



Media only: Isabel Lara (202) 633-0972

Oct. 17, 2006

Public only: (202) 633-1000

Smithsonian Latino Center Exhibition “Colombia at the Smithsonian” Is Extended to Jan. 15, 2007

“Colombia at the Smithsonian: The Colombian Presence in the Collections of the Smithsonian Institution,” which opened Sept. 6 to commemorate Hispanic Heritage Month, has been extended to Jan. 15, 2007, due to popular demand. The exhibition celebrates Colombia’s rich artistic, historic and natural heritage. Presented in the Smithsonian Castle’s Schermer Hall, “Columbia at the Smithsonian” features nearly 80 objects and art works, showcasing the full range of Colombian presence in the Smithsonian’s collections: from butterflies, insects, precious gems and minerals, to historical stamps and coins, to indigenous objects dating to 1400 and contemporary art works by renowned Colombian artist Fernando Botero.

The Smithsonian Latino Center worked with specialists from the Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage, the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, the National Museum of American History, the National Museum of the American Indian, the National Museum of Natural History and the National Postal Museum to select key objects from their collections that reflect Colombia’s history and its cultural, biological and geological diversity.

“‘Colombia at Smithsonian’ launches our initiative of each year showcasing a different Latin American country with which the Smithsonian Latino Center has had significant involvement,” said Pilar O’Leary, executive director of the Smithsonian Latino Center. “This provides an invaluable opportunity for all Smithsonian visitors to learn about this country’s contributions to art, science and the humanities.”

The exhibition includes the following themes:

National Museum of Natural History’s display, “Colombia’s Biological and Geological Diversity,” includes insects (butterflies and beetles); minerals (emeralds); metals (gold); botanical materials and research photography. A special case displays the José Cuatrecasas Medal for Excellence in Tropical Botany, which pays tribute to the work of the pioneering botanist and taxonomist from

Spain, who lived and worked in Colombia and spent nearly a half-century working in the Department of Botany at the Smithsonian Institution.

“Colombia’s History and Nationhood,” with pieces from the collections of the National Museum of American History and the National Postal Museum, provides an outline of the country’s history through coinage, currency and postage stamps that depict Colombia from the colonial period through the War for Independence to contemporary issues facing the country today.

“Cultural Continuity in Colombia’s Indigenous Cultures” showcases objects from the National Museum of the American Indian selected to illustrate the diverse cultures from Colombia’s past—the Quimbaya, Tairona, Muisca and Sinú, dating from about 1400 to 1600—and their relationship with modern-day indigenous people, including the Kogi, Witoto and Chibcha. The pieces on display range from a Muisca ceramic warrior figure to a variety of gold objects.

“Colombian Contemporary Art” features two works by Fernando Botero on loan from the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden. Botero, born in Medellín, Colombia, is one of the most recognized 20th-century Latin American artists. His paintings are in museums around the world and his sculptures have been exhibited along the Champs-Élysées in Paris, Park Avenue in New York and Constitution Avenue in Washington, D.C.

The “Music of Colombia” booth from Smithsonian Folkways Recordings includes selections that demonstrate Colombia’s diverse musical heritage: “Un Fuego de Sangre Pura: Los Gaiteros de San Jacinto”; “¡Arriba Suena Marimba! Currulao Marimba Music from Colombia by Grupo Naidy”; and the Grammy-nominated “Sí, Soy Llanero: Joropo Music from the Orinoco Plains of Colombia.”

The Smithsonian Latino Center is a division of the Smithsonian Institution which ensures that Latino contributions to art, science and the humanities are highlighted, understood and advanced through the development and support of public programs, scholarly research, museum collections and educational opportunities at the Smithsonian Institution and its affiliated organizations across the United States and internationally. For more information, visit <http://latino.si.edu>

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