

Fernando Botero:

Voluminous visions in Singapore

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In the world of art, Fernando Botero is like a living legend who has charmed the world with his idiosyncratic and inimitable style, and voluptuous and whimsi-

cal renditions of the human and animal form.

But for those in this part of the world who are not familiar with the name, now is the time to get to know this extraordinary artist whose age (72) has not diminished his energy in continuing to

create a distinctive style of smooth, inflated shapes with unexpected shifts in scale.

From Dec. 8, Singapore will host Botero's largest solo exhibition in Asia, including 20 monumental outdoor sculptures weighing close to 1.5 tons, at Esplanade Park,



Singapore Art Museum

Sphinx (300cm by 234cm by 273cm), a bronze sculpture produced in 1995 by Fernando Botero, can be seen at an exhibition of his work in Singapore that runs from Dec. 8 through Feb. 27, 2005.

Esplanade Theaters on the Bay, Changi Airport T2, The Fullerton Hotel and Suntec Singapore Lobby, and over 70 paintings, drawings and charcoals at the Singapore Art Museum.

Born in 1932 in Medellin, Colombia, Botero became interested in painting at an early age. He was barely 17 when he made news with an article in the Medellin newspaper, *El Colombiano*, titled *Picasso and the Nonconformity of Art*.

Exhibiting his paintings at a young age as well, he soon won prizes at the National Salon in Bogotá where he had moved to in 1951.

In Madrid, he visited the Prado museum daily while studying at the San Fernando Academy.

In Florence, with the money, he started traveling widely in Europe — to Spain, France and Italy — where he studied the work of the old masters.

He studied at the San Fernando Academy in Madrid, and visited the Prado as often as he could. In Florence, he studied at the Academy of San Marcos and became fascinated by the works of Giotto, Piero della Francesca, Paolo Uccello and Andrea del Castagno.

Appropriating the old masters did not meet with much protest, as he transformed them into his own particular style.

While slender and skinny are the ideal proportions of modern times, Botero chooses to inflate his images which may come across as weird, but with an underlying sensitivity toward human nature.

This, indeed, remains a



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Casa de Rosalba Correa (Rosalba Correa's house), oil on canvas, was produced by Botero in 2001. The amply proportioned human forms that he paints are far removed from the slender and skinny figures that have become the contemporary ideal; nonetheless, they are imbued with an underlying sensitivity toward the essence of human nature.

characteristic, as does his enduring fascination with small towns in his native Colombia. Although he is celebrated worldwide and divides his time between Paris, New York and Tuscany (Italy), Botero has never forgotten his roots, as evident in many of his works that suggest life in places where time seems to have come to a standstill.

In contrast, his reputation as a great artist, which is said to have started at the Paris Biennale in 1967 when he was 35 years old, has soared in time as well as space.

In 1987, the Centro de Arte Reina Sofia in Madrid hosted a retrospective of his paint-

ings and drawings. At that time he was well-known in Europe and the United States.

Now, after Paris, New York, Venice, Madrid and Tokyo, Botero is coming to Singapore, where he will share the perspective, inspiration and personal experiences from which he draws for his art.

Botero-Ju Ming dialog

The momentous occasion will also be marked by a dialog between this world-renowned Colombian artist and one of Asia's foremost sculptors, Ju Ming, whose large exhibition in Singapore will soon travel to Beijing and Shanghai.

The dialog will be held on Thursday, Dec. 9, 2004, at 6

p.m., at Suntec Singapore Theater (Level 2). Entrance is via Suntec Singapore International Convention & Exhibition Center.

Admission to the dialog is free, but registration is required.

To register, please email nhb_sam_programs@nhb.gov.sg or call (65) 6332 3220. Closing date: 3 p.m., Dec. 8. Unclaimed reserved seats will be released 10 minutes prior to commencement.

For more information call Lynn Tan, Singapore Art Museum (65) 6332 3219.