

San Jose Institute of Contemporary Art



NEWS RELEASE

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Summer Shows at the ICA

Building Worlds with Old and New Technologies



Bernie Lubell, *Conservation of Intimacy*, installation detail, 2005 - 2010, Pine, latex, music, wire, copper, nylon line, paper, pens and video surveillance, Courtesy of the Artist

SAN JOSE, CA – June 2010 – Opening in July 2010 at running through September 19 at the San Jose Institute of Contemporary Art (ICA), are four exhilarating exhibitions that expose, capture and celebrate the art of collaboration, participation, experimentation, and manipulation of old and new technologies and mediums in art, construction and photography.

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Summer Shows at the ICA

San Jose Institute of Contemporary Art, 560 South First Street, San Jose, CA 95113 (408) 283-8155 www.sjica.org

Bernie Lubell: Conservation of Intimacy opening on July 3 in the Main Gallery, is an immersive sculptural installation presented in partnership with the O1SJ Biennial Art and Technology Festival (September 16 – 19).

Exposed: Yesterday's Photography/Yesterday's Technology opens on July 17 in the Focus Gallery. Inspired by the rich history and alchemic experimentation of obsolete photographic practices, the artists in this exhibition create images using antiquated photographic methods, creating works that range from daguerreotypes to tintypes, gum prints to cyanotypes. *Captured: Photography's Early Adopters* also opening on July 17 in the Cardinale Project Room is an exhibition of vintage prints from the collection of San Francisco gallerist Stephen Wirtz. Also opening in July in the ICA's Lounge, *Liz Steketee: Reconstructed Memories* – a unique print series that uses the artist's personal family photographs to rewrite history from her vantage point. An Opening Reception celebrating the works and artists in these exhibitions will be held on Friday, July 16, from 6-8pm at the ICA.

Bernie Lubell: Conservation of Intimacy

In true Silicon Valley fashion, Lubell has created his low-tech machines in his San Francisco garage for over twenty years. However, instead of working with computers, software, and electronics, the artist collaborates with pine wood and ancient technologies—cranks, pulleys, and springs, for instance—to build the immersive and interactive works. The deliberate handmade aesthetic, along with the ingenuity of the complex designs, give Lubell's works the appearance of a different era—a time of the master craftsmen and old technology. The creations are in fact deeply rooted in the artist's research and explorations of historic scientific instruments and obsolete machinery.

Lubell's *Conservation of Intimacy* serves as a stage where people are invited to touch and play with the work—an unlikely, but thrilling, proposition in the context of the “do not touch” policy in the gallery and museum environment. As participants crank, rock, and create sounds with the work, they tap into what the artist describes as the “vast reservoir of knowledge stored in each of our bodies,” and become important collaborators in the realization and understanding of this massive installation.

With a background in engineering and psychology, Lubell designs his interactive wood machines through experience. He begins with a question—about intimacy, the nature of being human, the theory of entanglement—and looks to archaic technology to manifest these complicated concepts into a mechanical device. His trial-and-error process results in creations that are fragile-looking yet sturdy, poetic and surreal.

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Not until the works come in contact with us, the visitors of the exhibition, do they truly come to life. In Lubell's world of art making, every person's participation is significant. The works entice the senses—they look and feel like elaborate playground diversions and are incredibly pleasurable to explore. In *Conservation of Intimacy*, two people rock on a suspended bench while their motions are recorded as a graph by a pen marking a roll of paper (which is moved by the third participant pedaling on a stationary wooden bicycle). With minimal instruction, visitors intuitively discover and activate the mechanics of the multifaceted machines. As participants are absorbed in the rattle and hum of the work, they delight in being alive and engaged in the wonder of life.

Much of Lubell's work is inspired by the early medical devices of French physiologist Etienne Jules Marey (1830–1904). A mechanical genius, Marey developed myriad sophisticated pneumatic contraptions in the late nineteenth century to precisely measure movement and make visible what is otherwise invisible, including a machine that simulated a heart beat and a pulse-reading device that was a precursor for medical imaging. The artist writes, "What I like about Marey's early medical apparatus is that while they reflect a naive faith in mechanical models for biology they also embody the evolutionary design necessary to get realistic results. They were designed by experience just as we ourselves are."

Born in Baltimore, MD Lubell is based in San Francisco, CA. His interactive installations have exhibited nationally and internationally, most recently at FACT, Liverpool and V2 in Rotterdam. Lubell has received numerous awards including an Award of Distinction from Ars Electronica, an Adolph and Esther Gottlieb Foundation grant in 2009 and Pollack Kranser Foundation Grants in 2002 and 1991.

Exposed: Today's Photography/Yesterday's Technology

The introduction of the digital camera over 20 years ago revolutionized photography. For novices and professionals alike, the computer has replaced the darkroom in the 21st century. However, even with the sophisticated advances of the digital age, a growing number of artists are embracing 19th century photographic technologies to make their work.

Paradoxically, technology has greatly contributed to the enthusiasm, interest and renewal of antiquated photographic processes. Many artists utilize digital tools along with historic practices to make hybrid works.



Joy Goldkind, *Ruth*, 2000-2009, bromoil, hand inked,
Courtesy of the Artist

Digital printing enables artists to create large negatives for contact printing and play with scale in ways that were previously unavailable. Active online communities provide a forum to share recipes and practices.

Part chemist, artist, historian and experimentalist, the photographers in this show share an interest in utilizing old technology to create new imagery. Exhibiting artists include: Stephen Berkman, Linda Connor, Binh Danh, Nathaniel Gibbons, Joy Goldkind, Andreas Hablutzel, Rachel Heath, Robin Hill, Kerik Kouklis, Chirs McCaw, Beth Moon, Ben Nixon, Ron Moultrie Saunders, Michael Shindler, and Brian Taylor.

Captured: Photography's Early Adopters

A companion exhibition of vintage prints from the private collection of San Francisco gallerist Stephen Wirtz and guest curated by David Pace, lecturer, Art and Art History Department, Santa Clara University and ICA Board member. These images will also provide a lens to examine how contemporary photographers are informed by the historic work, whether they rely on its nostalgia and sentimentality or create radically different imagery.

Liz Steketee: Reconstructed Memories

A unique print series that uses the artist's personal family photographs to rewrite history from her vantage point. By choosing unrelated images and digitally manipulating them into unlikely combinations, Steketee builds new memories. She forges new relationships, addresses old confrontations, imagines different experiences, and faces old demons. "I disrupt linear narratives and recompose events, establishing my family history as a construct," explains Steketee. "Once these new snapshots have been finalized digitally, they are printed, aged and weathered according to their appropriate time period. This rebuilding of memory has allowed me to establish my own version of reality, as I prefer it." *Reconstructed Memories* takes the form of a unique print series as well as a series of reconstructed "false" family photo albums that adhere to the artist's revisionist history.

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The 2010 01SJ Biennial is predicated on the notion that as artists, designers, engineers, architects, marketers, corporations and citizens we have the tools to (re)build the world, conceptually and actually, virtually and physically, poorly and better, aesthetically and pragmatically, in both large and small ways. 01SJ is about how powerful ideas and innovative individuals from around the world can make a difference and come together to build a unique and distributed city-wide platform for creative solutions and public engagement. Under the theme "Build Your Own World," ZER01, in collaboration with dozens of partners, will present over the course of 4 days, from September 16-19, hundreds of artworks, performances, events, and artist talks, which not only imagine the future of the world) but begin to build it.

The San Jose Institute of Contemporary Art (ICA) is an energetic art space located in downtown San Jose dedicated to making contemporary art accessible and exciting to audiences of all ages and backgrounds. Exhibitions are presented in three galleries that display the most current, relevant and often challenging art from the region, the nation and the world. The ICA is activated by opening receptions, South First Friday gallery walks, after-dark programming in the front windows, panel discussions, printmaking workshops, brown bag lunches and impromptu conversations in the galleries. Admission is always free.

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