Fernando Botero – “The Presidential Family”

Concepts and Key Words: Caricatures, Illustrator, Disproportionate, Overlapping, Light Source

Activity: Imagination drawings

Materials needed:
White drawing paper
Pencils
Crayons, Colored pencils or markers

About the Artist...
Fernando Botero was born in Medellin, Colombia in 1932. At the age of twelve, Botero, the son of a Colombian travelling salesman, received training as a matador along with his usual school education. Botero’s first major subject in his early paintings was the bull ring. After studying art in college in Bogotá, he started his art career as an illustrator for a newspaper. Botero’s style is easy to recognize because of the corpulent, plastic-looking figures. They have big faces and bodies, but small facial features, hands and feet.

Talk About....
Note the repetition of the shapes in the painting. Each figure has undersized heads, wide middles and small feet; the people all fit into individual ovals or egg shapes. What do the shapes of the mountains remind you of? (Half an oval) Where is the light source coming from? Point out where the color changes, lighter on the left side and darker on the right. Discuss Botero’s use of space. Everything is tightly packed in the picture, with the figures overlapping.

In “The Presidential Family”, the message goes beyond first appearances. Seven somber people appear on the top of a mountain range, indicating that they consider themselves to be better than everyone else. Botero includes in the family representatives of the military, and the Church, which are both powerful institutions in South America. The snake slithering at the bottom of the painting symbolizes the presence of
something evil. The little figure at the oversized easel on the left of the painting resembles the artist Botero.

**Activity-Step by Step:**

1. Students will draw a picture using unreal or disproportionate figures.
2. Encourage students to use unexpected shapes and exaggerated sizes. Mix and match parts-like putting a leopard tail on a chicken or bird legs on an elephant.
3. Utilize every inch of the paper by overlapping figures and shapes.
4. Complete the artwork by adding color, keeping in mind the light source and which angle it is reflecting on your page. (Lighter on the left, darker on the right or vice versa)