

Fernando Botero

12 October 2011 to 15 January 2012

Bank Austria Kunstforum, Vienna

PRESS PORTFOLIO

Status: 11 October 2011

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Facts & Figures

Curators: Evelyn Benesch, Lisa Kreil

Exhibition organisation: Barbara Gilly, Lisa Kreil

We would like to thank Fatalin von Reviczky and the Association for Austrian-Hungarian Cultural Cooperation for the initiative and support of this exhibition project.

Duration: 12 October 2011 – 15 January 2012

Opening hours: Daily 10 am – 7 pm, Friday 10 am – 9 pm

Address: 1010 Vienna, Freyung 8

Website: www.fernando-botero.at

Catalogue: Edited by Evelyn Benesch and Ingrid Brugger. With contributions by Evelyn Benesch, Ingrid Brugger, Conny Habel, Mariana Hanstein, Lisa Kreil, Mario Vargas Llosa and an interview with the artist. 176 pages, 148 illustrations. Published in October 2011 by Hatje Cantz Verlag, Ostfildern/Ruit. 29 euros, available in the Bank Austria Kunstforum Shop and in select retail bookshops.

Tickets: Bank Austria Kunstforum
Club Bank Austria in all branches
Austria Ticket Online (www.ato.at)
Österreich Ticket (www.oeticket.at)

Eintritt:	Adults	9.– euros
	Concessions	7.50 euros
	Senior citizens	7.– euros
	Art Start Card (aged 17 to 27)	6.– euros
	Children up to age 16	4.– euros
	Family Ticket	20.– euros
	Groups (as of 10 persons)	7.50 euros
	Children up to age 6	free
	Personal art assistant, guided tour for public	3.50 euros

Further information on concessions on our website www.bankaustria-kunstforum.at.

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Press Release

Fernando Botero

The Bank Austria Kunstforum is holding the first ever comprehensive presentation in Austria of the painted oeuvre by the Colombian painter and sculptor Fernando Botero (b. 1932 in Medellín). 70 paintings ranging from his first works from the late 1950s until today telescope a view for us into Botero's artistic universe.

The artist interprets his portraits, nudes and still life with allusions to his South American origins. They are pictures of seeming cheer and innocuousness, but at the same time are ambivalent and infused with dark, unfathomable cunning. Botero has been astonishing the world now for more than fifty years with his opulent, "blown up" figures, whose aesthetics as it were contradict the precise rendition of form and colour. Botero does nothing other than force art history to question its own canon. The exhibition includes the sensational *Abu Ghraib Cycle* of 2004/2005 and explores the "phenomenon of Botero", which is today more topical than ever.

The exhibition is sectioned into various chapters: Everyday Life in South America, Catholicism, Bull Fight, or paraphrases of the most famous works in the history of art – images in which the sensuousness of life keeps colliding with its transience. "I am the most Colombian among Colombian artists," says Fernando Botero. He makes us understand with incredible consistency what a picture has to achieve according to his ideas: an unambiguous message, a dialogue between artist and observer that is unequivocally understood. Botero's subjects seem to come from another age and are full of melancholy and nostalgia. In this way Botero – exactly like contemporary South American literature and music – is placed entirely in the tradition of his home continent. His figures have the effect of being captured in an anachronism: they exist unconcernedly, they eat, drink, play cards, go for walks, sew, weep, go on picnics, yet they always seem isolated, plunged into some world deep inside themselves. Botero moreover inserts metaphors of impending threat into his pictures – such as erupting volcanoes or

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collapsing buildings – which turn the seeming idyll upside down into the negative. The reproach, also repeatedly made by art critics, that Botero deals only with cosy and “appetising” motifs, is not true by any stretch of the imagination, as is proven above all in his *Abu Ghraib Cycle*. Here the artist wants to bear emotional witness to the shame that rises when watching the terrible scenes of torture perpetrated by US American soldiers. With this cycle Botero brought political events of everyday into his art.

Biography

1932

Fernando Botero was born on 19 April in the Colombian trading centre Medellín as the second of three sons. Attended elementary school and the Jesuit grammar school.

1949

Botero's illustrations, primarily nude drawings, are published in the daily paper *El Colombiano*. 1951: moves to Bogotá, contacts to the artistic avant-garde there. First solo exhibition in the Leo Matiz Gallery.

1952

Botero shows his pictures – painted under the influence of Picasso and Gauguin – once more in the Leo Matiz Gallery. The painting *At the Coast* is awarded second prize at the IX Salon of Colombian Artists. First trip to Europe, which takes him at first to Barcelona.

1953

Trip to Paris. Botero studies the Old Masters in the Louvre and works on copies. In Italy he discovers the art of the Early Renaissance and fresco painting.

1955

Returns to Bogotá. Marries Gloria Zea.

1956

Moves to Mexico City, where his son Fernando is born. Intensive study of pre-Colombian folk art. His drawing *Still Life with Mandolin* in which the resonance board of the instrument is over-dimensional in size compared to its soundhole provides the impetus for Botero's voluminous language of forms that still characterises his work today.

1958

Birth of his daughter Lina. Professor of painting at the Bogotá Academy of Art. The painting *Camera degli sposi (Homage to Mantegna)* is awarded first prize at the XI Colombian Salon, after having been rejected beforehand by the jury. In 1959, Botero shows his *Picture of Mona Lisa at the Age of Twelve* at the V Biennale of Sao Paolo; the New York Museum of Modern Art purchases it in 1961.

1960

Birth of his son Juan Carlos. Moves to New York and gets to know the leading representatives of the New York School of Painting, including Willem de Kooning and Mark Rothko. Divorce from Gloria Zea.

1964

Botero marries Cecilia Zambrano and relocates his studio to the Lower East Side.

1966

First major exhibition in Europe in the Kunsthalle in Baden-Baden. Exhibition in the Milwaukee Art Center, which signals Botero's breakthrough in the States.

1973

Botero moves to Paris. Pedro, his son from his second marriage, is killed at the age of four in a car accident. Divorce from Cecilia Zambrano in 1975.

1977

Intensive preoccupation with sculpture.

1979

Peripatetic exhibitions in Belgium, Norway, Sweden, the USA, and Japan. In 1983 the Metropolitan Museum of Art New York purchases the painting *Dance in Colombia*.

1999

30 monumental sculptures are exhibited on the Piazza della Signoria in Florence.

2000

Botero donates the museums in Medellín and Bogotá not only 200 of his own works, but also 100 masterpieces from his collection of classical modernism, including pictures by Chagall, Klimt, Matisse, Monet, Picasso and Toulouse-Lautrec.

2004

The tortures perpetrated by American soldiers in the Iraqi prison of Abu Ghraib were circulated throughout the world, motivating Botero to produce a series of paintings and drawings.

2011

Botero lives and works in Paris, New York, Montecarlo and Pietrasanta (Italien).

Information

Quotes

“Well, I have never tried to be “en vogue”. I always followed my own ideas, never those of others. I stand up for my ideas, even when they are contrary to what is being preached at that moment.” (Fernando Botero)

“I think an artist has to be rooted in his own country. This lends honesty to what he does. All great art belongs to a specific place and is identified by this localisation. In Latin America most artists follow the art trends as represented in New York, London or Berlin. This has led to a cultural colonialism, which I have avoided. Art has to be local first of all in order to be universal later.” (Fernando Botero)

“I regard my work as ‘figurative post-abstraction’, since I allow myself practically the same freedoms in the use of colour and form as abstract artists do. I look at the picture I’m working on first of all as colour: so I apply colour values spaciouly onto the canvas until it is completely covered – almost like an abstract painting. Only later do I transform the colour elements into three-dimensional forms: what matters for me is what’s said ‘behind’ the colours and lines [...]” (Fernando Botero)

“The purpose of art is not the imaging of reality, but the creation of one’s own world.”
(Fernando Botero)

“Really, I haven’t anything to tell the world – I can only bear witness. When the newspapers are thrown on the rubbish heap and people have forgotten what happened yesterday, art is the only thing that’s left.” (Fernando Botero)

”Exuberant, innocent and immobile – this is Botero’s world [...]. In contrast to the human world, it is a frozen world, time that has become space. Its fruits, people, animals, trees and flowers are at their burgeoning peak before they start to putrefy, to rust, to rot or to die. It is this instant of culmination that Botero’s painting immortalises by snatching away time, which is decay. This moment of time standing still is the time of memory and yearning [...]: it is the time of his childhood and youth in the provinces, to which he, the citizen of the world and wanderer throughout the entire geography of art, remains stubbornly true and which he has transformed into the rich mythology of his pictures.”

(Mario Vargas Llosa)

Information

The Exhibition Catalogue

Evelyn Benesch and Ingrid Brugger (eds.),
Fernando Botero, ex. cat. Bank Austria
Kunstforum Vienna, Ostfildern/Ruit 2011. With
contributions by Evelyn Benesch, Ingrid Brugger,
Conny Habbel, Mariana Hanstein, Lisa Kreil and
Mario Vargas Llosa. 176 pages, 148 illustrations,
29.- euros.

The exhibition catalogue provides a comprehensive view of the Colombian artist's painted works and contains three essays on art and cultural history, an interview with the artist, and also a catalogue section with theme-specific chapter texts by the exhibition curators, a detailed biography, and an exhibition index. In his essay "Die üppige Pracht" (Sumptuous Glory), the Peruvian author Mario Vargas Llosa points to the creative reliance on western art as a fundamental component in Botero's painting. The art historian and critic Mariana Hanstein, who was born in Chile, explores Botero's biography in her text and its influence on the development of his unique style. The Viennese photographer and art theoretician Conny Habbel endeavours to answer the question "Why do we like Botero?"; in doing so, she analyses Botero's work in a pop-cultural context, in which the question of "good taste" is a fiercely contested one.



Exhibition Preview

Rudolf Goessl: The Wealth of Stillness

The Plenitude of Stillness

9 November 2011 to 15 January 2012 in the vault of the Bank Austria Kunstforum

Opening on 8 November 2011 at 7 pm

To celebrate Rudolf Goessl's 80th birthday, the Bank Austria Kunstforum is organising a compact exhibition of his works. Current works will be juxtaposed to early pieces from the late sixties. Goessl's beginnings are marked by an abstract atmospheric style removed from the trend of *informel* dominant at the time. Here, Goessl can be aligned into the international context of colour field painting from Rothko to Louis, also the minimalist monochrome pictorial concepts of Klein, Fontana and Graubner. During the eighties he tended towards an earthy, material-related painting, which nevertheless generated light and atmospheric pulsation. Goessl's metaphysical imagery doesn't correspond to a homogeneous recipe, but yields new and singular creations every time: far-reaching colour spaces and centralisations of colour in the form of heads, masks or crowns.

For the exhibition opening, there will be a presentation of the new monograph of the artist published by Galerie Jünger in Baden bei Wien.

Curator: Florian Steininger