

## MODESTO COVARRUBIAS: LIMINAL

Focus Gallery  
April 10 - July 3, 2010

Opening Reception:  
Friday, May 7, 6-8 pm

*Liminal* is supported in part by the Castellano Family Foundation with additional support from the James Irvine Foundation.

## LIBBY BLACK: WORK OUT

Cardinale Project Room  
April 10 - July 3, 2010

Opening Reception:  
Friday, May 7, 6-8 pm

*Work Out* is supported in part by Wanda Kownacki.

The San Jose Institute of Contemporary Art (ICA) presents Modesto Covarrubias: *Liminal* and Libby Black: *Work Out*, two immersive and experiential installation-based solo exhibitions. Both artists join a roster of emerging and established Bay Area artists who have presented large-scale installations in the ICA's Focus Gallery and Cardinale Project Room. While Covarrubias and Black both utilize paper as a primary material to make the installations, their strategies and resulting works are completely unique.

## Focus Gallery

### **Modesto Covarrubias: *Liminal***

*Liminal* is the culmination of Covarrubias' observations of the ICA's architecture and space. For several months, the artist has studied how light pours through the skylights to cast shadows on the walls, noted the way air moves when the front doors open and thoughtfully listened to the ambient sounds of the galleries. Informed by this research, Covarrubias has created a site specific installation comprised of suspended layers of tracing paper. The accumulation of this overlaid film dramatically alters the physical space and our relationship to it. As we move through the installation, we may notice the subtle movement of light, the various tones of transparency or the quiet flutter of the paper. In paying close attention to what may otherwise be considered invisible, Covarrubias has built an environment intended for introspection.

Covarrubias has long been interested in the perception of space and how it can alter or be altered by one's mental state. When he was a child growing up in San Jose, he created forts, houses and spaceships to transport himself to imaginary worlds. Today, he employs a similar process of play and experimentation to communicate his artistic vision. The blurry layers of the installation convey his "veiled emotions and memories" associated with coming back to his boyhood home, a place that was once familiar and now feels different. Where we are, according to Covarrubias, is not just to a dot on a map but is relative to memories, relationships and a state-of-mind.

In addition to his personal experience, Covarrubias' work has been deeply influenced by a long line of contemporary artist practicing minimalism, abstraction and conceptualism including Robert Irwin, Sol LeWitt and Richard Serra. Interested in perception, architecture, light, and space, Covarrubias often begins with a sketch, which develops into a sculpture or installation and is often captured in a photograph. In addition to his immersive installation, Covarrubias will be an Artist-in-Residence at the ICA Print Center where he will create a set of limited edition prints.

Modesto Covarrubias is a San Jose-native who lives and works in Berkeley, CA. He recently graduated with an MFA in Studio Art from Mills College, and in 2005 earned a BFA in Photography from the San Francisco Art Institute. His work has been exhibited in Italy, New York City and throughout the Bay Area.

## Cardinale Project Room

### **Libby Black: *Work Out***

Creating high-fashion forgeries out of low-budget materials is nothing new for artist Libby Black. Made out of paper, acrylic paint and hot glue, some of her projects have included recreating a Kate Spade store in a museum and a Louis Vuitton boutique in a gallery (which incidentally Vuitton threatened to shut down). In her work Black investigates the outward appearance of the “good life” and the social, cultural and economic symbolism of the objects she copies. She writes, “My work is about surface, desire and distraction. I am drawn to this subject matter because of my uneasiness and ambivalence about what these status symbols mean to me, and how they function in society.”

By re-making, painting and constructing faux designer objects with the utmost care and attention, Black opens the opportunity for us to contemplate our relationship with the brands and lifestyle she presents. In *Work Out* we cannot avoid seeing our reflections in the mirror-lined walls of the installation. The sight of our selves in this absurdly branded exercise room may instigate our own longing for the luxury labels presented. Whereas a gym provides the space and equipment to literally sculpt one’s body, is it irrational to indulge the notion that buying the latest fashion accessory will transform us for the better too? In working on a perfect body on the treadmill, would success be more obvious while sweating in Prada? While we may rationally understand this to be false – we cannot, after all, buy happiness or a perfect figure – Black’s *Work Out* suggests the bizarre promise of high fashion and teases at our own conflicted desires.

Born in Ohio and raised in Texas, Libby Black now lives and works in Berkeley, CA. She received her MFA from the California College of Arts and Crafts in San Francisco in 2001, and received her BFA from the Cleveland Institute of Art in 1999. Her work has been shown extensively throughout the United States in solo and group exhibitions, and is held in both private and public collections in California, New York and Europe, including the Orange County Museum of Art, the Oakland Museum of Art, and The Chaney Family Collection in Houston, Texas.

Additional Programming:

## Talking Art

### Thursday, May 13

7-9 PM

A conversation with Libby Black

### Thursday, June 10

7-9 PM

A conversation with Modesto Covarrubias

*Talking Art* is a series of salon-style discussions about art, held at the ICA on the second Thursday of the month from 7-9 PM. Admission to Talking art is FREE for ICA members; \$5 for non members; \$2 for students.

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### Celebrating 30 Years

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### Hours

Tues - Fri 10 - 5  
Sat 12 - 5

Closed Sun-Mon