display 3D objects, each NFT is the generative result of over 100 parameters. Randomized permutations of attributes create rarity through select combinations of geometry, color, composition, and light, making each work in the series entirely unique.

Simple forms evolve into complex constellations, emulating the architecture of life. As Villareal explains:

“A particular order can be found in deepest space, in our oceans and forests, and in all living things, including ourselves – a unified code that produces variation. Gravity and cosmic winds shape star-forming nebulae into coral-like forms. Flowers self-organize with a radial symmetry produced by signals hidden from the human eye. Stars are birthed, collapse, explode, and are reborn. Invertebrates move on the tides of oceans, signaling with ever-changing patterns of bioluminescence. Light bends time as events unfold in our own lives.”

Bringing his work from the physical to the digital, Villareal’s process finds its natural extension on the blockchain, where the creation, distribution, and ownership of the NFTs are decentralized and democratized for a new and wider audience. The code translates the artist’s acclaimed public art installations and site-specific LED sculptures into this new digital universe. Villareal imagines a possible future in which works from the *Cosmic Reef* series will be experienced viscerally through VR (virtual reality) or in everyday life via AR (augmented reality).

Art Blocks founder Erick Calderon expressed his enthusiasm for the project:

“Leo Villareal’s work has been a source of inspiration for me for many years, both in my own creative practice and as the founder of Art Blocks. The platform was originally conceived as a way to enable the public to interact with digital art using blockchain technology, so the significance of working with Leo on the release of his work on Art Blocks is humbling and surreal and I am excited to see this work come to life in this medium!”

The project is supported by Pace Gallery, which represents Leo Villareal.

For more information, visit www.cosmicreef.io and www.artblocks.io.

About Leo Villareal

Leo Villareal (b. 1967, Albuquerque, New Mexico) works with LED arrays to create complex, rhythmic light sculptures and other works 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 major temporary and permanent works for numerous public spaces and museums including the Herbert F. Johnson Museum; Cornell University; and National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. He is particularly known for two monumental public works: *The Bay Lights*, a site-specific generative light sculpture that occupies the entire western space of the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge, and *Illuminated River*, a series of light sculptures installed on bridges over the River Thames in London.

About Art Blocks

Art Blocks is a first-of-its-kind platform focused on genuinely programmable on-demand generative content that is stored immutably on the Ethereum blockchain. Pick a style you like, pay for the work, and a randomly generated iteration of the content is created by an algorithm and sent to your Ethereum account. The resulting piece might be a static image, 3D model, or an interactive experience. Each output is different and there are endless possibilities for the types of content that can be created on the platform. Art Blocks emerged in 2021 as one of the top blockchain art platforms, with over \$1 billion in total digital art sales.

About Pace Gallery

Pace is a leading international art gallery representing some of the most influential contemporary artists and estates from the past century. Under the leadership of President and CEO Marc Glimcher, Pace supports its artists and shares their visionary work with audiences worldwide. Now in its seventh decade, the gallery advances its mission through a robust global program comprising exhibitions, artist projects, public installations, institutional collaborations, performances, and interdisciplinary projects. An early champion of artists engaged with technology, Pace has long prized innovation as a core value. Pace has supported a number of NFT projects by artists including John Gerrard's *Western Flag*, Urs Fischer's *CHAOS*, Glenn Kaino's *Pass the Baton*, and has released NFTs on Pace Verso, the gallery's dedicated NFT platform, by Lucas Samaras and *DRIFT* with Don Diablo. The development of Pace Verso, the gallery's new NFT Platform, aligns with Pace's history of supporting boundary-pushing artists and their projects, and it underscores the gallery's commitment to the advanced studio practices of artists within and beyond its program.

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