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Havana 2000

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What do we ask of a set of photographs that describes a city, Havana in this instance? Clearly, we want it to present architectural documentation as articulately as possible. We also want a sense of when "now" was for the photographer (ambiguously dated photographs seem loose at their moorings) and a sense of where the pictures fall along the timeline of the city's development (historic buildings illustrated without their present contexts seem prevarications fit mainly for coffee table books).

In the twentieth century, the changes that have occurred in most Western cities (those that are not museums to their own pasts) have been ones of replacement and redesign. And in most of these cities, the most reliable visual indication of when architectural photographs were taken is the date of automobiles. In photographing these places, one juxtaposes the old and the new and keeps an automobile in view. But in Havana, the topographic changes during the last two-thirds of a century have been minimal: the juxtapositions one can make are often ones that could have been made seventy years ago. And, of course, Havana's almost half century-old American automobiles are famously still in use.

In the pictures of Havana shown here, juxtapositions, rather than apposing time past to time present, describe architectural conversations that have been going on for the better part of a century. The topics have rarely changed in the last forty years, however, giving the city an aura of the past that an American city attempting to retain so-called historic districts must envy. The clothes of the citizens (and perhaps the mere fact that the pictures are in color) tell us that the photographs were taken recently and provide the present context. The old American automobiles, besides affirming that the city is indeed Havana, serve, by their yearly increasing age, the function of an ever receding temporal (and historical) shoreline.

-Cervin Robinson

Color reproduction of "Havana 2000" was made possible by Hardy Holzman Pfeiffer Associates

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Morro lighthouse and Máximo Gómez monument

P L A C E S 1 4 : 1

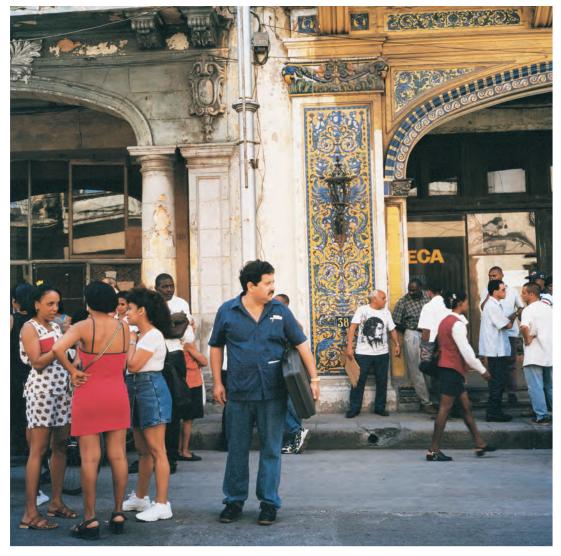


The city from El Morro, Capitol at center, Gómez monument to left



in Parque Central, with
National Capitol and palacio
del Centro Gallego (teatro
Garcia Lorca) behind

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Assembling for a demonstration for Elián Gonzalez, Vedado

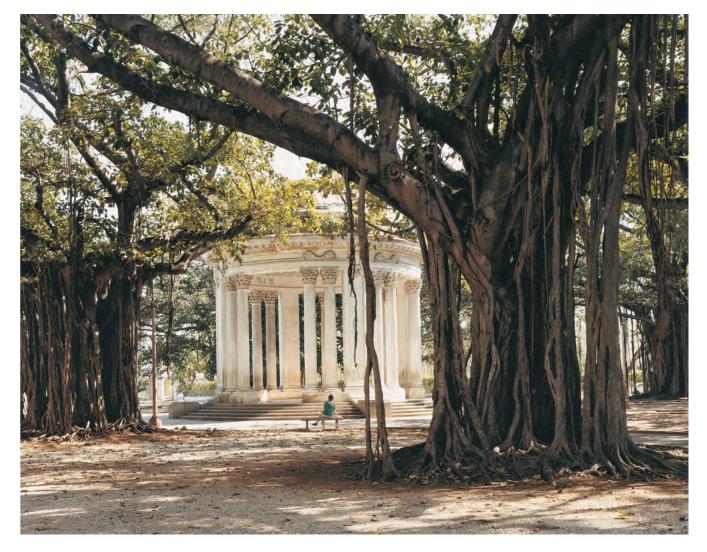


Julio Antonio Mella monument and steps of University of Havana

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Church of Jesús del Monte seen across Calzada de Dies de Octubre



Park on Avenida 5ta, between Calles 24 and 26, Miramar

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