



Fotográfica Bogotá 2009

Imagine attending four to six daily art openings over the course of a week showing the work of diverse international contemporary photographers in the heart of Bogotá, Colombia. Then, imagine the opportunity for informal conversation with fellow photographers over coffee or a sumptuous Colombian dinner. Now, imagine exchanging ideas with your colleagues about the creative process in the relaxed and supportive atmosphere of the Bogota arts community.

The biennial Fotográfica Bogotá 2009 sponsored by Fotomuseo, the national museum of photography, provided me with these artistically and intellectually stimulating experiences during the first week of May 2009. Along with sixteen international photographers, twenty-four Colombian photographers, and a cadre of university professors and museum curators from around the world, I shared my work and ideas about contemporary photography in both formal and informal settings.

Following the theme of the Fotográfica I displayed various portraits at the Museo de Bogotá located in the historic Candelaria district. Teaching a class at the Universidad Nacional I explained the process of creating my photomontages to five hundred enthusiastic art students, all remarkably appreciative of their educational opportunities. In a public conversation at the Universidad Central with Guatemalan photographer Luis Gonzalez Palma, we compared and contrasted the themes and symbols in our photographic work. At the city radio station called RadioNica I chatted in a live conversation about the meaning of my photography, as some of my favorite music by Iron and Wine and Andrew Bird book-marked my comments.

In the spirit of the Fotomuseo's mission to bring photography into the lives of the Colombian people, my photographic portraits were displayed on the exterior of public buildings and along the thoroughfares of Bogota. Most remarkable was the piece Fetch measuring 24 by 65 feet displayed prominently on the front of the Archivo de Bogotá. A bit of a surreal experience, perhaps a parallel to my photography, I was amazed and grateful to view my work on such a large scale in the international arts community of Bogotá.

If you have the opportunity to participate in a future Fotografica, I would highly recommend this experience. Please disregard any unfounded concerns and stereotypes about travel to Bogotá. Throughout my stay I was well taken care of by Gilma Suarez and her attentive staff at Fotomuseo, as well as warmly embraced by the people and arts community in Bogota.

Tom Chambers, May 9, 2009



*Above:
My solo show at Casa Samano*

*Below:
Installation on the Dept. of Tourism*



*Right:
Installation on
the Archives
Museum*