



**FERNANDO BOTERO** Colombia b.1932

Le Déjeuner sur L'herbe

Signed and dated "Botero 69" lower right  
oil on canvas

70 3/4 x 75 in. 179.7 x 190.5 cm.

Painted in 1969

This work is sold with a photo certificate signed by the  
artist, Obra de mi mano Botero

#### PROVENANCE

Galerie Claude Bernard, Paris

Private Collection, Paris

Sale: Sotheby's, New York, 'Latin American Paintings, Drawings, Sculpture and Prints', November 18, 1991, lot 42 (col.), illustrated

Gary Nader Art Centre, Miami

#### EXHIBITIONS

1969 Paris, Galerie Claude Bernard, 'Botero Peintures/Pastels/Fusains', August

2010 Miami, FL, Gary Nader Art Centre, 'Fernando Botero: The Grand Show: Paintings, Drawings & Sculpture', December

2011 Miami, FL, Gary Nader Art Centre, 'Fernando Botero: The Grand Show: Paintings, Drawings & Sculpture', January

2014 New York, Gary Nader, 'Fernando Botero. One Man Show.', October 30 - December 31

2015 New York, Gary Nader, 'Fernando Botero. One Man Show.', December 31 - May 30

#### LITERATURE

Germán Arciniegas, 'Fernando Botero', Edilerner Editions, Madrid, 1977, p.107 no. 73 (col.), illustrated

Carter Ratcliff, 'Botero', Abbeville Editions, New York, 1980, p.120 (col.), illustrated

Giorgio Soavi, 'Botero', Celiv Editions, Milan, 1988, p.65 (col.), illustrated

Fernando Botero, Ediciones poligrafa, Barcelona, 1996, fig.11 illustrated in color.

Gary Nader Art Centre, 'Fernando Botero, The Grand Show, Paintings, Drawings & Sculpture', Gary Nader Editions, Miami, 2010, p.18 (col.), illustrated

'This painting combines humor, voluptuousness and compositional equilibrium with the artist's highly intellectualized manipulation of one of the key monuments of the history of early modern art. In the 'Déjeuner sur l'Herbe' and related works, Botero enters the pantheon of major masters who have proven their sensitivity to the attainments of their earlier counterparts by using their achievements as starting points for their creative impulses,' –Edward J. Sullivan

Over a century after Édouard Manet scandalized the French academic establishment with his then shocking rendering of a female nude accompanied by two properly attired gentlemen enjoying a lovely afternoon picnic, the Colombian painter Fernando Botero set out to pay homage to this iconic work with his own unmistakable take on this classically inspired subject. It should be noted that Manet's painting itself was based on an engraving made after a composition executed by the Renaissance painter Raphael depicting a grouping of mythological deities. Interestingly Manet's contemporaries failed to identify this source, rejecting the painting in part for its seemingly random nudity. Indeed it was its lack of plausibility or rather its transgression of the accepted norms of representation that garnered its greatest criticism and banished it from the official Salon to the now famous Salon des Refusés. Yet today Manet's painting is widely considered one of the most radical paintings in the history of early modern art for the very reasons that inflamed contemporary sensibilities in the 1860s. Today it is considered one of the most groundbreaking works of its time. Botero's own playful, yet thoughtful reinterpretation of Manet's infamous painting reveals similar concerns and attempts to push the boundaries further in a work that is ripe with myriad visual puns and double entendres that turn the classic late 19th-century masterpiece on its head, while also expanding the possibilities of representation and gender politics vis à vis the canon of Western art history.

Fernando Botero's artistic oeuvre reveals a passion for art history through his multiple appropriations of well-known masterpieces that he ably transforms with his signature style. From 1966 through 1973 Botero returned to Manet's iconic painting on various occasions and created several versions of which this is the most important. Here the figures are subjected to Botero's characteristic sense of voluptuousness and disproportion while set against a smoky, sfumato-like atmosphere that further suspends them between reality and pictorial illusionism. It is not difficult to see why Botero was attracted to the work of Manet, an artist equally engaged with questioning the limits of representation. However Botero pushes the envelope further by breaking a few more rules of his own. In his version of 'Le Déjeuner sur l'herbe', the sexual tension between the protagonists is heightened while the notion of transgression, both moral and artistic, is explored further through such conventional tropes or visual puns as the red slithering snake that threatens to disturb our Edenic couple's romantic interlude, the sensuous, almost life-like fruit strewn about like loose balls on a pool table, and the satin ribbon bow tied on the picnic basket that strategically covers our modern day Adam's private parts. But perhaps the most notable and effective move away from traditional conventions is the shift from a female to a nude male here accompanied by a demurely clothed woman. In his humorous and witty take on Manet's trailblazing painting, Botero breathes new life into this classical genre by placing it within a decidedly contemporary context (much like Manet did a century before) that not only expands the limits of representation but disrupts the traditional power structure between genders thus injecting his version with a surprisingly radical and feminist tone.

Executed in the late 1960s, at a time in which societal norms and gender roles were being reassessed, Botero's painting suggests both a debt to its art historical antecedent and a possible response to these contemporary circumstances.

Likewise 'Le Déjeuner sur l'Herbe' conveys Botero's passion for life and for painting. In typical Botero fashion, the artist imbues every inch of this painting with an enhanced sense of vibrancy, an artistic effervescence or joie de vivre that is equally palatable in the main figures as it is in every fruit and blade of grass depicted. This overall exuberance is what art historian Edward J. Sullivan refers to as the artist's constant "search for the inherent sensuality of the three-dimensional form an ideal that is present in virtually everything Botero has created."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The significance of this work is further reinforced by Botero's witty take on himself in the tongue in cheek painting, The Botero Exhibition (1975), illustrated below. Here the master of appropriation and reinvention turns his mimetic skills on himself and faithfully reproduces a number of his most iconic works, including Le Déjeuner sur l'Herbe. In an interesting play on reality and illusion, the painting within a painting depicts an exhibition of works by Botero with a familiar cast of guests enjoying the pictures.

<sup>2</sup> Edward J. Sullivan, "Fernando Botero's Le Dejeuner sur l'Herbe," Latin American Paintings, Drawings, Sculpture and Prints, November 18 and 19, 1991 (New York: Sotheby's, 1991), Lot 42.