



Red Social

Alejandro Garcia-Lemos, Cynthia Boiter

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About Red Social Red Social by Alejandro García-Lemos and Cynthia Boiter is a visual and literary art book that evolved from a 2012 art exhibition of work by García-Lemos at the Goodall Gallery at Columbia College in Columbia, SC. The title of the book and exhibition, Red Social, translates to Social Network in García-Lemos's native Spanish. As he approached this body of work, which is made up of 24 unique portraits, García-Lemos who is a native of Bogotá, Colombia, focused on relationship-building and the community of fellow artists and arts lovers he had become enmeshed in in his new home of Columbia, SC. The sitters for each portrait, almost all of whom were close members of his newly formed community, were asked to bring symbolic icons for their sitting and many went so far as to collaborate on their specific portraits. (Several fellow-artists made actual artistic contributions to their portraits.) "The creative space that opened during these sessions provided an atmosphere of candor which mimicked that of the therapist," the artist says. "I came to realize the importance of a comfort level between the artist and subject and I chose people who have been supportive of me and are truly friends and family". Once the series was complete and had been exhibited, García-Lemos hoped to continue in the collaborative spirit so he approached local writer and editor, Cynthia Boiter. It was his idea to have Boiter create short fictional stories about the characters in the portraits-whether she was personally familiar with the characters or not-based on nothing but the title of the portrait and the various icons represented. Boiter says that, "Many of the friends about whom I wrote had to become strangers before they could become subjects about whose inner lives-their worries, fantasies, and insecurities-I could write. But as unconnected as these stories are to the portrait models who inspired them, they are still real stories, I'm sure, that belong to someone else out there." The result is a fascinating reverse-process of illustration. Based upon García-Lemos's paintings, Boiter uses fiction to illustrate the portrait subjects. Each piece of short fiction-few are over 250 words in length-tells the tale of a unique individual with subject matters ranging from love to loss to issues of gender roles, new roles, and throwing off the roles society attempts to impose upon all of us.

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