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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

**18th Annual San José Mariachi and Mexican Heritage Festival,
Presented by Target**

**Announces A Resurgent Exhibition:
The Lost Murals of Miguel Covarrubias**

Opening at San José City Hall, Tuesday, September 22

In 1939 Treasure Island would be host to the last great fair before the beginning of the “Cold War”. The Golden Gate International Exposition represented a proud San Francisco...and played host to an enduring mystery that remains unsolved to this day

San José, CA --- July 27, 2009 --- The San José Mariachi and Mexican Heritage Festival announced today the opening of a blockbuster art exhibition as part of the weeklong festival. “The Lost Murals of Miguel Covarrubias,” presented in a partnership with History San José, the City and County of San Francisco’s Treasure Island Development Authority (TIDA) and the City of San José, will open at San José City Hall on Tuesday, September 22. These exquisite murals by Mexican artist Miguel Covarrubias, restored in 2005 by the Government of Mexico, will be unveiled for the first time in the United States in nearly ten years.

“The story behind these murals is one part history, one part mystery, and 100% fascinating,” said Linda Ronstadt, Artistic Director of the Festival. “Covarrubias was a major contributor to 20th Century theatre design, illustration, the fine arts and cultural anthropology on both sides of the border. He was a confidante of Mexican greats Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo, a painter of great talent and a caricaturist for *Vanity Fair* and *The New Yorker* in the hey day of the 1920’s “Smart Set.” He was an anthropologist and geographer as much as he was an artist and these murals, created for the 1939 Golden Gate International Exposition (GGIE), are a magnificent blend of all of his interests in both documenting and visually interpreting the communities of the world.”

Originally created by Covarrubias in 1939 for exhibition at the Pacific House of the GGIE held on Treasure Island, this historic exhibition will present four of six murals commissioned for the fair, along with rare examples of Covarrubias’ artwork from the private collection of collector and Covarrubias expert, Adriana Williams.

“Ms. Williams’ loan of Covarrubias’ art works to this exhibition is a generous gift to festival-goers and the citizens of San José,” said Marcela Davison Aviles, President and CEO of Mexican Heritage Corporation. “She is an acknowledged expert on Covarrubias art and career, and as the granddaughter of Mexican President Plutarco Elias Calles, a witness to Mexican history at the turn of the century.”

The full mural set, entitled “A Pageant of the Pacific,” comprises six individual murals “Peoples of the Pacific”, “Economy of the Pacific”, “Native Dwellings of the Pacific Area”, “Native Means of Transportation in the Pacific Area”, “Fauna and Flora of the Pacific Area”, and “Art Forms of the Pacific Area”. After the close of the GGIE the mural set was sent to the Museum of Natural History in New York City. Subsequently, the set was returned to San Francisco, where five of the six murals were hung at the World Trade Club at the Ferry Building under the stewardship of the Port of San Francisco.

Renovations to the Ferry Building in 2001 caused for the murals to be removed and transferred to the Treasure Island Development Authority for storage and caretaking. In 2005, TIDA, Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco and the Government of Mexico entered a partnership which loaned five of the murals to Mexico, where they were painstakingly restored by Mexico’s Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes (INBA) and subsequently exhibited at four separate locations throughout Mexico over the following two years, including at the National Museum of Anthropology in Mexico City and at the United Nations UNESCO Forum 2007 in Monterrey. Restoration and exhibition of the murals in Mexico was made possible in part by a generous grant by the Charles D. and Frances K. Field Fund.

Of the six murals, four will be on display at San Jose City Hall: “Peoples of the Pacific”, “Economy of the Pacific”, “Native Dwellings of the Pacific Area”, “Native Means of Transportation in the Pacific Area”. The fifth, “Fauna and Flora of the Pacific Region” is currently on an extended loan for public display at the deYoung Museum in San Francisco’s Golden Gate Park.

“I am delighted to have the four remaining Covarrubias murals back on display for everyone in San José to enjoy, especially as we celebrate the 70th Anniversary of the Golden Gate International Exposition and Hispanic Heritage month from September 15th to October 15th,” said Mirian Saez, Director of Island Operations.

The whereabouts of sixth mural “Art Forms of the Pacific Area” is a mystery that has perplexed art historians and Covarrubias scholars for decades. Separated from the set sometime between their removal from the GGIE and their installation at the Ferry Building, this sixth murals unknown whereabouts adds to the rich history and aura surrounding the “Pageant of the Pacific” mural set.

“To have the Lost Murals of Miguel Covarrubias here in San José is very exciting,” said Alida Bray, President and CEO of History San José. “These pieces of art, by a very

important Mexican artist, have huge historical significance to the entire region of the Bay Area.”

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About Miguel Covarrubias: (taken in part from Britannica.com)

Born in Mexico City in 1904, Miguel Covarrubias was an illustrator and painter with interests in archaeology, anthropology and ethnology.

Covarrubias received little formal artistic training. In 1923 he went to New York City on a government scholarship, and his incisive caricatures soon began to appear in magazines such as *Vanity Fair* and *The New Yorker*. A collection of his caricatures, *The Prince of Wales and Other Famous Americans*, was published in 1925.

His illustrations showing his interest in the study of racial types also appeared in numerous magazines and books. In 1930 and 1933 he and his wife traveled in Asia, and subsequently he wrote *Island of Bali* (1937). Covarrubias also painted six mural maps illustrating the cultures of the Pacific area for the Golden Gate International Exposition in San Francisco; these maps were then published as *Pageant of the Pacific* (1939).

After returning to Mexico in the early 1940s, Covarrubias wrote and illustrated an account of the Tehuantepec region, Mexico South (1946). His book *The Eagle, the Jaguar, and the Serpent* (1954) surveyed the cultures of the North American Indians. He also worked as a theatre designer, easel painter, printmaker, and art-history teacher.

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About the San José Mariachi and Mexican Heritage Festival:

The San José Mariachi and Mexican Heritage Festival, now in its 18th year, has experienced measured growth in terms of attendance and revenue in the past three years and is now the largest festival of its kind in the nation, headquartered in San José (the nation’s tenth largest city) and centrally located in Northern California, which is the fourth largest US Latino consumer market. The Festival annually presents an array of educational workshops, indoor concert events and outdoor music and cultural family activities in downtown San José. Festival revenue supports the Heritage Corporation’s music and dance education programs, which are taught in San Jose public schools, the Mexican Heritage Plaza, Children’s Discovery Museum and local community centers. www.sanjosemariachifestival.com

About History San José:

History San José is a non-profit organization dedicated to preserving and sharing the continuing history of the Santa Clara Valley. HSJ manages one of the largest and most comprehensive regional history collections in the State of California, from 1784 Spanish governmental records to twenty-first century Silicon Valley technology. History San

José aspires to provide innovative national leadership in preserving and sharing regional history by engaging diverse audiences in exploring the varieties of human experience that contributes to the continuing history of San José and the Santa Clara Valley.

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About Treasure Island Development Authority:

The Treasure Island Development Authority (TIDA) is charged with the interim re-use and long-term redevelopment of former Naval Station Treasure Island. TIDA serves as the caretaker and property manager for the former Naval Station; administering vital municipal services, promoting on-Island community development, and managing Treasure and Yerba Buena Islands natural, cultural and artistic resources on behalf of the City and County of San Francisco.