

**Eric Firestone Gallery**

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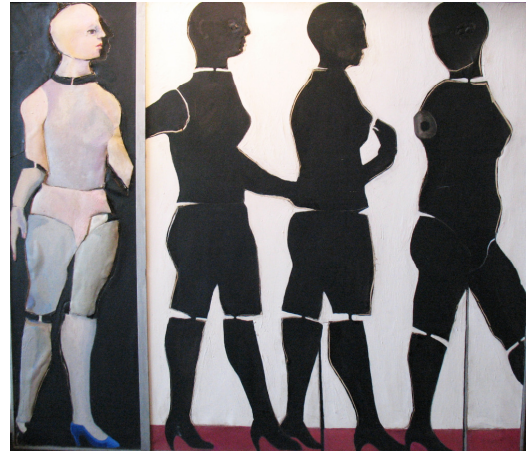
Enrique Montenegro: *American Modernist*

**Dates: March 20 – April 26, 2008**

**Reception: Thursday, March 20, 7:00-10:00pm**

Eric Firestone Gallery is pleased to announce an important exhibit –  
**Enrique Montenegro: *American Modernist***.

Recognized in the 1950's as an important artist of the American Modernist movement, Enrique Montenegro's work is now, at long last, presented once again to the American art world with an exhibition that highlights his unique painterly vision.



In 1957 Montenegro was featured by *Life Magazine*, along with friend and colleague Richard Diebenkorn. This article introduced the American public to a new wave of abstraction emerging from the west that utilized the landscape and figure as points of departure. Montenegro sought to isolate and emphasize the figure, and investigate its relationship to its immediate environment and to the broader spectrum of the natural world. The exhibit **Enrique Montenegro: *American Modernist*** reveals a selection of works that Montenegro initiated at this time, and followed for the rest of his life: a body of work in which Montenegro drew from a deep knowledge of abstraction to invent a new realism.

Montenegro was known as a painter of forceful compositions driven by complex color schemes and lush, gutsy and virtuoso brushwork. In this selection, parking lots, pedestrian footpaths, shopping centers and shallow interiors frame isolated figures and create a tension and drama that reflect the social and political climates of postwar America. Planes of color and texture alongside subtle passages of deftly applied collage ignite the imagination. Compositional complexities of cinematographic brilliance sample as much from Velasquez and DeChirico as they do from Renaissance masters like Fra Angelico and Giotto, and lend a surreal anxiety to each piece. *The New York Times*, reviewing Montenegro's 1959 exhibit at the Parma Gallery, NY, wrote that Montenegro's semi-abstract figures and landscapes "owe their attractive and original character to the painter's sensuous feeling for the medium and color, both of which are richly exploited without becoming over-lavish...Slabs of color stand effective proxy for figures and still-life in semi-abstract paintings of odd, but genuine dramatic power." It wasn't, however, until he started to record the world around him that Montenegro's ability to know and to see became his calling card. *Art News* critic Sidney Illium (reviewing the same exhibit) wrote "Montenegro inclines neither to Diebenkorn's obvious patterning nor to Olivera's melodramatic chic, but to a kind of sociability. Not only does he look longer and harder than the others, he paints more of what he sees." Montenegro's personal search for universal truth remains as current today as it was sixty years ago.

Enrique Montenegro was born in Valparaiso, Chile in 1917 and died in Albuquerque, New Mexico in 2003. Montenegro earned a BFA from The University of Florida in 1944 and continued his studies at the Art Students League in New York with Reginald Marsh and Morris Kantor in 1945. Montenegro was the recipient of the Catherwood Fellowship for study in Europe in 1956 and a grant from the Pollack/Krasner Foundation in 2002. Montenegro's paintings have been exhibited widely; one person exhibits include the Denver Art Museum, Landau Gallery-Los Angeles, Mount Holyoke Museum of Art, North Carolina Museum of Art, Parma Gallery-New York, The University of Florida Museum of Art, The University of Texas Art Museum, and the White Museum-San Antonio. Montenegro's paintings are in the permanent collections of the Lowe Art Museum, Miami, FL ; Mount Holyoke Museum of Art, Mount Holyoke, MA; North Carolina Museum of Art, Raleigh, NC; and the Albuquerque Museum of Art and History, Albuquerque, NM.

For complete information as well as high resolution images, please contact Eric Firestone Gallery in Scottsdale, Arizona via email: "david\_tooker@ericfirestonegallery.com"  
Image "Mannequins", oil on canvas, 52" x 60", 1965