

Exhibition: Fernando Botero. Abu Ghraib – The Circus
IVAM Institut Valencià d'Art Modern
20 May 2008 – 6 July 2008

Organized by: Institut Valencià d'Art Modern

Curator: Fernando Castro

In collaboration with:  FUNDACIÓN CAIXA GALICIA

Itinerary: IVAM (May – July 2008)
Casa das Artes, Vigo (October – December 2008)

The IVAM, in collaboration with Fundación Caixa Galicia, has organized the exhibition *Fernando Botero. Abu Ghraib – The Circus*, which presents two recent series by this Colombian artist. The exhibition consists of a total of 95 works: 25 paintings and 24 drawings belonging to the series *Circus*, and 24 paintings and 22 drawings from the series *Abu Ghraib*. The first of these two series derives from Botero's interest in the circus world, which in the past inspired other artists such as Calder, Picasso, Léger and Chagall. Botero portrays people traditionally associated with this activity, giving them the special monumental physiognomy characteristic of his style. In the second series, *Abu Ghraib*, Botero represents the tortures to which prisoners of war were subjected in the infamous prison in Iraq. After reading a critical article published in *The New Yorker* which attracted worldwide attention, Botero worked for a year to express his denunciation of the drama of the torture suffered by the prisoners.

The catalogue published to accompany the show contains illustrations of the works exhibited and includes texts by the director of the IVAM, Consuelo Císcar, the president of Fundación Caixa Galicia, Mauro Varela Pérez, the art historian Ángel Kalenberg and the critic Fernando Castro Flórez, curator of the exhibition.

The Colombian painter and sculptor Fernando Botero (Medellín, Colombia, 1932) is considered one of the most important living Latin American artists and the most highly valued. His extensive output spans five decades, featuring a style which has gained wide recognition.

In the early fifties Botero moved from his native Medellín to Bogotá, where he came into contact with some of the leading Colombian intellectuals of the time. In 1951 he presented his first two exhibitions and was awarded a prize by the Colombian National Library at the *IX Salón de Artistas Colombianos*, which enabled him to travel to Europe. After visiting Barcelona he settled in Madrid and there he went to the Museo del Prado, where the work of Goya and Velázquez made a profound impact on him. He then spent some time in Italy, returning to Colombia in 1955.

Botero went to live to Mexico in 1956. The following year he had his first show in New York and success began to accompany him. He returned to Bogotá and in 1958 was appointed as a teacher at the School of Fine Arts in Colombia's National University. In 1960 he moved to New York and his work began to win the approval of the critics. After presenting work in Paris in 1969 he embarked on a period of travel and exhibitions in Europe, the United States and Colombia.

In 1973 he moved to Paris and started working on sculpture. In 1976 he made a substantial donation of his work to the Museo de Antioquia, which assigned a permanent room to him bearing the name of his son, Pedrito Botero, who died in a traffic accident in 1974. Botero made a further donation to the museum ten years later, this time consisting of sculptures, which were placed in a second permanent room devoted to Botero. His increasing interest in sculpture led him to set up a workshop in Pietrasanta, a town near Florence with a long tradition of involvement with the casting of sculpture.

Since then, Botero has gone on working and has exhibited in leading museums throughout the world. His work features in many international public collections, including the Museo Nacional in Colombia, Museo de Arte Moderno in Bogotá (MamBo), Museo Reina Sofía in Madrid, Museum Moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig in Vienna, Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes in Santiago de Chile, the Metropolitan, MoMA and Guggenheim in New York, the Museo de Arte Contemporáneo in Caracas, the St Petersburg Museum, the Ho-am Museum in Seoul and the Museum of Contemporary Art in Hiroshima. His public sculpture has been exhibited in some of the most famous avenues and squares in the world, including the Champs Élysées in Paris, Park Avenue in New York, Paseo de Recoletos in Madrid, Praça do Comércio (Terreiro do Paço) in Lisbon and Piazza della Signoria in Florence.