



EL HORROR según Botero

Por primera vez llega a Sudamérica la serie de Fernando Botero que retrata las torturas de los soldados norteamericanos en la cárcel de Abu Ghraib, en Irak. A punto de celebrar sus 80 años el pintor habla con *Qué Pasa* sobre esta muestra, que se inaugura el 15 de marzo en el Museo de la Memoria.

[Por Yenny Cáceres]

periodismo
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rablosos y sangrando profu-
samente.
"Me allá del dolor físico,
me impacto la humillación.
iraquíes mayores, muchos
inocentes eran humillados
por unos teenagers que los
trataban a patadas sólo por
pensar distinto. Es la hipoc-
resía de los EE.UU., que se
presenta como modelo de
democracia pero practica la
política



► Botero donó esta serie a la U. de Berkeley.
"La pintura del siglo XVI, para plasmar la vida de Cristo. Mezclo personajes de América Latina con figuras de la Biblia. Aquí los soldados son romanos, sino policías colombianos. No se trata de colombianos, lo que se trata de políticos sólo de libertad artística", dice. Aunque no se niega a rozar la contur-
tura en su pintura.

La obra más cruda y aterriza en el Museo de la Memoria.

► Anoche se inauguró la muestra del pintor colombiano: 35 pinturas y dibujos que retratan los abusos en la cárcel de Abu Ghraib en 2004.

► Es la primera vez que la serie exhibe en Sudamérica, gracias a la alianza entre el museo, la U. de Berkeley y CorpArtes.



Sociedad Saatchi, directora de CorpArtes en la imagen.

CULTURA

Fernando Botero celebra sus 80 años en el mundo y su obra pasa por Chile

Desde el viernes, se verán en Santiago treinta y siete obras sobre las torturas en la cárcel iraquí. Pronto, su mayor retrospectiva estará en México y España, y sus últimos trabajos en Colombia, Italia y Brasil.



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A 9
TRES MUESTRAS
Pintura sobre el circo. Detalle.
"ABU GHRAIB"
Botero celebra su 80 aniversario inaugurando la muestra "Abu Ghraib" en el Museo de la Memoria y los Derechos Humanos en Santiago. El artista colombiano muestra sus obras más recientes, que retratan los abusos en la cárcel iraquí. La muestra es la más grande que se ha realizado en Chile.
"TODOS LOS DERECHOS"
A finales de febrero se inauguró en el Museo de la Memoria y los Derechos Humanos en Santiago la muestra "Todos los Derechos Humanos". La muestra es la más grande que se ha realizado en Chile.
"LA PASIÓN DE CRISTO"
El pintor colombiano Fernando Botero donó a la Universidad de Berkeley su serie de pinturas "La Pasión de Cristo".

CHILE

News accounts of the Botero exhibit at Chile's Museo de la Memoria.

Botero and the Museum of Memory

by Harley Shaiken

The Museo de la Memoria y los Derechos Humanos (Museum of Memory and Human Rights) is a striking, contemporary building on the edge of downtown Santiago, Chile. Its simple rectangular form — glass, steel, and concrete sheathed in green metallic mesh — seems to hover over a sunken, open-air plaza that spans a city block.

As you approach the museum, walking down the gentle slope toward what is appropriately called "Memory Plaza," you pass alongside the 30 articles of the United Nation's Universal Declaration of Human Rights, engraved article-by-article on a concrete wall. Article 5 states that "no one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment." The declaration frames the building as you arrive and confronts you again

when you leave. The museum, located in Santiago's gritty Barrio Yungay, is embedded in the cacophonous city but, with its compelling architecture, open spaces, and flowing water, encourages reflection. While very different in form and function, it has the haunting quality of the "Vietnam War Memorial" in Washington, D.C.

Upon entering the building, you are met with the words of President Michelle Bachelet, who inaugurated the museum in the final months of her presidency. "We cannot change our past, we can only learn from what we have lived. This is our opportunity and our challenge." These words define the mission of the Museo de la Memoria: it was created to focus attention on the human rights horrors of Chile's recent past and, thereby, to help ensure a democratic future.

The museum, which details the trauma of Chile's bloody 1973 coup and the 17-year dictatorship that followed, proved to be an exceptional place to display 38 of the paintings and drawings from Fernando Botero's Abu Ghraib collection on their first showing in South America. The exhibit, on loan from the University of California, Berkeley, opened on March 15, 2012 for a three-month run.

"The theme of human rights is universal," commented the museum's director, Ricardo Brodsky, in an interview about the exhibition with *La Tercera*, a major Chilean newspaper. "Through art, we can touch these same themes in a more open, modern, and rich way."

Art proved to be a powerful window on critical issues: torture and institutions; the rule of law and democracy; and memory and human rights. Botero has said that great art is meant to provoke, and these works do just that. They draw you into their world and force you to confront your own. In the process, they touch the soul and engage the mind. The art raises critical questions: What circumstances led to these horrific events? What toll does torture extract on a democracy? How can human rights abuses be prevented in the future?

Botero is arguably the world's best-known living artist, and he is particularly iconic in Latin America. David Ebony, the managing editor of *Art in America* magazine and a noted critic, called him "one of the world's most significant artists," noting that "Botero has managed to be profound and popular at the same time — not an easy feat." Speaking at the presentation of the International Sculpture Center's Lifetime Achievement Award to Botero in late October



Photo courtesy of Paula Leonvendegar.

The exhibition space.

2012, *Ebony* called him "one of the most courageous artists of our time," recalling "as the stories and images of the atrocities and abuse of prisoners at the Abu Graib facility near Baghdad first came to light in 2004, I was stunned that most contemporary artists remained silent on the subject."

Botero broke that silence with his graphic, brilliantly executed paintings and drawings about what

took place. He spent 14 intense months creating this series, which Roberta Smith, *The New York Times* art critic, called "among Mr. Botero's best work, and in an art world where responses to the Iraq war have been scarce — literal or obscure — they stand out."

How did Berkeley become involved? After Botero completed the series, it was shown at prestigious museums across Europe to strong



reviews. Museums and galleries throughout the United States, however, passed on exhibiting the works. The Center for Latin American Studies organized the first showing at a U.S. public institution in January 2007 on the Berkeley campus, leading Botero to donate 60 paintings and drawings — virtually the entire Abu Ghraib collection — to UC Berkeley.

At the opening in Chile, visitors who had lost loved ones during the

dictatorship or who themselves had been horrifically tortured were visibly moved by the art. Among them was Carolina Toha, who has since been elected mayor of Santiago. Her father, Salvador Allende's vice president, was arrested, tortured, and murdered in the aftermath of the coup. A new generation was also in attendance. Young people, many of whom were born after the return to democracy, were also deeply impacted by the art.

The combination of great art, an iconic artist, and a new, path-breaking museum sparked intense interest and discussion throughout Chile as well as elsewhere in the Americas. It provoked a flurry of major media articles, radio discussions, television segments, tweets, and blog posts. The exhibit became a must-see event and sparked a national discussion on human rights, torture, and democratic

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Photo by Gonzalo Orellana Hidalgo.

The 30 articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights line the wall outside the museum.

values. President Piñera visited the museum for the first time to see the exhibit.

At a small dinner held the evening before the opening, a Chilean professor mused about the major impact the exhibit was already having. All the excitement and attention stemmed from the fact that “it’s not about Chile,” he said, “but it is.” The art universalizes torture. Chileans and Latin Americans were horrified at what happened at Abu Ghraib, he reflected, and the fact the U.S. was involved made it all the easier to critique. Once the discussion about torture starts, however, it leads inexorably closer to home.

In a program at the museum the day after the opening, José Zalaquett, a professor of Law at the Universidad de Chile and co-director of its Human Rights Center, placed the discussion in historical context by describing art’s shifting representation of torture and war. He displayed slides of artworks from the Middle Ages that displayed gruesome images bearing a striking resemblance to the Abu Ghraib works, and he presented photos of contemporary horrors around the world. Eduardo Vio Grossi, a judge on the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, laid out a contemporary vision of the continued

relevance of these issues in Latin America. Christopher Edley, dean of the Berkeley Law School, examined torture and the rule of law. Edley, who played a key role in bringing the art to Berkeley in the first place, has displayed four of the largest and most riveting paintings at the law school. They sit just outside the dean’s office in a major corridor between that office and the law library.

“Art offers the possibility of serving a need that law has failed to serve,” he said during the museum program in Santiago. “How can we be sure that we will continue to debate what is right and what is wrong? I believe that the answer lies, in part, in art. That is what Señor Botero has done for us.”

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