

# Maribona in *Social* before the journey

By Juan Sarracino

Female portraits, professional visibility and a proposed Central American route in 1933

A page from *Social* brings together three images of women and a short notice about Armando Maribona. Its text connects an exhibition taking place at Havana's Lyceum with a forthcoming journey to Central America. Preserved in a copy identifying it as part of volume 18, number 7, July 1933, the page reveals how an artist could prepare his public presence before leaving home. Female images, their social captions and the announcement of a small travelling selection connect artistic activity with the life of the magazine. [1]

The notice opens by recalling the praise received several months earlier by an exhibition of female portraits. Maribona now returns to the same rooms with portraits of women and men and several nudes. This continuity matters. The Lyceum emerges as a place to return to, where recent work can be considered alongside a previous presentation and where viewers already familiar with the artist find new reasons to follow him. The announcement constructs a professional sequence, although it provides neither opening dates nor a complete checklist or sales figures.

## Women with names and occupations

The three reproductions are treated differently. The figure at the top receives the generic caption *Nude*. The other two have names and brief social identifications. Marisabel Saenz is introduced as the magazine's physical-culture writer and a forthcoming lecturer on women's aesthetics and biology. Rosie Galiano de Girón is presented as the wife of Guatemala's consul general in Cuba. The credit "Van Dyck" also appears beside the portraits; its precise function remains to be established. Proximity to the Maribona announcement does not establish that these two pictures reproduce paintings by him. Preserving the captions reveals how the page brings together an artistic subject, a professional contributor and a link within a social network.

In Saenz's portrait, her face tilts upward and turns to the side. Wavy hair, strongly marked eyes and a clearly defined mouth focus the viewer's attention. Yet the accompanying text introduces another dimension. The reader encounters more than an elegant woman's likeness: an intellectual and educational activity is also announced. The page publicizes a contributor's work while announcing Maribona's activities. The portrait's authorship and

medium have not been established, but its presence does reveal the coexistence of both kinds of promotion on a single page.

The portrait of Rosie Galiano de Girón establishes a more frontal presence. A visible hand and the support beneath the body help organize her relation to the viewer. Her consular identification brings Guatemala onto the page before the paragraph announces Central America. The coincidence is suggestive: the social world represented and the journey's geographical horizon meet. It does not prove that the Girón family organized an exhibition, financed the passage or hosted the artist. It does show that the region evoked was not entirely detached from Havana life for *Social's* readers.

## **A nude beside the portraits**

The nude occupies a large area of the upper section. The seated body opens through diagonals: the angle of a leg, a descending arm and the arm supporting the pose. The figure has a contemporary hairstyle and requires no mythological identification. Its proximity to the portraits places this study of the body within the same visual world of recognizable women and modern appearances. The combination brings together different ways of presenting a woman: a figure study, a portrait identified through professional activity and an image associated with a diplomatic connection.

Printed reproduction imposes conditions of its own. The halftone screen allows us to distinguish contours, dark areas and the distribution of light, but it flattens nuances and does not establish each image's original medium. Attention should therefore remain on the editorial composition while the identification of its components stays open. Three female images coexist with an announcement of portraits of both sexes. The magazine's selection is not the exhibition's inventory, and it does not justify adding the two society portraits to a list of exhibited paintings.

The Lyceum adds a further dimension to this connection between art and women's public presence. Luz Merino Acosta recalls that the association was established in December 1928 and opened to the public in February 1929. Founded by women, it pursued educational and cultural activities, with exhibitions forming part of this wider programme. Her account helps us understand that the venue mentioned by *Social* actively connected artists and audiences. It should not be reduced to a prestigious address lending authority to an announcement. [2]

## **The work travels first as news**

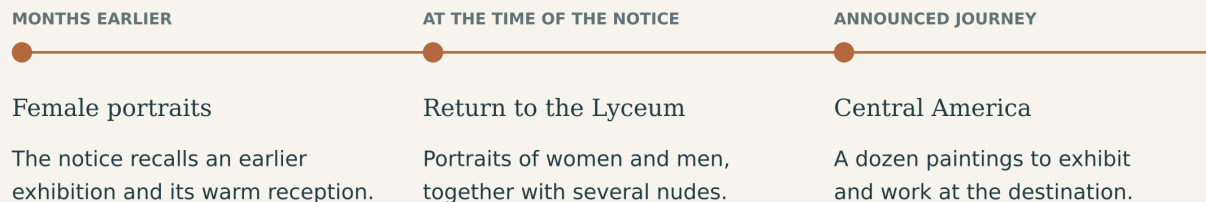
The final paragraph promises that Maribona will leave with a dozen of his best paintings to exhibit and work. This wording presents an artist in motion and proposes a manageable scale: a selection rather than the wholesale transfer of a studio. It also brings together two distinct activities. Exhibiting means taking work already made; working leaves open the possibility of producing new paintings at the destination. The short notice thus projects a career extending beyond the Havana exhibition.

Its tone is openly friendly. The magazine identifies Maribona as a friend and contributor, celebrates his merits and wishes him success. This connection does not invalidate the information, but it clarifies its purpose. The notice participates in launching the journey and building a reputation. Its praise records that support rather than supplying an independent assessment of the entire exhibition.

The page's historical interest lies precisely in this anticipation. Before we possess documentation of a Central American exhibition, we have a public image prepared for one: the promise of selected paintings, a Havana venue and a magazine placing the announcement alongside identifiable women from its social world. The future tense must remain intact. This notice does not establish whether Maribona actually travelled or where he subsequently exhibited. It does establish that, in July 1933 according to the copy's identification, his project had already begun to circulate publicly on paper.

## Maribona: before the journey

Social · July 1933, according to the copy's identification



The notice announces a plan; it does not establish that the journey took place.

ORIGINAL EDITORIAL DIAGRAM · Based on source [1] in the essay

Original editorial diagram of the sequence announced in Social: an earlier exhibition of female portraits, a return to the Lyceum and a proposed journey to Central America with a dozen paintings. July 1933 according to the copy's identification. Based on [1]; it does not establish that the journey took place. The archival page analysed in the essay is not reproduced in this edition.

## Sources and references

[1] Unidentified author. Retratos y desnudos de Maribona, Social. July 1933, vol. 18, no. 7, according to the heading of the copy. C13 PDF, p. 1; original printed page number not visible. Reproduced clipping with a re-typeset heading; visually checked. Sarracino archive, document C13.

[2] Luz Merino Acosta. El Lyceum y Lawn Tennis Club y las artes plásticas cubanas, Espacio Laical. 2018, no. 4. pp. 53-61; context used on pp. 53-54. Secondary study citing founding records and historical testimonies. Online source

[3] Florida International University / Digital Library of the Caribbean. Colección Social. 1916-1938. Collection-level record; the complete July 1933 issue was not consulted. Primary repository identified; the issue remains to be checked. Online source