

Dario Escobar: *Play Offs*

May 22 – July 3, 2008

Opening: Thursday, May 22 from 6 to 8pm

Josée Bienvenu gallery is pleased to present *Play Offs*, Dario Escobar's first solo exhibition in New York. As gas prices go up on a daily basis, the best remedy is to do more sports: walking, skateboarding, playing tennis, baseball, ping-pong. *Play Offs* is an invitation to deconstruct depression by approaching the most common objects with a radical subjectivity.

Dario Escobar's work is characterized by the use of materials charged with historic and symbolic meaning, articulated in a language that references minimalism as well as pop art. He started by using elements from his immediate context: his first object interventions were on icons of Guatemalan colonialism's legacy. Altered and modified religious imagery, and use of traditional Baroque colonial techniques such as gold leaf and silver repoussé are some of the trans-contextualizing methods he has developed over the past ten years.

In *Play Offs*, the artist pursues his ongoing investigation of the semiotics of the object in the arena of sports. Confiscated, manipulated and reconfigured, sport objects stop being part of identifiable structures to become symbols that question the dynamics of power and challenge notions such as competition, success and failure, virility, social status, and national pride.

Obelisk II, a construction of pool queues, embodies Benjamin H.D. Buchloh's definition of contemporary sculpture as an exercise in articulation between the tradition of the monument and the industrial object. The skeletal architecture becomes a drawing in space, in equilibrium between the idea and the material. *Table Top* evokes an assembly line of the essential operations defining sculpture for centuries: cutting, pasting, carving and modeling actions have been performed on tennis balls, a baseball bat and a ping-pong paddle among others. Unfolding on the floor, two large deconstructed and reassembled skateboards resemble dysfunctional creatures evocative of Lygia Clark's seminal "Bichos". *Turbulence II* and *Turbulence III* are landscapes made of baseball bats individually lacquered with automotive paint, simulating the flamboyant body of a 1970s racecar. On the adjacent wall, *Manchas (Stains)* a series of oil stain drawings of varied shapes and hues is made by leaving sheets of paper underneath a car, hoping for a coincidental encounter between the paper and used oil leaking from the engine.

Born in Guatemala, Dario Escobar lives and works in Guatemala City. He has exhibited widely in galleries, museums and biennials in Latin America, North America and Europe. Recent exhibitions include: *World Histories*, Des Moines Art Center, Des Moines, IA (May 16—August 31, 2008); *Elefante Negro*, Museo Diego Rivera, Mexico City (2008); *Poetics of the Handmade*, The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, CA (2007); *The Hours: Visual Arts of Contemporary Latin America*, Dublin Museum, Ireland (2005) and Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, Australia (2007). His work is included in public and corporate collections such as: Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (MOCA); The Daros Collection, Zurich, Switzerland; Cisneros Fontanals Art Foundation; La Colección JUMEX, Mexico; The Blanton Museum of Art, Austin, TX; The Nasher Museum of Art at Duke University, North Carolina.