

# Main Gallery

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## ***Bernie Lubell: Conservation of Intimacy***

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### **July 3 – September 19**

***Bernie Lubell: Conservation of Intimacy* for the 2010 01SJ Biennial is presented with the support of ZERO1, 1st ACT, and the National Endowment for the Arts.**

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# ***Bernie Lubell: Conservation of Intimacy***

The 2010 O1SJ Biennial theme *Build Your Own World* is predicated on the notion that we have the tools to (re)build our own world. The future is not about what is next; it is about what we can build to ensure that what is next matters. In partnership with the O1SJ Biennial the ICA presents *Bernie Lubell: Conservation of Intimacy*, an interactive environment where every person's participation is significant. The low-tech wood installations require the cooperation of people in order to work, powerfully suggesting that by engaging with each other and our surroundings, we can solve problems and re-envision our world.

In true Silicon Valley fashion, Lubell has created his machines in his San Francisco garage for over 30 years. However, instead of working with computers and electronics, he employs pine wood and ancient technologies –cranks, gears, pulleys and springs– to build these interactive works. The creations are rooted in Lubell's deep interest in historic scientific instruments and incorporate technologies from the middle ages through the nineteenth century. In particular, Lubell takes great inspiration from the technical work of French physiologist Étienne-Jules Marey. In the late nineteenth century, Marey developed myriad pneumatic contraptions to measure movement and to make the imperceptible visible. His heart simulations, pulse meters and other pneumatic cardiology sensors were the precursors of medical imaging. These very pneumatic sensing and writing technologies developed by Marey have inspired all the work in *Conservation of Intimacy*.

Drawing on his background in engineering and psychology, Lubell begins his process with a question, about how intimacy might be connected to the laws of nature, for instance, and looks to archaic technology to manifest these complicated concepts into a mechanical metaphor. His trial-and-error process results in creations that reflect the complexity of life: they are fragile yet tenacious looking, poetic and surreal. Not until the works come in contact with us, the visitors of the exhibition, do they come alive and open up a world of possibilities and wonder.

Born in Baltimore, Maryland, Lubell is based in San Francisco. His interactive installations have been exhibited nationally and internationally, most recently at the Foundation for Art and Creative Thinking (FACT) in Liverpool and the V2 Institute 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 Krasner Foundation Grants in 1991 and 2002.

**Please note that you need to interact with the machines to make them function, so feel free to pedal, touch and move your way through the exhibition. If you have any questions, please ask the gallery assistants.**

## Inspiration

Most of Lubell's works reference the experiments of nineteenth-century French scientist Étienne-Jules Marey (1830–1904) whose pioneering experiments were fundamental in the fields of cardiology, medical imaging, aerodynamics and the birth of cinema. The pioneering work of Marey in both physiology and cinema can be seen in the ICA's Lounge on the flatscreen TV and in the book *Picturing Time: The Work of Étienne-Jules Marey*.

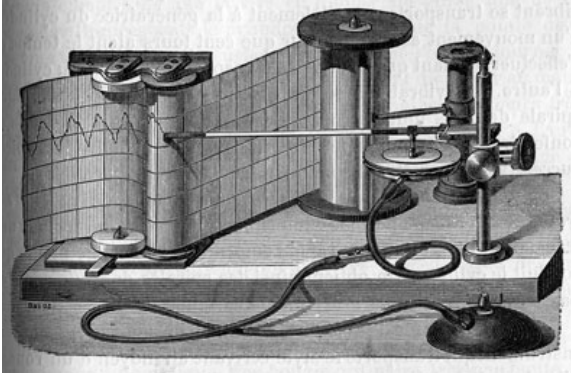


Image: Marey's polygraph recorded bodily responses of subjects while they experienced mental phenomena like excitement or fear. Lubell employs these same pneumatic sensing and writing technologies in his work.

## Exhibition Artworks:

***Conservation of Intimacy*** (2005) suggests that if there are mechanical laws which apply to our social world, intimacy may be a fundamental one. As both an homage to and critique of science's insatiable quest to understand everything, *Conservation of Intimacy* extends Marey's mechanistic endeavor into the realm of intimacy.

A couple rocking on the bench sends air pulses to another room causing balls to move and pens to transcribe the couple's motions onto paper. The paper is moved by a third person riding a stationary bike. The couple on the bench can also watch the balls on a video monitor where the balls appear to bounce into the air. The action of the balls is best when the couple is moving slowly together.

In ***Making A Point of Inflection*** (2000) participants are encouraged to touch each other through a double latex wall filled with air. The wall between them gives permission to interact, but also serves as a barrier, implying the inevitable distance between people in every relationship.

## ***Cheek to Cheek*** (1999)

As you move about on the stool, your lower cheeks cause bladders below the seat to pump air to bladders next to your upper cheeks, allowing you to dance with yourself 'cheek to cheek'. (With apologies to Irving Berlin, Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers).

## Two-Dimensional Works

### **Preamble** (1982)

Inspired by *The Planiverse*, a book about a two-dimensional universe by A. K. Dewdney, *Preamble* is a two-dimensional lock and key. However, *Preamble* does not completely “unlock.” Similar to life experience, Lubell’s work often withholds something, leaving us with questions, curiosity and sometimes even frustration.

### **The Verb Intransitive** (1984)

In all of his works, Lubell delights in language play. In grammar, the intransitive verb has no direct object. Similarly, *The Verb Intransitive* does not have a direct object either. Operating almost like a pin-ball machine, the disc may fall on the floor, go through the hole or land unexpectedly. Ultimately, there is no object of the game.

### **Pre-requisite** (2008)

When Lubell decided to take an art class as a Social Psychology graduate student, he was first denied registration because he did not have the pre-requisite course. Instead of letting this discourage him, he took a walk around the block, returned to the registration office, declared he had the pre-requisite, and signed up for the class. According to Lubell, life is not always a straight-forward task, sometimes you have to think outside the box in order to get to where you need to go. In order for *Pre-requisite* to work, you have to think differently than simply following its numbered instructions.

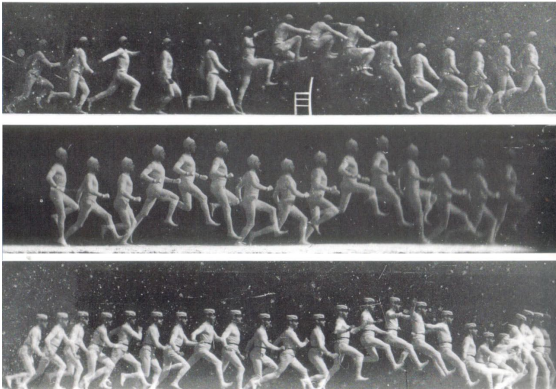


Image: An example of Marey's photographic studies of movement. The pioneering work of Marey in both physiology, cinema and art can be seen in the ICA's Lounge on the flatscreen TV and in the book *Picturing Time: The Work of Étienne-Jules Marey*.



### **Celebrating 30 Years**

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