



## The Baroque World of Fernando Botero

By John Sillevi

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Colombian-born Fernando Botero (b. 1932) is a painter, sculptor, and draftsman renowned for his extravagantly rounded figures combining the polish and excess of Spanish colonial baroque with the social realism of the Mexican muralists. Their humorous exaggeration belies the more serious content of Botero's work—commentary on colonialism, political instability in Latin America, and the vernacular artistic traditions of the region, as well as European art history.

Accompanying the artist's first American retrospective in over thirty years, *The Baroque World of Fernando Botero* is the most extensive study of his life and work to date. Drawn exclusively from Botero's private collection, the 100 works featured in this book, including previously unpublished paintings and drawings, represent the full scope of his oeuvre from a uniquely personal perspective. Many of these—portraits of friends and family members and remembered scenes—have remained in the artist's possession since their creation, while others he has bought back over the years as markers of significant developments in his career. Three essays examine the artist's creative life, from the aesthetic environment in which Botero developed his unique style to his catalyzing influence on the Colombian art world of the 1960s and 70s.

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\*Starred Review\* Botero's oversized figures are instantly recognizable, his opulent paintings and sculptures loved the world over, yet there have been few books about his work and very little incisive criticism. Now, as museums across the country prepare for the first traveling Botero retrospective in three decades, this beautifully produced, in-depth overview of Botero's life and oeuvre provides a much-needed key to his uniquely baroque sensibility, technical virtuosity, and profound humanitarian concerns. Born in 1932 in Medellin, Colombia, Botero apprenticed himself to the great European tradition while remaining spiritually rooted in his war-torn homeland. In one of many striking observations, Sillevis aligns Botero's baroque fullness of form with the magic realism of Colombian writer Gabriel Garcia Marquez. Studies in beauty and terror, Botero's monumental figures can be sensual, and many are large with pain and sorrow. Like Goya, Botero often depicts violence, but no works attain the moral weight of his Abu Ghraib series. Some examples of these overwhelming paintings are included here, and all 50 shocking and resounding images are found in I^ Botero: Abu Ghraib (Prestel, 2006). As Botero has said, "Art continues a common remembrance or testimony [or leaves] a permanent accusation." *Donna Seaman*

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### About the Author

**John Sillevis** is chief curator of the Gemeentemuseum, The Hague. **David Elliott** is director of the Mori Art Museum, Tokyo. **Edward J. Sullivan** is professor of fine arts and dean of humanities at New York University and author of the forthcoming [Language of Objects in the Art of the Americas](#) (Yale).

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