



Las Sociales

Lucas Ospina at Bodega Piloto

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Las Sociales takes as its point of departure the life that surrounds art: the openings, the cocktail parties, the names, the photographs, the conversations, and the rituals that accompany the circulation of artworks. In the context of ArtBo, Lucas Ospina brings these codes to Bodega Piloto to construct a situation in which sociability ceases to be the backdrop of an exhibition and becomes part of the work itself. Humor emerges as a way of observing a world that, even as it celebrates art, is also celebrating itself.

The relationship between art and social life has a long history. The title refers to the European salons of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, meeting places where artists, writers, intellectuals, and members of the elite gathered around conversation, exchange, and the shaping of opinion. Over time, the salon also became a bourgeois institution, against which other forms of gathering and exhibition emerged, seeking to break away from its conventions. In Colombia, this relationship between art, prestige, and social life took a particular form in the “society” pages of newspapers and magazines, which still operate as one of the stages for the public representation of the elite and of the country's cultural life. There, receptions, dinners, openings, and celebrations are recorded, accompanied by photographs and names, building a public image of those who take part in them.

This form of representation takes on a particular resonance when one looks back to the Colombia of the 1980s and 1990s, when the country was undergoing profound social, political, and economic transformations while, at the same time, the art market, the galleries, collecting, and the networks of new buyers were expanding. That intersection of art, money, prestige, and power does not belong to history alone: the forms of representation and the rituals of visibility that accompanied it are still present today. These pages recorded a society displaying itself in the midst of these transformations. The photographs of receptions and cultural events also shared space with the classified ads: advertisements for services, treatments, solutions to intimate problems, weight loss, and everything belonging to a far less elegant dimension of everyday life. That proximity introduces an irony into the carefully constructed image of society that appears in the photographs. The society pages have changed format and today coexist with other forms of circulating the public image, but the logic of appearing, being recognized, and building visibility around art remains. For Ospina, the society pages of yesterday and today offer a way of looking at

Colombian cultural and political life through its appearances, its aspirations, and its contradictions.

Ospina's position within this context is fundamental. An artist, draftsman, writer, professor, and critic, for more than two decades he has developed a sustained practice centered on observing the figures, institutions, discourses, and behaviors that make up Colombian cultural and political life. His work as a critic and teacher is part of that gaze: Ospina takes part in that world at the same time as he observes and questions it. Drawing and caricature allow him to carry that observation into the territory of humor, where likeness, exaggeration, and recognition become instruments of interpretation. In *Las sociales*, this gaze also turns toward the social dimension that accompanies art: the moment when an exhibition's cocktail party can become an event in its own right, and when the presence of those who attend, their relationships, and their visibility begin to form part of what gives value and meaning to the encounter with the work. What happens, then, when the social act of attending, appearing, and being recognized begins to matter as much as the work itself?

In *Las Sociales*, that gaze takes on a physical dimension. A welcome carpet introduces the language of arrival and public appearance; the cocktail party remains open, and a waiter brings into his service recognizable forms of Colombian hospitality. Arriving, being received, and making oneself visible are also small acts of representation; everyday gestures, but codes as well: who receives, who is received, who serves, who appears, and who is seen.

The life-size drawings of certain public figures occupy a central place. By bringing them to the scale of the body, Ospina turns his subjects into presences within the gathering. The caricature ceases to be merely an image on paper and acquires a public dimension: the figures appear, take up a place, and participate in the situation the work constructs. The individuals portrayed also expand the field of the work toward other forms of power, representation, and conflict, incorporating references that exceed the specific world of art and reach broader social and political questions.

The images and press clippings function as an archive of this history. Whether they appear physically at the gathering or remain working material for Ospina, the society pages constitute a particularly fertile source: a collection of faces, names, encounters, and forms of recognition. The newspaper records the event, but it also produces a particular idea of who deserves to be seen. In recovering this material, Ospina returns to a visual memory in which art, society, money, politics, and appearance have coexisted for decades.

Las sociales thus brings together different forms of sociability around art: the historical salon, the society pages, the opening, the cocktail party, and the fair. The work is built in that territory where looking at art and looking at those who surround it can become one and the same activity.

Whatever happens there will be part of the work.

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