

After 50 years, Cuba is back to the Triennale di Milano

ART AND REVOLUTION - NATIONAL ART SCHOOLS OF LA HABANA VITTORIO GARATTI, ROBERTO GOTTARDI, RICARDO PORRO

Wanted by Fidel Castro and Che Guevara in the aftermath of the Revolution, the complex of the National Art Schools is located in Havana in the area of the Country Club and was designed with the aim of creating a cultural center of developing countries, welcoming 1,500 students from Latin America, Asia and Africa.

In 1961 the project was entrusted to the Cuban architect Ricardo Porro (1925-2014), which involved the Italian architects Roberto Gottardi (1927-2017) and Vittorio Garatti (1927).

They were given total creative freedom, in agreement with the functional program provided by the directors who would run the five schools, with some restrictions due to the use of building materials, favoring bricks and terracotta due to the scarcity of steel and cement.

The three architects decided to build the five buildings at the edge of the park to preserve their integrity and to exploit the perimeter roads for access, integrating the new complex to the urban context.

This choice has meant that today the park is a protected nature reserve with a high environmental value. Nature is a source of inspiration and influences the character of the architectures that become "pabellon d'amour", establishing a continuous and uninterrupted relationship between open and built space.

The freedom of composition, interpreter and spokesman of the ideals of an overall cultural renewal, is based on the principle of the analysis in of history, function and culture, in a continuous and mutual process of modification and enrichment of the project. The analysis of the function becomes a decisive element for the definition of the forms, triggering a process of self-generation. Five organic buildings born, whose characteristics reflect the essence of the artistic practices and the poetics of the designers, creating a surprisingly unitary and coherent image.

In 1965 the building works were suspended, only two of the five schools were completed and used until today, Modern Dance and Plastic Arts. Dramatic art, missing the theater, will be used in part until the 2000s, while Ballet and Music after a long period of neglect, will be used to host events related to the Havana Biennial.

In the 2000s, following the publication of the book by John Loomis "Revolution of Forms", the Art Schools will experience a period of renewed international interest.

Fidel Castro promoted the program for the recovery and completion of the buildings and the Schools were enrolled in the Watch program promoted by the World Monument Fund as the first example of modern architecture to be recovered in Havana.

Since 2003 they have been included in the World Heritage Tentative List, and in 2010 are named Cuban National Monument by the president of the National Monuments Commission, Eusebio Leal Spengler.

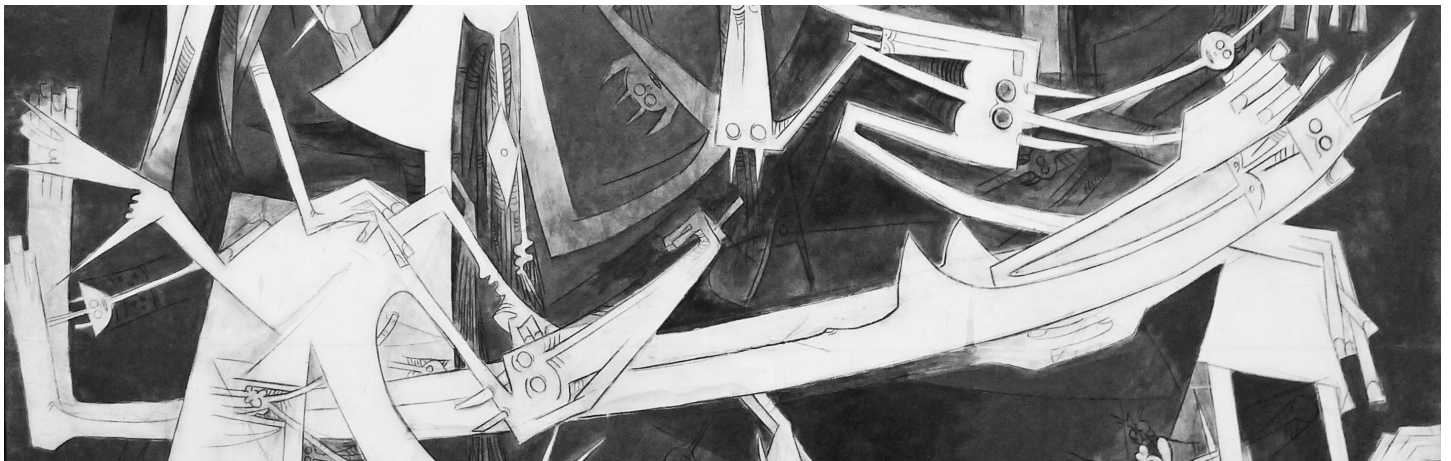
In 2009 the restoration works of the Modern Dance and Plastic Art Schools are completed.

After the last global economic crisis, restoration projects have been re-arrested until 2018, the year in which a major cooperation project financed by AICS (Italian Agency for Development Cooperation) of the MAECI is approved (the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation) which provides for the restoration, structural consolidation and re-functionalization of the School of Drama by Roberto Gottardi, with the technical advice of the DiDA Department of the University of Florence. In the same year a second project was approved, whose subject is the making of a Plan for the Conservation and Management of the entire complex. The project is coordinated by the Politecnico di Milano, with Princeton University, Università di Parma, Assorestauro and the Vittorio Garatti's Committee and is funded by the Getty Foundation as part of the Keeping it Modern program.

Ricardo Porro graduated in architecture from the Universidad de la Habana in 1949. Porro's support for the Revolution caught up with him, and he was forced into exile when his subversive activities were discovered. He fled to Venezuela where he taught architecture and worked in the Banco Obrero led by architect Carlos Raúl Villanueva. There he met two Italian expatriate architects Roberto Gottardi and Vittorio Garatti. With the triumph of the Revolution he returned to Cuba and was charged with the project for the Art Schools by Fidel Castro. He invited Gottardi and Garatti to join him in the project for which he designed the School of Modern Dance and the School of Plastic Art.

Roberto Gottardi graduated in architecture from the Istituto Superiore di Architettura di Venezia in 1952. There one of the major influences on his formation was his mentor Carlo Scarpa whose craft approach to architecture refuted the tenets of Rationalist modernism. Also influential was the school's director, Giuseppe Samoná, who like Scarpa, was an important critic of Rationalism. After his studies in Venice, Gottardi worked in Milan for Ernesto Rogers. In 1957 he departed for Caracas and ended up working in the Banco Obrero. As part of the three man team who designed the National Art Schools, Gottardi created the School of Dramatic Arts.

Vittorio Garatti graduated in architecture in 1957 from the Politécnico di Milano, where Ernesto Rogers was a major influence. Guido Canella and Gae Aulenti were his classmates. In that same year he departed for Venezuela where he later, like found employment in the Banco Obrero and began teaching at the university. Garatti, like Gottardi, had been a young participant in the post-war debate in Italy against Rationalism, a critique that was lead by such figures as Ernesto Rogers, Carlo Scarpa, Mario Ridolfi, Giuseppe Samoná and Bruno Zevi. Garatti designed the School of Music and the School of Ballet, part of the National Art Schools.



- Commissioner** Norma Rodríguez Derivet (*Consejo Nacional de las Artes Plásticas*)
- Curator** Jorge Fernández Torres (*Museo de Bellas Artes de Cuba*)
- Co-curators** Umberto Zanetti, Christian Zecchin
- Team** Umberto Zanetti, Christian Zecchin, Andrea Vertua, Michele Paradiso (*Università degli Studi di Firenze*)
Davide Del Curto (*Politecnico di Milano*), Maria Paola Borgarino (*Politecnico di Milano*), Riccardo Feder, Ana María Pedroso Guerrero (*Asociación Cubeart*), Oderays Cruz Perez
- Artists** Osmara Alberteris Canizares, Hector Zamora, Felize Dulzaides, Didier Fiuza Faustino
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