

COMPLEX AWARENESS // THE SOCIAL DYNAMICS OF A SHIFTING CUBAN PUBLICNESS

*What we mean by place is a crossroads, a particular point of
intersection of forces coming from many directions and distances*
-Rebecca Solnit

STATEMENT

Contemporary Havana is a city of great possibility and intense uncertainty. Recent changes in policy are moving the city away from the isolation of the Communist era towards dynamic globalization. This openness brings great promise accompanied by immense risk. Architecture of scale ushered into existence by a reexamination of the architect/designer can begin to mediate conflicting forces of urbanization and imagine a contemporary framework for the future of Havana.

ABSTRACT

The city of Havana finds itself in a moment of flux without a contemporary framework for urban revitalization. The lack of architectural production over the past 50 years and isolation from the global information economy inhibits the existence of a point of reference for future growth.

In 1991 with the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Cuba began a slow and inconsistent transition away from a centralized organization towards an economy that supports the growth of the private sector. The transformation, littered with false starts and moments of regression finds itself at a point of exciting and frightening uncertainty. With the reforms initiated by Raul Castro in 2008 we see the beginning of a deeper transition in politic, economy, and ideology moving towards a more moderate strategy of governance. The limited introduction of Wi-Fi in public space and the gradual opening of US – Cuban relations indicates an interest in engaging with the global economy and fostering connectivity with the global population through information access.

The growth of a private sector brings into question the role of the architect. Can designers be actors who can mediate between the hyper efficiency of market driven development, the political agendas of centralized planning, and the ad hoc ‘jerry-city’ of informal development? Architecture can serve to mediate these tensions through a series of interventions.

Beginning at a small temporary scale, interventions in the public realm can express the value of design and enable freedom of expression while challenging perception of the meaning and use of building and space. Engaging in a dialogue with the work of artists dealing with architecture and space the architect can inhabit a space between art and architecture. In this realm it is possible for the architect to re-conceptualize what it means to build and explore a mode of creation that positions him or herself as choreographer and curator. The intention is to defamiliarize objects and space through the use of architectural language. This defamiliarization will slow perception and facilitate a new reading of the social production of public urban space. Working in this manner will allow the Cuban Architectural community to explore authorship of the urban immediately and prepare for future challenges of reconciling the forces of globalization and local needs.

LANGUAGE

Space: Space is for me all about construction. By construction I mean communication, language, sculptures, systems, situations...

-Monica Bonvicini¹

Build: "The old word bauen, to which the bin belongs, answers: ich bin, du bist mean I dwell, you dwell. The way in which you are and I am, the manner in which we humans are on the earth, is buan, dwelling.

*"this word bauen, however, also means at the same time to cherish and protect, to preserve and care for; specifically to till the soil, to cultivate the vine. Both modes of building-building as cultivating, Latin colere, cultura, and building as the raising up of edifices, aedificare-are comprised within genuine building, that is, dwelling. Building as dwelling, that is, as being on the earth, however, remains for man's everyday experience that which is from the outset "habitual"-we inhabit it, as our language says so beautifully: it is the Gewohnte. For this reason it recedes behind the manifold ways in which dwelling is accomplished, the activities of cultivation and construction. These activities later claim the name of bauen, building, and with it the matter of building, exclusively for themselves. The proper sense of bauen;~ namely dwelling, falls into oblivion."*²

aesthetic: 1798, from German Ästhetisch (mid-18c.) or French esthétique (which is from German), ultimately from Greek aisthetikos

1. "of or for perception by the senses, perceptive," of things, "perceptible," from aisthanesthai "to perceive (by the senses or by the mind), to feel,

2. "science which treats of the conditions of sensuous perception"

- Immanuel Kant

3. "criticism of taste"

- Alexander Baumgarten

aest - ethics:

The aesthetic of Tania Bruguera's works is instead a method or instrument which the artist uses to activate the mechanism of experience, of life and of memory, in which the work lives and will continue living. The aesthetic varies in function and is defined by the work's concept, but it is never an essential element.

- Tania Bruguera

1 Kraynak, Janet, Monica Bonvicini, Juliane Rebentisch, and Alexander Alberro. *Monica Bonvicini*. N.p.: n.p., n.d. Print.

2 Heidegger, Martin. *Building, Dwelling, Thinking*. N.p.: n.p., 2000. Print.

INTRODUCTION

Architecture as a practice involves language of communication and creation. Materials and methods define language which then produce objects and define space. Like spoken words the materials and methods of architecture evolve over time taking on new associations and generating alternative meaning. Heidegger asserts that it is the tendency of the individual to come to see his or herself as the master of language and that this power inversion results in the alienation of being. This idea makes apparent the need for constant dialogue surrounding the meaning of words and the spatial significance of forms. This thesis will explore ways in which the intersection between art and architecture can challenge perceived meaning embedded in buildings and excavate the complexities of objects or space. After this excavation the resulting atmosphere can foster connection and dialogue and reverse the process of alienation defined by Heidegger. Previous explorations of this intersection often favor art over architecture, as art is a method that allows for greater malleability in its definition when dealing temporally with the social and spatial dynamics of public urban space. In the book *A Place Between*, Jane Rendell analyzes this intersection with great rigor and density through the a series of theoretical lenses citing Michel de Certeau, Walter Benjamin, and Edward Soja. She employs Soja's three pronged approach of space, time, and social to organize her analysis. In describing the result she explains, "... my interest is in practices that are critical and spatial, I have discovered that such work tends to occur more often in the domain of art, yet it offers architecture a chance to reflect on its own modes of operation."³ From the standpoint of architecture this document will expand upon this idea of architectural reflection produced by artworks that exist in between art and architecture. A place in the midst of uncertain transition in possession of a dense history, Havana provides an environment that both requires and lends itself to this exploration.

The delayed introduction of publicly accessible information technology in Havana mimics the conditions that yielded a reconceptualization of art theory during the 1990's. Nicolas Bourriaud, in an attempt to define a contemporary framework for analyzing art, took as his point of departure the new mental space created by the Internet, responding to the "...whole of

3 Jane Rendell, *Art and Architecture: A Place between* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2006).³

human relations and their social context, rather than an independent and private space.”⁴ The abundance of information and an abstract digital connectivity pushed contemporary artists to explore methods that collapse the void between life and art and directly engage the viewer socially. These works built off of the ideas of the minimalist, conceptual, land and performance artists of the 1970’s, which provoked new spatial perception and social engagement. The focus was not on the object itself but rather on the participation of the viewer and dialogue surrounding spatial identity. Havana isolated from the impact of this technological advance in the 1990s did not experience this recalibration and only now is faced with the implications of a new digital space.

In transitioning Havana the architect is marginalized in the process of city authorship. Traditional methods for engaging in the process of making are not readily available as all architects are employed by the government and in turn censored making it necessary for the architect to explore alternative means. In 2008 when the opportunity for individual business venture was introduced sparingly by Raul Castro, architecture and design were not included on the list of approved endeavors.

In relation to the rate of global architectural production, the lack of physical production in Havana is discouraging but the potential for change is promising. The isolation of Havana from the forces of globalization is responsible for the remarkable preservation of the cities historic architecture. This historic architecture includes not only that of the colonial period but also a collection of iconic buildings in a Cuban modernist, Art deco, and international style. Nearly all of the forms are in some degree of decay and reflect different layers of patrimonial significance associated with different periods. The state of decay allows the existing architecture to be engaged as a transient space rather than a fixed object.

The recent introduction of information technology, a lack of architectural opportunity, and a decaying and visibly impermanent architectural patrimony points towards a need for the architect to explore alternative means. While contemporary architectural production is sparse Cuban artistic output is substantial. The work of artist Tania Bruguera is political, urban and social and her focus on Arte util (useful art) places her work in a space between art, politics, and architecture. Taking the



Tilted Arc - Richard Serra
Primary example of minimalist sculpture that requires the viewer for its completion



Joseph Bueys 'happening'
Early conceptual artwork moving towards the ideas of Bourriaud and Relational artworks



Pad Thai - Rirkrit Tiravanija
Relational Artwork

4 Nicolas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics* (Dijon: Les Presses Du Réel, 2002).
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work of Bruguera as a departure point, the architect, facilitating an architectural reflection and critical engagement, can activate the public urban space of Havana through dialogue addressing the function and ownership of public urban space. Experimentation in the current transitional moment may allow for the development of a more perceptive population and evenly distributed ownership of public urban space.

HISTORIC TIMELINE

In order to extract a reading of the city it is first necessary to gain a general history of the city and its constituent pieces. The history of Havana can be divided into three general periods, which break down into subsequent sections. It is important to take a chronological approach to understanding urban identity in order to uncover the layers of history as they aggregate.

Colonial Period

The current site of Havana is in fact the second site of the city. The original Havana, founded in 1515 by Diego Velázquez de Cuéllar, was located on the southern coast of the Island. That site was quickly abandoned due to unfavorable conditions and the city moved to its current site on the northern coast in 1519. Equipped with a tight-mouthed inlet into a natural deep-water bay, the present site of Havana was deemed the “Llave del Nuevo Mundo y Antemural de las Indias Occidentales”⁵ by the Spanish crown. In 1553 the residence of the Governor was relocated. With this move Havana began its life as the thoroughfare to the Americas for the Spanish colonial empire. During the initial settlement of the Island the native populations were almost entirely and immediately eliminated. As the colony grew, the sugar and tobacco industries along with a booming slave trade brought large numbers of African slaves to the country. As a pivotal port in the network of the Spanish colonial empire Havana was constantly under attack by the British and French fleets. The prominence of slave trade and the economic importance of the city resulted in the construction of a heavily fortified port city characterized by fortifications, walls, and plazas inhabited by a population primarily comprised of Spanish colonials and African slaves. In the latter half of the colonial era, after the conclusion of



1. Figure ground showing the expansion of the city to the west and south

5 “Havana, National Capital.” Encyclopedia Britannica Online. Encyclopedia Britannica, n.d. Web. 18 Oct. 2016. <<https://www.britannica.com/>>. Matthew Raybon / AHST 5110 / Assignment 4+5 / Owen

the 7 years war, additional European immigrants began to arrive intending to take advantage of the economic opportunities of the city. During this time a small group of Americans began to establish a presence in the economy of Havana.

The architecture of this period took the form of Cuban Baroque and Spanish colonial styles. These forms reflect the western imperialistic ideas apparent across the Spanish colony in Latin America. The gridded city of the Roman military camp provided the template for Habana Vieja. Unlike the other primary Spanish colonial cities, Havana was organized around multiple plazas serving separate urban functions instead of one single plaza. As the city expanded it grew from the bay to the West and South. Power structures were organized around adjacencies to the water and port as the primary economy came into the city from the water. The upper class Spanish colonials and Criollos inhabited the northern section of Havana Vieja and the demographic shifted towards enslaved Africans and free people of color towards the southern section of the city wrapping around the bay to the east. From the initial inhabitation of the city a spatial and hierarchical organization imported from the militant imperialism of the Spanish empire established the racial and economic organization of the city.

Republic

The Cuban fight for independence is complicated and essential for understanding the power structures embedded in Havana. In 1898 after two failed attempts under the leadership of Narciso Lopez, Cuba gained independence from the Spanish colony. The revolution was conceived of by a group of Cuban intellectuals and exiles residing in New York, including Jose Martí who wrote passionately about the need for Cuban Independence in addition to warning of the imperialistic intentions of American financial support of the revolution. The successful revolution termed the Spanish American War in American textbooks was a Cuban endeavor facilitated by American funds. Following the conclusion of the independence war, United States business positioned itself as a pseudo imperial power inserting itself as an economic and political influence in the workings of Havana and Cuba as a whole. Replacing Spain as a colonial ruler the United States imported ideals, perpetuating systems of socioeconomic division. During this period the government of Cuba was characterized by corruption and authoritarian rule. The urban

form responded to this relationship as Havana imported American businesses such as Sears, Hilton, and Woolworths in the forms of the international and modernist architectural styles. The city began to resemble Miami or a Caribbean New York while maintaining the spatial division put in place by the Spanish colony. With the introduction of the automobile, the suburb emerged as the privileged home of the elite and upper middle class while commercial centers located towards the northern coast of the city center began to grow.

Communist

The last years of the Republic under the rule of Fulgencio Batista drove the Cuban working class towards revolution. The brutal and oppressive rule of Batista led a group of Cuban revolutionaries and their leader Fidel Castro to build a revolution aimed at redistributing wealth and prioritizing the people. This revolution occurred in dialogue with many others of its kind throughout Latin America. Driven by Utopian ideas the revolutionaries sought to decentralize the urban cores and subvert the dominance of an elite ruling class. During the early years of this era there was a brief moment of architectural experimentation visible in a handful of buildings such as Coppelia Heladeria or Instituto Superior de Arte. This experimentation was quickly replaced by the Soviet ideals of hyper efficiency and functionality. Prefabricated concrete became the only means and housing the only typology. The urban cores were neglected as development efforts were focused on the hinterland and the city was left to decay. The architect associated with the elite was largely removed from processes of development and replaced by the utilitarian laborer or engineer. Architectural production was almost entirely frozen at this moment in time.

Special Period - Present

In 1991 the dissolution of the Soviet Union yielded a number of post-communist cities in newly re-established nations throughout Eastern Europe. Across the Atlantic Ocean, Cuba, still committed to the goals and means of their revolution faced a dilemma distinct from that of post-Soviet nations such as Slovakia, Albania, and Romania. Navigating the loss of a primary trade partner and ally the Cuban government created the Ministry of Tourism in 1994 refocusing the Cuban economy on tourism. This reform viewed



Instituto Superior de Arte



Coppelia Entry



Vertical Circulation Coppelia



Soviet Housing Building in Cerro
Photos by Author



Unidad Vecinal No.1 Camilo Cienfuegos
Photo from google images

as a necessary evil rather than a long-term plan for reforming economy involved the legalization of hard currency, a reformed tourist sector, restricted openness to foreign investment, incentive based agriculture, and a slight allowance of small scale entrepreneurship.⁶ The introduction of a limited number of sanctioned ‘cuentapropistas’ or independent business ventures produced a significant growth in the private sector from 1991-1996. In 1996 the growth of the private sector slowed due to the introduction of an income tax and competition with state run competitors. In 2004 new economic opportunities for the state with Venezuela led to a revocation of the legislature that allowed for cuentapropistas and the growth of the private sector. By 2004 the private sector had reached a stasis. In 2008 Raul Castro took his place at the helm of the government. He soon initiated economic reform by way of actual policy aimed at long-term transformation in contrast to the changes of the mid 90’s, which were seen as temporary revisions. With the reforms beginning in 2008 we see the initiation of a deeper transition in politics, economy, and ideology moving towards a more moderate strategy of governance. The recent introduction of Wi-Fi in public space and the gradual opening of US – Cuban relations provide concrete indicators of the potential for innovation or quite possibly regression.

Arriving at the current moment in time it is clear that there is a dense history of conflict and complexity in the social and spatial evolution of Havana. As a means of beginning to develop a method of engaging this context the architect can explore alternative languages for articulating built form that exists in-between art and architecture as a way of facilitating dialogue in public urban space. As the private sector grows and the presence of WiFi access expands, what was once public becomes increasingly private. Employing strategies of de-familiarization, small scale architecture can put on display the existing conditions of publicness and project the possible transformations of that public space by engaging the citizen in an act of participation.

6 Phillip Peters, “Cuba’s Entrepreneurs: Foundation of a New Private Sector,” Lexington Institute July 2012, , accessed September 2016, <http://lexingtoninstitute.org/>.
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PROLONGED PERCEPTION THROUGH DEFAMILIARIZATION

In building narratives around identity there is a tendency to edit out opposition in support of the streamlined object. This denies the complexity of reality wherein every object and action contains layers of meaning open to continuous interpretation and interaction. Architecture and its concrete built forms are often seen as definite and permanent presenting significant difficulty when a building or monument is perceived as oppressive or exclusive. Their perceived permanence inhibits dialogue surrounding their continued use and impact. As the city transforms socially the building remains static becoming a nuisance or controlling the character of the public urban space surrounding it. This perpetuates systems of socio-economic dominance and prevents the healthy growth of the social city. In cities transitioning from one ideology to another there is an opportunity to challenge urban identity and produce exciting results in the social and spatial dynamics of public urban space. In order to discuss the static perception of architecture the architect must explore alternative methods that attempt to de-familiarize physical forms and open a dialogue about ownership and urban identity. Working through temporary means the architect can shift technique towards the intersection between art and architecture. Architects are required to work through established means and produce resolved products while the artist has the ability to realize his/her works independently driven by the richness of an idea. The methods of the architect taint the density of ideas while the density of ideas disables the artwork from engaging the viewer directly. In Shklovsky's text *Art as Technique* he explains:

“...technique of art is to make objects “unfamiliar,” to make forms difficult, to increase the difficulty and length of perception because the process of perception is an aesthetic end in itself and must be prolonged. Art is a way of experiencing the artfulness of an object: the object is not important.”⁷

Shklovsky encourages a slow and direct reading of objects as they exist in order to extract meaning and subvert projected understanding. This idea is replicated in the Office of Metropolitan Architecture's curating of



1. By de-familiarizing the object or 'turning it on its head' we can explore the existence of antagonistic relationships and excavate the complexities of object

7 Shklovskii, Viktor Borisovich, and Sher, Benjamin. *Theory of Prose*. 1st American ed. Elmwood Park, IL, USA: Dalkey Archive Press, 1991.
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the *Hermitage Museum* in St Petersburg Russia. In this case the Architect acts as a curator arranging artifacts and choreographing experience. The intention is to allow the viewer to ‘prolong’ perception and ‘experience the artfulness of an object’ in order to understand significance that moves beyond the form and physicality of said object. Shklovsky cites the way in which Tolstoy “makes the familiar seem strange by not naming the familiar object. He describes an object as if he were seeing it for the first time, an event as if it were happening for the first time. In describing something he avoids the accepted names of its parts and instead names corresponding parts of other objects.”⁸(Shklovsky) Through the distilled use of language he de-familiarizes the object and allows it to be understood differently. In the Hermitage, OMA creates a similar effect. By arranging the artifacts of the Czar in a nondescript pile in the corner of a decaying or partially preserved room the architect is describing the object with language unfamiliar to its understood history. This allows a new and potentially more honest interpretation to surface that transcends the objects themselves. Dissecting the implications of the Hermitage in *Off Modern Urbanism*, Svetlana Boym explains “The desire to preserve dilapidation itself does not aim to create another artificial ruin of modernity but rather to foreground beauty in disharmony, revealing the eccentric cohabitation of different modernities and the complex density of the present historical moment...The role of the architect is not to build but sometimes to remove, not to restore to the idealized original but to clear the stage for the rehearsal of different cultural potentials.”⁸ Rem Koolhaas confirms his intent in a lecture stating his desire to “... extend the repertoire of the architect... with a legitimate domain where you can abstain from action and think, and then whether you can develop that into something more strong, compelling or more creative remains to be seen.”⁹ In the Hermitage, Rem challenges the architect to postpone action and prolong perception and he acknowledges the challenge and uncertainty of this strategy.

The Garage Museum of Contemporary Art is another iteration in OMA’s exploration of this idea. A process of research and documentation resulted in the preservation of certain decorative elements and the

8 Boym, Svetlana. “Off Modern Urbanism: St Petersburg and Tirana.” In *The Life of Cities*. Ed. Mohsen Mostafavi. Zurich: Lars Müller, 2012. N. pag. Print.

9 Koolhaas, Rem. “Recent Pre-occupations: Architecture and Exhibition Making” Moderna Museet. Sweden, Stockholm. 2 Oct. 2016. Lecture.



Collage by OMA depicting the artifact as clutter in the Hermitage



floor covered in dust and debris

man and lion carved out of stone in conflict

image depicting lion imprinted on wall

pile of ruins resting in the corner beneath image of lion

Collage by OMA presenting classical forms and a space in a former palace with all of its decay and ruin, allowing a direct reading

image from: <http://oma.eu/>
text by author

primary structure of an existing ruin from the Soviet Period. The restored ruin is then wrapped in layered polycarbonate and re-imagined as a museum providing space for permanent exhibition and flexible programming. The adjacent plaza is revitalized and re-framed in adjacency to the translucent volume of the restored ruin. This project moves from the prolonged moment of perception into action. While successfully redefining use and producing a vibrant public space the potency of the revitalization as a device for affecting perception is lost. The ruin prior to the intervention required prolonged perception. The polycarbonate wrapper regularizes the original complexity present in the ruin and renders it's meaning with a smooth completeness raising the question: Is it possible to respond to initial perception through the act of creating in a way that does not remove complexity?

SOCIAL THROUGH FORMLESSNESS

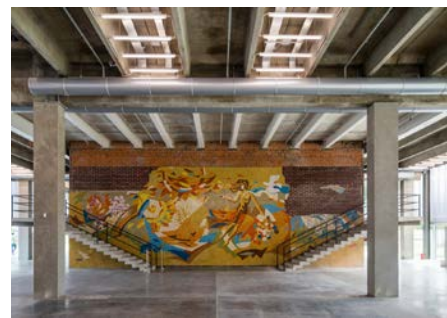
In her essay *Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics*, Claire Bishop analyzes artworks that seek to address this question. In discussing Santiago Sierra, whose work embodies the power of relational artworks to embrace conflicting dualities, she explains "The work does not offer an experience of transcendent human empathy that smooths over the awkward situation before us, but a pointed racial and economic non-identification: "this is not me.""¹⁰ Relational aesthetics deals largely with the anti: non-identification, anti-form, anti-establishment and at times even anti-artist. In its malleability it is effective in embracing antagonistic relationships and avoiding the homogenizing of complex relationships. The works she is referring to in this scenario are defined entirely by human participation and in effect deal with a transforming and mutable identity. Humans are easy to perceive as impermanent and contradictory. It is more difficult to achieve this through built form, as it is, in its physicality, perceived as permanent. Ruins bring to light the mutability of built form, as the impact of time on the object is visible. The redefinition or disruption of public urban space through interventions that engage ruins or a place's past can yield productive dialogue. This can be seen in the works of Mary Miss and Richard Serra. Their work, while requiring participation for their completion, utilizes physical intervention in various media to instigate the relation.



<http://oma.eu/>



SMOOTHING OVER



3. Garage Museum intervention depicting the loss of information after renovation

<http://oma.eu/>



5. 250 CM Line Tattooed on 6 Paid People -Santiago Sierra. The work described by Claire Bishop. In the naming selection of the artist the connection is apparent to the ideas of Shklovsky

Bishop, Claire. "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics." MIT Press Journals - October - Citation. N.p., n.d. Web. 18 Oct. 2016. <<http://www.mitpressjournals.org/doi/>

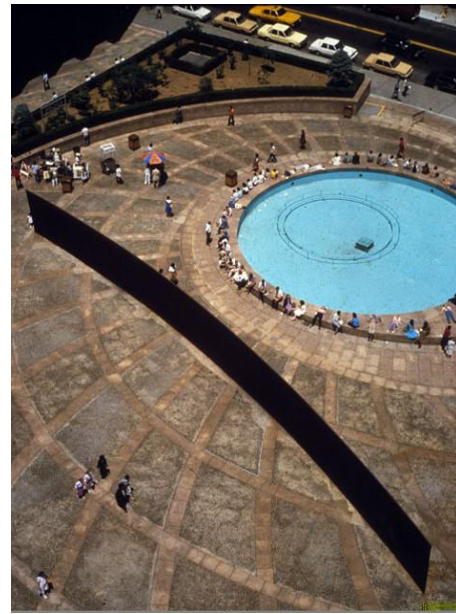
10 Bishop, Claire. "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics." MIT Press Journals Web. 18 Oct. 2016. Matthew Raybon / / AHST 5110 / Assignment 4+5 / Owen

SPATIAL THROUGH FORM

Richard Serra's Tilted Arc attempted to prolong and disrupt the viewer's perception. Intervening in a public space associated with a federal function this piece challenged ownership and authorship. The scale and form of the piece itself required the viewer to move along the piece and complete its relation. Its disruptive placement made it difficult to digest and forced a prolonged interaction. Regarding Serras work Miwon Kwon explains, "The scale size and location of site specific works are determined by the topography of the site, whether it be urban or landscape or architectural enclosure. The works become part of the site and restructure both conceptually and perceptually the organization of the site"¹¹ They are not objects for contemplation rather they are objects for interacting or completing.

Following the minimalist movement came a group of artists working with similar ideas but transforming methods while still dealing with the process of making. The work of Mary Miss engages the viewer spatially and facilitates social contemplation but accomplishes this through the choreography of path through space rather than around object. Miss was critical of the minimalist work of Serra despite his similar intent, claiming that his sculptures were too rooted in monumentality of object rather than the experience of provocative space. She explains her work as focusing on "breathing space, human scale, and first hand experience."¹⁵ Her sculptures employ the use of traditional and vernacular building materials and methods that seek to provide intimate spaces rather than monumental objects. Through research and prolonged perception Miss attempts to understand the layered history of selected sites and explore her own personal response to the space before developing her intervention. In the work entitled *Pool Complex: Orchard Valley* Miss choreographs a path around the ruin of a pool constructed over a former pond. The path leads the viewer through a ceremonial gate, engages the remnants of the previous function, and sequences pavilions that provide different vantage points and alternate readings of the ruins in their environment. In an essay entitled *Beyond Boundaries* Eleanor Heartney explains the way in which her intervention "acknowledges the passage of time that

11 Kwon, Miwon "One Place After Another: Notes on Specificity"



Tilted Arc relative to the inhabitation of the public



Pool Complex by Mary Miss, Image depicting the promenade which frames the ruin of the pool and guides the viewer to an elevated pavilion of contemplation



Image of a piece by Mary Miss entitled Mirror Way. Inserted into a historic courtyard this promenade provides sequence and vantage point that do not comment directly but allow the viewer to reflect on the context

<https://karolienraveyds.wordpress.com/circulatie/>

erodes, not only physical structures, but ways of life and private histories. Here deteriorating structures are recycled to create a new set of experiences.”¹² In this instance Miss is interpreting and re-framing physical ruins through architectural construction that does not edit the existing ruin but offers a spatial experience that re-frames and explores its history and meaning. The potency in this work is in the openness of the artist’s agenda combined with the tactile realness of her intervention. It is something that has the potential to be understood by all participants without explanation. While the relational works are so intense in their malleability and lack of definition and the Tilted arc is static in its solidness, *Pool Complex* inhabits a middle zone, which contains openness and participation, augmented and made real with material richness and physicality.

Beginning with an understanding of perception through language, the necessity for constant interpretation and dialogue surrounding the significance and ownership of public urban space and architectural patrimony is foregrounded. Shklovsky depicts the malleability of language and the need for de-familiarization in order to understand the complexity of things through the ideas put forth in *Art as Technique*. His thinking suggests that art as technique could potentially transfer to architecture to conceive of a form that provides a reflection of architecture and re-frames perceived spatial significance. The explorations of OMA in the Hermitage and Garage museums explore this in-between space. The Hermitage successfully conceives of a choreography that engages the viewer in a dialogue surrounding the historical reading of objects but fails to move beyond the conceptual and into the physical. *The Garage Museum* perceives history and social meaning but when the intervention moves into the physical the complexity is removed. As Rendell explains, spatial and critical work tends to appear more often in art than architecture resulting in a leaning towards to the abstract and conceptual. In the extreme musings of relational aesthetics this complexity is apparent, while the absence of physical presence beyond the body of the participant makes it difficult to process and learn from. Richard Serra’s *Tilted Arc* gives form to the participatory public experience and challenges perception, but the completeness of the physical object remains too tied to a traditional understanding of sculpture. The work of Mary Miss explores the process of perception

12 Heartney, Eleanor. “Beyond Boundaries.” Ed. Daniel M. Abramson. *Mary Miss*. By Mary Miss. New York: Princeton Architectural, 2004. 9-13. Print.

by re-framing existing forms through spatial sequencing. Instead of producing an object of contemplation or not creating anything physical at all she re-presents an existing ruin in a way that provokes dialogue around its meaning and yields a reflective experience on the part of the participant. Her works find success in their ability to facilitate a personal engagement with a particular site. In the Cuban context Tania Bruguera argues that all works and experiences no matter how personal become political. The ambiguous nature of *Pool Complex* and *Mirror Way* are no longer simply reflective if placed Havana. Unable to escape the political nature of working in Cuba, Bruguera forefronts the political nature of her artworks employing the fact that they are artworks as a means for expressing politically dissident or subversive ideas. Regarding her piece *Destierro* she explains “...art is the language of the citizens in places where they cannot speak.”¹³ The architect lacking a contemporary voice can employ art as technique in order to act and by disguising the intervention as artwork it can move into a place of dissidence and provocation.

In Havana the opportunity for architectural exploration in the traditional sense is approaching, but yet to arrive. Given the physical form of history preserved through 50 years of isolation from the global economy, there exists an array of ruins that present exciting opportunity for works that seek to produce the effect present in the work of Mary Miss and to explore the ideas put forward in the projects of OMA. The growth of the market and expansion of exchange will force the city to reconcile the needs of the general public, the political agenda of government, and the influence of foreign capital. At this moment a process of prolonged perception will provide healthy and productive insight and encourage dialogue while providing an opportunity for the Cuban architectural community to explore identity without the bureaucratic hindrance of traditional building means. The architect can develop a site-specific spatial language that challenges the public perception regarding the ownership of public space and creates dialogue surrounding the legacy of urban ruins. Engaging the ideas put forth in the works of Tania Bruguera, architecture becomes realizable disguised as artwork while simultaneously becoming critical and political.



Destierro - Tania Bruguera

13 Bruguera, Tania ““The Role of Ethics in Political Art”” Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study Harvard University. Cambridge, Massachusetts. 3 Oct. 2016. Lecture

Angelil, Marc M., and Rainer Hehl. *Informalize!: Essays on the Political Economy of Urban Form*. N.p.: n.p., n.d. Print.

Informalize! is a collection of essays that is a part of a series of publications from Ruby Press in Berlin. The authors examine the emergence of informal strategies employed in urban contexts throughout the global south as a result of urbanization and the lack of basic provisions on the peripheries or cores of cities. It then discusses methods through which architects and urban planners can distill the strategies that appear out of necessity and translate them into a basic structure for future growth of cities with the hope of incorporation rather than exclusion. It approaches this analysis through a lens of political economy examining the methods employed by governments to control and direct urban development.

Birkenmaier, Anke, and Esther Katheryn. Whitfield. *Havana beyond the Ruins: Cultural Mappings after 1989*.

Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2011. Print.

Havana Beyond the Ruins is a collection of essays discussing the current state of decay in Havana. Two essays are particularly insightful. One authored by the highly regarded Mario Coyula argues that the contemporary Havana still finds itself entrenched in the so called 'Special period in times of peace' the period of decay and difficulty initiated by the collapse of the Soviet Union. Another deals with the Barbacoa, an informal method of subdividing a typical Havana residence vertically in order to allow for a separation between living/eating space and sleeping space. Coyula's essay presents an assertion that the recent reforms are simply an extension of reforms initiated in 1991 and calls for a more critical stance to be taken on the condition of contemporary Havana. Jill Hamberg's essay describes an informal strategy unique to Havana that exhibits Cuban resilience (Resolver) and invention (inventar).

Bishop, Claire. "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics." *MIT Press Journals - October - Citation*. N.p., n.d.

Web. 18 Oct. 2016. <<http://www.mitpressjournals.org/doi/abs/10.1162/0162287042379810>>.

Bourriaud, Nicolas. *Relational Aesthetics*. Dijon: Les Presses Du Réel, 2002.

Boym, Svetlana. "Off Modern Urbanism: St Petersburg and Tirana." In *the Life of Cities*. Ed. Mohsen Mostafavi. Zurich: Lars Müller, 2012. N. pag. Print.

Bruguera, Tania "The Role of Ethics in Political Art" Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study Harvard University. Cambridge, Massachusetts. 3 Oct. 2016. Lecture

Deutsche, Rosalyn. *Evictions: Art and Spatial Politics*. Chicago, IL: Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts, 1996. Print.

Goodman, Carole, and Claudio Sotolongo. *Soy Cuba: El Cartel De Cine En Cuba Después De La Revolución =*

Cuban Cinema Posters from after the Revolution. México, D.F.: Trilce, 2011. Print.

Soy Cuba: El Cartel De cine en Cuba engages with representations of the city during the communist era. Particularly sections dealing with the collaborative Soviet-Cuban propaganda film entitled "Soy Cuba" this text offers a critical analysis of the politicized representation of Havana. Through cultural representation of the post-revolutionary Cuban imaginary I will start to identify zones or potential sites that carry political and social significance.

Heidegger, Martin. *Building, Dwelling, Thinking*. N.p.: n.p., 2000. Print.

Koolhaas, Rem. “Recent Pre-occupations: Architecture and Exhibition Making” Moderna Museet. Sweden, Stockholm. 2 Oct. 2016. Lecture.

Kraynak, Janet, Monica Bonvicini, Juliane Rebentisch, and Alexander Alberro. *Monica Bonvicini*. N.p.: n.p., n.d. Print.

Peters, Phillip. “Cuba’s Entrepreneurs: Foundation of a New Private Sector.” Lexington Institute, July 2012. Accessed September 2016. <http://lexingtoninstitute.org/>.

Rendell, Jane. *Art and Architecture: A Place between*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2006.

Segre, Roberto, Mario Coyula, and Joseph L. Scarpaci. *Havana: Two Faces of the Antillean Metropolis*. Chichester: Wiley, 1997.

Sevilla, Luis Bay. “El Paseo De Tacon O De Carlos III.” *En Arquitectura* Sept. 1939: 5-18. Print.

Shklovskii, Viktor Borisovich, and Sher, Benjamin. *Theory of Prose*. 1st American ed. Elmwood Park, IL, USA: Dalkey Archive Press, 1991.

Solnit, Rebecca. *Storming the Gates of Paradise: Landscape for Politics*. Berkley: University of California Press, 2007. Print.

Thompson, Nato, *Living As Form: Socially Engaged Art From 1991-2011*. New York: Creative Time Books, 2012. Print.

Living As Form catalogs and analyzes the contemporary practice of ‘socially engaged art.’ This is an extremely flexible categorization that includes a variety of works utilizing varying means and methods. The unifying element is the way in which the works engage with the observer through participation. They attempt to create works wherein the product does not describe ‘life.’ Rather the product is life. The introductory essays create dialog on the role of art in redefining public space, influencing social behavior and interacting with urban fabric. Sections analyze the work of Tania Bruguera a contemporary Cuban artist who deals with freedom of expression, citizenship and nationality, and ownership of public space.

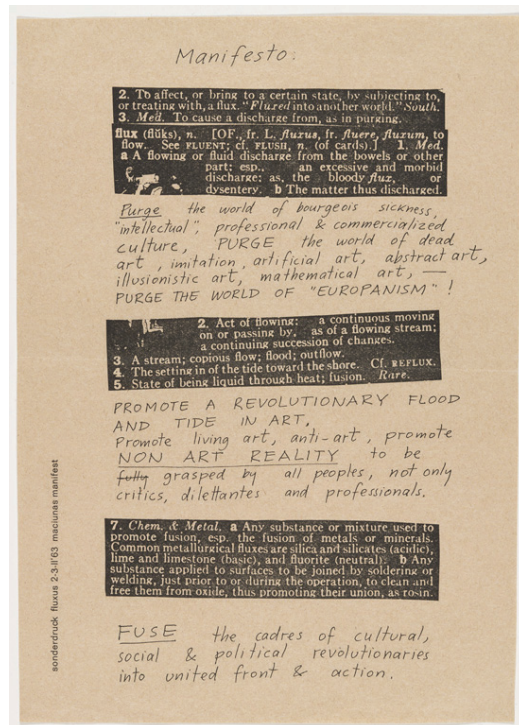
Tung, Anthony M. *Preserving the World’s Great Cities: The Destruction and Renewal of the Historic Metropolis*. New York: Clarkson Potter, 2001. Print.

Tung offers a micro to macro analysis of the birth of a conservation ethic around the world. He describes how many major cities such as Beijing, Moscow, Warsaw and New York have destroyed and rebuilt their historic centers throughout time. Sections examining Warsaw, Vienna, Beijing and Moscow offer relevant global precedent for the reconstruction or deconstruction of historic cores largely effected by the political agendas of centralized planning. Tung is comprehensive in chronology and as result more general in content. The text is driven by thematic pairings around the globe rather than in depth analysis of a select few cities. He provides historical background in a concise manner but in order to move into the contemporary setting with finer detail other sources will be examined.

CASE STUDIES / INSPIRATION

FLUXUS MANIFESTO

Fluxus manifesto outlines the fundamental principles behind the fluxus movement. The fluxus group sought to revive the vitality of contemporary art by rejecting the static environment of the museum and the fixed methods of abstract impressionism. Working in primarily in the 60's they developed provocative means of creating participatory art. The 'happenings' initiated by Allan Kaprow created staged events that combine many mediums in an action based production that centered upon and involved the 'audience' and 'artist' as one. The aim was to create art directly from life. This manifesto in particular outlines various meanings of flux and its variations generating a series of ideas or actions that lie at the center of the fluxus ideology. As ideas they deal with the importance of examining the spontaneous conditions of life before producing from it in order to understand and then revise or reverse static structures of complacency or control.



BUNKER HILL MONUMENT /

KRYSTOF WODIZCKO

“I am not about revolutionary messages on walls...I want to analyse the relationship between the human body, the body of someone who lives here, and the social body and the body of the architectural and spatial forms around that body”

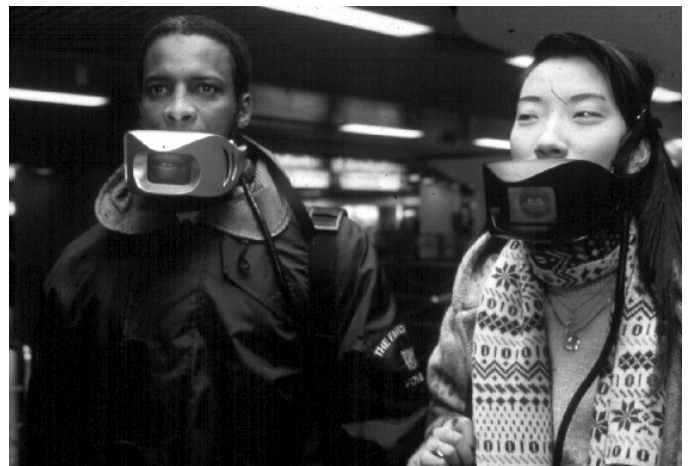
Through projection Wodiczko engages the symbolic legacy of monument and architecture. The Bunker Hill monument piece was created in response to the Charleston Code of Silence. The code of silence is when an individual chooses to withhold vital information in order to avoid alienation or exclusion from a community. In this piece Wodiczko offers a critique of silence citing Foucault’s use of the Greek term parrhesia or fearless public speaking, as a way both to produce a critical confrontation between an individual and a monument and to penetrate the silent assent of community.

Wodiczko’s method of RE presenting the Bunker Hill monument in order to comment on its symbolic meaning exists in contrast to the methods employed by communist governments. After the triumph of Cuba’s communist revolution statues were removed and streets renamed. While removal is effective in erasing meaning it negates continued dialogue about problematic history. Wodiczko interferes with existing monument but does not erase it. This acknowledges its meaning and initiates conversation with regards to a contemporary issue without erasing the information of history. Through a disruptive but temporary intervention Wodiczko re-frames the symbolic power of monument and encourages the population to engage critically.



Krzysztof Wodiczko, Bunker Hill Monument Projection, Let Freedom Ring, Inaugural ICA/Vita Brevis Project, 1996.

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TILTED ARC

RICHARD SERRA

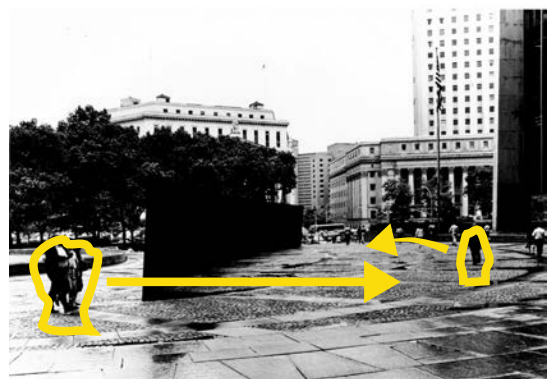
Richard Serra's Tilted Arc and its subsequent removal confront the relation between population and public space. The arc in its placement provokes a response. It is disruptive and creates a feeling of discomfort. The Tilted Arc exists as a counterpoint to the hyper curated experience of contemporary museum space. Through its disruption it challenges the viewer to make a decision about what he or she desires in public space.

In its removal the tilted arc leaves a scar. The ruin of the arc contains information or residue that describes its controversial past.

Intense debate followed the removal and disposal of the arc asking What is the relationship between the public and art?, What is the relationship between private sponsor and public art? How does its removal conflict with ideals about freedom of expression in the United States? Are successful works pleasing or provocative?

Richard Serra's sculptures exist at a scale that requires the viewer to move in order to experience the whole of the piece. The total environment can not be understood at once. The plaza before the sculpture was nondescript and inactive. The tilted arc did not disrupt activity as activity did not exist. Instead it interrupted the perception of 22 Federal Plaza and provoked the public to engage with its use.

In this case there was a disconnect between the intent and its reception questioning where the line exists between a piece that incites dialogue among citizens and an intervention that results in its removal by the organization of power.

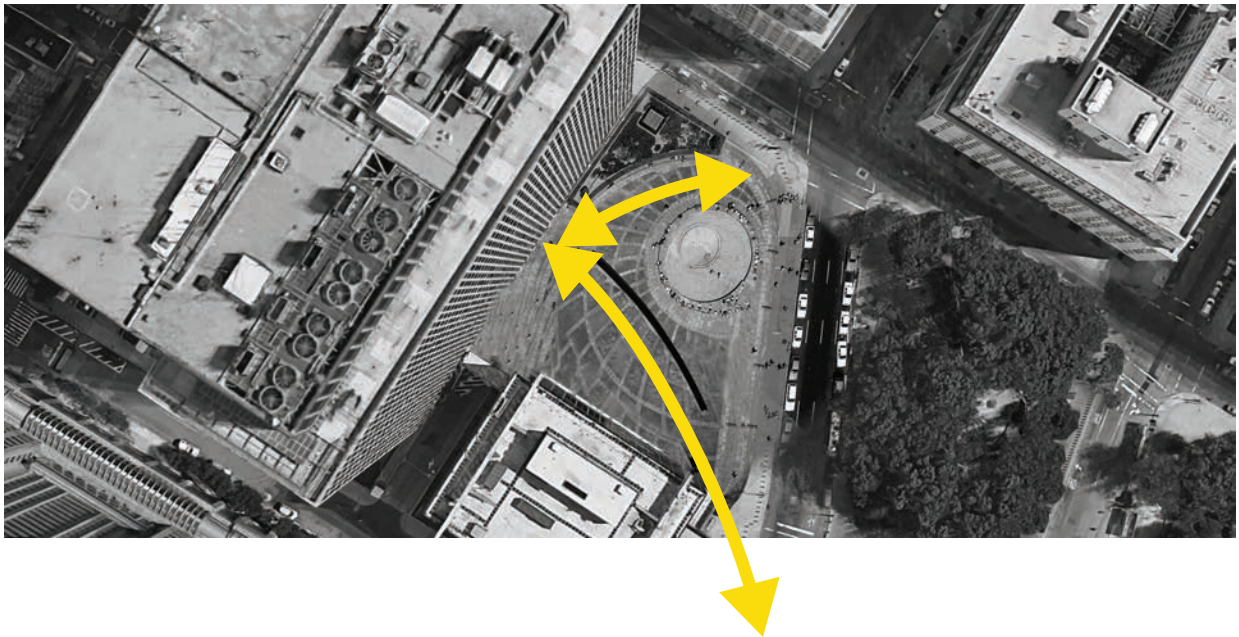


“Space becomes the sum of successive perceptions of the place. The viewer becomes the subject. One’s identity as a person is closely connected with the experience of space and place. When a known space changes through the inclusion of a site-specific sculpture, one is called upon to relate to the space differently.... This experience may startle some people.”

-D.S. Friedman, Urbanist,
University of Cincinnati

“when it came to public art post-Serra, a different, totally nonconfrontational strategy was taken: acquiescing and trying to make public art and bureaucracy work together. This led to the second and final failure — one that still resonates.”

-Jerry Saltz,
art critic

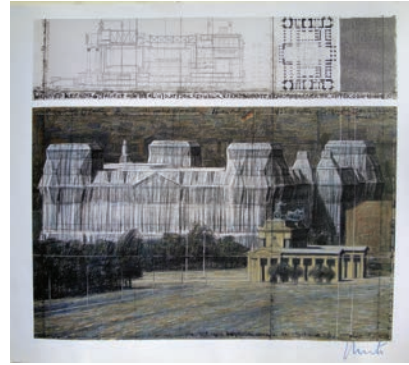


WRAPPING OF THE REICHSTAG

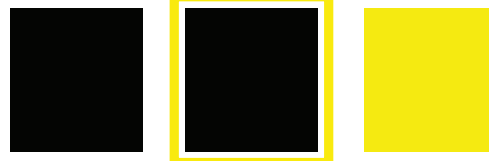
CHRISTO AND JEAN CLAUDE

In 1971 Christo and Jean Claude were approached with a proposal to wrap the German Parliament building. The loaded climate of the Cold war prevented the realization of the project in that moment however it did not disappear entirely. As Foster and partners took on the renovation and restoration of the Reichstag an opportunity presented itself for the realization of the Reichstag Wrapper.

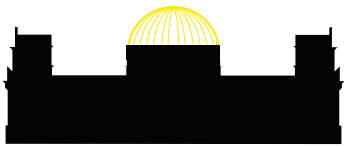
Taking place during the renovation this piece contains many layers of meaning with regards to how temporary architectural intervention can re-frame and commentate on the symbolic power of certain buildings and public space while provoking a dialogue about transformation and change. Physically Christo and Jean Claude's Reichstag wrapper invokes associations with the cocooning and rebirth of a chrysalis. Whether intentional or not Christo Jean Claude and Norman Foster took on a powerful collaborative act in re-framing the symbolic meaning of the German Parliament



MONUMENT WRAPPER REBIRTH



BEGINNING OF CONSTRUCTION ON REICHSTAG 06.09.1884



CONCEPTION OF "REICHSTAG WRAPPER"

1971

BEGINNING OF FOSTER & PARTNERS RENOVATION

1990

REALIZATION OF REICHSTAG WRAPPER

1995

COMPLETION OF FOSTER AND PARTNERS RENOVATION

1999



[HTTP://RAREHISTORICALPHOTOS.COM/SOVIET-FLAG-REICHSTAG-BERLIN-1945/](http://rarehistoricalphotos.com/soviet-flag-reichstag-berlin-1945/)

[HTTP://WWW.GERMAN-WAY.COM/TRAVEL-AND-TOURISM/GERMANY-FOR-TOURISTS/CITY-GUIDES-GERMANY/BERLIN-AND-POTSDAM/THE-REICHSTAG-IN-BERLIN/](http://www.german-way.com/travel-and-tourism/germany-for-tourists/city-guides-germany/berlin-and-potsdam/the-reichstag-in-berlin/)

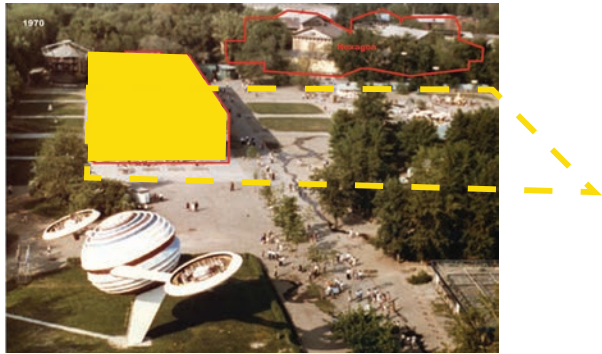
GARAGE MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART

OFFICE OF METROPOLITAN ARCHITECTURE

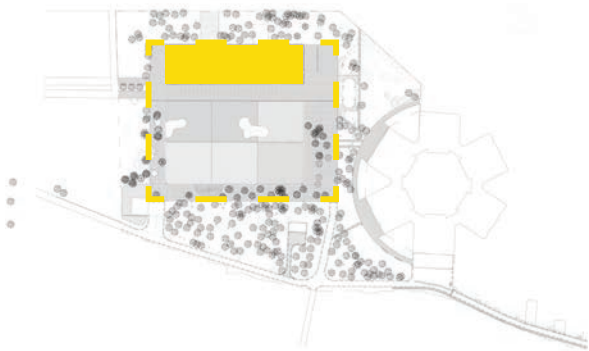
In the Garage Museum of Contemporary Art OMA finds an opportunity in Moscow to address a ‘ruin’ of Soviet Moscow. Initial design approach involves intensive documentation and assessment of the existing material conditions before imagining an intervention.

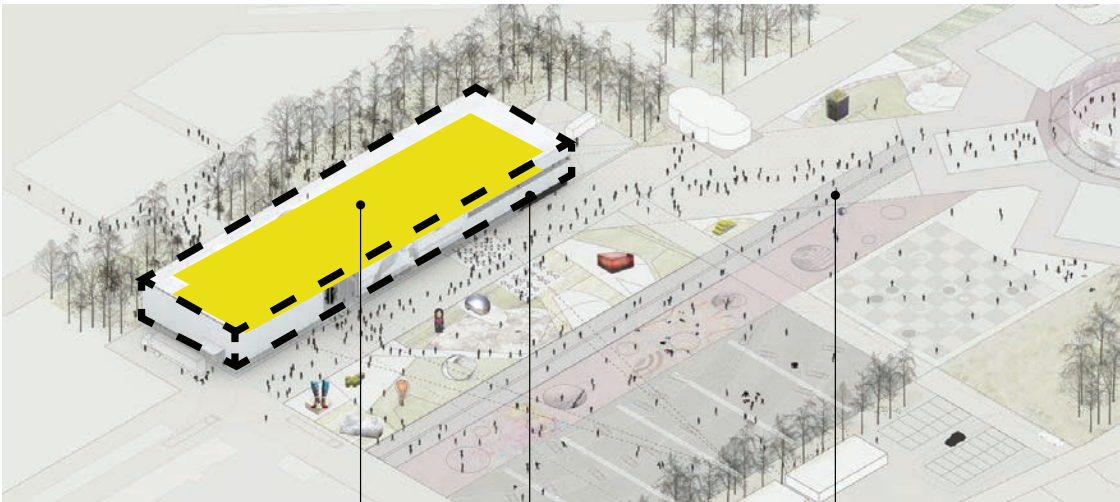
“...even if history is not particularly glamorous, is not particularly attractive it is almost per se for its own sake worth keeping or at least worth referring to.”

The RE-presentation itself seeks to restore certain decorative elements and the structure. Then by wrapping the volume in layered polycarbonate an enclosed programmable space is defined in relation to a open public square.



BUILDING EXTENSION





EXISTING CORE

WRAPPER

PUBLIC EXTENSION

SITE AND PROGRAM / LA RAMPA

Reciprocity, materiality, threshold, insertion, and infrastructure
- JANE RENDELL

LA RAMPA

La Rampa is located at the threshold between Centro Habana and Vedado the first historical suburb of Havana. Centro Habana is the district of Havana that occupies the space directly beyond the threshold of the colonial wall. Under the leadership of General Tacon during the middle of the 19th century Havana received its first major urban redesign. Fixated on the urbanism underway in Washington DC, Tacon implemented a series of reforms aimed at modernizing the city. He cleared land for the expansion and creation of Avenidas such as Alameda Isabell II following the path of the old city wall and Paseo Tacon stretching from Parque Fraternidad, on the edge of the old city, west to el Castillo Principe. These avenidas were intended to provide a public place for the leisurely activities of the emerging middle and upper classes. Although novelty in their focus on social function they took on a monumental and militaristic scale due to Tacon's experience as a General. In contemporary Havana these Avenidas appear as formal and social thresholds between different sections of the city. Alameda Isabel II now known as el Prado separates Habana Vieja from Centro Habana to the west and Paseo Tacon now Avenida Salvador Allende creates a divide between Centro Habana and Cerro to the south. These three districts, Habana Vieja, Centro Habana and Cerro were the three initial zones of urbanization and are arguably the spaces in greatest decay today. What separates Centro and Cerro from Habana Vieja is a slight shift in scale and the presence of a more prescribed urban form.

Cerro and Centro came into existence under the guidelines of the *Ordenanzas de Construccion de 1861* which established hierarchy in street planning and specified formal guidelines reflecting the socio economic and environmental concerns of the time. Segre explains:

“As a major building code and planning mandate, the ordenanzas were quite progressive for its day and left an indelible mark on Havana. Roads were classified in a hierarchy, and a Neoclassical Style was imposed on the pórticos, which contrasted with the commanding baroque style of the walled city.”¹⁴

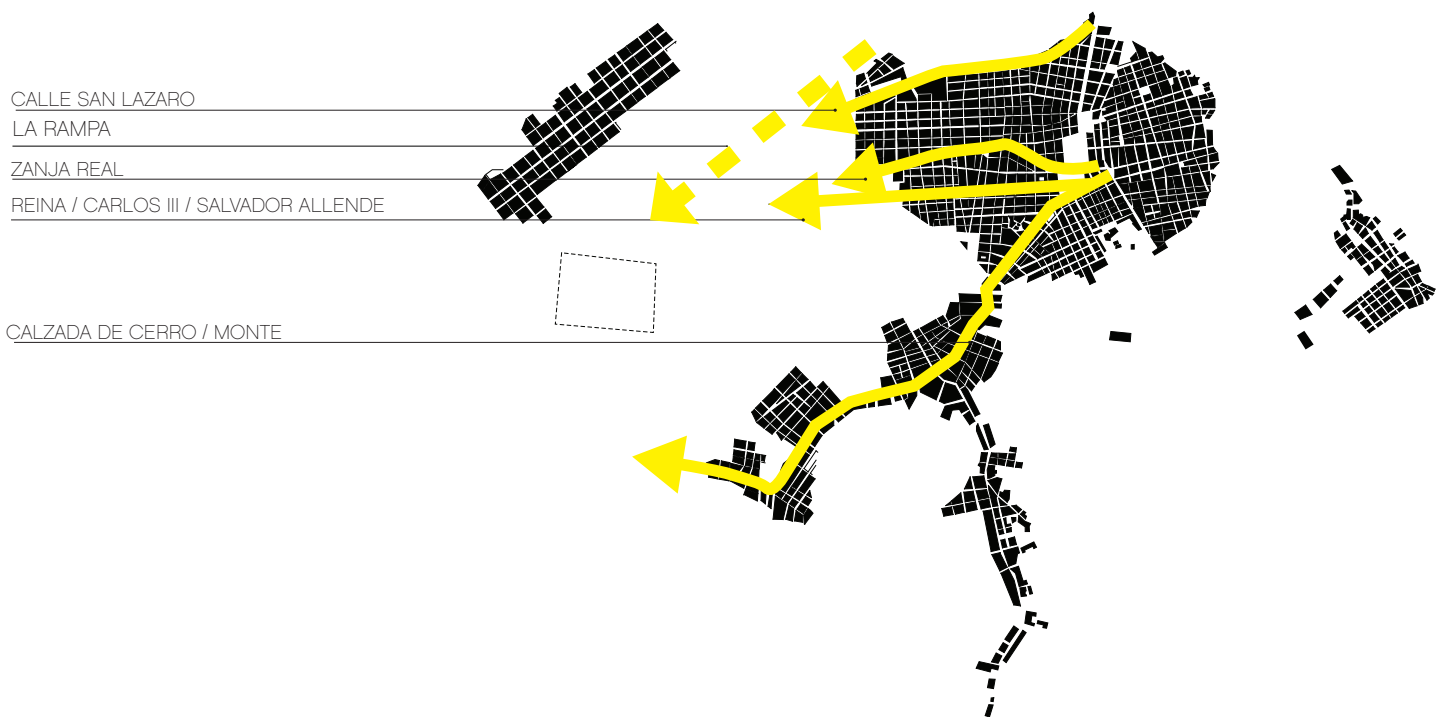
14 Roberto Segre, Mario Coyula, and Joseph L. Scarpaci, *Havana: Two Faces of the Antillean Metropolis* (Chichester: Wiley, 1997).



Photo From Google Images

This stylistic shift indicates a transition in thinking. The neoclassical was initially resisted as it reflected the progressive thought coming from France at the time. It was not until the rise of independence movements that Havana began to embrace the neo-classical over the baroque. Around the turn of the century Centro Habana would become a place for the new urban middle class. Residence would combine with commercial space to form a thriving urban environment of capitalist production and modern living. In parallel with this urban growth the introduction of the tranvias, electric street cars, resulted in the appearance of the suburb of Vedado as the urban elite and middle class sought homes outside of the city. The introduction of the automobile and the ‘modernization’ of the city around the turn of the century led to the creation of the Vedado, Miramar and Playa suburbs to the west.

La Rampa Making up the 6 blocks of Calle 23 from Calle M to the Malecon came into existence at the seam between the Centro district and Vedado as a reverberation of urban growth. First the districts surrounding the seam grew boasting their own commercial amenities. As the economy grew and tourism boomed there was a need for a larger scale commercial center. The void of La Rampa presented the ideal site. Over the seam of La Rampa, both in physical and temporal space, exists a shift in publicness



HAVANA **1853** / Primary Avenidas (Interior a Exterior)

LA RAMPA AS THE SEAM

Drawing by author

La Rampa: Balanced mix; modernist high rise, structuralist, 'streamlined,' neo classical, Art Deco; degree of disrepair: moderate; Level of occupation: appropriate for (wifi hotspots yield spikes in occupation); mixed use (predominantly commercial), civic, entertainment

Galiano: 18th Century Neo classical, Modernist, Art deco; Degree of disrepair: moderate to high; Level of occupation: (street) Appropriate to scale, (residence) high;

Avenida Carlos III: balanced mix, Neo classical, Art Deco, Modernist, Structuralist, Cuban Baroque; Degree of disrepair: Low to moderate; Level of occupation: (street) seems appropriate; Mixed use, predominantly mixed use - commercial/Civic

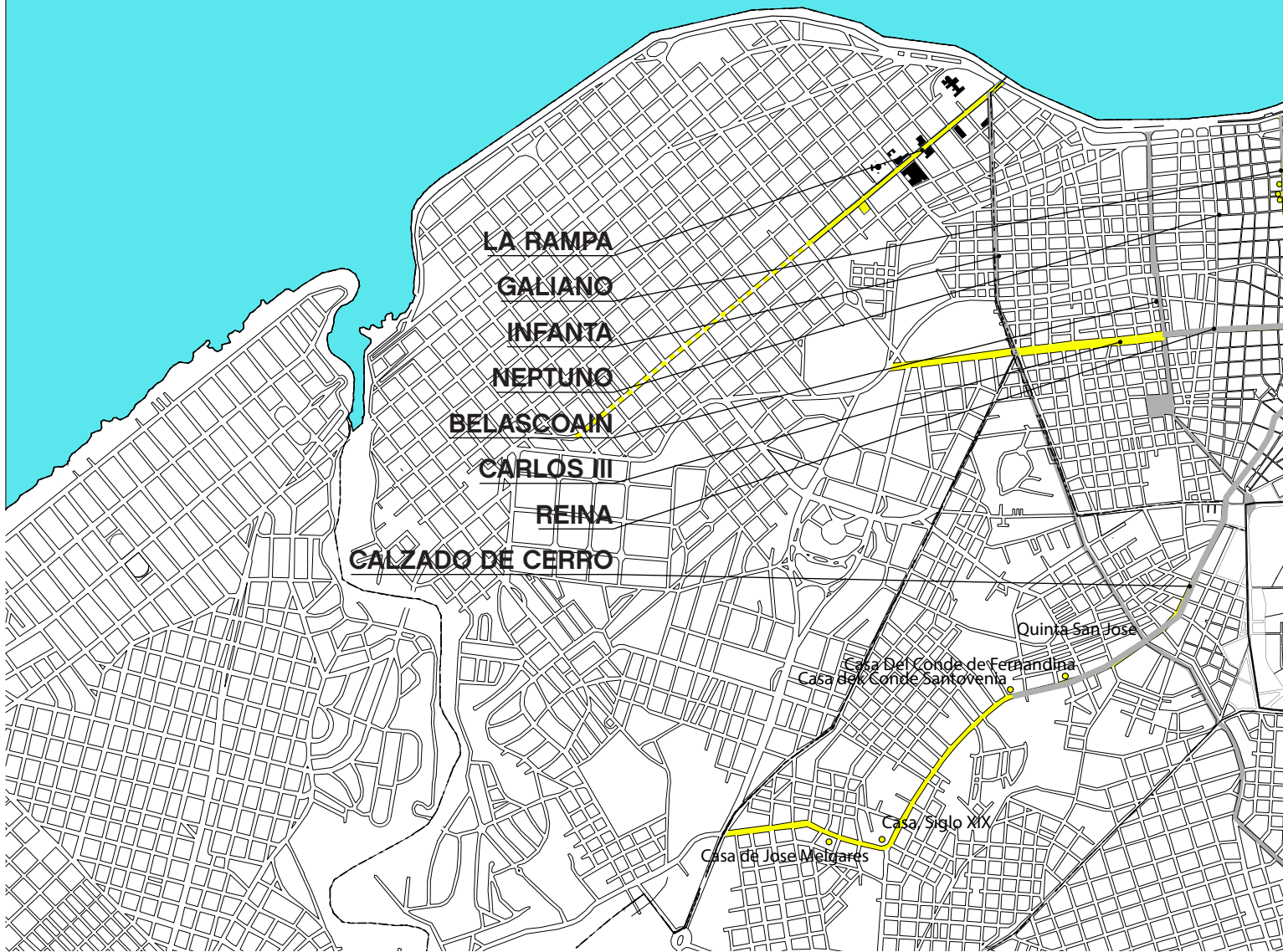
Simon Bolivar (Reina): 18th Century Neo Classical, Art Deco, Art Nouveau (Eclecticism); Degree of disrepair: moderate to high; Level of occupation: (street) Moderate primarily residential/localized commercial

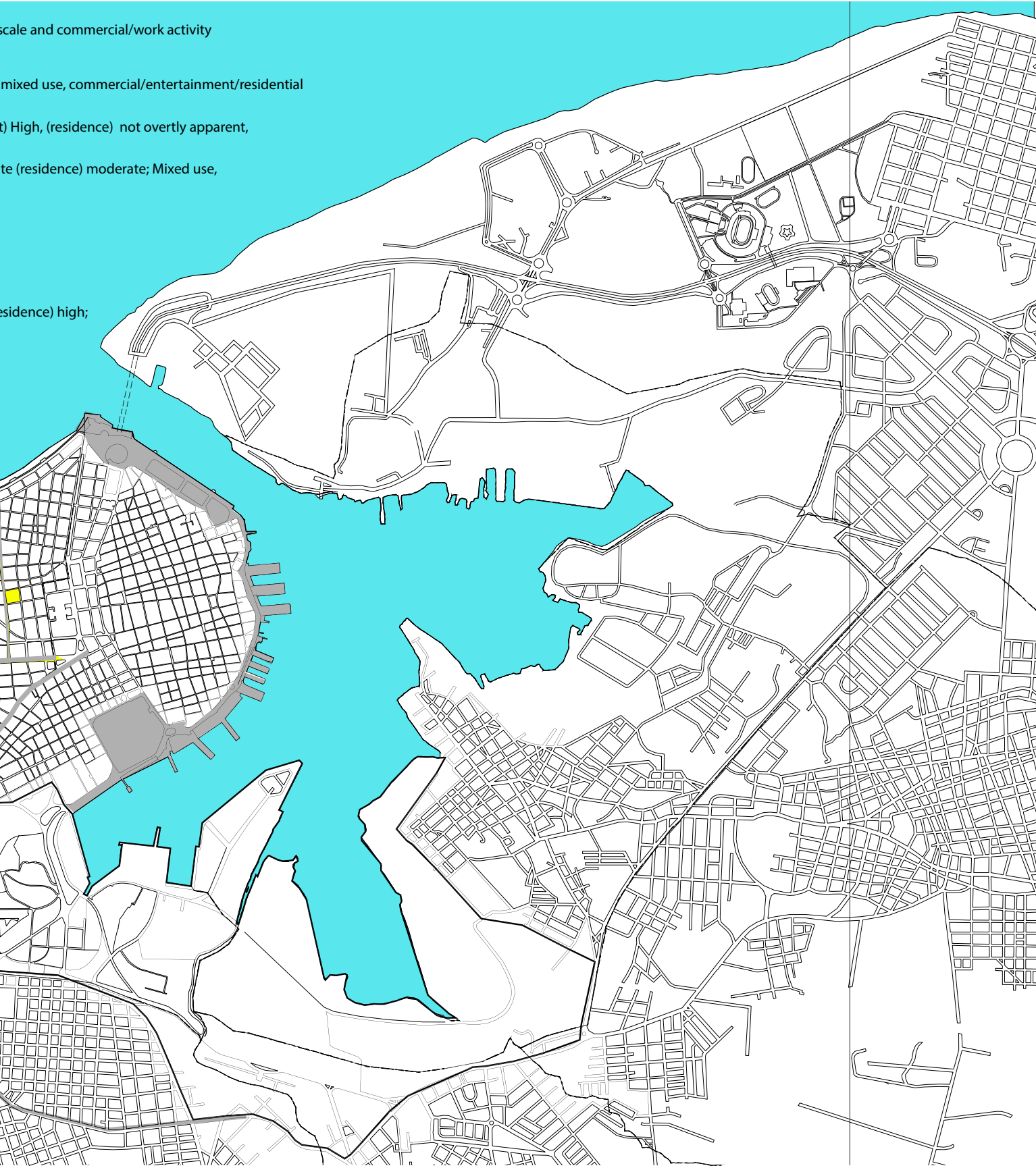
Calzado de Cerro/Monte: Frozen, entirely historical, pervasive use of Neo classical, Degree of disrepair: high, Level of occupation: (street) high, (residence) high; mixed use residential/commercial

Infanta

Neptuno: 80:30/pre 1900: post 1900; Neo Classical, Art Nouveau, Art Deco, Modernist; Degree of disrepair: high, Level of Occupation: (street) Appropriate to scale, (residence) residential/Commercial at certain intersections (infanta, galiano, Belascoain/Padre Valera

Belascoain





scale and commercial/work activity

mixed use, commercial/entertainment/residential

t) High, (residence) not overtly apparent,

te (residence) moderate; Mixed use,

(residence) high;

CONTEMPORARY HAVANA / Primary Avenidas (Interior to Exterior)
 POTENTIAL ZONES FOR DEVELOPMENT

Diagram by author



TAXONOMY OF PUBLICNESS / THE POLYCENTRIC CITY

1519 - 1880

The plazas:

Unlike the standard Spanish colonial city which grew around one single central plaza which served all civic social and political functions, Havana developed around multiple plazas each serving a separate function.

“Sartor describes the irregular layout as organic and closer to the medieval towns of Europe than the formal grid plan found in most Latin American cities. Placing la Fuerza fortress on the Plaza de Armas disrupted the usual pattern of locating important buildings of the church (iglesia) and government (cabildo, or town council) on a single town square...this dispersed city functions to other town squares and characterized Havana’s polycentric nature”¹⁵

PLAZA DE CATEDRAL

religious

PLAZA DE ARMAS

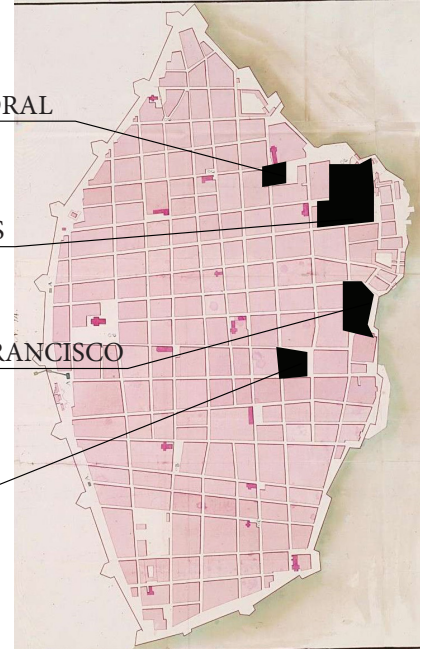
military

PLAZA DE SAN FRANCISCO

foreign trade

PLAZA VIEJA

commercial

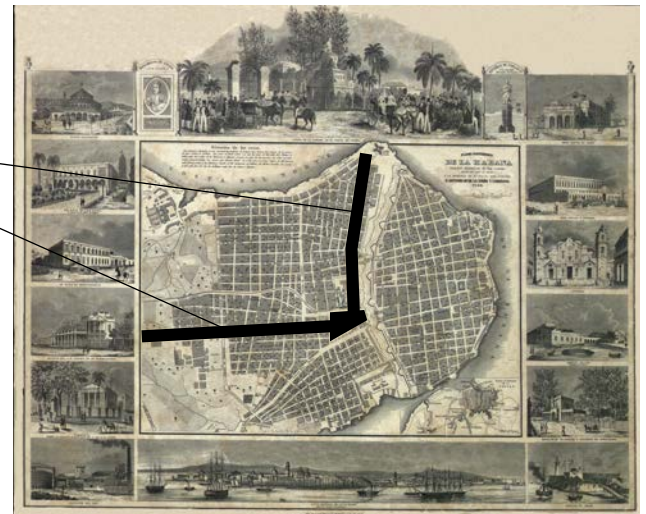


1820-1890

The boulevard:

As the city begins to expand beyond the limits of the wall the space of the public transforms and expands. During this period the European boulevard is introduced in the form of Alameda Isabel II and Paseo Tacon. These spaces provide a new place of leisure and socializing for the emerging upper middle class.

“Todo esto decidió al General Tacón a llevar a práctica la idea que le animaba de construir en aquel lugar, además de una vía de pavimento firme, un sitio de recreo y solaz para los habitantes de la capital, que en aquella fecha ya se elevaba a más de ciento sesenta mil personas”¹⁶



15 Roberto Segre, Mario Coyula, and Joseph L. Scarpaci, *Havana: Two Faces of the Antillean Metropolis* (Chichester: Wiley, 1997).

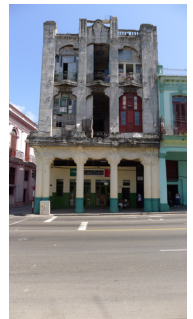
16 Sevilla, Luis Bay. “El Paseo De Tacon O De Carlos III.” *En Arquitectura Sept.* 1939: 5-18. Print. “General Tacón decided with all of this to construct in that place in addition to a paved avenue, a site of leisure and recreation for the inhabitants of the capital that on the date had grown to more than 170,000 people.”

1890-1920

The portales:

A rise in capitalist production and the growth of the new middle and upper middle classes results in increasing independence sentiments and an embrace of the new European school of thought. The physical result was the appearance of neo-classicism as a primary architectural style.

During this period the Ordenanzas de Construcción dictated that all primary and secondary avenues (Calzadas) employ portales, a colonnade to cover the pedestrian path.¹⁷ The urban fabric in this part was primarily mixed use where the first floor contained commercial space with residence above. The extension of the portales to cover the public space created a fluid connection between building, public space, and inhabitant. The combining of the front porch and building face with the sidewalk and shade cover fostered the social use of the streetscape. The widespread use of the colonnade during this period is what is responsible for the condition Alejo Carpentier refers to in *La Ciudad de Columnas*. (*The City of Columns*)



¹⁷ Roberto Segre, Mario Coyula, and Joseph L. Scarpaci, Havana: Two Faces of the Antillean Metropolis (Chichester: Wiley, 1997).

“First Order roads were called calzadas, whose width could not be less than 25 meters (90 feet). Calzadas Zapata, Puentes Grandes, Güines, Cristina, Monte, Cerro, Galiano, Belascoain, and Jesus del Monte...and Infanta still exist today, adding Calzada to the roadway nomenclature of Calle and Avenida that form part of the contemporary Hava’na’s road names. These calzadas were typically lined with porticated public corridors called portales. These portales gave access to stores at the ground level, with dwellings above. Such a pattern was key in shaping the look of the city beyond the old walled city (extramuros), but in the old walled historic core portales were confined to the buildings surrounding the main plazas. Secondary roads deemed the Ordenanzas, would also have portales at the expense of land lots in necessary. Covered sidewalks and promenades outside the walled city were wide and longer and recommended for a pedestrian’s protection from the tropical sun

1920 - 1959

The privatization of the portales:

With the development of the first suburb of Vedado and those that followed to the west, the porch was severed from the sidewalk as residence and business separated and the individual home became ubiquitous.

The commercial corridors already present in the old city and those emerging in the suburbs sported the brands of American business, such as Coca Cola, Woolworths, IBM, and Sears. Increasing presence of American business and the importation of 'modern ideals' encouraging suburbanization and the automobile result in an intense privatization of space and commerce. During this period La Rampa appears as a new commercial center between the sections of the city characterized by the public portales and the sections of the private home and private portales.

1959 - 1996

Complex publicness:

In theory the space of the communist country is entirely public. Property is monitored and owned by the government. The former spaces of the elite were appropriated for popular use or left to decay. The large extravagant homes of the elite were re-purposed as schools, museums, and service centers. Social life existed outside, in the colonnaded Calzadas of Centro Habana during the day and at the Malecon at night.

Simultaneously the public space was also a place of surveillance and propaganda. While people were allowed to move about freely and access spaces that were once the private space of the elite, the freedom of their inhabitation was restricted by the presence of propaganda and the Comités de Defensa de la Revolución. The committees were a neighborhood watch present throughout the city whose responsibility was to enforce and maintain the ideals of the revolution. In this way it provided the government with a mechanism for surveillance. While the traditionally private spaces were reclaimed there public function as spaces for gathering and sharing of ideas was inhibited by the fear of existing against the revolution.



1996 - PRESENT

Gradual re-privatization of space:

As the approved list of cuenta propistas grows there is an increasing need for the division of property and designation of ownership. As individual ownership increases that which was once public is encroached upon by higher quantities of private property. Alongside the traditional return of private space is a new form of privateness. The world of Online information has produced a complex private space. At once intensely private and extremely public, Internet access is an extremely powerful tool.

Wi Fi:

Describing the impact of information technology on publicness in the United States Rebecca Solnit explains:

“The world of information and communication Online, much hailed as a technological advance, is also a social retreat accompanying a loss of the public and social space of the cities; a loss of the aesthetic, sensual, and nonhuman space of the country; a privatization of physical space; and a disembodiment of daily life.”¹⁸

In Havana this disembodiment is taken from its standard interior context and placed in the public realm forcing the private action into the public and dictating the character and use of public space. Rather than a place for engagement the public becomes a place for disengagement. The tool for liberating information access is only available in a monitored format both through censored content and the forced public nature of the activity. In this scenario the publicness creates a false sense of utility. The public placement of wifi hot spots on the surface is a gesture of equal access for all citizens however the anti social nature of the resultant social dynamic in these spaces warns of the potential for the loss of public social space.

Wi Fi HOTSPOTS



WiFi outside Cine Yara



WiFi Cuban Airline Bldg



WiFi hotspot Calle K y 23



WiFi Hotspot Calle M y 23

Photos by author

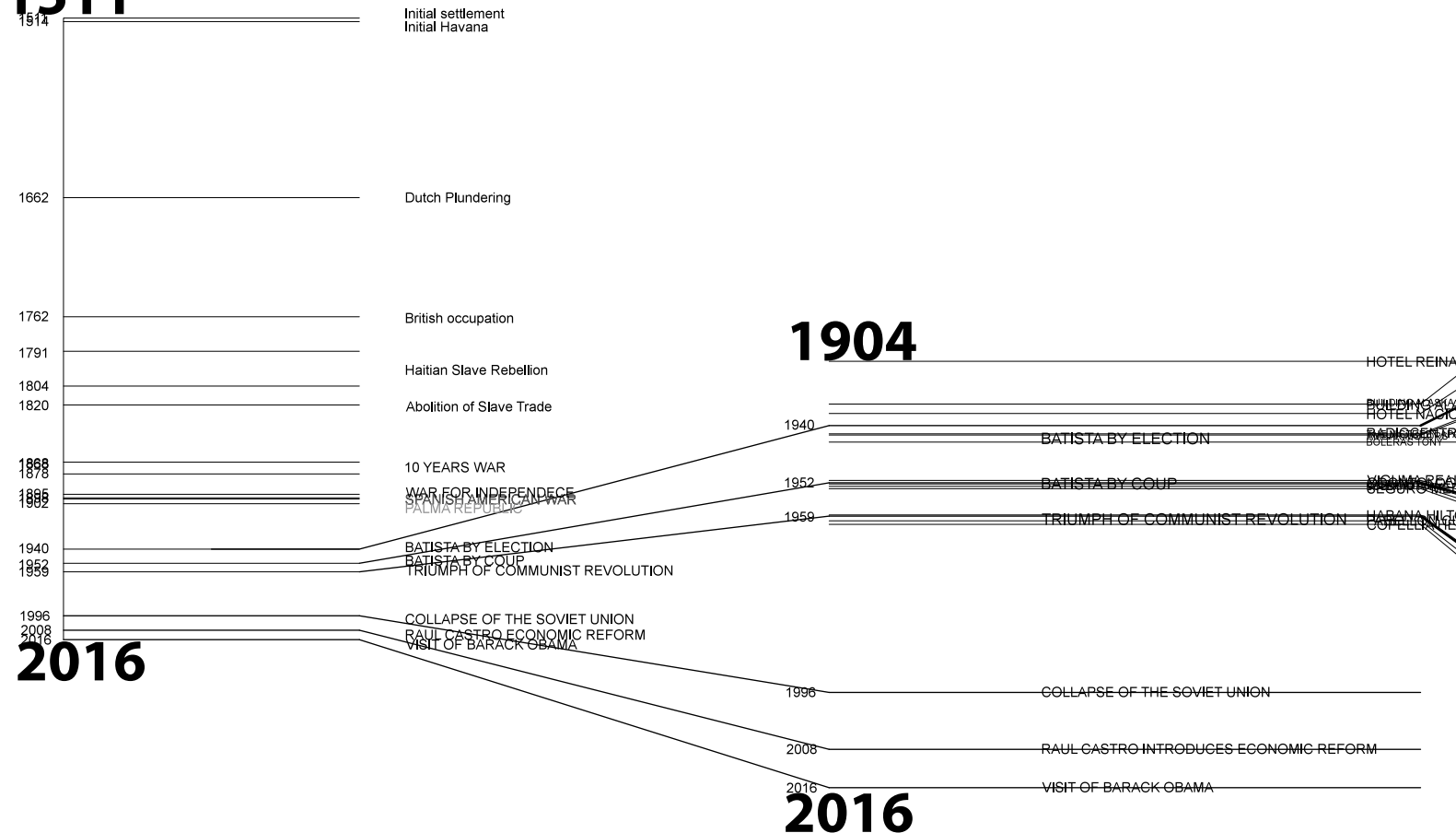
¹⁸ Solnit, Rebecca. *Storming the Gates of Paradise: Landscape for Politics*. Berkley: University of California Press, 2007. Print.
Matthew Raybon / / AHST 5110 / Assignment 4+5 / Owen

CATALOG OF SIGNIFICANT STRUCTURES

The development of La Rampa began at the turn of the century with the construction of **Hospital Reina Mercedes** on the site which is now **Copellia Heladeria**. The oldest existing piece of architectural patrimony adjacent to La Rampa is the **Hotel Nacional**, a symbol of high class luxury located above the ground level of the street atop a large stone bluff. This hotel remains a destination for the wealthy tourists alone. The appearance of La Rampa and the growth of Calle 23 correlates with the growth of Cuba as a Republic. In 1940 with the insertion of U.S. backed Fulgencio Batista as authoritative leader, La Rampa experienced a spark in architectural production. The cultural and commercial center of Havana shifted away from corridors like Callé Galiano towards the international modernity of La Rampa.

In the years preceding the communist revolution numerous structures in a variety of architectural styles appeared along La Rampa. Of note are the **Radiocentro Building of 1946**, **Habana Hilton of 1958**, and the **Seguro Medical Building of 1956**. This period of architectural production was the result of a free flowing trade relationship with the United States and a booming tourist industry. While a glorious period of architectural production, the resultant social condition was one of division and distrust yielding the reactionary uprising led by Fidel Castro. Upon taking Havana in 1959 Castro selected La Rampa as the stage for the symbolic reclamation of the city and country. In the months following the revolution Castro set up headquarters and residence in the **Habana Hilton** which he would later rename **Habana Libre**. The Habana Hilton completed in 1958 stands as one of the primary examples of the international style in Cuba. Completed in the final moments before the triumph of the revolution Habana Hilton represents 'the last straw.' In its reclamation and appropriation Castro sought to undermine its status as a symbol of progress under the free market capitalistic model.

1511



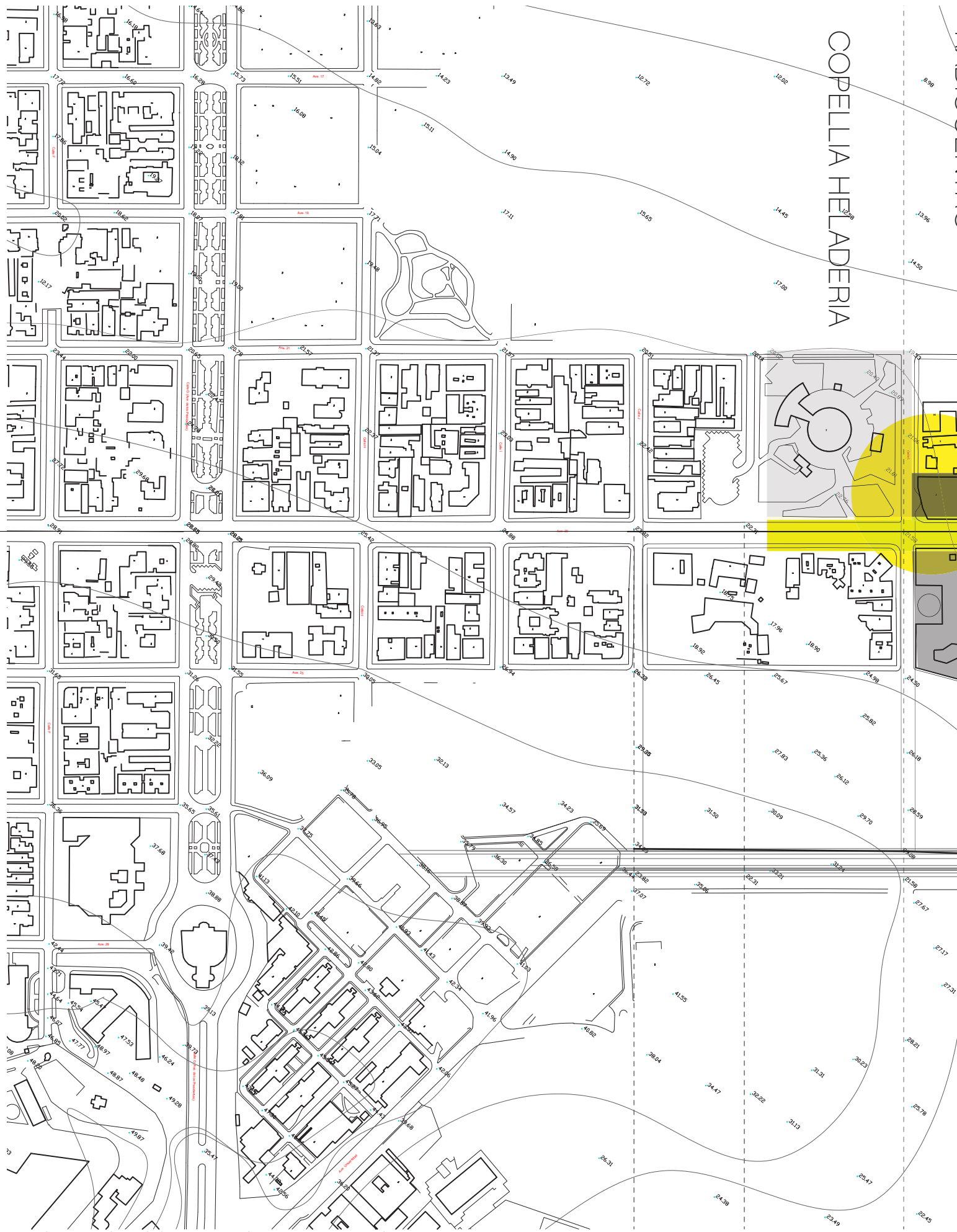
In the first years of the new political era there was a brief period architectural experimentation in search of a revitalized architectural identity for the newly defined nation. The vast majority of this experimentation occurred in the hinterland and on the periphery of Havana: another symbolic gesture aimed at shifting the perceived power and elitism away from the urban elite and towards the rural working class. Programatically this period sought to provide housing to all citizens as well as access to education and healthcare in all regions of the island. Within this utilitarian agenda existed a series of more expressive projects, including the **Instituto Superior Arte (ISA) Pabellon Cuba and Copellia Heladeria**. In 1966 Castro initiated the creation of Copellia Heladeria, a national ice cream company that would serve more flavors than any American ice cream vendor to all Cubans. For the primary location Castro selected the former site of **Hospital Reina Mercedes**, the place of initial development in the La Rampa corridor.

After 1966 architectural production in Havana came to a screaming halt. La Rampa boasts some of the most visible, large scale contemporary architectural expression of Cuba. In a fairly brief period of 50 years La Rampa went from barren landscape to the commercial and recreational core of the city.



STRATIGRAPHIC TIMELINE / moments of development

COPELLIA HELADERIA



RADIOCENTRO

PABELLON CUBA

HOTEL NACIONAL

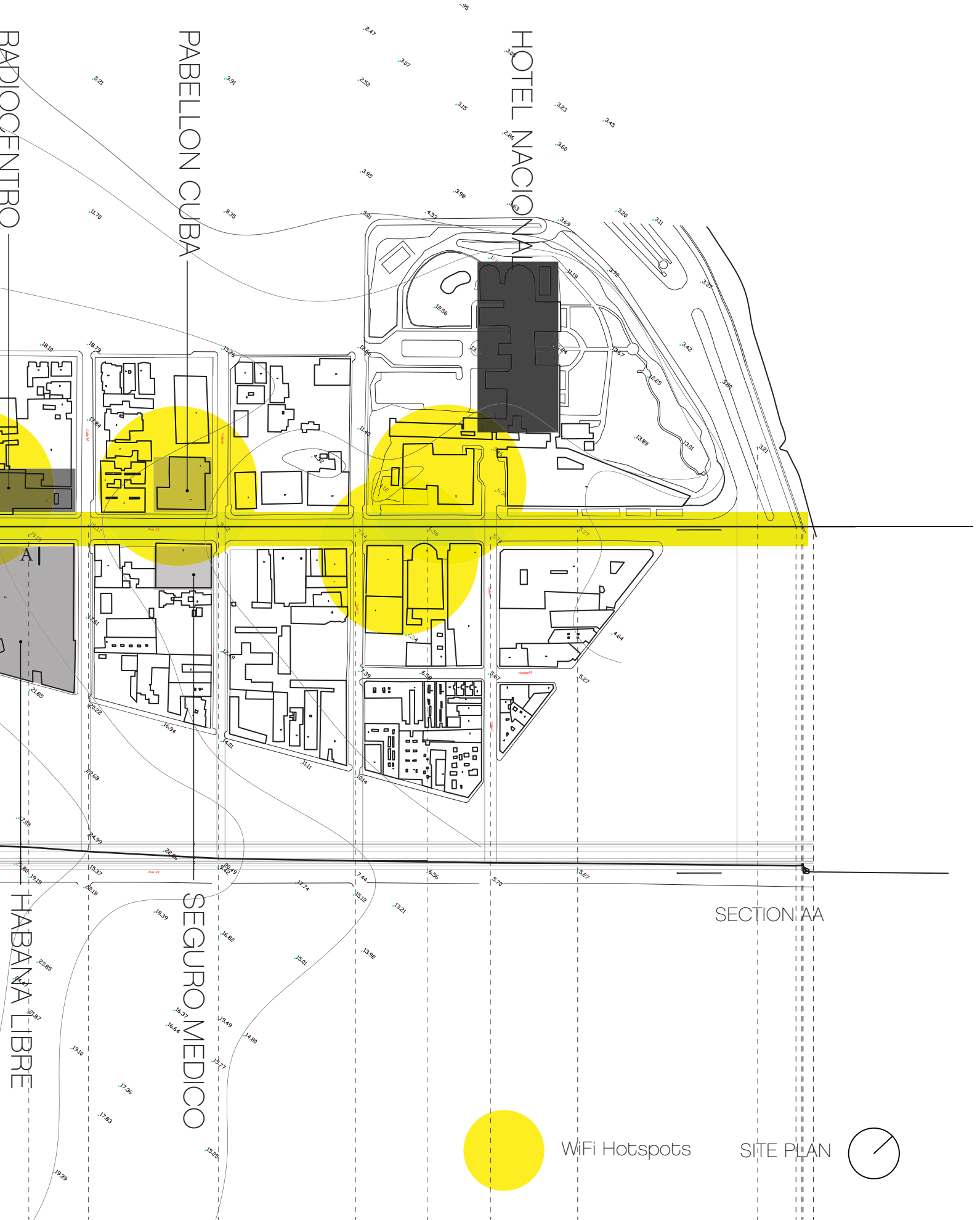
HABANA LIBRE

SEGURO MEDICO

SECTION 'AA

WiFi Hotspots

SITE PLAN



AERIAL EVOLUTION



~1940



~1954



~1950



1950



1958

PEDESTRIAN EVOLUTION



1950



1950



1955

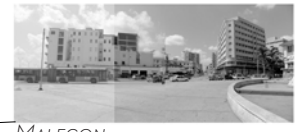
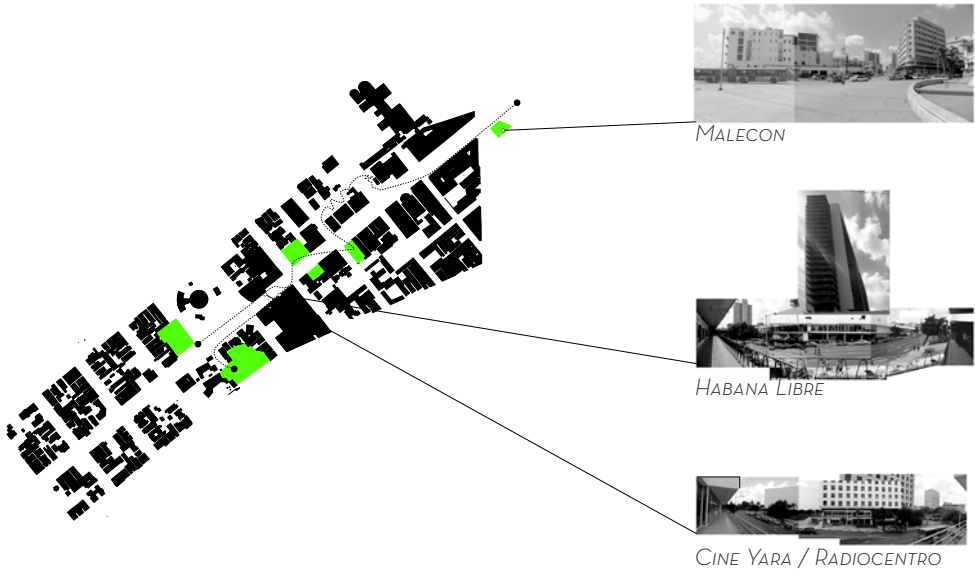


1958



1959

Photos From Google images



MALECON

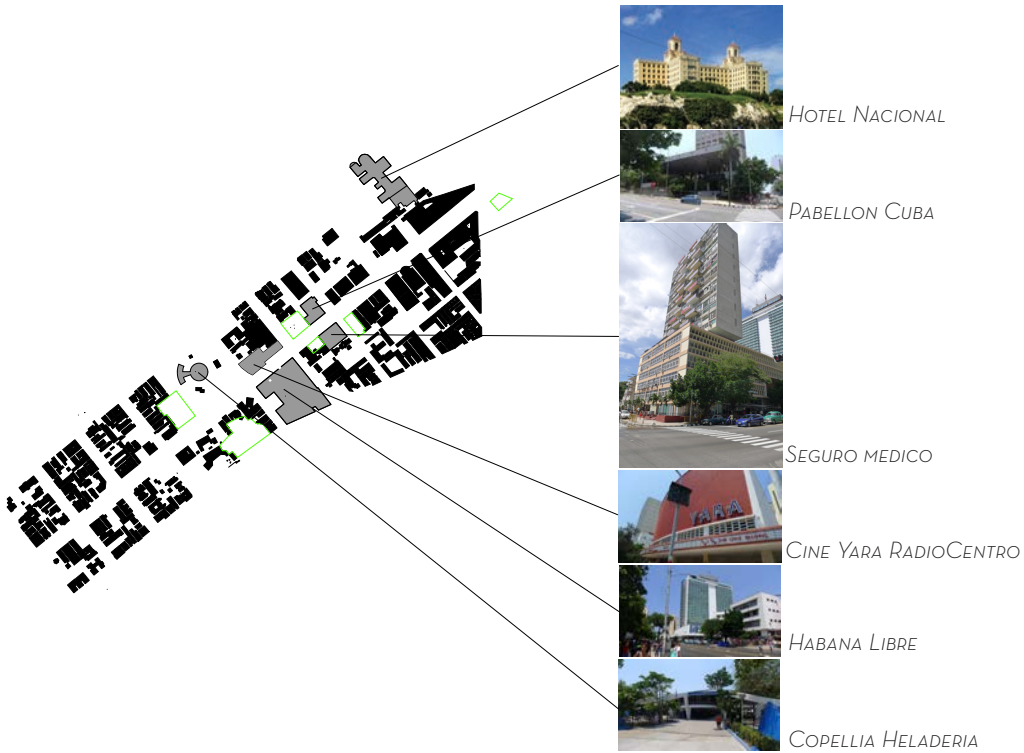


HABANA LIBRE



CINE YARA / RADIOCENTRO

LA RAMPA / VACANT LOTS



HOTEL NACIONAL



PABELLON CUBA



SEGURO MEDICO



CINE YARA RADIOCENTRO



HABANA LIBRE



COPELLIA HELADERIA

LA RAMPA / SIGNIFICANT STRUCTURES
Photos and diagram by Author

HOTEL NACIONAL

Function: Hotel

Address: Calle Obispo Esquina A S/N,
La Habana 10100, Cuba

Former uses on site: Hotel, military defense

Year of Construction: 1930



1: 500

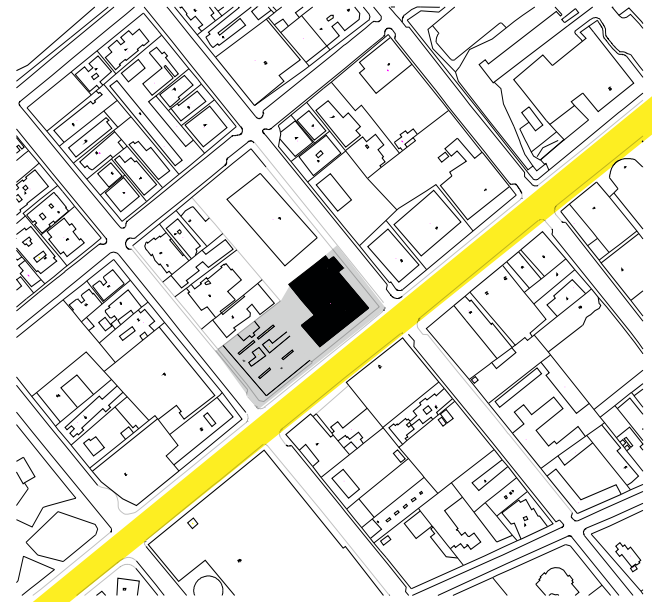
PABELLON CUBA (AND FORMER SITE OF HOTEL ALASKA)

Function: Pavilion

Address: Avenida 23, La Habana, Cuba

Former uses: Hotel

Year of Construction: 1963



1: 500

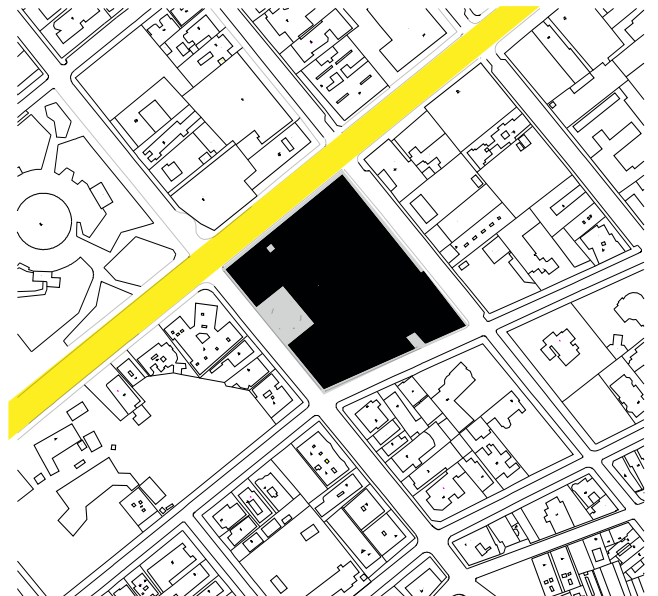
HABANA LIBRE

Function: Hotel / Comercial Space

Address: Calle M, La Habana, Cuba

Former uses: Hotel Hilton

Year of Construction: 1958



1: 500

Base Map From Renan Rodriguez Architect (Cuban)

The place of this architectural exploration is the physical location of La Rampa and the ephemeral site of the Cuban imagination. Within this complex site there exists a variety of urban and social conditions with which the architecture will engage:

Deteriorating architectural patrimony

Overlapping historic narratives and uses

Fluctuating publicness

Hotel Nacional, Pabellon Cuba and Habana Libre appear as nodes or anchors along the corridor. These spaces and their histories will serve as subjects of reflection. Each place has its origins in a different era of Cuban history and contributes uniquely to the social function of La Rampa. The plinths and scale of Habana Libre and Hotel Nacional make explicit their separation from the public. Castro's occupation of Habana Libre after the triumph of the revolution complicates its role in shaping the social function of La Rampa. Pabellon Cuba, an expression of the revolutionary government, serves a ceremonial function contributing a conditional publicness while serving as a consistent monument to the accomplishments of the revolution.

La Rampa is shrouded in a blanket of WiFi. From Coppelia at the top of the hill to the Malecon the sidewalk is filled with people utilizing this new resource. This information blanket threads together the subjects of reflection yielding an extended place for urban exploration, that exists at once, in physical and imaginary form.

PROGRAM

ALLEGORY / ENGAGING THE RUIN

MIRROR WAY - *MARY MISS*

MONTAGE / RECOGNIZING MULTIPLE NARRATIVES

LA VILLETE - *BERNARD TSCHUMI*

POLITICIZATION OF WORK / RESISTING ACQUIESCENCE

DESTIERO - *TANIA BRUGUERA*

“The beautiful is not only that which is in harmony, or the sublime; the beautiful is also present in the moment when one realizes something-in oneself, in society, or in a system-that makes one reassess and reconsider everything.”

-Tania Bruguera

ALLEGORY / ENGAGING THE RUIN

MIRROR WAY - Mary Miss

“This temporary installation in the neoclassical stone courtyard of the Fogg Museum takes advantage of the three level view into the courtyard. A complex wood structure, it seemed to fill the court. In contrast to its historicized setting it looked like a construction site, a stage set, or the temporary platform for a feast or procession which is about to take place. The layering of stairs and platforms invites physical engagement - stepping, climbing, sitting; its complexity is a challenge to explore the space. However, the museum is an environment that precludes this exploration. This place of spectacle becomes desirable because of its inaccessibility.” (statement from artist website)

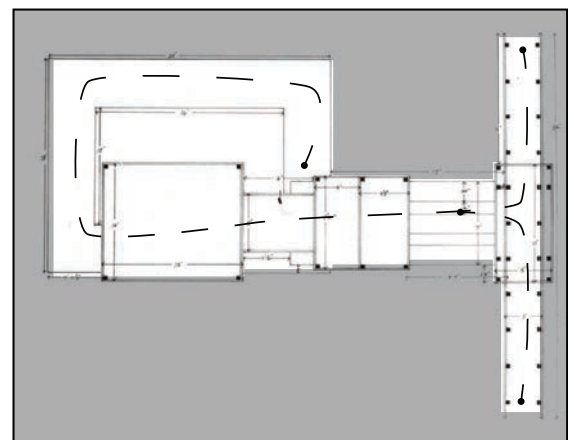
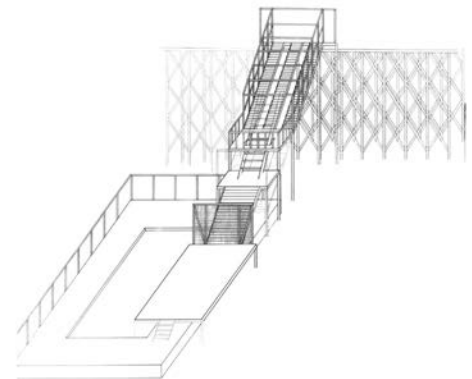
Mirror Way is an inaccessible promenade inserted into the Courtyard of the Fogg Museum at Cambridge. Through materiality Miss creates a structure that appears like a work in progress, a construction site or scaffolding. Existing in contrast to the heavy permanence of the structure surrounding it and providing the promise of an alternate path of experiencing the space. By constructing a space of exploration and then preventing that space from being inhabited Miss offers a critique on the false promise of the museum as a place of exploration accentuating its static and dominating presence.

It is desirable because it is inaccessible and in its inaccessibility it prevents the realization of the promised experience. In this way Miss has constructed an architectural allegory. Regarding allegory Jane Rendell explains:

“Insertions into locations adopt inappropriate materials or languages in order to displace dominant meanings and to interrupt particular contexts, these constructions create visual audio and tactile environments in which the experience of engaging with the work may initially include shock, but over time starts to evolve and connect with the more subtle ambiguities associated with allegory.”¹⁹

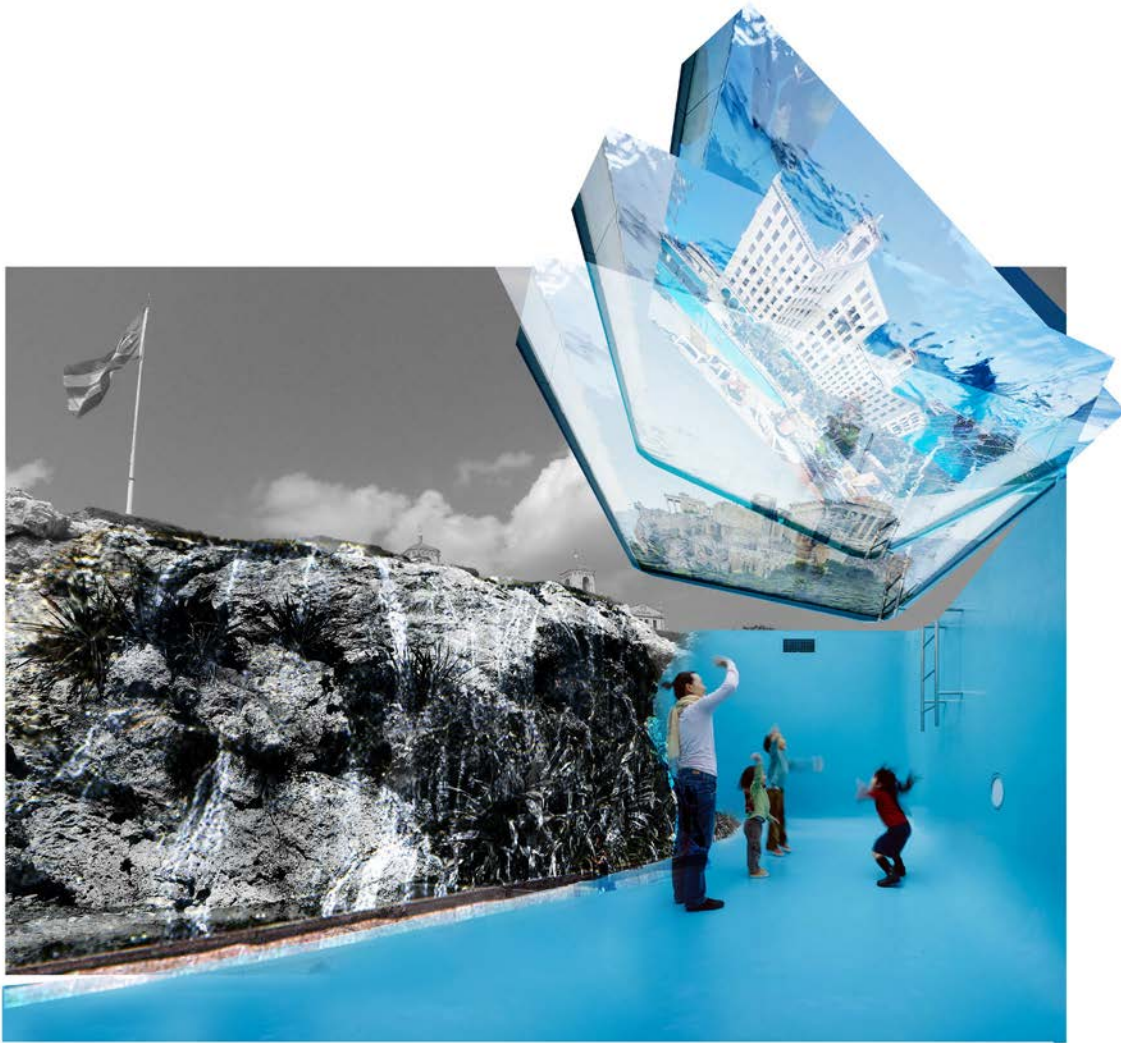
Mirror Way functions as a poetic mirror. Initially the construction is attractive and familiar in its assembly. The viewers inability to access it yields a certain frustration which leads to a contemplation of its function pointing towards its site and relation to context. Overtime its meaning emerges in various forms.

¹⁹ Rendell, Jane. *Art and Architecture: A Place between*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2006. Print.



— — — Inaccessible Promenade
■ Occupiable Space

Orthographic drawings by Mary Miss



Oasis Above

Hotel Nacional sits atop a large natural plinth. One of the earliest landmarks along La Rampa. A place of luxury Hotel Nacional is a destination for wealthy tourists providing an oasis like experience. The natural plinth separates this oasis from the rabble of the street.

From the Street glimpses of the Hotel can be seen moving along the stone landform. An insertion suggesting the inhabitation of a pool, an asset of luxury vacation transfers the image of the hotel to the street level through reflection and distortion. Visual transfer of luxury from plinth to street allows a simulation of experiencing the oasis but withholds full satisfacion.

MONTAGE / RECOGNIZING MULTIPLE NARRATIVES

LA VILLETE - Bernard Tschumi

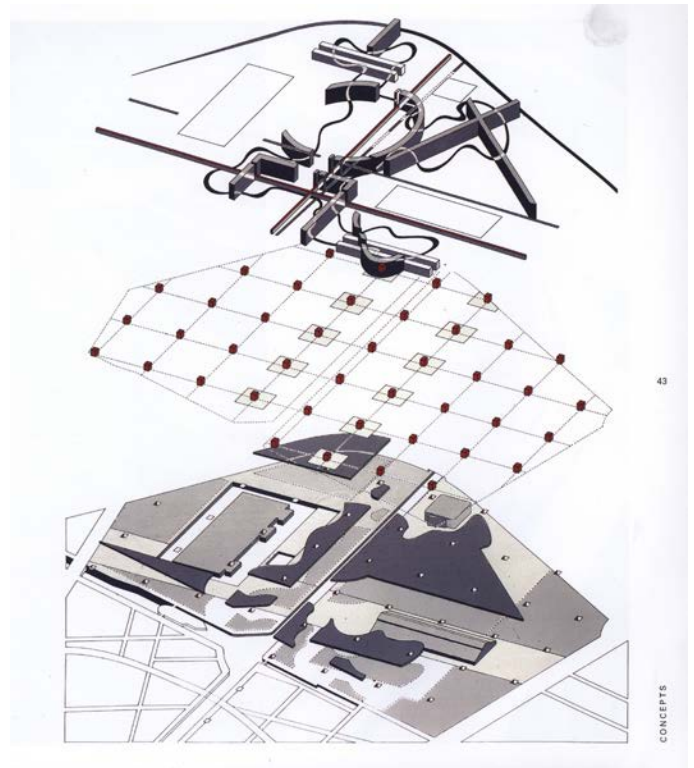
Folie (à deux): n. french

- the presence of the same or similar delusional ideas in two persons closely associated with one another

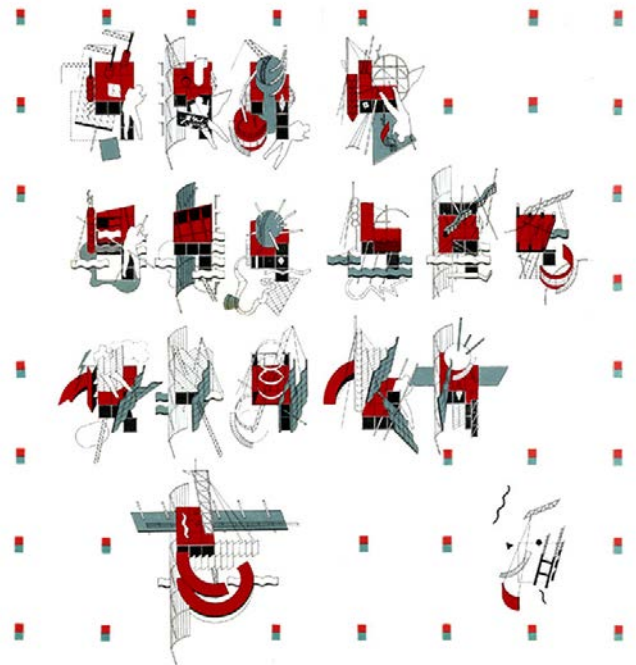
La Villete brought to the fold a new way of envisioning the park as a space in relation to culture rather than nature. La Villete is site specific in terms of being derived from site defined by culture rather than physical location of form.

Tschumi envisioned the site of La Villete as an interpretation of a contemporary moment responding to a culture of fragmentation. Tschumi utilizes a dialectic of point, line, and plane, to transform the former site of a large meat production facility into a series of spatial nodes. These nodes described as folies defy specific programmatic function in favor of an evolving interpretive function. In describing La Villete as an example of the use of montage Rendell explains:

“...the layering of one ‘function’ on top of another provides the potential for multiple programmes to critique and destabilize each other - an attempt to bring the montage techniques of juxtaposition and... recombination into the design of new spaces.”²⁰

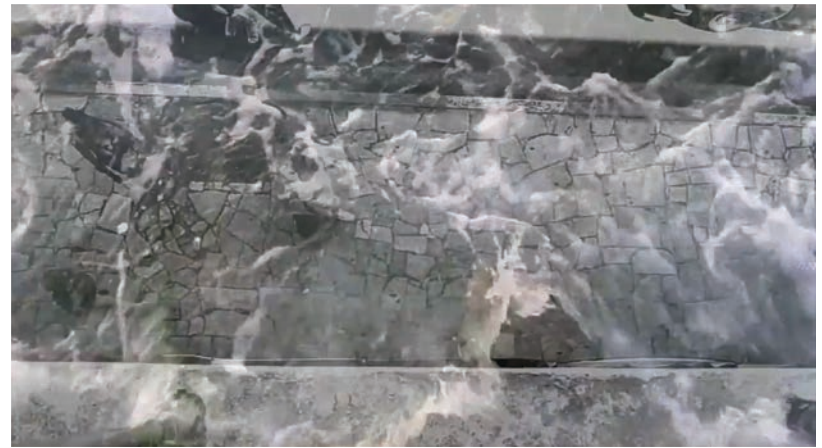
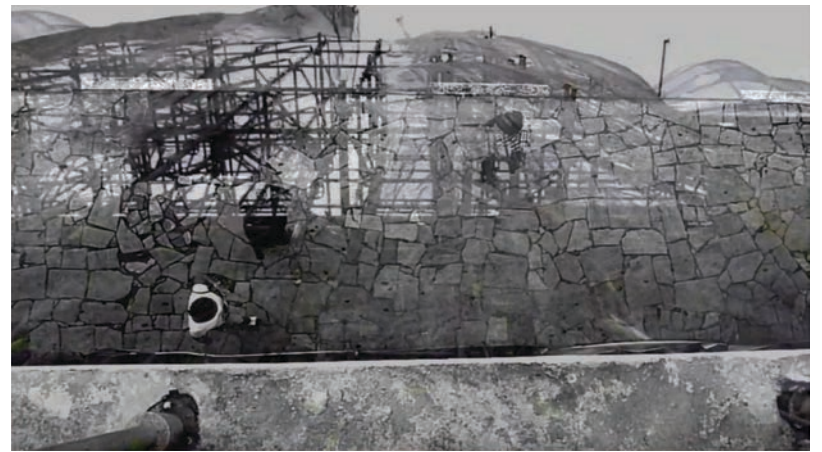


POINT, LINE, PLANE AXONOMETRIC



FOLIE MATRIX

Diagrams From "Tschumi Parc de la Villette"



La Rampa Breathes

People walk past and through below. From the plinth of Habana Libre they are watched but do not see. Stone, concrete and steel shaped by wind, water, and fabric. A foreigner talks of internet and bank accounts. A man whistles at a woman.

Forward, back.

Follow.

POLITICIZATION OF WORK / RESISTING ACQUIESCENCE

Destierro (Displacement) - Tania Bruguera

Two primary ideas drive the work of Tania Bruguera:

1. *IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO MAKE APOLITICAL ARTWORK IN POLITICALLY CHARGED ATMOSPHERES*

2. *(IN CUBA) POLITICAL AND POLITICALLY DISSIDENT ACTS ARE VALIDATED AND ACCEPTABLE WHEN THEY COME IN THE FORM OF ARTWORKS*

Destierro is a work by Tania Bruguera which solidified the political nature of her work. The piece involved her embodying a Nkisi Nkonde icon walking through Habana Vieja. The icon is religious fetish native to Congo which grants wishes in return for fulfilled promises. If the reciprocal promise is not fulfilled there will be unknown consequences. Bruguera explains, “Destierro (Displacement) is an allegorical way to approach Cuban reality and the social promises that were made and never kept.”²¹ The form of the piece is familiar to the intended audience making it approachable.

Bruguera describes a realization that she had while doing this work where:

“...because its Fidel Castros birthday alot of police came to see whats going on, why are people having a spontaneous demonstration...following this person...and a kid say, “no no this is an artwork. and the police, who was not trained probably for such a situation thinks...”okay then; then its fine, continue”²²

In this experience she comes to the understanding that the technique of art makes the political and politically dissident acceptable.



Destierro - Tania Bruguera in Plaza de Catedral



Destierro - Tania Bruguera in Gallery setting

photos from artist website

21 Bruguera, Tania ““The Role of Ethics in Political Art”” Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study Harvard University. Cambridge, Massachusetts. 3 Oct. 2016. Lecture

Bruguera makes clear the opportunity in art to be political. In this work it takes a behavioral form, in later iterations the work moves beyond behavioral and moves closer to standard political organizing. Bruguera stretches the definition of an artwork pushing its impact to be as useful as possible for the intended audience. She utilizes her position and privilege as an artist to be political

As Tania pushes her artwork towards politics challenging standards of her discipline and provoking new thought, the architecture community can reciprocate shifting towards art in order to push new explorations questioning permanence and engaging in a politicized dialogue surrounding the forces at play in public urban space. As Tania uses her position as an artist to produce direct political action in her work, the architect disguising the work as a form of public urban art, not dissimilar to the behavioral works of Bruguera but possessing the physicality of the works of Mary Miss, can utilize his/her training as a designer to contribute directly to the social production of public urban space.

While Destiero responds to unfulfilled promises this new architecture will confront the shifting publicness of public urban space.

The presence of WiFi hot spots in public urban space yields a contemporary privatization of public space. The traditional space for political and expressive action is rendered obsolete and replaced by a space for consumption mediated by a form of surveillance. Solnit again offers insights on the implications of this new mediated publicness proposing that information technology, “Postulated as a solution to gridlock, crime on the streets, the chronic sense of time scarcity,...seems instead a means to avoid addressing such problems, a form of acquiescence.”²² A seemingly beneficial indicator of progress, the controlled public placement of Internet access plays a role in producing acquiescence. In disrupting or re-contextualizing this new use of public space the work can compel the occupant to engage with the space and its amenity in a perceptive and thoughtful manner.

22 Solnit, Rebecca. *Storming the Gates of Paradise: Landscape for Politics*. Berkley: University of California Press, 2007. Print.



Origenes de totalitarianismo
reading of forbidden text by Hannah Arrendt by Tania Bruguera



Immigrant Movement International
-Tania Bruguera artwork that is nearly indistinguishable from direct political organizing
photos from artist website

DATA COLLECTION / MODES OF OCCUPATION

Over the course of 12 days observations were made regarding the nature and density of public occupation and behavior along the 6 block stretch of La Rampa. Individuals were mapped and an indication of internet connection was made in a binary fashion Connected to wifi vs. connected to human. Eventually more nuanced behavior was observed resulting in a non binary classification which recognized varieties of connection type. These include but are not exclusive too:

INDIVIDUAL TO INDIVIDUAL

INDIVIDUAL TO INTERNET

MULTIPLE INDIVIDUALS TO INTERNET UTILIZING SHARED CONNECTION CARD

TWO OR MORE INDIVIDUALS CONNECTED TO INTERNET THROUGH SINGULAR DIGITAL INTERFACE.

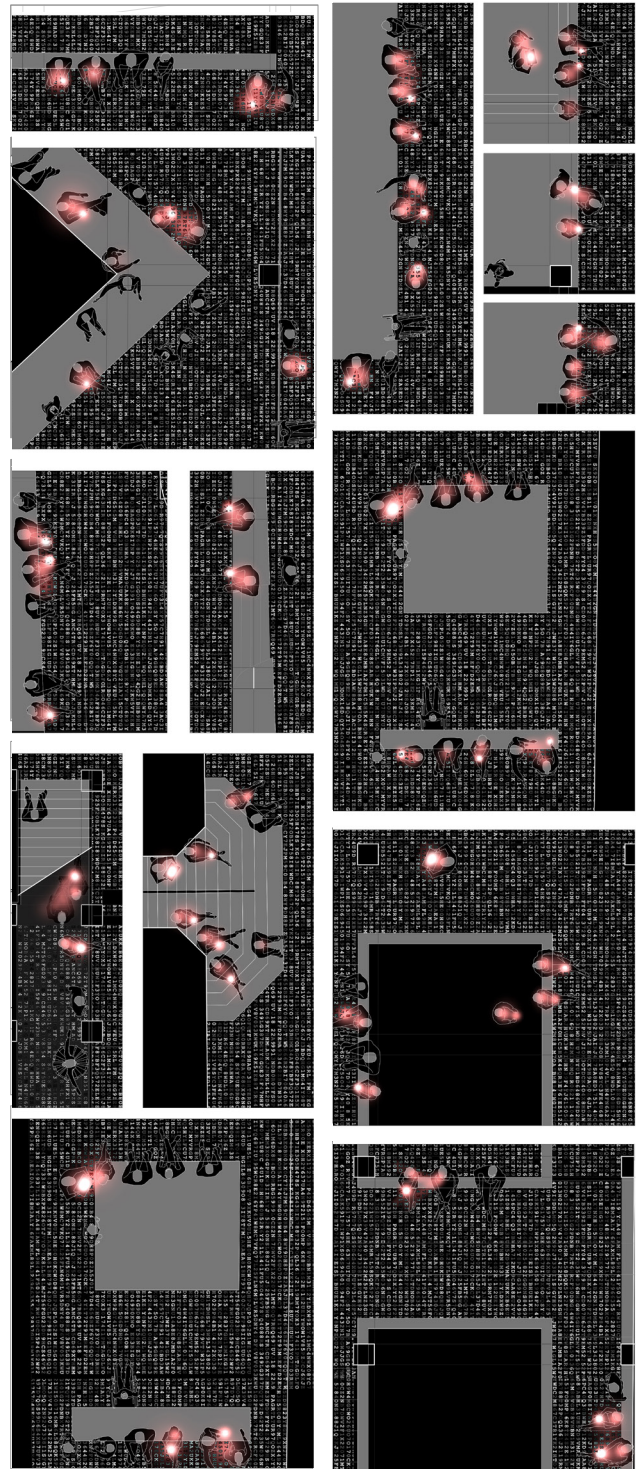
This variety of behaviors emergent from the shared resource of WiFi connection reinforced the complex nature of this new activity. The simultaneous presence of productive and counterproductive potentials calls for a design response which points towards and embodies the tension between opposing potentials. These potentials are as follows:

[+] *DIGITAL INTERACTION ALLOWING FOR LIBERATING VIRTUAL CONNECTION OUTSIDE THE LIMITS OF ONES CITY, PROVINCE AND BEYOND THE BOUNDARY OF THE ISLAND*

[-] *DIGITAL INTERACTION REMOVING THE INDIVIDUAL FROM HIS/HER IMMEDIATE AND REAL SURROUNDING*

[+] *LOCATING OF DIGITAL CONNECTION IN THE PUBLIC REALM FORCING SOMETHING THAT IN MOST PLACES IS A PRIVATE ACTIVITY SITED IN THE HOME INTO THE PUBLIC SHARED SPACE.*

[-] *LOCATING OF DIGITAL CONNECTION IN THE SURVEILLED PUBLIC REALM ALLOWING CLOSE MONITORING AND CONTROL OVER THE DURATION AND CONTENT OF THE VIRTUAL EXPLORATION.*



Along the 6 block stretch there are 4 primary zones of Wifi occupation:

- ZONE 1 // CALLE 23 AND CALLE L (CORNER)
- ZONE 2 // CALLE 23 BETWEEN CALLE M AND N
- ZONE 3 // CALLE 23 BETWEEN P AND HOSPITAL
- ZONE 4 // CALLE 23 AND MALECON

Moving From Zone 1 to Zone 4 there is a gradient in the existing socialness present in the current mode of occupation.

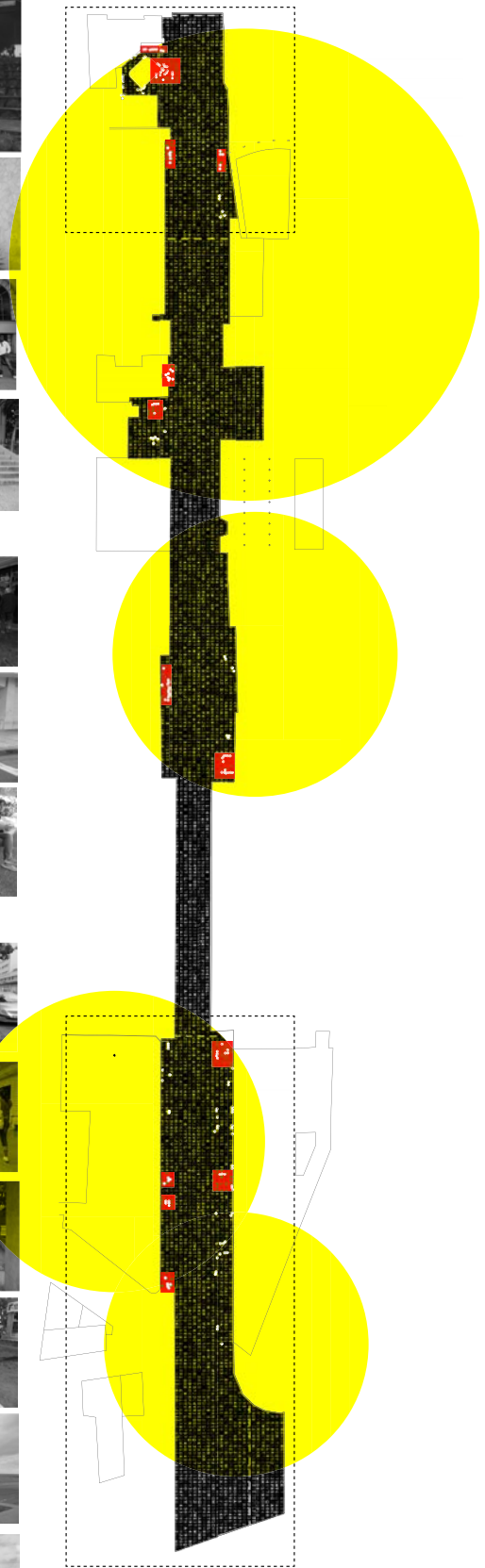
ZONE 1 IS OCCUPIED EXCLUSIVELY FOR PURPOSES OF WIFI CONNECTION. THE SPACE IS RESIDUAL AND LACKS SIGNIFICANT URBAN FORM TO ACCOMMODATE OCCUPATION.

ZONE 2 CONTAINS A CONDITIONAL FUNCTION. ON CERTAIN DAYS THE SPACE HOSTS A PUBLIC FLEA MARKET WHILE ON OTHERS IT IS VACANT AND OCCUPIED BY WIFI USERS

ZONE 3 IS ADJACENT TO A BUS STOP AND CONTAINS EXISTING URBAN FORMS WHICH ACCOMMODATE AND PROVOKE NATURAL CLUSTERINGS AND PROVIDE SURFACES FOR SITTING. THE AREA IS WELL COVERED BY TREE SHADE ALLOWING OCCUPATION AT ALL TIMES OF DAY.

ZONE 4 IS OCCUPIED IN A TEMPORAL FASHION. LACKING SHADE COVERAGE THE SPACE IS TYPICALLY EMPTY DURING THE DAYTIME. AT NIGHT IT BECOMES HEAVILY OCCUPIED, PRIMARILY AS A SOCIAL SPACE. THE MALECON IS A SOCIAL SPACE IN MANY CITIES ACROSS LATIN AMERICA AND THIS HOLDS TRUE AT CALLE 23 AND MALECON IN HABANA. THE IMPETUS FOR PEOPLE GATHERING HERE IS TO CONGREGATE SOCIALLY. IN THIS SPACE THE ABILITY CONNECT TO WIFI AUGMENTS AN ALREADY SOCIAL MODE OF GATHERING.

Each zone contains a slight variation on the same program. These variations emerge when existing forms and previously agreed upon cultural functions interact with the novelty digital function of WiFi connection.



OCCUPANCY // WIFI

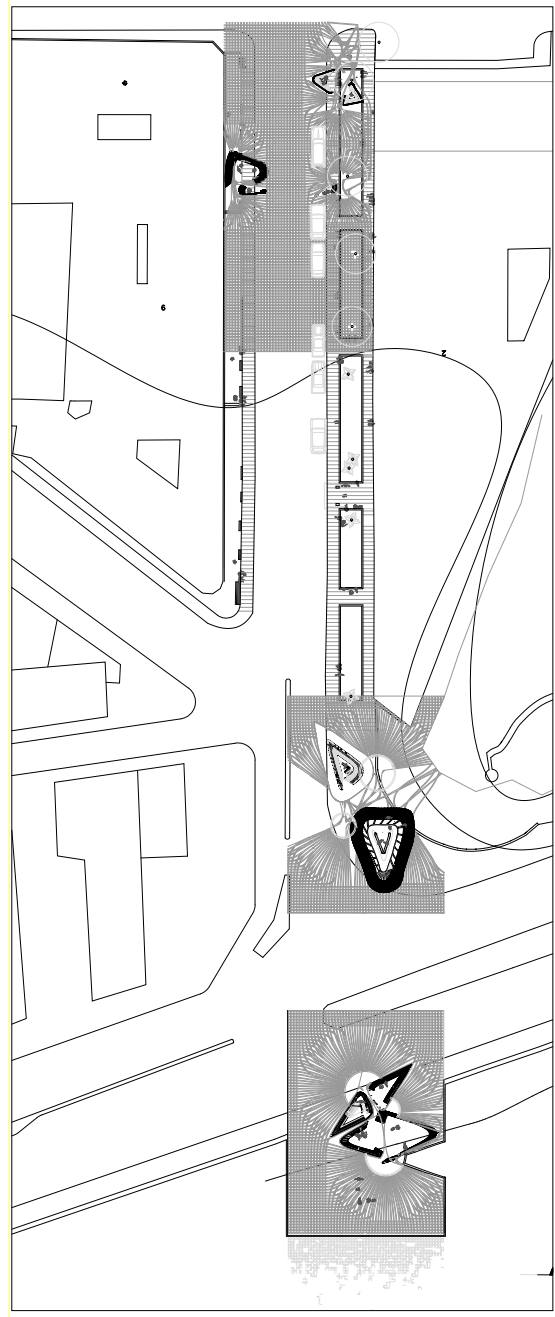
These behaviors and data points serve as the departure point for organizing space and generating the form of the interventions.

The overall organization seeks to increase the density of clustering that is occurring in the four primary zones. This is achieved by intensifying the experience of connecting digitally in a series of Access centers or nests. Within the Access centers concave forms serve to organize people in a place making social manner. The surfaces which enclose this organization immerse the occupants in a illuminated digital environment combining tangible physical presence with intangible digital activity through architecture.

As the quantity of individuals present and connected increases the signal strength increases allowing virtual connection to further locations around the world. When a critical mass of online individuals is present, utilizing mesh networking, the shared interface becomes a virtual portal to a generic other place. This portal taps into an existing network of public digital interfaces created by Connecting Cities Network. An expanding network of large scale interactive media surfaces located in cities throughout Europe, Latin America and Asia.

In this moment the individual digital interface is transferred to a shared interface. The group of Cubans positioned across the virtual interface from the 'other' group creates a scenario wherein both groups will begin to form a social identity in relation to one another. Confronted with language difference people may begin to interact using hand signals or a common yet broken shared language. This will result in a strengthened bond to the people of shared culture and language in the actual surrounding while producing a virtual and revelatory connection with a totally foreign and distant entity.

Presence and actual connection in the specific place coupled with productive virtual connection to the other beyond.



Site Plan 1/32" = 1'

DESIGN INTENT:

INCREASE DENSITY OF WIFI CLUSTERING BY INTENSIFYING THE DIGITAL EXPERIENCE AND CREATING A PLACE SPECIFIC TO THE ACTIVITY

PROVIDE CONCAVE ENVIRONMENT WHICH FOSTERS INTERACTION THROUGH BUILT FORM.

TRANSFER THE INDIVIDUAL DIGITAL INTERFACE TO A SHARED DIGITAL INTERFACE THROUGH A VIRTUAL PORTAL CONNECTING BEYOND THE SPECIFIC PLACE.

CLUSTER AND ORGANIZE INDIVIDUALS IN AN ATTEMPT TO INSTIGATE PERSON TO PERSON INTERACTION

COMBINE THE DIGITAL CONNECTION WITH IMMEDIATE PHYSICAL PRESENCE IN AN ATTEMPT TO MAKE APPARENT THE PRODUCTIVE AND LIBERATING POTENTIALS OF CONNECTION BEYOND THE ISLAND WHILE FOSTERING A STRENGTHENING OF SHARED IDENTITY AND CONNECTION BETWEEN CUBANS.

