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**INTERNATIONAL EXHIBITION OF WORKS
BY WORLD-RENOWNED ARTIST RUFINO TAMAYO
DEBUTS AT THE SANTA BARBARA MUSEUM OF ART**

Tamayo: A Modern Icon Reinterpreted (February 17 – May 27, 2007) is the largest U.S. exhibition in decades to explore the work of one of the most important artists of the 20th century.



Rufino Tamayo, *Amigo de los pájaros* (Friend of the Birds), 1944. Oil on canvas. Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Museum Associates, The Bernard and Edith Lewin Collection of Mexican Art. © Herederos de Rufino Tamayo.

SANTA BARBARA, CA - The first major U.S. exhibition in 28 years of the works of acclaimed Mexican artist Rufino Tamayo (1899-1991), ***Tamayo: A Modern Icon Reinterpreted*** makes its worldwide debut at the Santa Barbara Museum of Art (SBMA), Santa Barbara, Calif., **February 17 through May 27, 2007**. The internationally traveling exhibition will feature spectacular paintings from private and institutional collections all over the world, including canvases that have not been on public view for decades. Following its presentation at

SBMA, its lead organizer, *Tamayo: A Modern Icon Reinterpreted* will travel to the Miami Art Museum and then to the Museo Tamayo Arte Contemporáneo in Mexico City.

The extraordinary exhibition of more than 100 paintings—created during a prolific seven decade career in Mexico City, New York, and Paris—seeks not only to present a careful selection of Tamayo’s finest works, but also to offer a contemporary reinterpretation of this world-renowned artist. An icon of modern Mexican art, Tamayo was called the “The Fourth Great One” and was inducted into Mexico’s “national pantheon” alongside *Los Tres Grandes* (The Three Great Ones) of Mexican Muralism, José Clemente Orozco, Diego Rivera, and David Alfaro Siqueiros. Far and wide, his extraordinary paintings conjure familiar images of Mexico, its colors, textures, and centuries of indigenous and hybrid culture, perhaps most picturesquely, and stereotypically, epitomized by the

country's traditional marketplaces brimming with exotic flowers, tropical fruit, and native folk art. The lushness and materiality of Tamayo's signature canvases readily encourage such an imagining and, as a result, has indelibly marked the artist as a formalist, a painter primarily interested in pure line, form, and color. While he has been contextualized among them, he has been most often considered a discordant counterpoint to *Los Tres Grandes*, whose ambition was Social Realism, in which aesthetics was wrought by politics. The persistent view of Tamayo as an ardent advocate of formalism, or *arte puro* (pure art), has impeded a fuller appreciation of the artist as well as his painting. *Tamayo* aims to offer new readings of this widely recognized and respected, but also controversial painter.

The exhibition provides viewers with a window onto the painter's many geographic and creative trajectories. It traces Tamayo's artistic evolution from his earliest paintings—impressionistic landscapes and Picasso-esque portraits—to his last works, meditations on his own mortality. As a retrospective, *Tamayo* presents the artist's contributions to Mexican and international modernism by exploring the various paths he traveled to shape the ways in which he successfully negotiated both an aesthetic dialogue and a career between Mexico, the United States, and Europe. Beyond a retrospective, *Tamayo* revisits the story of Mexican modernism through the artist's paintings, portraying a much richer panorama of visual expressions and debates than customarily understood.

The carefully selected paintings are organized in a loose chronological sequence in order to emphasize thematic interpretation. The early period (1920-the late 1930s) addresses Tamayo's adoption of the various "isms" of European modern art and proceeds to demonstrate how he transformed these vanguard sources by way of still lifes, images of women, nudes, portraits of children and family, and genre scenes of indigenous subjects. These striking works show how Tamayo appropriated imagery, incorporated modernist strategies of collage and advertising, and, contrary to conventional wisdom, ventured to make political observations.



Rufino Tamayo, *Perro ladrando a la luna* (Dog Howling at the Moon), 1942. Oil on canvas. Private Collection, Courtesy of Galeria Ramis Barquet, New York. © Herederos de Rufino Tamayo.



Rufino Tamayo, *El hombre frente al infinito* (Man before the Infinite), 1950. Oil on canvas. Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique, Brussels. © Herederos de Rufino Tamayo.

By 1940, Tamayo had established the definitive form of abstract figuration that made him one of the most celebrated painters of the twentieth century. His fully mature period (1940-to the mid 1960s) is represented by a dramatic range of figurative works, from telling self-portraits to eerie phantoms. This section, the largest of the show, examines Tamayo's fusion modernism through a series of themes that confirm the breadth and depth of his visual thinking. The subjects of man; woman; nature; man and woman representing the universal; animal; and human hybrids were all treated in this manner to address a full range of emotion. Love and hate, joy and despair, aggression and reconciliation, all found pictorial expression in the artist's mature work that is on view.

The exhibition culminates with a selection of Tamayo's best late paintings. In his work from roughly 1968 on, Tamayo left behind his searing and searching pictures of the 1940s and 1950s. Besides their message of universal humanism and their tour-de-force ability to show that modern painting is still capable of arresting the eye, this sampling demonstrates how Tamayo addressed a reality that cannot be sentimentalized: death. These pictures do not treat its actuality but rather the process of reflecting on a life lived and anticipating what is to come. They poignantly speak to the artist's own sense of mortality, showing an increasing physical weakness but also a defiant resistance to that inevitability.

"Tamayo's painting as well as his personal and professional story have the hallmarks of aspiration and struggle, triumph and failure that defined Mexico as a modern nation," says Diana C. du Pont, SBMA Curator of

Modern & Contemporary Art and the exhibition's Project Director. "At the heart of the controversies that Tamayo and his painting fueled in his day were the clashes created by the different views of modernism and modernity that he and his art represented. Today, Tamayo's international perspective and aesthetic approach serve as an example for the contemporary Mexican artist working globally. Thus, in many ways, Tamayo had and continues to have a significant influence, which this exhibition seeks to understand."

Catalogue:

A fully illustrated catalogue, published by SBMA in association with Turner Libros, Mexico City, includes essays by leading scholars and curators from both the United States and Mexico. Available in February 2007, the 460 page publication will be printed in both English and Spanish and will be sold through the Museum store. For ordering information, please contact store@sbma.net, or call (805) 884-6454, or fax (805) 966-6840.

Exhibition Tour:

Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Santa Barbara, Calif., February 17 – May 27, 2007

Miami Art Museum, Miami, Fla., June 21 – September 16, 2007

Museo Tamayo Arte Contemporáneo, Mexico City, Mexico, October 26, 2007- January 21, 2008

Credit Line:

Tamayo: A Modern Icon Reinterpreted is organized by the Santa Barbara Museum of Art in collaboration with the Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes, through the Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes and the Museo Tamayo Arte Contemporáneo, Mexico, and the Fundación Olga y Rufino Tamayo, AC. It is curated by Diana C. du Pont, Curator of Modern & Contemporary Art, Santa Barbara Museum of Art, with Juan Carlos Pereda, Curator of the Museo Tamayo Arte Contemporáneo.

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About the Museum:

The Santa Barbara Museum of Art, founded in 1941 is a privately funded, not-for-profit institution with internationally recognized collections and exhibitions and a broad array of cultural and educational activities as well as travel opportunities around the world. The Museum dedicates special effort to four main collecting areas in modern and contemporary art – United States art, California art, European art and Latin American art.

The Santa Barbara Museum of Art is located at 1130 State Street, Santa Barbara, California. It is open Tuesday through Sunday 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Docent-led tours of special exhibitions are held daily at noon; docent tours of the permanent collection are offered daily at 1 p.m. General admission is \$9, \$6 for seniors, students with ID and children ages 6-17 and free to Museum members. Admission is free on Sundays. For more information the public may call (805) 963-4364 or visit www.sbma.net.