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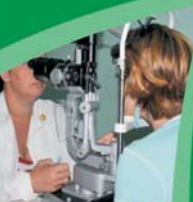




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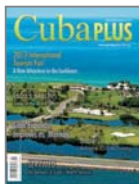
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Hola Sun
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Letter from the Publisher

Dear Readers,

Springtime is here, and that means lots of exciting news about Cuba.

In Varadero, the archipelago's leading sun and beach destination, Cuba's International Tourism Fair, FITCuba 2013, is set for May 7-10. This is the premiere event in Cuba for tour operators, travel agents, airline representatives and industry journalists to learn all about Cuba's tourism industry and the many attractive events held in this country, such as the Ernest Hemingway International Fishing Tournament.

Fishing enthusiasts from around the world will be coming to Cuba for the May 20-25 tournament, based at the Marina Hemingway in Havana, a great opportunity to fish, make friends and remember Hemingway.

In great news for boaters, the Marina Hemingway, Marina Gaviota Varadero and other Cuban marinas are being expanded and improved to meet the anticipated growth in recreational boating to Cuba, with more and better services and options for enjoying the archipelago. **Cubaplus** attended the Miami boat show for the first time this year and found lots of interest around these developments.

Also in this issue, learn more about Cuba's latest healthcare advances. The Health Ministry aims to return to the founding concepts of family medicine, and to do so, it is reorganizing its family doctor and family nurse program, which focus on prevention.

Cubaplus loves to help you learn about Cuban art. In this issue, an interview with Jorge Gil, whose work straddles a fine line between art and jewelry. Learn more about his auteur jewelry making and sculpture.

Spring and youth go hand in hand, and what better way to celebrate both than with a music festival? The 17th

International Cubadisco Fair takes place May 18-26, and its theme this year is young artists, concert music, and the violin, with many performances by Cuban and international singers and musicians. A special gala called Cuba: Music/Fashion will feature the latest concepts in art and fashion and their relationship to Cuban music. And speaking of fashion...

...this month's fashion article is a special one. Is fashion art? Cuban writer and art critic Frank Padrón tackles that subject in his piece on the work of designer Ismael de la Caridad.

As always, we at **Cubaplus** hope to enhance your enjoyment and delight in this beautiful country and its people. Check out our new and improved website, www.cubaplusmagazine.com, and share your experiences with us!

Sincerely,

To be able to share stories about boating in Cuba and the Americas, **Cubaplus** has partnered with the yachting lifestyle quarterly magazine *Marinalife*. For more information visit:

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Dominic Soave
Publisher

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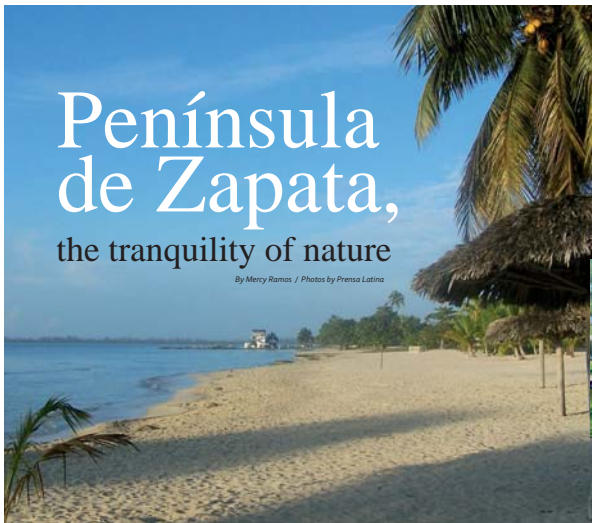
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Península de Zapata, the tranquility of nature

By Mercy Ramos / Photos by Prensa Latina



Guamá tourist center.

For nature lovers, the Peninsula de Zapata is an ideal destination. Located in the southern region of the central province of Matanzas, the peninsula is home to one of the country's most important ecosystems and also to Playa Larga, Playa Girón and Guamá, three places for spending a great vacation and enjoying the beach, diving, and the environment in general. One of the world's largest wetlands is located on this peninsula: the Ciénaga de Zapata, which spreads out over 10,499 square kilometres. It was declared a Biosphere Reserve in the year 2000.

The area is full of extensive virgin landscapes, with unique and very well-preserved flora and fauna—including



Guamá Tourist Center.

endemic species like the *Gallinula de Santo Tomas* (Zapata rail) and the *ferminia cerverai* (Zapata wren)—lush coastal and wetland vegetation, beaches, natural lakes and lagoons and deep caves.

In fact, more than 100 species of birds make their homes here, including the tiny bee hummingbird, the Cabrerito de la Ciénaga (*Torrearnis inexpectata*), Gundlach's Hawk, the Cuban parakeet and the green parrot. However, the Ciénaga de Zapata is also a natural refuge for thousands of migratory birds as they make their way from North America.

The swamp's lagoons also provide a habitat for two endangered species of aquatic vertebrates: the manatee and *manjuari*, or Cuban gar. At least 16 species of reptiles live in these swampy areas and grasslands, including the Cuban and American crocodiles, which reproduce on the grounds of a special breeding farm. There, visitors can also see iguanas, lizards, different types of frogs, *puercos jibaros*

(wild pigs), deer and two types of Cuban tree rat: the *jutia conga* and the *jutia enana*.

The Península de Zapata is also home to the Bahía de Cochinos, also known as the Bay of Pigs, where a U.S.-sponsored mercenary invasion was defeated in 1961, in just 72 hours. The bay is a beach resort area, and has a museum where visitors can learn about those historical events.



Above, divers at the entrance to the subterranean cave known as "Cueva de los peces."



A jutia.



The Ciénaga de Zapata Biosphere Reserve.



*Above,
la Girón
hotel.*



la Girón museum.



Crocodile arm.

In addition to taking in the sun and sea, vacation-goers can enjoy a pleasant boat ride on the Laguna del Tesoro. Motorboats take visitors to Guamá, a tourist center in the middle of the lagoon that features replicas of Cuba's indigenous people, the Taino, and their way of life. The installations, including cabins and a restaurant, are built on piles over the water.

Various hotels in the region offer accommodations for visitors and restaurants feature different specialties. We would like to recommend two in particular: El Colibri and La Boca, which specialize in crocodile meat, for those who want to savour that exquisite delicacy.

The Peninsula of Zapata is a place where you can find different options for enjoying a magnificent vacation, far from the hustle and bustle of the city and close to the tranquility of nature. ■

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Cuba's International Tourism Fair, FITCuba 2013, is organized by the Ministry of Tourism and is the most important trade event of its kind on the island. This year's fair is set for May 7 to 10 in Varadero, the Cuban archipelago's leading sun and beach destination.

Seductive and fascinating, Varadero is Cuba's best-known beach. It is located on the island's north coast, and runs along the narrow Hicacos Peninsula for 22 km in the province of Matanzas, 140 km from Havana. Its natural beauty, delights and opportunities for enjoyment are excellent reasons to make it the main theme of Cuba's 33rd International Tourism Fair.

Its miles of fine white sand and crystal-clear green-blue waters provide unmatched options in this universe of sun and beach for nautical activities, such as catamaran sailing, boat rides along the shoreline and sport fishing, and beautiful sea bottoms for recreational diving.

In addition to its beach, Varadero's attractions are significantly heightened by its privileged natural surroundings and its facilities for organizing events such as golf tournaments, on its professional

(18 hole/par 72) course, parachuting, incentive travel, and honeymoons.

Varadero is a free port and provides services at its two international marinas, equipped with the technical requirements necessary for receiving large numbers of boats. Nearby is the country's only underwater park, Cayo Piedras del Norte.

About 30 percent of the total area of the Hicacos Peninsula is occupied by the Varahicacos Nature Reserve. Considering the nearness of the valley of Yumuri, the rivers Canimar and Bacunayagua, and the Ciénaga de Zapata natural park, home to the largest wetland in the Caribbean, this is an ideal destination for those who love environmental and adventure tourism.

Diving and snorkelling, swimming with dolphins in Varadero or the nearby Rancho Cangrejo, microlight flights, excursions in jeep



The rivers Canimar nature reserve.



safaris along the banks of the River Canimar and the possibility of taking to its waters in rowboats and other craft, rides on a semi-submarine, and visits to archaeological sites are all opportunities for visitors in Varadero.

Brazil, which is the guest country of honour at this year's International Tourism Fair, will fill Varadero Beach with its colourful and multiethnic charms. The Brazil of the picturesque carnivals of Rio; of celebrated musicians like Heitor Villa-Lobos and Caetano Veloso; of a capital city born out of the genius of the great Niemeyer; and the soon-to-be venue of the FIFA World Cup and the Olympic Games—welcome, Brazil.

Together, we invite you to experience this new adventure in the Caribbean. ■

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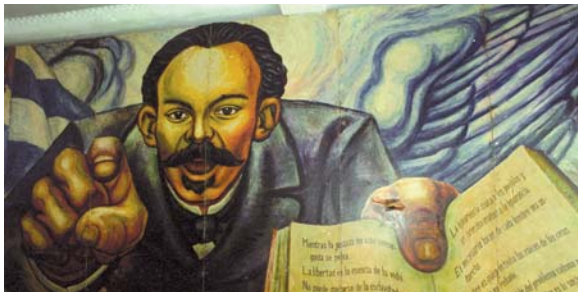
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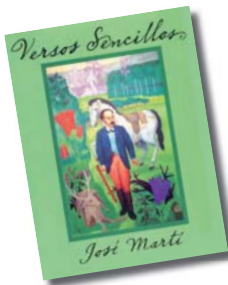
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artí, the poet

By *Ciro Bianchi Ross* / Photos by *Prensa Latina*



Some pigeonhole him into modernism. However, for others, he was the precursor of that literary movement, and yet others say that he was much more than a modernist: all of José Martí's work was an expression of the modern age.

He used—and how—the oldest and most popular forms of poetry, and demonstrated how much could be said using those moulds, which were already considered old and worn-out in his era. At the same time, he also anticipated the poetry of the future, and in his prose, he fully expressed the renaissance that would later come to the Spanish language with the arrival of Azorín, Juan Ramón Jiménez, Ortega y Gasset, and Antonio Machado....

Martí is a luxury of language. The Spanish writer Miguel de Unamuno used to say that Martí wrote in a sort of protoplasmatic language, that is, one that preceded the split between verse and prose. That is why when critics refer to his poetry, they do not limit themselves to his collections of poems; they include his speeches and articles. Even in his youthful prose, "Martí demonstrates that for the integral poet, there is only one language, dominated at its origins by the beating of the heart, which is instantaneously transmitted from the pulse to the pen, and open at the top to visionary space," Cuban critic Cintio Vitier writes.

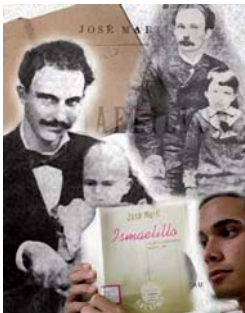
The Argentine writer Domingo Faustino Sarmiento said that nothing existed in the Spanish language like the outpouring of Martí's roar. Nicaraguan poet Rubén Darío lamented that he was unable to put into verse the luminous greatness of this Cuban. And Unamuno remarked, "The style is the man, and because Martí was a man, a real man, he had a style, a real style." But more than a writer, he was a great prose writer, and writing for him was a way of serving. He was an essayist, a chronicler, and an orator; that is, he composed many different pieces. His letters fill various volumes of his complete works.

Martí was born in Havana in 1853. He suffered prison and exile. He made his living with a variety of occupations. His main goal was to liberate Cuba from Spanish colonialism, and to that end he devoted his greatest efforts. It was why he organized what he called the "necessary war." He died in battle in 1895, with the war barely underway, and having spent only 17 of his 42 years in his homeland. He is known as the Apostle of Cuba's independence.

With such an intense, eventful life, marked as well by marital conflicts, Martí left behind very few organic works. He published a novel, *Amistad funesta* (1885), and two poetry collections: *Ismaelillo* and *Versos sencillos* (Simple Verses). Two more remained unpublished: *Versos libres* and *Flores del destierro*.

While *Ismaelillo* (1882) still moved within the atmosphere of the classics, it was the beginning of a poetic dawn. It is like nothing that had been done previously in Spanish poetry. Martí knew that when he recommended that the publication of his poetry begin with this book, which he dedicated to his son. None of his previous poems was worth an iota, he claimed. These, in contrast, were "like a visit from a new muse." They are verses in a light meter that follow, with grace and ingenuity, the games and mischief of a little boy. Poems written in moments of happiness, when the father feels close to his son, despite being absent. The author unsheathes his tenderness in this poetry collection, a tenderness that appeared new to the modernists and that did not hide the poet's preoccupation with his civic and political commitments. Brief poetry, with unexpected rhymes, complex syntax, archaisms and verbal treasures, condensation and detail.

Versos sencillos (Simple Verses, 1891) is apparently simple. Cuban writer José Lezama Lima said it was



the simplicity of one who, after having traveled the world, begins again, and things are reborn for him. In any case, in these verses, the most widely-read by the Cuban people, strange meanings and tragic references burn; perhaps it is the autobiographical references, his assimilation of tradition, or his unique capacity for taking words to their height.

In *Versos libres* (Free Verses), the life of this Cuban hero passes before our eyes. He says, "Pieces of my own entrails are these...None has come forced, feigned or recomposed from my mind, but instead as tears and blood that gush from a wound...I did not patch with this or that, but instead cut into myself. These are writings not in the ink of academia, but in my own blood."

The poet could have said the same thing about *Flores del destierro*. Both poetry collections form a stylistic unity and a complete ideology. Verses of passion and agony, sweat and blood. ■





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he lear in Butterfly

By Raúl García / Photo by Luis Olmo



Lives in Cuba's Mountains

The glasswinged butterfly (*Greta oto*), is rare and little-known in Cuba. However, a local species, the *Greta cubana*, can be found in the country's central and eastern mountains, particularly the Guamuhaya—also known as the Sierra del Escambray—in Sancti Spiritus province.

According to researcher Luis Olmo, the *Greta cubana*, which is also referred to as the Cuban Clearwing, is distinguished by its beautiful translucent wings, which make it the only diurnal butterfly of its kind on the island.

In recent field studies, the Cuban Clearwing was spotted in the Pico Potrerillo hills, about 900 meters above sea level, said Olmo, who is part of the Cuban Speleological Association's Grupo Samá.

The Samá group first encountered the Clearwing in 1995 in the Sierra del Escambray, which spans Sancti Spiritus, Cienfuegos and Villa Clara provinces. Specifically, it was detected in a karstic pit known as *Caja de Agua* in Alturas de Banao, south of the city of Sancti Spiritus and about 365 kilometres east of Havana.

According to previous research, the butterfly had been known to inhabit forests in areas such as Hoyo de las Mariposas, Hoyo de los Pitos, and Caballete de Casas, in shady, humid forests that were 500 to 700 meters above sea level.

Olmo says the *Greta Cubana*'s beautiful translucent wings, which act as a natural defence mechanism against predators, also make it hard to spot. It has a wingspan of 5.5 to 6 centimetres and the opaque borders of its wings are dark brown, sometimes tinted with red or orange, and it has a dark-coloured body.

Some researchers believe that glasswinged butterflies from the central Cuban mountains are smaller than those from the country's east.

Cuba has some 177 species of diurnal butterflies, 28 of which are endemic and largely found in forests. Its nocturnal butterflies are much more diverse, but it is a little-studied group of species that is estimated to number in the hundreds. ■



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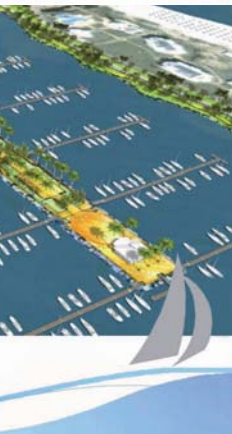
By Dominic Soave / Photos by Courtesy Marina Gaviota

Cuba is setting its sights on an expansion of nautical tourism as it prepares to receive more recreational boaters by expanding and improving its marinas and related services. Two of its most important marinas are the historic Marlin Marina Hemingway and the Marina Gaviota Varadero.

MARINA GAVIOTA VARADERO

Cuba currently has fewer than 1,000 transient slips, but its new marina, Gaviota Varadero, will have 1,200 slips, including docks for megayachts and a full-service yard.

The Marina Gaviota Varadero, which is operated by the Gaviota Group, is located on the north shore of Matanzas province on the internationally-celebrated Varadero Beach, about 89 miles from Havana (coordinates: 23° 11.244 N - 81° 08.069 W). It is right on the tip of the Hicacos Peninsula, and very close to the best hotels.



pen or Business.

Currently, the marina offers docking, repair and other services for yachtsmen, and work is well underway to create the largest and most complete tourist port in Cuba, featuring 1,200 slips for small and large boats, a deluxe hotel, a number of condominiums, technical services, shopping malls and other facilities.

Work that has been completed and is now operational include a new administration building, new piers and wharves, maritime repair shops, an ice factory and warehouses and storage for gear. A state-of-the-art Travel Lift, which can hoist up to 100 tons, is another new feature.

The Kike-Kcho, the only restaurant of its kind in Cuba, is now open for business, featuring a diverse arrange of

seafood, including fresh catch, shellfish and lobster that can be personally picked out by the customer.

With expanded capacities for maintenance and repairs, Marina Gaviota Varadero has a new service line for its own fleet, direct customers and third parties.

Boaters will find lots of options for enjoying their stay: scuba diving, onboard activities, and full-fledged enjoyment of maritime life, with an exclusive Sun Cruise tour on Tahiti 75 and 80 catamarans, which are French-built (by Fountaine Pajot) on a fabulous day-long ride featuring open bar, snorkelling around the coral reefs, a swim with the dolphins, a seafood lunch, and beach time at the paradise-like Cayo Blanco, along with many other attractions.





View from Club Nautico Internacional de la Habana.

MARINA HEMINGWAY

The Marina Hemingway (Coordinates: 23 05.3N - 82 30.5W) is usually the first stop for yachters when they sail to Cuba. Located in Santa Fe, about nine miles west of Havana, this marina is operated by Nautica Marlin.

It has 400 berths, including 170 for medium and large-sized craft, such as mega-yachts, and services include water, electricity, security, ship chandlery, minor repairs and others. Visitors can also book taxis or rent autos, and can enjoy excursions, diving and fishing options.

The marina's other services include a restaurant, snack bar, pharmacy, medical services, nautical supply center,

grocery, telephone, Internet, crew rental, garbage collection, accommodations and cable TV.

The Club Nautico Internacional de la Habana, which sits at the beginning of the marina's Canal 2, is a beautifully decorated yacht club overlooking the canal, yachts and power cruisers. A non-profit organization, the club has more than 2,000 members from 60 countries, and it promotes pleasure boating, nautical sports and nautical tourism in the form of competitions, regattas and other events. The Marina Hemingway is the venue for the annual Ernest Hemingway International Billfish Tournament, and the 63rd annual tournament is set for May 20-25 this year. ■

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Boaters eagerly anticipate a cruising

Text and photos by Robin Smith-Martin

With economic reforms continuing in Cuba, American businesses are preparing for improved relations and future free trade and travel, and no group is more excited about engaging with the people of Cuba than the mariners and yachtsmen of the United States. From Maine to Key West to Houston, yacht and boating clubs are buzzing with hopeful plans to set course south to the pristine and friendly waters of Cuba's north coast.

Because of continuing restrictions on travel as part of the U.S. economic blockade against Cuba, U.S. citizens and residents must obtain permission, or a "license," from the U.S. Treasury Department to travel to Cuba by air or sea. Once the United States lifts those restrictions, Key West would be the natural last stop to Havana, and marinas and service providers in the Florida Keys are working hard to prepare for the tens of thousands of vessels that would be expected to make the 90 mile cruise across the Florida



Brad Blask precision crafts skateboards.



1950
Havana Race

Ticonderoga

Dr Hub Isaacs
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First to Finish
1950 1951 1952

On the west side of Safe Harbor, Stock Island Marina Village is managing a renaissance on Shrimp Road. An area that was once known for crack cocaine and prostitutes is being revolutionized, and it now boasts the county's largest organic garden, a new dog park, and an enclave of craftsmen and artists. By August, this marina village will have 128 new concrete floating slips, a fuel dock and ship's store.

Community engagement and economic activity is on the rise, creating growing anticipation for positive change in U.S.-Cuba relations. Roostica, the most recent restaurant startup, is a traditional wood-fired pizzeria offering a top wine selection and the best salads on Stock Island. At the lunch bar you'll find local artisan Brad Blask with his signature longboards, precision-crafted skateboards that he designs and manufactures out of tropical hardwoods in his workshop in Stock Island Marina Village.

In Cuban coffee shops across the Keys—like 5 Brothers in Old Town Key West—daily patrons down espresso and speak intensely about the need for greater freedom of travel to Cuba. Discussion centers on participating in the annual Hemingway Billfish Tournament, which is set for May, and resurrecting the annual St. Petersburg-to-Havana Sailboat Race, which was founded in 1930. But the ultimate marker of normalized maritime relations, say the old timers, would be a return of the twice-weekly Key West-to-Cuba car ferry, allowing Americans and Cubans to freely engage and explore their communities and cultures.

Entrepreneurshavealwaysbeencatalystsforchangeandprogress. Where there is demand, there is opportunity. As Cuba's Marina Gaviota Varadero prepares to become the premiere marina in the Caribbean, so the marinas of the Florida Keys are preparing to accommodate the south-bound yachtsmen en route. ■

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rd e in ay ishin ourna ent

By Roberto F. Campos



The 63rd edition of the Ernest Hemingway International Billfish Fishing Tournament takes place from May 20 to 25 this year, according to Cuban tourist authorities.

This is an excellent opportunity for fishing enthusiasts from around the world to obtain a relevant place in this type of nautical event, said Roberto Salinas, general director of the Marina Hemingway, during a press conference to announce this year's dates.

Boats and teams from France, Canada, Venezuela and Italy made their reservations early on, and organizers said they expected a significant increase in the number of participants this year. As the continuation of a tradition that began in 1950, when Hemingway was still alive, this competition is known for the hospitality it offers to men (and women) of the sea from every corner of the world.

In general, teams of up to four anglers can participate in their own or rented boats. The event's program includes an awards reception, tours of the Cuban capital and opportunities for exchanging experiences.

According to the tournament's rules, participating anglers must use the tag and release technique, as stipulated by the International Game Fish Association. The line for this tournament is 50 pounds.

Fishing in the so-called Gulf Stream, or Gulf Current, which runs along the Havana shoreline, was one of Hemingway's favorite activities, leading to that stretch becoming known as the "Hemingway Mile." Eventually, the billfish tournament was born. Some say that the tournament's roots go back to Havana's early 20th century *Club Náutico* (Nautical Club), whose activities led to the first billfish fishing tournament in 1950.

Whatever its origins, the Hemingway tournament is now included by the IGFA on its roster of annual events, with points granted to competitors. It is organized every year by the International Hemingway Club, founded in 1992, and the Marlin chain of marinas in Cuba.



The tournament is also part of the development of Cuba's recreation industry, especially its growing nautical attractions, all part of the government's strategies for diversifying its attraction as a tourist destination beyond the sun-and-beach option. Every year, the Cuban archipelago welcomes more than two million travelers with more offers, such as conferences, incentives, nature, history and culture, with growing space for recreational nautical activities. ■





Zucchero in Havana, Italian style

By Jesús Adonis Martínez / Photos by Prensa Latina

In the world of music, which has its own geography, the waters of the Mississippi can lap the shores of the Mediterranean.

And anyone can confirm this by listening to the music of Zucchero Fornaciari (b. 1955) and hearing how his African-American style rhythm-and-blues enters the sea of Italian musical tradition. Vivaldi, Donizetti, Rossini, Verdi, Puccini, Caruso, Pavarotti: the whole imposing musical legacy of the Italian peninsula crisscrossed and fragmented by rhythmic breaks, the drum beat of jazz, the lament of New Orleans blues, and the howl of rock and roll from all over the world.

That is what Zucchero has to offer. He is unquestionably the best-known Italian contemporary singer in the world, but he is also much more, as he demonstrated during a visit to Havana in December.

The artist, a native of Roncole Verdi in Reggio Emilia, northern Italy, presented his latest album, *La sesión cubana* ("The Cuban Session")—produced by Don Was—at a massive outdoor concert on the grounds of Cuba's national arts university, the Instituto Superior de Arte (ISA).

The popular Cuban band Buena Fe opened the concert for a crowd of thousands of young people who, for one



night, resisted the lure of the annual International Festival of New Latin American Cinema, which was taking place at the same time.

Soon Zuccherò took the stage, launching into songs from his new album, alternating between fusion of international pop-rock and Cuban rhythms and other, well-known tunes from his repertoire, seasoned here with arrangements featuring an undeniably Caribbean twist.

On the ISA grounds—the same place where in May 2012, during the 11th Havana Biennial, Austrian artist Hermann Nitsch shook local spectators with his aesthetic ideas about religious “archeology” and art/ritual in his bloody *Acción 135*—Zuccherò soon had everyone moving to the music, with his irresistible *Baila, baila, morena, sotto questa luna piena. Under the moonlight...*

He followed with hits like *Senza una donna* and *Misere*, featuring the special accompaniment of Cuban pianist Frank Fernández. For other songs, he shared the stage with other stellar local musicians, such as Elmer Ferrer (guitar, bass), Horacio “El Negro” Hernández (percussion), Jorge Reyes (double bass) and young virtuosos like keyboardist Maykel Leoner Pernas, trumpeters Lázaro Oviedo and Maikel Corrales, and *tumbadora* drummer Julio Guerra.



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Zuccherò said that singing here became one of his dreams after he performed the first rock concert—together with his band and the Vivaldi Orchestra—at the Kremlin in Moscow after the fall of the Berlin Wall. On that day, Dec. 8, 1990, the tenth anniversary of the death of John Lennon, Zuccherò shared the stage with Randy Crawford to sing that emblematic song by the *L'enfant terrible* of Liverpool: "Imagine." At the end of the concert, as the ovation continued, Zuccherò told himself, "I'm going to do the next one in Cuba."

However, his manager at the time—who also represented Ray Charles and Sting—told him that if he sang in Cuba, he would never be able to sell any records in the United States (due to that country's policy of blockade against Cuba). "But I don't care about that anymore at this point," Zuccherò said during his Havana visit.

He has shared the stage and cut albums with the likes of Luciano Pavarotti, Miles Davis, John Lee Hooker, Tom Jones, Sting, Ronan Keating, Elton John, Stevie Wonder, Cheb Mami, Dolores O'Riordan, Paul Young, Maná, Brian May and Andrea Bocelli.

Likewise, the composer of *Bluesugar* (1989)—the best-selling album in the history of music in Italy—said that making his new CD, *La sesión cubana*, was a very personally gratifying experience. "I really enjoyed putting it together with the songs that I wanted," he said.

For him, Havana was the closing of a circle that began exactly 22 years earlier at the Kremlin in Moscow, and at the same time, the opening-up of a new path. Addressing the crowd of more than 20,000, he dedicated his music to the memory of John Lennon.

This concert was the first stop of his world tour to promote *La sesión cubana*.

Music lovers in Australia, the United States, Canada, Mexico, Venezuela, Brazil, Argentina and Europe will soon discover a new version of the man who sang "Miserere"; we could call it his Cuban avatar.

And in the end, nobody can possibly harbor any doubts about Adelmo Fornaciari's choice of a stage name: Zuccherò means Azúcar ("sugar") in Italian. ■





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by: *Don Ciccio*

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By Mireya Castañeda

The work of Moisés Finalé has a poetic element that makes it immediately recognizable. However, every piece is different and always surprising, although all feature his baroque compositions, chromatic eclosions, use of light and novel techniques.

Finalé (Cárdenas, Cuba, 1957) is one of the most emblematic representatives of the so-called "1980's boom," an important transition period, both formally and conceptually, in the Cuban visual arts.

He has lived in Paris since 1989, and since his "return" to Havana in 2003 with his retrospective exhibition, "Herido de sombras" (Wounded by Shadows), at the Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, he has come back six times, with the exhibitions *Dulzuras insulares* (Insular sweetnesses), *Doble realidad* (Double reality), *Simulacres atypiques* (Atypical shams), *Turista cubano o Problemas de identidad* (Cuban tourist or Identity problems), *El peso de su cuerpo* (The weight of the body), and above all, *Se fueron los 80* (The 80s are gone).



A orismo de amor,
acr-lic on canvas. cm



*Carnaval chino en aris,
cm, mixed media.*

Contact Information
www.moisesfinale-art.com
finale@cubarte.cult.cu
finale57@googlemail.com

*tra espada para anta Bárbara,
cm, acrylic on canvas.*

The La Acacia gallery is the host of his most recent exhibition in Havana (March 2013), and he agreed to meet with **Cubaplus** in his workshop in the Vedado neighborhood of Havana to talk about his show and other aspects of his work.

They are large-format pieces...

"About 40 pieces, in large format, very recent work; others I made during my previous trip, and some are representative of previous exhibitions. The paintings now go further than two-dimensional, and foray into volume. They have elements incorporated, and are not just painted conventionally on the canvas; instead, there are also structures, objects, sculptures and metals."



*Turista cubano o problemas de identidad
cm, mixed media.*

Since your return in 2001 and your exhibition at the Bellas Artes, you have exhibited five more times in Havana...

"Since 2003, I have come more often to Havana. The reason is to work here in a context that is different from working in my French studio, and based on that, I think that a lot of things change, through ideas and motivations. Just by being here and working, things happen differently. I'm not going to compare paintings. They are different moments in an artist's work; the spaces are different, the studio is different, and the circumstances are different."

Could you tell us about your creative process?

"The creative process advances with the advance of the years, as I advance in age, and as my life motivations

change. The process begins with analysis, the search for an idea or theme. For example, with *Se fueron los 80s*, I began looking for something that was latent among young people and Cubans, and every time I was in an interview or with friends, the subject of the 80s would come up, one way or another: 'They were so good,' as if everybody were still in the 80s, even in the way they dressed. That really struck me. From then on I began my searching, and the idea was to motivate a public, so that they would give me objects—I called them relics—from the 80s for some boxes, and to my surprise, the quantity of objects from the 80's that people had tucked away was impressive. That collection was like an awakening,



Fiesta de despedida,
2011,
150 cm,
acrylic on canvas.



Ultras insulares,
2011,
150 cm,
acrylic on canvas.



Ella vive en otro mundo,
2011,
150 cm, mixed media.



Noche para hacer arte,
2011,
150 cm, mixed media.

and I got really interested, and felt really good when I saw that people were interested in the exhibition, and that the public was motivated.

"Then there's the parallel part of trying to experiment and work in a more contemporary way, if you can talk about being contemporary in traditional forms of painting. I approach my work through new materials, different resources, sometimes paint or acrylic, to talk about traditional things; I think that the way the canvases are used and the things I do are totally different from what is traditional, and one way or another it is what motivates the spectator, and it is why the public follows my exhibitions."

Al lado del
camino,
mi ed
techni ue.



Search and experimentation are two terms that are very closely associated with your work...

"I think that right now it is what interests me the most. I consider my work to be contemporary, avant-garde, my own; in short, let the critics and public decide. Personally, I've thought that my work is that of a very solitary artist, because in the end, I do not fit into any artistic tendency or avant-garde movement, even though I am very much up to date on what is happening in international art. I wouldn't want to be influenced, either, by any of those large exhibitions that I see or those artists that I know. The main objective is always to try to create work that has a Finalé hallmark; work that does not respond to anybody, or any movement, and that people can identify as a pure Finalé."

That's right, your painting is perfectly recognizable...

"That hallmark comes from the 80s. Just by chance, I began to appropriate a way of drawing, a figuration that responded to the way I am. It is like a stamp; nobody else makes that type of drawing or form. Those masked women, those men/women who mingle together, the tonalities; that same experimentation

causes people to recognize the work as my work. It is a figuration that comes from the 80s and continues to change. Sometimes I go along appropriating or re-appropriating my own figuration. It is a term that vanguardists really like—appropriation, which comes from all of that postmodern art. I re-appropriate moments that I made and I give them a new form, but always playing with the fact that it is my work; that is, there are changes, but it's me."

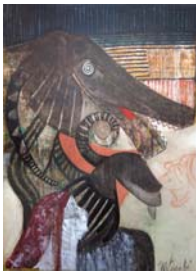
We can always talk to you about innovations...

"In France I am using metal sheets, I give them form. I am making pieces that are practically all metal, where neither canvas nor paint appear. It's still two-dimensional, but all metal."

What other projects are you working on?

"I'm going to hold a large exhibition in Haiti, a place that really attracts me. I feel very close to that country, because of its culture and its people. I think that the exhibition in Haiti will come after the exhibition in Havana, and then Germany and other projects for this year that I need to add to the calendar."

Moisés Finalé is a maestro, a creator in the strict sense of the word. Neither artistic tendencies nor avant-garde movements, much less "what's selling now," influence his work. Without having to come close enough to read the signature, one can look at his work and fearlessly say, that's a Finalé, because it bears his incomparable hallmark. ■



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cm,
acr lic on canvas.

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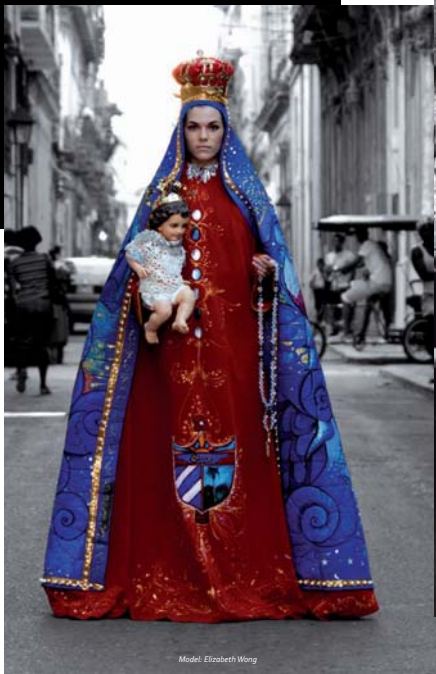
is also an art

fashion

The Virgin of Charity, holding a child and walking through a busy Havana with a photograph-like background; she wears the red of fire and blood, but her mantle is the ocean itself, not just because of its intense blue, but also because of the elements that cover her.

Another woman, dressed like Marlene Dietrich, looks out defiantly from a bar with her expressive hat; now the black and white photo background (the outstanding chromatic element) is the medium.

The centrally-leading blue, or rather, several ranges of that very representative colour, are back in the sensuality and movement of a mermaid who



Model: Elizabeth Wong



Model: Nay González

is now on land, but who still bears her maritime elements, together with two expressive peacocks, as she is surrounded by the green of lush vegetation. Lastly, and also surrounded by our essential greenness, another young woman unfurls her wings; gold is now her chromatic sign, and her winged dress features beauty spots and ornaments that give it great vitality.

What do all of these designs have in common? In addition to their originality, power and beauty, they are all by one of our most outstanding artists in this specialty of the arts: Ismael de la Caridad, a hard-working designer with an impressive professional record.

By Frank Padrón

Photos by F.A.C. Project

*Makeup Artist:
Pavel Marrero*

*Assistant Designer:
Daniel Otero*

*Models:
- Nay González
- Katia Gil
- Elizabeth Wong*

s ael de la aridad



Model: Nay González



Model: Katia Gil

He began working at Cuba's Cultural Assets Fund (*Fondo de Bienes Culturales*) in 1980, designing clothing that used hand-dyed fabrics on the initiative of Nisia Agüero. At the same time, he worked as a model for a number of state entities, including the Ministry of Light Industry, Locales, Contex, the Palacio de Artesanía (arts and crafts retail center)—where he was its exclusive artist—and others. One day, he felt the need to create his own work, and that is why he began working at the Karl Marx and Mella theatres but without abandoning his work with clothing made from hand-printed fabrics. Shortly after that, he joined the Cuban Association of Artists and Artisans (*Asociación Cubana de Artesanos y Artistas*), designing *batas cubanas* (loose-fitting traditional Cuban dresses), something that he still does, with one collection annually. He has participated in Telarte with collections inspired by the

painted textiles of Sosabravo, and he has designed for Fashion Week events in Cuba and internationally (United States, Mexico, and elsewhere).

Frequently, Ismael has united his art with that of one of our great painters, Zaida del Río, with whom he has created beautiful work, such as the recent *Nacimiento de Ochún* ("Birth of Ochún"), which also included the participation of Carlos Guzmán, and which was one of the most popular events during the recent Arte Moda event on fashion and art.

When he is asked about the main sources of inspiration for his work, he immediately replies, "The Malecón, across from which I happily live; the Morro, mulatta women, the air, colour, and Cuban and Latin American mythology. It fills me with complete satisfaction to work in Cuba. The public enjoys it, and even though I travel all over, there is nothing like working here." ■

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"Caraba a," early 21st Century.

Jewelry has a centuries-old history. Deciphering the enigmas that flow from the creations of gold and silversmiths is not an easy task. The first thing would be to shed any evaluative prejudices that do not recognize an authentic artistic language in jewelry. In contemporary art, concepts are being broadened so that they can eliminate the tenuous line between a piece of jewelry and a sculpture.

One relevant example in Cuban jewelry making is Jorge Gil (Havana, 1961). For many years, his concept of jewelry has been very much connected to that of sculpture.

From his elaborately and boldly-designed jewelry, elegantly simple and unsurpassable in craftsmanship, the artist has moved to what he calls "salon sculptures."

In looking over articles and catalogues that refer to Gil's work, we can see how this move to sculpture was inevitable. This jeweler likes the term "sculptor's jewelry." It was no coincidence that in March 2010 he received approval for the legal importation and sale of his jewelry designs from the Department of the Treasury in Washington (despite the economic blockade), because they are considered to be small-format sculptures.

Gil has created a way of working precious metals that distinguishes him within that very ancient trade. His methods are what make him unique. His pieces, which can be included in minimal art, are above all very contemporary.

In his Havana home on the River Almendares, where he has his workshop, he received a visit from *Cubaplus* for what became a relaxed, extensive dialogue.

or e il

the tenuous line between jewelry and sculpture

By Mireya Castañeda
Photos by Raúl Casas Anca and Luis M. Gell



Luna de Mareas

nickel-plated
and cast and textured bronze, titanium sphere, oxidized
and colored by electrolysis.

La Luna de kontiki

*Bronze with patina,
acrylic, American wood.*



"My history as a sculptor cannot be conceived without my birth as a silversmith. There's the knowledge that it gives you from the standpoint of concept and construct; and then there's the fact that you spend a lot of time working in a small scale, prepared for them to inhabit that space."

"Pieces that once inhabited the human anatomy can be taken perfectly into space. That is what I advocate, and after slaving away on jewelry for almost 25 years—because I make jewelry—I realized that I was ready to start casting my first bronzes, and to make reinterpretations of jewelry that I thought could somehow inhabit a place with a greater breadth."



Lunas Nuevas

*Bronze with patina, stainless steel,
acrylic.*

For our readers, you are going from jewelry to sculpture...

"I have two transitions: one is from jewelry to sculpture, from the jewelry that I resized and made into a salon sculpture; and the other is where that salon sculpture that keeps growing and becomes an object with another dimension."

Your sculptures, then, have the character, spirit and finish of a piece of jewelry...

"Trained sculptors have a conception that is different from mine as a silversmith, and that is the issue of finish. For them, perhaps, it is not the most important thing; they go for the large volume, a certain texture, but with imperfections. That is not my case. I want the sculpture I make to be as well-made as a piece of jewelry."

Each piece is unique in its conception. Explain your creative process to us...

"I have training in mechanical drawing. I draw a lot, not with a computer, but in the old-fashioned way. I

On the Rocks

*Cast iron, glass, steel
with black patina.*



a a sut a

*Titanium rade , partiall
colouri ed b electrol sis, kt
old.*



it has a high point of fusion; and it is light. One of its attributes is that it is great for dyeing. I do it with fire and an electrolytic process."

An artisan...?

"I am an artisan; I defend that. For me, painters are also artisans. I think an artisan is somebody who can materialize what he or she thinks in wood or on a canvas. I am an artisan touched by some deity who one day gave me the possibility of learning about titanium. I don't think my work has any philosophical foundations. I go for beauty, for essence. I will always defend my work based on beauty and scale."

Do you work in series?

"I've done two series. One form has given me the possibility of transforming it into others, and working

anoe series r os rin s

*Titanium rade , partiall colouri ed
b heatin movin part .*



La una de va

*Titanium rade partiall colouri ed
b electrol sis, steel wire, e tendable
chain.*

go to nature; that's where everything is. What I extract from nature in terms of rhythm, form, character, I then influence by using the architecture that can inhabit one of the pieces of jewelry that I make.

"First I have to figure out how to resolve a form to be able to know whether or not I can do it, although what one imagines is almost always real."

Your work is quite minimalist...

"I try, with a minimum of resources, to get the message across to you like a telegram. I don't like for my work to have a lot of elements; the fewer the better, which is very difficult."

We can't leave out titanium...

"It has been a leading metal in my work for the last 15 years, and has many attributes. It is bio-compatible;



achu a e

Titanium rade , on movin part



he e o the to

*Titanium rade partiall colouri ed
b electrol sis, steel wire ecklace*

La o u de a u ia

*Titanium rade , partiall
colouri ed b heatin , pearl
white .*



o a e to Rodin

*Titanium rade , partiall colouri ed
b electrol sis.*



is ida

cm

*Titanium rade partiall colouri
ed b heatin , movin chains.*



with an original idea, adding hundreds of details without losing the essence of the original; every ring or necklace comes out different. The first was the series *Arcos* (which appears in a catalog in which the Lark Jewelry gallery in the United States featured what they called the best 500 rings in the world), and the second was *Las lunas de Eva*, a series of necklaces (one of them, *Lotus*, made the cover of the Dutch magazine *Edelmataal*)."

The sumptuary nature and artwork—do you consider them to be mutually exclusive terms?

"Value almost always lies in special stones, or in gold, and I'm not into that. I go for pure design, beauty, something that can become a personal attribute of yours based on aesthetics, not value."



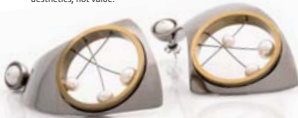
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*Titanium rade partiall
colouri ed b electrol sis.*

Jorge Gil has exhibited his work in galleries in Havana, Paris, Barcelona, Rome, Pennsylvania and Amsterdam, and has points of sale in the galleries of the Fondo Cubano de Bienes Culturales at the Hotel Meliá las Américas, Varadero; Forma, on Calle Obispo, and the Victor Manuel, in the Plaza de la Catedral, both of which are in Habana Vieja. Also, in the CODA Museum, Apeldoorn; Galerie Zee, Zand, Zilver, La Haya and Galerie Montulet, Gouda (Netherlands). At Cuba's annual International Arts and Crafts Fair (FIART), he has won prizes for Best Individual Piece (1993) and for Jewelry Collection (2009).

A well-balanced combination of practical artisan's knowledge and today's designs for auteur jewelry making and sculpture make Jorge Gil a very contemporary artist. ■



e as

*Titanium rade , pearls white ,
steel wire.*

a os des u s

*Titanium rade partiall
colouri ed b electrol sis.*



onta t



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Cuba's national program for the study, prevention and control of retinitis pigmentosa with determination of prevalence, epidemiological monitoring, identification of at-risk groups, and continuous medical attention for retinitis pigmentosa patients.

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and others. The most popular treatments include breast reduction and augmentation, correction of facial defects, the smoothing out of wrinkles and skin tightening.

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earnin the art of oo in

By Mercy Ramos / Photos by José Meriño

Cooking, or preparing food, is more than a job—it is an art, and for many, it is the pleasure of preparing a good dish for the enjoyment of guests. However, to achieve a good dish that meets the objective of nourishing those who eat it, along with the pleasure of enjoying a well-prepared meal, one must have the appropriate knowledge.

Every country has its way of preparing food, its condiments that people use, and its forms of presenting meals. Like everywhere else, in Cuba cooking has its own characteristics, and experts say that it has various influences, including indigenous, Spanish and African elements and, to a lesser extent, Chinese, French, U.S., British and Mexican. However, today, there is talk of a new Cuban cuisine, which uses and recreates the latest international tendencies in this art.

All of this can be learned through the "re-qualification" and "renovation" educational activities that are organized



by the Federation of Culinary Associations of the Republic of Cuba (*Federación de Asociaciones Culinarias de la República de Cuba*, FACRC), which has its offices in Havana Vieja. It operates a school-restaurant called *Artechef* in the Vedado neighbourhood, on 3^{ra} and A streets.

According to Chef Eddy Fernández, president of the FACRC and an honorary member of the World Association of Chefs' Societies, the Cuban organization has a membership of some 70,000 specialists, and its main objectives include bringing

dignity to the cook's profession and bringing well-deserved appreciation to professionals in this industry.

"Through the FACRC, members can participate in educational activities at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels of cooking, and in other specialties of the culinary arts. At the first level, they are taught about the basic operations of a kitchen; at the second, about basic cooking preparations; the third is about international cooking, and subsequently, a one-year course is given to reach the category of chef."

The FACRC belongs to the World Association of Chefs' Societies, the Culinary Academy of France, and the Association of Gastronomic Restaurateurs of the Americas and the World, with which it maintains extensive relations of exchange and collaboration, Fernández said.



"It is precisely through those links that we maintain a fruitful exchange with specialists from other countries that belong to those associations, via which our professionals travel to other countries to teach courses on Cuban cooking and professionals from those nations come to Cuba, too, to receive courses on preparing our cuisine and to learn about its new tendencies."

The Cuban organization also gives workshops for exchanges on Cuban and international cooking as well as many other educational activities, always with the goal of improving the knowledge of its members, he said.

"The FACRC was founded 42 years ago and reorganized 32 years ago. Our school-restaurant, Artechef, was created in 2007, and in the last five years, some 1,700 specialists have participated in our classes," Fernández noted.

"Public opinion about the cook's profession has changed a lot, for the good, and this can be seen by the number of young people who are coming to the trade. Moreover, in Cuba, it is no longer a specialty that is reserved for men; the evidence of that is the fact that 47 percent of the professional cooks who are members of our association are women." ■



Chef Fernando, president of the FACRC and an honorar member of the World Association of Chefs' Societies.

Conference and Incentive Travel, An Important Line for Cuban Tourism

By Roberto F. Campos / Photos by Prensa Latina



Plaza América convention center in Varadero

Incentive, conference, event and meeting travel are becoming increasingly important in the world as one of the strongest lines of growth in the tourist industry.

This area is so important that some experts say that conference and incentive travel stands alone as its own industry, even though many nations include meetings and conferences as part of their tourist industry.

Despite the effects of the global economic and financial crisis, this non-leisure form of tourism has opened its own road and is building stronger ties between countries and with other industries, and one example of that is Cuba.

Cuba's indicators are sufficiently strong to point to the upward movement of this area as part of its tourism industry, given that the island is increasingly chosen, year after year, by event organizers. The country's well-organized infrastructure and the possibility of combining

the business travel aspect with other options are two factors that are taken into account in this decision.

With growth figures pointing to secure potential for the future, the island's authorities are boosting conference and incentive travel as part of the local tourism industry, which in 2013, is expected to welcome some three million visitors.

Conference tourism

It would be logical to think that as one of Cuba's growth industries, the conference and incentive travel sector would have a special priority, including important meetings that cover many areas, such as education, music and culture in general, science and technology and medicine.

On an interesting note, there is one very outstanding event: the Habanos Festival, which is held in late February

every year and attended by more than 1,000 people from at least 70 nations. Many participants are cigar smokers, but others are tourists who are interested in Cuba's tobacco farming industry, which not only produces Cuban cigars, known as Habanos, but also encompasses the country's history, tradition and culture. As a showcase for premium Habanos, which are made totally by hand, this gathering is one of the most important in the world, comparable only to the Big Smoke, which is held in Las Vegas in the United States.

While it is true that the smoking habit is harmful and rightly criticized all over the world, so is that of consuming sugar, and tobacco has been part of the Cuban people's idiosyncrasy since the nation's founding. This is why so many people are interested in visiting the island on an incentive trip as interesting as one related to tobacco.

Two other top areas on the island are the annual education congress (*Congreso Pedagogía*) and high-level meetings of specialists in health care and quality of life, with participants attracted by these sectors in Cuba.

Business travel has been boosted in recent years, as the Ministry of Tourism has been deeply immersed in providing services to and uniting those interested in promoting the solid development of conference and incentive travel in Cuba. That includes the participation of Cuban delegations at trade fairs such as the EIBTM in Spain, CMITS in Canada, IMEX in Germany, BTC in Italy, MITM in various countries, CONFEX in the UK, FIEXPO in Uruguay and MIBEXPO in Russia.

Conference travel in Cuba works like a well-oiled mechanism, and it is recognized as such by many tour operators around the world. Cuba belongs to the International Congress & Convention Association (ICCA), the regional conference tourism organization COCAL (*Federación de entidades organizadoras de Congresos y afines de América Latina y el Caribe*), and others.

Thousands of people come to Cuba to attend events and congresses of all types, with some 400 such gatherings organized nationwide annually.

In their work, Cuba's specialists concentrate on providing quality service, with the help of emblematic sites in the national capital, such as the Palacio de Convenciones international conference center (which includes the Hotel Palco and the Pabexpo fairgrounds), the Expocuba fairgrounds, and the ORTOP events centre.

Others on this list include the Club Habana, a space that is principally for the diplomatic corps; the Salón Arcos de Cristal, of the famous Cabaret Tropicana, and other

meeting rooms, auditoriums and ballrooms in hotels that include the Parque Central, Habana Libre Tryp, Meliá Cohiba, Meliá Habana, Nacional de Cuba, Ambos Mundos, Comodoro, Copacabana and Habana Riviera.

Varadero, the famous seaside resort town in Matanzas province, has the Plaza América convention center and the Hotel Meliá Varadero; the eastern city of Holguín has the hotels Meliá Río de Oro and Pernil; and Cuba's second-largest city, Santiago, has the Teatro Heredia convention center and the Hotel Meliá Santiago de Cuba.

On the other end of the island, the western province of Pinar del Río has the Hotel Horizontes Los Jazmines, which is located in beautiful surroundings that include some of Cuba's most important tobacco plantations.

Incentive travel organizers usually make a previous inspection to learn about the conditions of the different sites, and they are always satisfied, according to tourist authorities, especially in cases of "made-to-order" options.

As one measure of this interest, Cuba has received as many as 100,000 visitors as part of conference and incentive travel groups, and their accommodations are mostly in four- and five-star hotels, with well-organized programs.

The main issuing countries for incentive travellers to Cuba are in Europe, led by Spain, France and Italy.

Meanwhile, the main business clients for this line in Cuba are BMW, Renault, SAAB, Pernod Ricard, AGFA, Xerox, Bayer, Konica, Bavaria, MasterCard, Alcatel, Hitachi, Mercedes Benz, Peugeot, Mitsubishi, Fiat and Nestlé, among others.

The World Tourism Organization predicts that the total number of tourists worldwide in the year 2020 could reach 1.6 billion, many of them in event and adventure travel, and Cuba aspires to hold a significant share of that market. ■



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Pedro Yoan Batista

Work from his series "BASTA"

Photos by Juan de Dios



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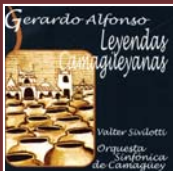



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CUBADISCO

real u an usi fiesta

The 17th International Cubadisco Fair takes place in Havana from May 18 to 26, 2013, and is dedicated to young people, concert music, and the violin in classical, traditional and popular music. An orchestra of more than 100 violins will bring together several generations of Cuban musicians.

As they do every year, national and foreign artists will perform in almost 100 concerts, including a historic encounter between two traditional Cuban music bands: the Orquesta Aragón and the Original de Manzanillo. Other shows will feature some of the country's top salsa and dance music bands, such as Los Van Van, which is celebrating its 40th anniversary.

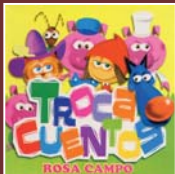
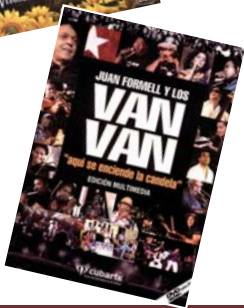




Other performances will feature young jazz musicians, rappers, rockers, and rumberos, with a fusion of diverse music genres and other arts, and the participation of past and present Cubadisco award nominees and winners. International artists from different countries will be an additional attraction for concert-goers.

As always, the program includes award ceremonies, press conferences, concerts by the National Symphonic Orchestra (*Orquesta Sinfónica Nacional*) and choral groups, children's activities, jam sessions with jazz musicians, Cuban country music parties (*guateques*), Afro-Cuban dance and percussion workshops, and an annual international symposium on issues related to the culture industry.

A special gala will be held: Cuba: Música-Moda (Cuba: Music/Fashion), featuring the latest concepts in art and fashion and their relationship to different genres of Cuban music, in harmony with the three principles upheld by Cubadisco: music, image and sound. ■





a comfy, friendly bar and restaurant

By Lucía Arbolóez / Photos by Luis Mario Gell



Ever since they began considering the idea of opening a bar and restaurant, the goal of the Meléndez siblings was to provide a comfy, welcoming place where customers would feel at home.

And that's what they did. In addition to an attractive cocktail menu and subtle, appetizing food, their bar/restaurant has an atmosphere that is made more pleasant by the music, creating an addiction for this place among its customers.

And how did they choose their name? Mercedes tells the story:

"Our story goes back to the past century. Many years ago, in the 1980s, a time of fantastic music, a group of teen-age friends got together in a little

corner of this neighbourhood and created a club. But don't think that it was easy to be a member; it had very strict rules. The most important premise was to be cheerful and to be a friend, although the calling card was always a little bottle.

"They had experiences that they stored away in the memories and energies of this charming little band, like first loves and the first time being drunk. As the years went by, they remembered those times with nostalgia and felt the desire to bring back the past. A few bold souls who were still living in the area and were inspired by the setting and by their passion for nightlife decided to bring the Melen Club back to life..."

The dishes that appear on the menu are both



ingenious and sensual. These include croquettes and "brava" fries; chicken with garlic and lemon; and their original "bocaditos" sandwiches. One favourite among the Melen crowd is the Melen octopus, served with olives and aromatic herbs.

In this harmonious, smart bar, one can enjoy well-known cocktails like the Cuba Libre, Mojito, Gin & Tonic and Margarita, or discover diverse combinations, according to the customer's wishes. The Melen Coctel, modern and fragrant, has a real flair, and provides a seductive invitation for the palate.

The bar welcomes you into an ambience coloured in red and grey tones, and you can also enjoy a

tranquil dinner there. The Melen opens at 6 p.m. Tuesday through Sunday. In addition to its usual services, it also provides catering for parties, work meetings and other needs. It is especially welcoming for lovers during afternoon get-togethers, with a sociable, relaxed environment.

At the Melen Club, they've thought of everything: the quality service provided by its workers and the personal attention offered by its owners make customers feel like their time in this bar and restaurant will be a memorable one. ■

1^{ra}. y 46, Playa, La Habana, Cuba.
www.melenclub.com

Stories of the Melen Club

The lord of the rings

—"He's a bastard! A bastard!" the woman customer said, sitting on the bathroom floor and crying disconsolately.

"Calm down, we're going to help you out," we said, but she just kept repeating, "What a bastard!"

"But can you tell us what happened?"

"The thing is, he threw our wedding rings in the toilet...and then he flushed!"

Frodo and his escapade

Our German shepherd, Frodo, went for a walk one night without permission. And as he passed through the dining room, he decided to test the quality of one of his favourite dishes, the "bravas" croquettes. The owner of the plate asked us, very delicately, "It is normal for the dog to be here among us?"



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International School Golf Tournament a success

By Flora Samuel,
11th grade student, International School of Havana
Photos by José Tito Meriño

Every year, the International School of Havana organizes the ISHavana Open Golf Tournament. The most recent competition took place on December 8, 2012, and was hosted by the Havana Golf Club.

The 2012 ISHavana Golf tournament was organized to raise funds for supporting a development plan for a new Performing Arts centre that it is hoped can be built at the school in the future.

The organizing committee arranged the tournament and invited golfers from both the Havana Golf Club and the school community to take part; 64 players participated, and 4,844 Cuban convertible pesos (CUC) were raised by the event.

The ISHavana Open has evolved over the years, and was previously known as the Commonwealth Golf Tournament, organized by the British Embassy in Havana. In 2005 the school assisted the Embassy in organizing the event for the first time, and since then has hosted the competition with the aim of raising funds to support development projects for the school.

Past tournaments have raised funds that have been used to help pay for the expansion and development of the school library, as well as other special projects, such as sound equipment for classrooms. Every year, the tournament has raised sums ranging from 2,500 to 4,500 convertible pesos (CUC).



Matthew Pickles.

In the and
Bohuska
Gonale
illian.





At the Green Conversation.

The school is always very grateful to the people, companies and institutions that have supported the event, through either direct sponsorship or participation in fund-raising raffles. This year, we thank our sponsors and donors to the Arts Centre, such as Business Strategies International, Warwick Mann, Kay International, TIC Recruitment, Cuba Select Travel, Delatrade, Nectar, WCBS, Republic Bank, Sherritt International, Havana Club, Korea Trade-Investment Promotion Agency, Larimar International, LTC International, La Guarida Restaurant, Grupo Santa Monica, Taino, Accor Group, Hotel Panorama, VPJ Consultancy Services, The Caribbean Book Company, The Embassy of South Africa, The

Embassy of Canada, The Embassy of Malaysia, The Embassy of the UK, The Embassy of Nigeria, and The Embassy of India etc.

We are also grateful to the various individuals that made donations. Thank you all! Now we are looking forward to the 2013 tournament and hoping that it will prove to be just as successful.

The International School of Havana provides primary and secondary education to the children of diplomats and expatriates living temporarily in Cuba and aspires to be recognized as a leading provider of international education in English. ■



Claudio etere, an orris and ohn im.



Claudio etere.



u a s e a h e s,

Some of the World's Best

By Roberto F. Campos
Photos by Prensa Latina

The Cuban tourist destinations of Varadero and Cayo Coco are among the 25 best beaches in the world, according to a survey by the travel review website TripAdvisor, one of the largest global networks on travel.

The top 25 beaches were chosen by million of tourists who gave their opinions to the site. Varadero was placed at No. 10 and Cayo Coco at No. 20 on TripAdvisor's 2012 Travellers Choice Awards list.

The list's top five winners for best beaches were Providenciales (Turks and Caicos), Palm/Tagle Beach (Aruba), Tulum (Mexico), Negril (Jamaica) and Saint Pete Beach, Florida (United States).

Varadero, about 140 kilometres east of Havana, is considered as Cuba's main tourist destination, and features 20 kilometres of fine white sand beaches on the peninsula of Hicacos, in the western province of Matanzas.

Ongoing projects are adding value to its attraction, such as a relevant hotel infrastructure, with outstanding establishments such as the Iberostar Varadero, Paradisus Varadero Resort & Spa, and Blau Varadero Hotel Cuba, all of them five-star hotels.

These facilities have won numerous awards for their high-quality service, and the industry as a whole is seeking to protect the environment and provide their guests favourable natural surroundings.

Another of Varadero's charms is its golf club, with an 18-hole course, the only one of its type in the country. Major international tournaments are organized here, such as the Copa Montecristo, which is set for April 2013.

For its part, Cayo Coco is a small island that is part of the Jardines del Rey archipelago, a tourist destination in the central-northern region, in Ciego de Ávila province. Cayo Coco has excellent hotel facilities, and spaces that



are very much in demand for ecotourism and nautical recreation.

Interestingly, both Varadero and Cayo Coco were referred to by U.S. novelist Ernest Hemingway, when he immortalized them in his novel *Islands in the Stream*.

Both destinations are ideal for photography, active vacations and discovering new landscapes, and every year, they are occupying more and more of a priority in holiday planning for people from all over the world, especially Europe.

TripAdvisor conducts annual surveys to learn about travellers' opinions and to guide those interested in finding new and better places to visit.



For three straight years, Varadero has welcomed one million foreign visitors. The Hotel Meliá Cayo Coco, for its part, was included in the 2012 Travellers Choice awards because of its quality and respect for the environment.

Every year, Cuba as a whole welcomes more than two million visitors, accommodating them in more than 60,000 rooms in some 300 hotels all over the country. ■

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Luis Mario Gell

and the art of photography

By Lucía Arboláez
Photos: Courtesy of Luis Mario Gell

Thanks to the simple fact that somebody gave Luis Mario Gell a camera as a birthday present when he was a teenager, today we can enjoy a vast body of work by this young artist.

With the camera he received from his father, Gell took many photos; some were good and others weren't, but that is where it all started. For him, photography is a vehicle; observers may not understand his photos, but they find them stirring.

His inspiration? Visiting museums, leafing through magazines, but above all, being in contact with people in the street, both in Cuba and abroad, which is something that has helped him enormously, he says.

"I have always wanted to do experimental photography, which is one way of describing it," he adds. "I'm very attracted to cinema because it is imaginative; you have to carry out a series of actions before you can take the photos."

Gell has many projects. One was to set up a studio in Havana, Estudio 50, and collect a small warehouse full of objects from the 1950s for anyone who would like to have their photo taken with them. He is also creating a catalogue featuring the work of several Cuban jewellers, and another of architecture in Cuba throughout the years.

Born in Havana in 1978, Gell is a member of the Fondo Cubano de la Imagen Fotográfica (a photographers' association) and the Officine Fotografiche de Roma school of photography, where he worked as a tutor. He is also vice president of the AISSAI ONLUS association, an NGO for international social and artistic development (www.aissaionlus.org).

With AISSAI ONLUS, Gell has organized a number of photography exhibitions, such as *Cuba in Images* (collective, Rome, 2010); *Landscapes* (solo, Julio Larramendi, Rome, 2010); and *Waters* (solo, Alan Pérez, Havana, 2010), all in collaboration with the Havana City Historian's Office.



from the series *oma*, direct print on aluminum,

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He has participated in many different activities in Europe, such as an initiative in 2006, when he began working as an archive photographer for the Bottega Mortet Roma, an artisans' laboratory specializing in sacred art, where he put together a database of a large part of the work of this artisan family, which for more than 200 years has worked in that city for renowned religious and state institutions, such as the Vatican, the Quirinale, the Dante Alighieri Society and the Comune di Roma. ■



From the series "En Dios Confiamos," digital print, 50 x 70 cm (1/5) 2009.



From the series "En Dios Confiamos," 2005.



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By Reina Magdaliaga Larduet



An incredibly contagious sort of magic seems to emanate from Cuba, and it involves human warmth, the spirit of setting challenges—despite the difficulties—the island's contagious music, and more.

For Swedish audiovisual producer Michel Miglis, this magic was inescapable. A resident of Cuba since 1996, he has worked closely with the island's cultural institutions since then, with the goal of promoting Cuban musicians and facilitating cultural exchange with artists from other nations.

Since his arrival to Cuba, his passion for reggaeton led him to meet and work with young Cubans who cultivate that genre, such as Cubanito 2002, Candyman, El Médico and Control Cubano, from Santiago de Cuba.

When he came to Cuba, that music still did not exist, Miglis told **Cubaplus**. In fact, he says, he considers himself responsible for its introduction, to the extent that he produced the first official album in 2004, *Cubaton—Reguetón a lo cubano*, which was nominated for the Cubadisco awards that year.



"This album, which I produced with my Swedish team and which features a group of Cuban artists, has 14 songs and a music video and it was an international hit," Miglis said. The album's most interesting feature is what reggaeton represented for that time period, he commented. "It was the first time that a recording was made with an electronic background," he said.

Regarding recent criticism of the vulgar and tasteless lyrics often used in the reggaeton genre, Miglis said that it was not the case in the early days. "It was a very nice rhythm that I liked very much, and with my group Topaz Sound, together with Cubanito, it was well-received."

"We performed a concert in Havana at the José Martí Anti-imperialist Tribunal, with 120,000 people, and we toured the entire country."

Inspired by the genre's young performers, especially the figure of Reinier Casamayor, who is a doctor by profession, Miglis co-starred in the film *El Médico: La historia Cubaton* (El Médico: The Cubaton Story), a joint Cuban/Swedish production by Daniel Fridell.

Due to a producers' delay, it was not possible to include the film in the program of the 34th International Festival of New Latin American Cinema in Havana; however, it has been screened in theaters in Russia and Sweden.

Likewise, Fridell's film, which has been sold in 27 countries, has been featured in a number of film festivals, including the Sundance (United States), Mar de Plata (Argentina), and London, and it is set to be screened at the Belize International Festival, set for July 11-15. At last year's New York International Latino Film Festival, it won the prize for Best Documentary.

It is hard to believe that a man like Michel Miglis, who loves

music and film, is a chemical engineer by profession, although he has never worked in that field.

"When I was 11 years old, I bought a dabe 8 film camera, because I was from a family that was very artistic, and that was my inclination from a very young age," he said. In Cuba, he has filmed with artists like A-Teens, Carlos Baute, Dr. Alban, Razmus, Jimmy Cliff, Teddy Bears, ARASH and Lumee Dee.

"There is a vast amount of talent in Cuba," he said. "That is why I do everything possible to show the world what exists here. Despite the fact that it is such a small island, it has many successes. And I am going to do everything possible to achieve cultural exchange," he added.

Referring to setbacks that he has faced over the years, he noted one disagreeable episode involving the company Warner Music Latino of Miami, which rejected the music video *Chupa Chupa*, one of Casamayor's international hits, solely because it was performed by a Cuban who lives in Cuba.

"Those responsible are part of the Cuban exile, and they rejected it for stupid reasons," he said.

However, that was the first reggaeton song that was an international hit. "In Spain, Warner Music was the most powerful Latin music company, and that song ["Chupa chupa"] rose to number eight on the charts there. It was a real hit in Madrid," he commented.



In Cuba, you live among family

Gratitude for Cuba's support in helping him to fulfill his goal of promoting Cuban music is implicit in Miglis's heart at all



times. "They helped me so much with my work, that I was able to film wherever I wanted. I even filmed in the Capitolio," he commented.

For that reason, "based on the success of the film [about reggaeton artist El Médico], Swedish producers asked me to write a book that would reflect my relationship with this country and about what it's like for a foreigner to live in Cuba."

With great satisfaction, he said that Cuba fills an emptiness that can be felt in Sweden.

"Look, all human beings have their family, and without that chain you are nobody. But today in Europe, young people say that one person alone is strong. But what strength are they talking about? You can't be strong like that. The only thing that you create with that kind of attitude is people who are individualistic and unhappy, and that is very sad," he said.

He said that according to a report that he heard on the radio, more than 50,000 young women in Sweden ages 18 to 25 take pills for depression. "What is being created is a generation of drug addicts. They don't know what they want," he said sadly.

"In Cuba, it is different. There is respect; people live among family, and that reality—which is worthy of being imitated—is one of the examples that I will provide in the book that I am writing."

Music, film and gastronomy

Casa Miglis is the first restaurant in Havana to specialize in Scandinavian food. Featuring a family-friendly environment, customers—including tourists, Cubans and foreigners who live in Cuba—choose Casa Miglis because it makes them feel at home.

"I'm very happy, because I was waiting for years for the opportunity to open a restaurant in Cuba. That was my dream; now it has become a reality," he said. He noted the State's interest in giving a twist to gourmet life. "I am happy with the flexibility that has been shown; that will improve the quality of life of the Cuban people," he said approvingly. ■

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he tallest, est preserved dunes in the arican

By Neisa Isabel Mesa del Toro / Photos by Publicitur

Dunes are one of the most important coastal ecosystems in the world, because they provide protection for beaches and coastal vegetation.

Because of their vulnerability to the effects of climate change, atmospheric phenomena and human activity, dunes are very fragile places.

Deserts, lakes and ocean shores, where winds tend to blow the hardest and in a single direction, are the most suitable environments for the formation of these ridges of loose sand. They are part of a dynamic equilibrium that

makes it possible for beaches to exist, and have seasonal changes with notable differences in the summer and winter.

In Cuba, the dunes on the cays that are part of the Jardines del Rey archipelago north of the central province of Ciego de Ávila, principally Cayo Coco and Cayo Guillermo, have very unique characteristics, because they are stabilized hills that do not migrate.

According to experts, these dunes emerged during a recent geological period, the Holocene Epoch, and are believed to be the oldest in Cuba's northern



cays. Their genesis is related to the receding waters of the sea, which left large areas of sand exposed to the drying action of the sun. Subsequently, the winds dragged the sand inland on the beach, where dunes accumulated over the years, forming beautiful natural reserves in Loma del Puerto, on Cayo Coco, and Playa Pilar, on Cayo Guillermo.

The dunes located parallel to Playa Pilar stand 15 meters above sea level and are believed to be the tallest in the Caribbean. Moreover, they are well-known in the region, given that they are part of one of the most beautiful beach landscapes in the world.

In Loma del Puerto, the dunes stand 10 to 14 meters tall, making them the second-tallest in the region, and they are part of the Cayo Coco Central-West Environmental Reserve, a protected area that harbours wildlife and that is preserved in its natural state.



These are vegetated dunes, or ridges that are parallel to the beach and anchored by vegetation, generally endemic flora that forms a narrow strip and includes mangroves, herbaceous plants, bushes and creepers, such as brittlebush, beach morning glory, inkberry, coastal ragweed, and purslane. It is also very common to find field sandbur, with its sharp, shiny burs.

According to Adán Zúñiga, director of the Cayo Coco Coastal Ecosystems Research Center, studies have shown that the dunes maintain their physical parameters and levels of vegetation that classify as endemic.

They also serve as natural conservation reserves; when the beaches lose sand due to coastal flooding or powerful winds, the dunes are a source of replenishment.



Despite their vital function in beach conservation, dunes are very fragile because they are composed of loose elements that come into constant contact with other very dynamic elements such as air, earth and water.

For tourists, the dunes and their accompanying flora and fauna—including dozens of species of birds—tend to be one of the most striking and attractive features of the beautiful Jardines del Rey tourist destination. To protect these ecosystems, wooden boardwalks on piles are being built to run from hotels and *ranchones* (outdoor restaurants) to the beaches and swimming areas on both Cayo Coco and Cayo Guillermo.

Another important activity that is part of the different biodiversity conservation plans underway in the Sabana-Camagüey archipelago is the reforestation of dunes with endemic plants. This project is being carried out by Cuban scientists with support from the United Nations Development Programme. ■



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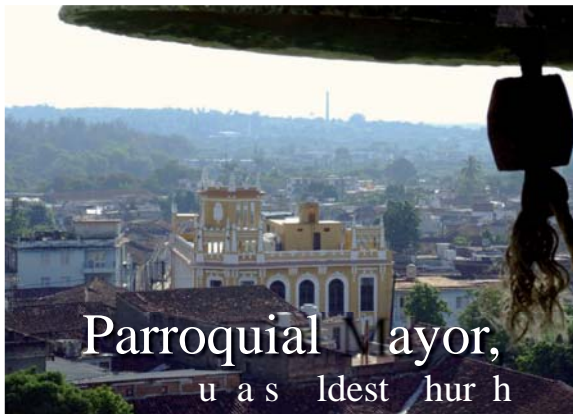
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Parroquial Mayor, Cuba's Oldest Church

*Below, the belltower clock
on the parroquial tower.*



By Raúl García / Photos by Prensa Latina

For over 300 years, the bells of Cuba's oldest church, the Iglesia Parroquial Mayor del Espíritu Santo, have rung day and night, inviting parishioners in this central city to worship the Holy Spirit.

As the centuries have passed, the bells continue to toll, in sadness and happiness, and the clock in the church's 100-foot bell tower strikes every half hour.

A local family, the Pasamontes, has taken charge of these famous old bells for over a century. It was in the early 19th century that José Feliciano Pasamontes Montes, born to a Galician father and a Cuban mother, first climbed the 103 steps leading to the top of the bell tower.

According to some accounts, José Pasamontes spent more time among the bells than with his family. Others say that his children accompanied him when he climbed the tower to ring the bells.

Today his grandson, Alfonso Rafael Pasamontes Alfaro — popularly known as Cuco Pasamontes — is in his 70s, and he continues to delight locals with the ringing of the bells. In the future, one of Cuco's grandsons will carry on the family tradition. Taking care of the bells is a real art, Cuco says: "I learned that every ring has a specific liturgical meaning, but you can also harmonize with Cuban musical rhythms and traditions."

Outstanding architecture

The Parroquial Mayor is one of the most important examples of 17th century architecture in the central province of Sancti Spiritus and in Cuba. The provincial capital is the city of Sancti Spiritus, which means "Holy Spirit." Located 350 km east of Havana, this beautiful colonial city will celebrate its 500th anniversary in 2014.

In its early days, the Parroquial Mayor played a major role in efforts to convert the indigenous population

Below, the belltower of the Parroquial Mayor in the colonial city of Sancti Spiritus.



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to Christianity, in support of the conquistadors. The original adobe church, with its wooden, palm-thatch roof, became the center of urban development in the area.

With he first came to visit in 1661, Bishop Fray Alonso Enríquez de Almendáriz suggested to King Felipe II that the church should be rebuilt to make it larger. Subsequently, Sergeant Ignacio de Valdivia largely funded the construction of the new building between 1620 and 1680, including a rectory.

Legends and traditions have accompanied the church throughout its more than three centuries of existence.

The bell tower still holds four carillons (a set of fixed chromatically tuned bells sounded by hammers) that were crafted from gold, silver and bronze by Cuban artisans in the years 1771, 1835, and 1853.



Above left, view of the church's interior right, the altar.



The bell tower, the country's tallest when it was built, still has its original clock, which was bought in 1771 with 600 pesos that locals had collected for the construction of a bridge over the Yayabo River, another of the historical jewels found in this villa.

The building still has its original roof structure, along with Arabic details, brick archways, *alfarjes* (carved wooden ceilings) in the main nave, and a vaulted roof in its chapel, the *Capilla del Cristo de la Humanidad y la Paciencia*.

This architectural complex and its traditions are one of the most extraordinary elements of the Sancti Spiritus historical district, where huge efforts are being made for it to be designated as a World Cultural Heritage Site by UNESCO. ■

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i ar fa tory readers

By *Ciro Bianchi Ross* / Photos by *Prensa Latina*

A man reads while his coworkers toil away. He does so in a loud voice, bringing moments of relaxation and education as his coworkers remain concentrated, without looking at him, rolling the delicate, dark leaves of tobacco between their hands and forming the cigars that smokers will turn into aroma. If they liked what they heard, the cigar-factory workers give a sign of approval at the end of the day by banging their curved knives, or *chavetas*—ideal for cutting and rolling the leaves—against the wooden tops of their worktables; if what they heard was unconvincing or seemed inappropriate, they will throw their knives to the floor.

If Cuban cigars are the best in the world, it is because their refined quality

is unquestionably influenced by the art of the cigar-factory reader, who leads the cigar worker to permeate those leaves with the passion of their listening. As the poet Miguel Barnet says, it is the only way for that great pleasure in life, smoking, to become a supreme ecstasy.

It is an original, unique task; these readers join those who read during the *despalillo* (leaf-stripping) and *escogida* (leaf-sorting) stages of the process of hand-rolling cigars. This is not something seen in other industries. It is 100 percent Cuban, and has been from the start—a real institution. Not too long ago, the UNESCO declared the work of the cigar factory reader an Intangible World Heritage. And recently, it was declared a National Cultural Heritage.

The cigar-factory readers did not always meet with universal approval. Men began reading for their coworkers in 1865, at the El Figaro cigar factory, and they soon gained begrudging looks and mistrust from the bosses and Spanish colonial authorities. In the case of the bosses, they preferred workers who were ignorant and therefore more easily exploited. The authorities, for their part, feared that the readings would allow pro-independence ideals to take hold. So, the very first reader found himself banned from his job a mere six months after his first reading. However, around 1880, the cigar factory readers made a comeback, and the practice gained ground a few years later as anarchist propaganda began to spread throughout the country. In 1896, with the Independence War, the readers

disappeared again. Many cigar factories were moved to southern Florida, and Cuban cigar workers in Tampa and Key West were an invaluable pillar of the Revolution. With their *chavetas*, they applauded the speeches of José Martí, and the readers made their platforms a place for rousing patriotic speeches.

Throughout that period, readers were threatened and beaten, and their readings were muzzled and censored. This was repeated in later years, under the Republic. The factory owners always tried, and sometimes succeeded, in controlling the materials that were read to their workers.

So, what was read? The work of José María Carretero, who used the pseudonym "The Courageous Gentleman," soon gave way to more complex texts, by authors such as Zola, Hugo, Balzac, and Cervantes.... Dumas and Shakespeare were the most popular; in fact, the names of characters from their books later became the names of famous cigar brands: Montecristo, Romeo y Julieta, and others.

The daily newspapers were also popular reading material, and some readers specialized in that task, while others were unsurpassable in reading literature.

When somebody could masterfully take on both types of reading, they were called "full readers," and they were the most in demand. It was a status gained by entering and winning a contest. The cigar workers themselves organized these events, setting themselves up as a jury and choosing the reader they liked best. As far as we know, up until the late 1960s, it was the cigar workers themselves who paid the readers. Once a reader had been chosen from among the workers, the rest made extra cigars so that the reader's daily quota of work would be fulfilled. That system changed over the years. When readers began to be chosen by contest, their fellow

workers would contribute small sums of cash every two weeks to cover the reader's salary.

Today, cigar factory reading materials include the work of a long list of Latin American and Cuban writers. Some cigar workers can recite from memory entire chapters of important classical and contemporary works. They have consumed these books by ear, as the Bible says; they have them in their blood. They are readings that bring delight and education at the same time, broadening out their world, and, in the end, making cigar-factory workers into one of the most advanced sectors of the Cuban labour movement. ■





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