



# Fernando Botero

OPERA GALLERY

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# Preface

Opera Gallery is delighted to kick off the year 2015 with an exhibition of original drawings, paintings and sculptures by Colombia's most famous living artist: Fernando Botero.

Born in Medellín, Colombia, in 1932, Fernando Botero is known for his unique style, featuring oversized and voluptuous characters, be it people, animals or even elements of the landscape.

It was in the 1950s that Botero started experimenting with proportions and sizes, all depicted in flat and bright spreads of colour, and developing what would become his emblematic style. This rapidly gained him notoriety and recognition among the international art audience.

In the 1970s, Botero moved to Paris and started working with sculpture, extending his painting style to a new medium but staying true to his large and round subjects.

Like his paintings before, the oversized sculptures were met with great acclaim and in the 1990s the artist developed outdoor exhibitions of gigantic bronze figures that travelled around the world to great success.

Since Opera Gallery first opened in 1994, the works of Fernando Botero have always been represented in our collections, displayed in our galleries and proposed to our collectors worldwide. This new exhibition, though, will be the first solo exhibition of the Colombian artist at Opera Gallery London.

Through a selection of paintings, works on paper and sculptures, this exhibition highlights some of Fernando Botero's most favoured themes, including the Latino-American society and family, nudity and femininity and the brothels, and it invites you to discover a universe of abundance and modest sensuality.

Gilles DYAN  
Founder and Chairman  
Opera Gallery Group

Jean-David MALAT  
Director  
Opera Gallery London



Entering into the world of art of Fernando Botero is a fascinating journey of emotions and pleasurable bewilderment. It connects us, the viewers, with two different worlds: the past and the present that co-exist simultaneously.

# A heterotopic world of creativity, fantasy and magic.

Observing a painting of Botero is a challenge for the viewer or observer. Botero's work is voluptuous and all consuming. It is vast, it is "fat". This is a concept that Maestro Botero denies with passionate security: "I do not paint fat people; I paint volume which is a totally different concept". He incorporates a technique that he discovered in the Renaissance painters that he recreated by mistake in 1956 at the age of 25, when he was painting a mandolin and drew a small hole in the centre of the solid instrument. It deformed in a fascinating way. This wonderful mistake was the beginning of the career of this grandiose artist. Who could imagine that this small boy born in 1932 in the Colombian city of Medellín, from a family of trades people, and who was destined to be a bullfighter but, who was frightened by a 47 stone bull in his debut, could one day reach his dream to be an artist? To be an artist was considered a feminine profession in Colombia in the 1940s and 1950s. Only his mother Flora Angulo and his uncle Joaquín believed in his innate talent and supported him in an unconditional way to realise his potential. With this emotional support, the young dreamer, aged 21, decided to undertake the journey of his new life as an artist. He left behind him, physically but not spirituality, his familiar and beautiful surroundings of the mountain town of Medellín. This would remain frozen in his memories as a precious relic for the rest of his life.

Who could forget a town like that? A town full of life, colour and happiness. A South American city, well described – as many of these cities were in that continent – by writers like Gabriel García Márquez, Mario Vargas Llosa or Alejo Carpentier.

This is a place remembered as a contented town disturbed by the occasional minor scandal, which momentarily altered the monotony of the environment. A place full of horses as the main mode of transport, round but well-formed women in old-fashioned dresses, heels, red nails and elaborate hairstyles. A place where men wore hats, moustaches and skinny ties. There were brothels, prostitutes, exotic fruit and animals, the traditional siesta after lunch, the parochial parties to the rhythm of the tangos of Carlos Gardel and the temporary circuses that entertained the children and teenagers of the 1940s and 1950s of Medellín, Antioquia and its surroundings. Even the native Latin American fruit in Botero's still life compositions display the generosity of his human and animal forms.

The heart of Botero's artistic identity comes from these memories of his youth in Colombia, the Popular and the Pre-Columbian art. Later, he drew inspiration from the history of art, particularly the Renaissance period. He learned from artists like Piero della Francesca, Andrea Mantegna, Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo, and also from Mexican art with muralists such as Diego Rivera, José Clemente Orozco and David Alfaro Siqueiros.

His art is not a commentary about "fatness", since a still life, a landscape, an animal, a person, a fruit or just an element undergoes the same deformation: everything in his art is deformed.

The art of Fernando Botero, a multifaceted and versatile artist, is not coincidence, spontaneity or merely the desire to cover the canvas for fear of emptiness. He emphasises the pictorial part of the painting in search of exaltation of form and the creation of space. Inspired by Giotto who reintroduced the idea of form, volume and space; by Paolo Uccello's geometric arrangement of volume; by Piero della Francesca's organisation of space and by Masaccio's monumental art. Every brushstroke in Botero's canvas is well planned. Objects on the floor like discarded cigarettes are, according to the artist, to add white to the painting. The red nails on women, a pretext to add colour to the composition. The round watches, to emphasise the arms and give them more volume.

The open doors serve to lead the viewers to different places beyond the painting and the mirrors represent two different realities of the same episode. Botero wants to draw the viewer's attention to his particular non-judgemental way of representing sensuality, volume and composition in a static inflated world.

Every colour, theme or topic in Botero's work has a reason to be, a history or a reality in the artist's world. It is a dialogical exchange between context and artist. Between artist and spectator.

Nudity is a common topic in Botero's work where the characters look like they have been posing for a photo shoot without making any visual contact with the spectator; a frozen time in life. There is passivity, sensuality, frivolity and immobility all at the same time. The rounded women's breast calls to mind the paintings by futurist artist Fernand Léger. The forms are geometrical and the knees are reproduced with two perfect circles. Women in Botero's painting are exceptional solid creatures full of femininity, vanity, coquetry and independence; whether they are wives, mothers, nuns, maids, nannies or prostitutes. These inflated figures viewed through a magnifying glass are a tribute to tranquillity, form and beauty.



Brothels are always present in Botero's work. In *The Whore House* (2009), men are represented in bed, in a pleasant state of relaxation in a dark room illuminated only by a rustic light bulb.

There are no hierarchies in the painting and nothing is left at random. Everything in the composition is important and relevant. The mirrors and what they reflect, the smoking women – undressed but left with their jewellery and makeup –, the red bottle, the watches, the well-combed hair of women, the one shoe with a sock, the cigarettes on the floor, the plate of untouched food, the green opened door, the green parrot contrasting with the dress of the little woman in red, Celestina (The Madame), with the oversized woman in boots and her red underwear that is visible and allegorical. All of these elements complement each other. Nevertheless there is a feeling of cold indifference: the parrot is

just standing there, the little woman beside the bed is trying to say something without getting heard. The man is absorbed in his thoughts or dreams and each woman directs her gaze in different directions. This is a reminiscence of the brothels that the young artist once visited with his friends in Medellín. The scene is represented with consideration, respect and Botero's ever-present humour and joviality.

The combination of the improbable with the not impossible is a remarkable attribute in Botero's art. Any particular success is a source of deep inspiration for Botero's new period of paintings. It can be the family, bullfighting, the violence in Latin America, the massacre of Abu Ghraib or just an old travelling, humble and rustic circus in Zihuatanejo, Mexico, that reminded him of his youth in Medellín. The circus' period is a reconciliation of hope, optimism and happiness after the representation on canvas of the cruel reality of Abu Ghraib. These are paintings that the artist made to wake up his conscientiousness of humanity, but never intended to sell. The circus period features a series of paintings filled with colour, humour and fantastical and comical situations.

In *Circus Musicians* (2008), the musicians, dressed in emerald green (the national precious stone of Colombia), are playing a clarinet and a flugelhorn with expressionless faces, as typically found in Botero's paintings.



The improbable resides in the fact that the musician to the left plays the instrument in his colleague's ear; nevertheless, it is not impossible.

Ambivalence is clearly shown. Once again, everything in the composition is important and every simple thing draws the attention of the viewer. The figures are not fat, they are voluminous, strong and compact and disproportioned. Their weightless, massive bodies float into a perfect composition. Botero inflates one part of the body and reduces another, to find the correct balance of form and volume. Binary oppositions are well used in his pieces of art: big eyes, small noses, short arms and wide shoulders.

Painting can give an illusion of reality, but sculpture gives the opportunity to touch the reality. Everything in Fernando Botero's art is sumptuous, colossal, disproportionate and exaggerated. The white canvas is filled with characters that sometimes exceed our perception of reality, while his magnificent and gigantic sculptures in bronze make us feel small in a large world. That is what Fernando Botero does in his bronze and marble masterpieces where the exaggeration of the volume is evident and palpable. He first makes a model in clay to then finalise it in a chosen final material. Most of his sculptures of generous forms can be found all around the world, some of them inspired by Pre-Columbian and Mexican art.

A pleasant-looking woman sitting in a chair, as many women do outside their houses in tropical cities, looking at the transient or waiting for a new happening in their lives.



*Mujer en Silla* (1995) is a typical example of how Botero elevates the everyday to the world of Magical Realism.

The indefatigable and hardworking artist Fernando Botero, now aged 82 years old, never stops to create. He is one of the most-valued living artists in the world and his paintings, drawings and sculptures, are found in private collections, recognised galleries, museums and public spaces around the globe.

**Antje Nisimblat Heller**  
(MA, History of Art – Museum Education)

### The Whore House, 2009

Signed and dated 'Botero 09' (lower right)

Oil on canvas

150 x 177 cm - 59.1 x 69.7 in.

#### Provenance

Artist's studio

#### Exhibited

Chicago, Selected Artworks of a Universal Artist, KM Sine Arts, 28 Oct. - 18 Dec. 2010, ill. in the exh. catalogue

#### Certificate

The artist has confirmed the authenticity of this work



# "An artist is attracted

to certain kinds of form without knowing why. You adopt a position intuitively; only later do you attempt to rationalize or even justify it. //

Fernando Botero



## La Danse, 2005

Signed and dated 'Botero 05' (lower right)

Oil on Canvas

45 x 34 cm - 17.7 x 13.4 in.

### Provenance

Artist's studio

Private collection, Seoul





**Family, 2010**

Signed and dated 'Botero 10'  
(lower right)  
Oil on canvas  
146 x 176 cm - 57.5 x 69.3 in.

**Provenance**

Artist's studio

**Certificate**

The artist has confirmed  
the authenticity of this work





**Family on a Beach, 2009**

Signed and dated 'Botero 09' (lower right)  
Oil on canvas  
97 x 130 cm - 38.2 x 51.2 in.

**Provenance**

Artist's studio  
Private collection, Singapore

**Exhibited**

Los Angeles, Botero in Los Angeles, Tasende Gallery, 2010  
Los Angeles, Los Angeles Art Show, Tasende Gallery, 2011

**Literature**

Peter Selz, Botero in Los Angeles exhibition catalogue,  
Tasende Gallery, La Jolla, California, 2010, p. 13

**Certificate**

The artist has confirmed the authenticity of this work

**Femme assise cousant, 2006**

Signed and dated 'Botero 06' (lower right)  
Watercolour on paper  
40 x 30 cm - 15.7 x 11.8 in.

**Provenance**

Artist's studio

**Certificate**

The artist has confirmed the authenticity of this work





### The Beach, 2009

Signed and dated 'Botero 09'  
(lower right)  
Oil on canvas  
147 x 208 cm - 57.9 x 81.9 in.

**Provenance**  
Artist's studio

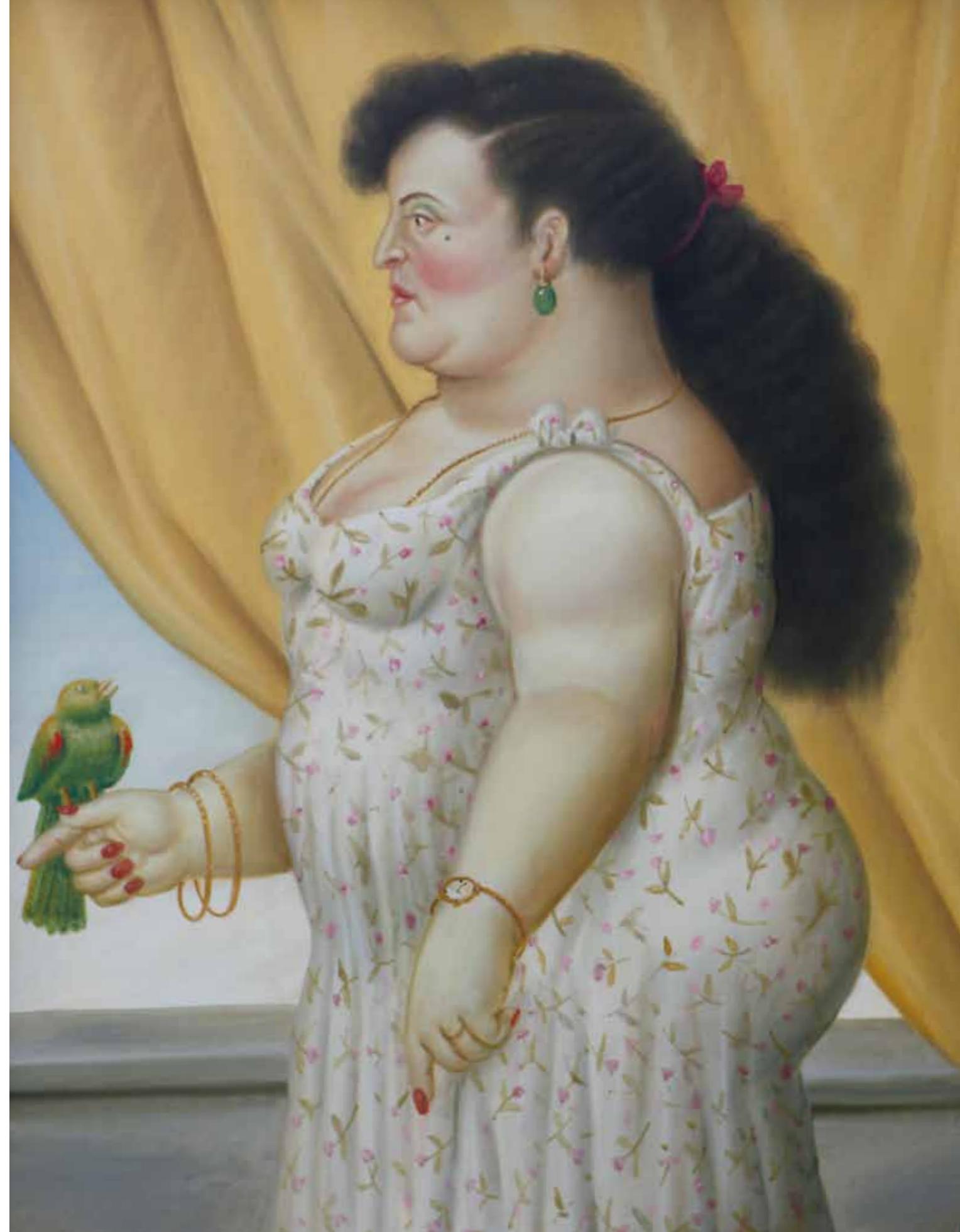
**Certificate**  
The artist has confirmed  
the authenticity of this work



“In art, as long as you have ideas and think,  
you are bound to deform nature.

# Art is deformation.”

Fernando Botero



## Woman with Bird, 1995

Signed and dated 'Botero 95' (lower right)

Oil on canvas

103 x 82 cm - 40.5 x 32.3 in.

### Provenance

James Goodman Gallery, New York

Private collection, Los Angeles

### Certificate

The artist has confirmed the authenticity of this work





### **Hombre Fumando, 1980**

Signed and dated 'Botero 80' (lower right)

Oil on canvas

189 x 136 cm - 74.4 x 53.5 in.

#### **Provenance**

Marlborough Gallery, New York

German Duque Gallery, Medellín, Colombia

Private collection, Mexico City, Mexico

Sale: Christie's, New York, Important Latin American Paintings, Drawings and Sculpture, 15 May 1996, lot 38, ill. in the catalogue pp. 80-81

Private collection, Guadalajara, Mexico

#### **Literature**

Edward J. Sullivan & Jean-Marie Tasset, Fernando Botero: Monograph & Catalogue Raisonné, Paintings 1975-1990,

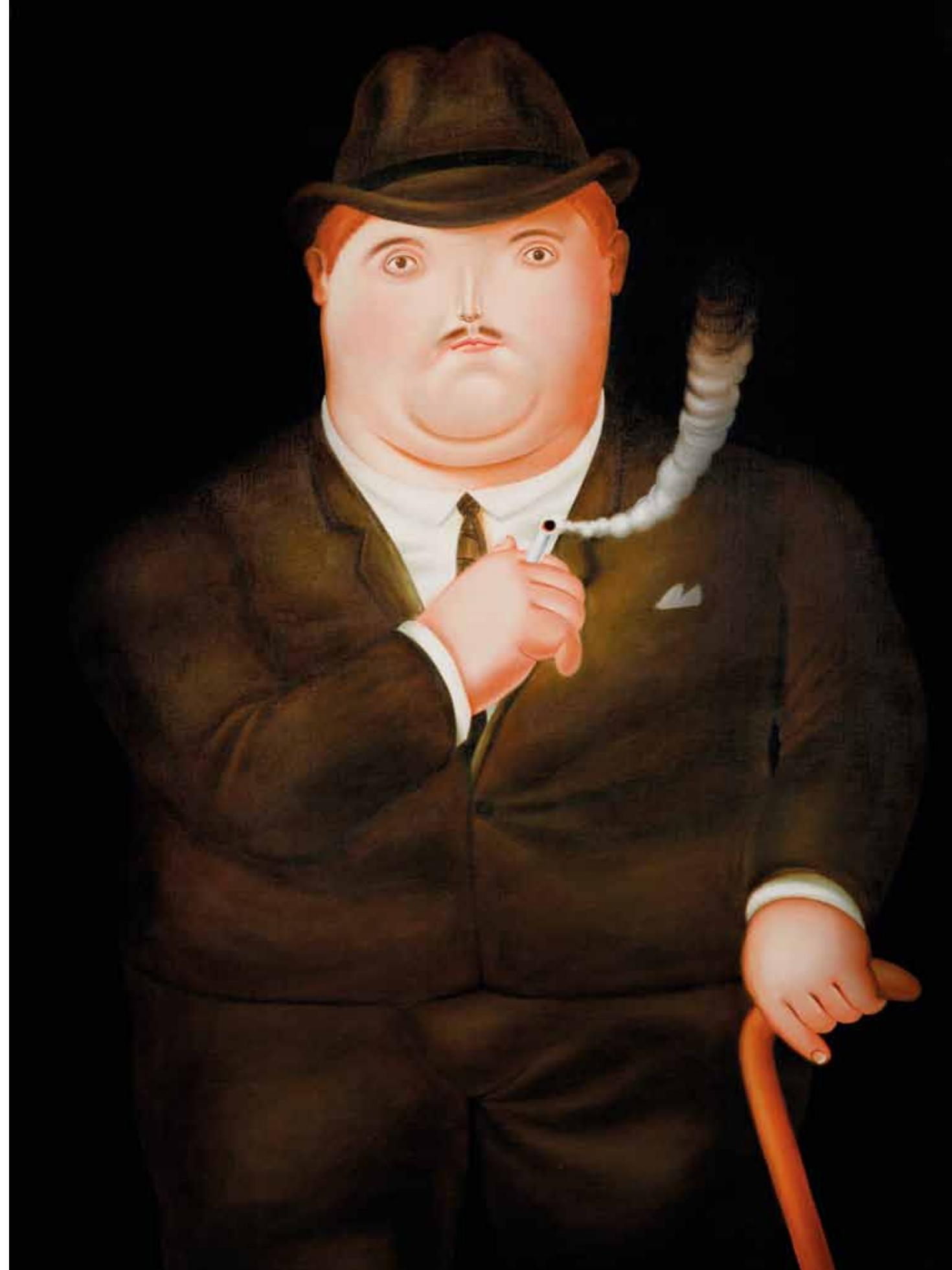
Sylvio Acatos, Lausanne, 2000, No. 1980/16, ill. p. 300

Pierre Restany, Botero, SJS Publishers, Italy, 1983, ill. in colour

Giorgio Soavi, Fernando Botero, Fabbri Editori, Milan, 1988, No. 103, ill. p. 131

#### **Certificate**

The artist has confirmed the authenticity of this work





**Man, 2004**

Signed and dated 'Botero 04'  
(lower right)  
Pencil and bistre on paper  
39 x 30 cm - 15.5 x 11.8 in.

**Provenance**

Artist's studio  
Private collection, Hong Kong

**Fillette à la balançoire, 2004**

Signed and dated 'Botero 04'  
(lower right)  
Pencil on paper  
39.2 x 29.5 cm - 15.4 x 11.6 in.

**Provenance**

Artist's studio

**Certificate**

The artist has confirmed  
the authenticity of this work





### Circus Act, 2007

Signed and dated 'Botero 07' (lower right)  
Watercolour on paper  
106.7 x 75.4 cm - 42 x 29.7 in.

#### Provenance

Artist's studio  
Private collection, Dubai

#### Exhibited

Los Angeles, Botero in Los Angeles,  
Tasende Gallery, 2010  
New York, The Armory Show Modern,  
Tasende Gallery, 2010

### Circus Musicians, 2008

Signed and dated 'Botero 08'  
(lower right)  
Oil on canvas  
140 x 100 cm - 55.1 x 39.4 in.

#### Exhibited

München, Galerie Thomas,  
2009-2010, Fernando Botero,  
ill. in the catalogue p.19

#### Certificate

The artist has confirmed  
the authenticity of this work



#### Literature

Peter Selz, Botero in Los Angeles exhibition  
catalogue, Tasende Gallery, La Jolla,  
California, 2010, overleaf p. 14

#### Certificate

The artist has confirmed the authenticity  
of this work



**Uomo con fisarmonica, 2004**

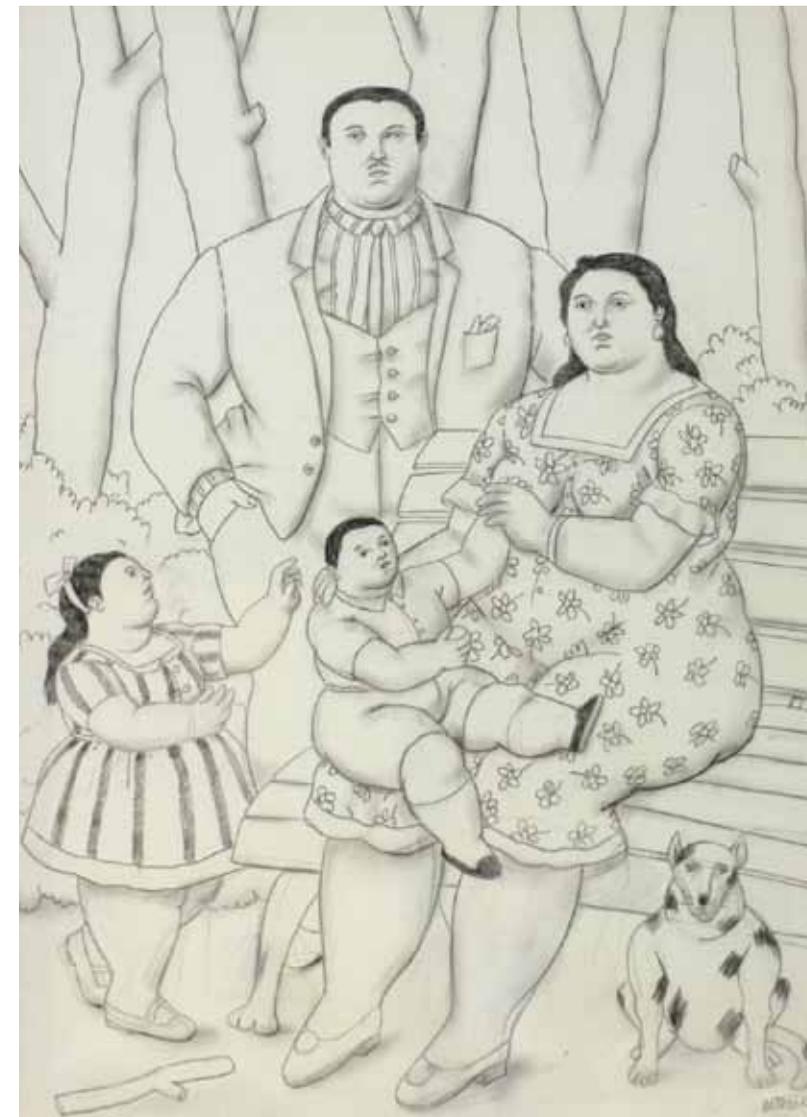
Signed and dated 'Botero 04' (lower right)  
Oil on canvas  
42 x 57 cm - 16.5 x 22.4 in.

**Provenance**

Artist's studio  
Private collection

**Certificate**

The artist has confirmed the authenticity of this work



**Family, 2012**

Signed and dated 'Botero 12' (lower right)  
Pencil on canvas  
136 x 95 cm - 53.5 x 37.4 in.

**Provenance**

Artist's studio

**Certificate**

The artist has confirmed the authenticity of this work



### House, 1995

Signed and dated 'Botero 95'  
(lower right)  
Oil on canvas  
118 x 156 cm - 46.5 x 61.4 in.

#### Provenance

Helly Nahmad Gallery, New York  
Private collection

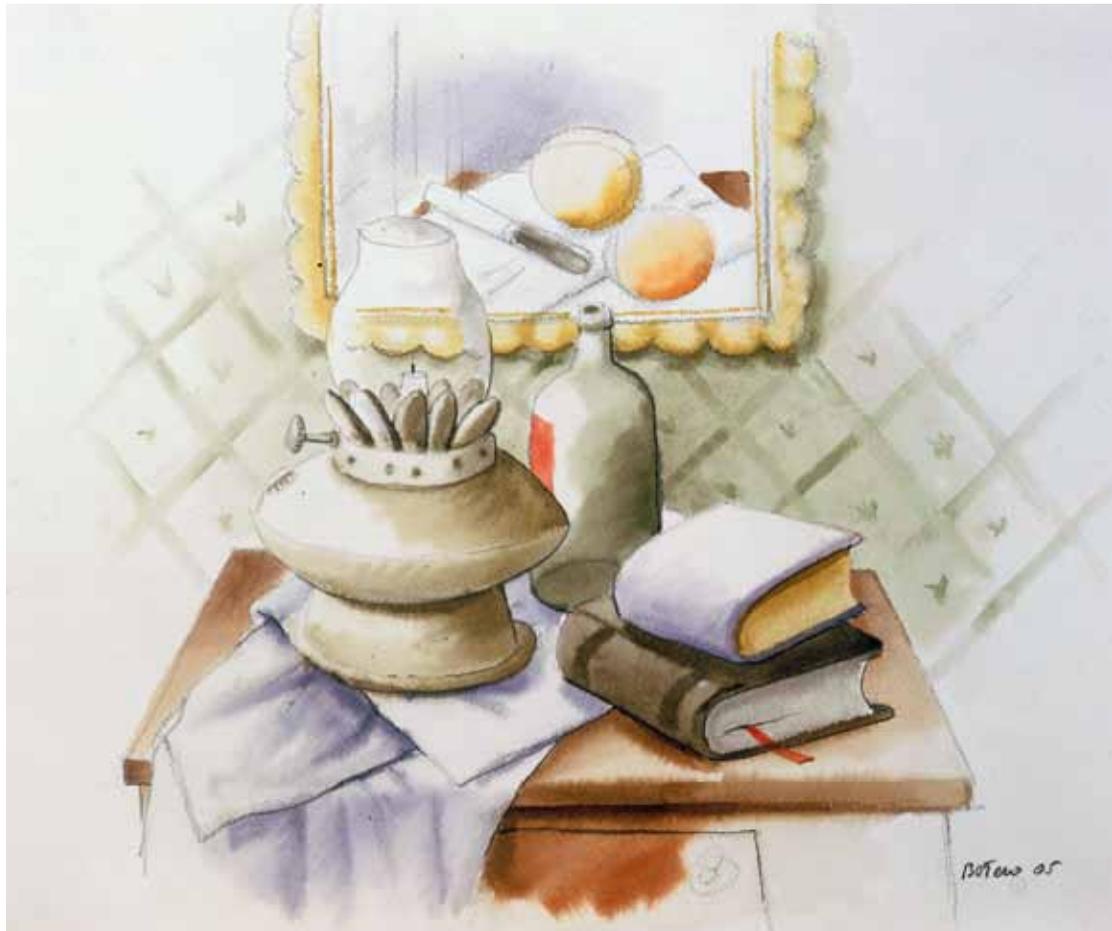
#### Literature

Ana María Escallón, Botero: New Works  
on Canvas, New York, 1997, ill. p. 142

#### Certificate

The artist has confirmed  
the authenticity of this work





**Still Life with Petrol Lamp, 2005**

Signed and dated 'Botero 05'  
(lower right)  
Watercolour on paper  
31 x 37.5 cm - 12.2 x 14.8 in.

**Provenance**  
Artist's studio

**Exhibited**  
Zurich, JPL Fine Art, Botero,  
Aquarelle und Zeichnungen, 1 June - 15 July 2005,  
ill. in the exhibition catalogue p. 44

**Certificate**  
The artist has confirmed the authenticity of this work

**Nature morte au guéridon, 2006**

Signed and dated 'Botero 06'  
(lower right)  
Watercolour on paper  
36 x 30 cm - 14.2 x 11.8 in.

**Provenance**  
Artist's studio

**Certificate**  
The artist has confirmed  
the authenticity of this work





**Still Life, 2009**

Signed and dated 'Botero 09'  
(lower right)  
Watercolour on paper  
105.5 x 75 cm - 41.5 x 29.5 in.

**Provenance**  
Artist's studio

**Certificate**  
The artist has confirmed  
the authenticity of this work

**The House with a Woman  
at the Door, 1995**

Signed and dated 'Botero 95'  
(lower right)  
Oil on canvas  
152 x 126 cm - 59.8 x 49.6 in.

**Provenance**  
Artist's studio

**Exhibited**  
Lugano, Museo d'Arte Moderna, 31 July-12 Oct. 1997

**Literature**  
Ana María Escallón, Botero, New Works on Canvas,  
New York, 1997, No. 142, ill.

**Certificate**  
The artist has confirmed the authenticity of this work



// Sculptures permit me to create real volume...  
One can touch the forms, one can give them  
smoothness,

the sensuality  
that one  
wants."

Fernando Botero

**Rapto de Europa, 2011**

Signed and numbered 'Botero1/6'  
and stamped with the foundry mark  
(on the base)  
Bronze, edition of 6  
60 x 49 x 32 cm - 23.6 x 19.3 x 12.6 in.

**Provenance**

Artist's studio  
Galeria Freites  
Private collection, Singapore

**Certificate**

The artist has confirmed  
the authenticity of this work







**Mujer en silla, 1995**

Signed and numbered 'Botero 1/6'  
and stamped with the foundry mark  
(on the back right-hand side  
of the chair)  
Bronze, edition of 6  
55 x 31 x 27 cm - 21.7 x 12.2 x 10.6 in.

**Provenance**  
Galería El Museo, Colombia

**Certificate**  
The artist has confirmed the  
authenticity of this work

**La Poupée, 1977**

Signed and numbered 'Botero 3/6',  
and stamped with foundry mark  
(on the base)  
Bronze, edition of 6  
161 x 104 x 64 cm - 63.4 x 40.9 x 25.2 in.

**Provenance**  
Artist's studio  
Private collection, Europe

**Exhibited**  
Berlin, Galerie Brusberg, Fernando Botero:  
Das Plastische Werk, 15 Oct. - 18 Nov. 1978,  
exhibition of another cast

**Literature**  
Carter Ratcliff, Botero, Abbeville Press,  
New York, 1980, pp. 200-201, ill. of another cast  
Edward J. Sullivan, Botero Sculpture, Abbeville  
Press, New York, 1986, p. 87, ill. of another cast  
Jean-Clarence Lambert, Botero Sculptures,  
Bogotá, Villegas Editores, 1998, p.63, No. 63,  
ill. of another cast

**Certificate**  
The artist has confirmed the authenticity  
of this work





### **Man with Cane, 1988**

Signed and numbered 'Botero E.A. 1/2' and stamped with foundry mark (on back left of base)

Bronze, edition of 3 + 2 EA

240 x 67.9 x 120 cm - 94.5 x 26.8 x 47 in.

#### **Provenance**

Private collection, California

#### **Exhibited**

Florence, Forte di Belvedere, Botero: Dipinti Sculture Disegni, 28 June-29 Sept. 1991, ill. in the exh. catalogue p. 103

Monte-Carlo, Marisa del Re Gallery, Fernando Botero in Monte-Carlo, 20 March-30 Sept. 1992, ill. in the exh. catalogue twice

Paris, Didier Imbert Fine Art, Botero aux Champs-Élysées, Sculptures Monumentales, 22 Oct. 1992-30 Jan. 1993, ill. in the exh. catalogue, p. 138

#### **Literature**

Silvestro Serra & Giorgio Van Straten, Botero al Forte Belvedere di Firenze, Florence, Fos, 199, ill. pp. 19-58

Jean-Clarence Lambert & Benjamin Villegas, Botero: Sculptures, Villegas Editores, Bogotá, 1998, No. 180

#### **Certificate**

The artist has confirmed the authenticity of this work



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Still Life with Petrol Lamp, 2005 P. 30



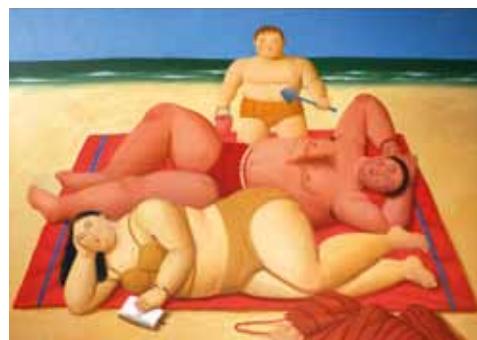
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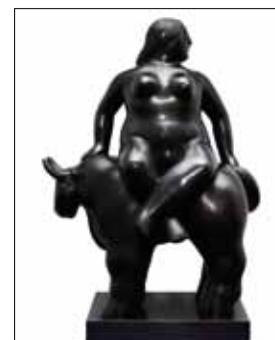
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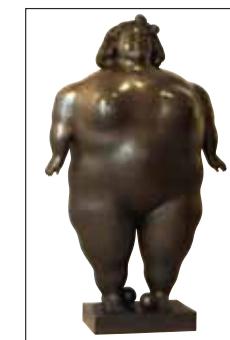
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