

Luis Caballero (Bogota, Colombia, 1943-1995)

Luis Caballero was a Colombian painter, draughtsman and lithographer, known for his depictions of the male nude, at once classical in their naturalism and precise detail and imbued with vitality and energy. Born and raised in Colombia, a society he described as 'fanatical' and 'violent,' Caballero grew up around the imagery of the colonial Catholic Church, and ever-present depictions of the male body in torsion and trauma: the flagellation, crucifixion and lamentation of Christ and the martyred saints. This imagery paired with the social and moral conservatism led by the church are considered to have made a marked influence on Caballero's attitude to the male body and the sensations of love, pain and control expressed in its forms. The long history of political violence in Colombia, including the savage era of civil war referred to as 'La Violencia' which covered much of Caballero's childhood, must be considered equally influential.

Caballero studied art at the Universidad de los Andes in Bogota, where he received a rigidly academic training. He held his first exhibition in Paris in 1966, and moved there in 1968, where he joined a small circle of other Latin American artists and held a studio in the rue d'Alésia. His life in Paris was described by the critic Edward Lucie-Smith as 'of the most traditional kind... closer to the life-style of the professional artists of the 19th century... dedicated and austere, wholly taken up with the process of making art.' The work he produced after his move to Paris is noted for its anatomical detail, often produced at life-scale.

Caballero was one of the few Latin American artists of the time to be open about his sexuality, both before and after his relocation to France. He expressed a strong affinity with the work of Francis Bacon, defined by Lucie-Smith as an 'instinctive sympathy' for the candid expressions of other homosexual artists. He shares with Bacon, in his own style, the mutilation of forms and fragmentation of images, and the grandeur of the triptych format. Furthermore, his compositions can be deliberately elusive, inviting multiple readings, with gestures that may be sexual, violent or protective, encouraging an urge to look and to divert the gaze.

Living through the AIDS epidemic, which was experienced in Paris with particular severity, there is further significance to Caballero's dedication to the male nude in the last decades of his life, and his embrace of the dualities of pleasure and pain. His monumental mixed media works produced in the 1980s and early 1990s, with turbulent compositions comparable to baroque sculpture and a depth achieved by oil and charcoal, display a richness and technical accomplishment at the culmination of his career. Falling ill in 1992, Caballero died of AIDS in 1995, at the age of 51. Caballero is celebrated as a central figure in Colombian art, and his work is widely represented in public collections in Colombia and France, as well as important international collections including the Tate, UK and the Blanton Museum of Art at the University of Texas, USA.

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Luis Caballero

Bogota, Colombia, 1943 - 1995

Education

1961-62 Universidad de las Andes, Bogota

1963-64 Academie de la Grande Chaumiere, Paris

Selected Solo Exhibitions

- 2022 *Luis Caballero*, Sala de exposiciones Centro Cívico Universitario, Universidad de los Andes, Bogotá, Colombia
- 2017 La Biennale Paris, France
- 2016 *Luis Caballero, el dibujante*, Teatro Galería Cafam Bellas Artes, Bogotá, Colombia
- 2016 Presentation of a mural restored by Olga Lucía González at the Universidad de los Andes, Bogotá, Colombia
- 2011 *Caballero erótico*, Museo de Pereira, Colombia; Museo de Arte Moderno de Barranquilla, Colombia
- 2009 Casa Ensamble, Bogotá, Colombia
- 2002 *Cien años Cernuda*, Casa de Poesía Silva, Bogotá, Colombia
- 1998 *Obra gráfica*, Museo Eduardo Sívori, Buenos Aires, Argentina; Banco de la Republica de Colombia; Museo de la Fundación Buque-Bus, Montevideo, Uruguay; Museo de Bellas Artes, Asunción, Paraguay
- 1998 Musée de la Castre, Cannes, France
- 1997 *Sin título 1966-1968*, Museo Nacional, Bogotá, Colombia; Museo de Arte Moderno, Medellín, Colombia; Museo de Arte Moderno, Barranquilla, Colombia; Biblioteca Gabriel Turbay, Bucaramanga, Colombia; Museo de Arte Moderno La Tertulia, Cali, Colombia; Museo de Arte, Pereira, Colombia
- 1995 *Obra sobre papel*, Biblioteca Luis Ángel Arango, Bogotá, Colombia
- 1992 *Luis Caballero*, Hotel de Miramion, Paris, France
- 1991 Grey Art Gallery, New York University, New York, US
- 1991 Biblioteca Luis Angel Arango, Bogota, Colombia
- 1984 XLI Venice Biennale, Italy

- 1981 Maison de la Culture de Metz, France
- 1974 Bonnefanten Museum, Maastrich, The Netherlands
- 1973 XII Bienal de São Paulo, Brazil
- 1969 Biennale de Paris, France
- 1968 *Pequeña Capilla Sixtina de Bogota*, Biblioteca Nacional, Bogota
- 1966 Museo de Arte Moderno, Bogota

Selected Group Exhibitions

- 2015 *In memoriam*, Museo de Arte Moderno de Bogotá (MAMBO); Museo de Antioquia, Medellín; Museo de Artes Visuales de la Universidad Jorge Tadeo Lozano, Bogotá; Biblioteca Luis Ángel Arango, Bogotá; Bogocine digital, Bogotá; Davivienda, Bogotá, Colombia
- 2000 *21 artistas de Colombia y Cundinamarca*, Gobernación de Cundinamarca y Museo de Arte Moderno de Bogotá: Cajicá, Chía, Cogua, Facatativá, Fusagasugá, Girardot, Madrid, San Juan de Río Seco, Soacha, Sopó, Villeta, Zipaquirá, Colombia
- 1994 *The Presence of the Nude in Drawing*, Colombian Center, New York, US
- 1992 *Colombia Arte 80*, Museo de Arte de Lima, Lima, Peru
- 1991 *Painting*, Colombian Center, New York, US
- 1991 *Latin American Drawings Today*, San Diego Museum of Art, San Diego, California, US
- 1990-1 *Clasicismo en Mexico*, Centro Cultural Contemporaneo, Mexico City, Mexico
- 1988 *Latin American Drawings from the Barbara Duncan Collection*, Archer M. Huntington Art Gallery, the University of Texas, Austin, US
- 1987 *Recent Developments in Latin American Drawing*, The Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, US
- 1987 *Colombian Art: Myth Dream, and Reality*, Interamerican Development Bank, Washington D.C., US
- 1985 *Artistas Latino-Americanos de Paris*, Museu de Arte Contemporanea da Universidad de São Paulo, São Paulo, Brazil
- 1983 *Pintura Colombiana*, Jornadas Culturales de Colombia, Palacio de Bellas Artes, Mexico City
- 1981 *Jeunes Artistes Latinoamericains*, Hotel de Ville, Paris, France
- 1977-8 *Recent Latin American Drawings (1960-1976): Lines of Vision*, Center for Inter-American Relations, New York; Florida International University, Miami; Arkansas Art Center, Little Rock; Archer M. Huntington Art Gallery, Austin; Art Gallery of Hamilton, Canada; Oklahoma Art Center, Oklahoma City. Organized and circulated by the International Exhibitions Foundation, Washington D.C., US

1976 *Colombian Figurative Graphics*, Archer M. Huntington Art Gallery, the University of Texas, Austin, US

1970 *100 Artistes dans la ville*, Montpellier, France

Selected Public Collections

Tate Collection, London, UK

Colección Coltejer. Medellín, Colombia

Museo de Arte de la Universidad Nacional de Colombia, Bogotá, Colombia

Banco Cafetero, Bogotá, Colombia

Colección Colsubsidio, Bogotá, Colombia

Inter American Development Bank, Washington, D. C., US

Bibliothèque Municipale de Colmar, France

Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris, France

Banco de la República colección de Arte Bogotá, Colombia

Regional Fund for Contemporary Art of Alsace, France

Regional Fund for Contemporary Art of Lorraine, France

Regional Fund for Contemporary Art of Normandy, France

Blanton Museum, University of Texas at Austin, US

Bonnefanten Museum, Maastricht, Netherlands

Museo de Arte Moderno, MAMB. Barranquilla, Colombia

Museo de Arte Moderno, MAMBO, Bogotá, Colombia

Museo de Arte Moderno La Tertulia, Cali, Colombia

Museo de Bellas Artes, Caracas, Venezuela

Musée des Beaux-Arts, Dunkirk, France