

CASA DE LA CULTURA DE VELASCO, CUBA



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Archiitectura et Amicilia

CASA DE LA CULTURA DE VELASCO, CUBA

Johanna van Doorn, Paul Meurs, and Lara Voerman (ed)

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FOREWORD: A DISCOVERY

Henk Döll and Mechtild Linssen

March 2007: the Dutch Society *Architectura et Amicitia* (AetA) is on a study trip in Cuba. The first building we visit is the *Casa de la Cultura* in Velasco, a village near Holguín. We tracked down this cultural center with the help of Roberto Segre, an authority on modern architecture in Latin America. We had read that it was a remarkable building, designed by Walter Betancourt, an American architect who settled in Cuba after the revolution. The pictures we saw looked promising. Apart from that, it would be a surprise what we would find. With hindsight, it proves to be a highlight of our trip. Not only due to the remarkable design, but also because of the building's role in the town and the warm-hearted reception by the people. Like many buildings in Cuba, the cultural center is dilapidated and in need of renovation, although provisional repairs have already been made.

When we arrive, a fanfare dressed in red shirts begins to play. After a speech by the director and a well read poem by an impressive blonde lady, we are led into the building. In the auditorium singers, dancers and guitarists of various ages perform for us. As final act of the show, we are treated to a festive lunch. Afterwards, we hear that tourists seldom come to Velasco and that people never show an interest in the cultural center of which the city is so proud.

A later item on the excursion program is a visit to the art schools near Havana by architects Ricardo Porro, Vittorio Garatti and Roberto Gottardi. These are also remarkable buildings from the first years after the revolution. The art schools had previously been in a poor condition, but have been restored. And our first thought is: that is what should be done with Velasco's cultural center as well! After returning home, our first idea is to spend the little money that is left after our trip on the restoration of the cultural center. But then we wonder whom to give the money to and whether it would have any effect. When we hear that the restoration of the art schools began with a publication in 1999, we decide to spend the study trip balance on an issue of the Dutch architecture magazine *Forum* about the Cultural Center of Velasco. The funds have meanwhile been supplemented by the Society AetA in order to realize this publication.

What else does the *Casa de la Cultura* have to offer to the occasional group of visiting architects besides a hero's welcome? By our request, John Loomis, the author of *Revolution of Form – Cuba's forgotten Art Schools*, wrote an article about the architect Walter Betancourt, while Johanna van Doorn and Lara Voerman of SteenhuisMeurs Architects and



The Casa de la Cultura in the village of Velasco.



Historians travelled to Cuba for further research. They spoke to villagers, architects and other people with stories to tell about the cultural center. One of them was Flora Morcate Labrada, a professor of architecture from Santiago de Cuba, who wrote her thesis on Betancourt's work. Flora was willing to write an article for this issue and introduced them to Betancourt's son, Lorgio. Lorgio told about his father's motives, his adventurous character and love of nature. He lives in his father's house, in which time seems to have come to a halt – with all of Walter Betancourt's furniture and paintings. Omar Lopez was also contacted, 'historiador' of the region and director of the municipal Conservation Office. The present director of the Casa de la Cultura, Gelasio Reyes, extended every courtesy to facilitate research into the cultural center. He gave an extensive tour of the complex, now affected by dry rot, dampness and two cyclones, and told them about the building initiative. Through Reyes contact was made with Jorge Santana, the son of the site supervisor who had spent many years building the complex under Betancourt's leadership. His father had had to be taken off the roof when he was 81 years old and son Jorge still helps out with repairs. Yet more inside stories about building the cultural center were gained in Havana from Selma Diaz and Miguel Coyula. As a young architect at the Ministry of Construction, Diaz had worked her way up to be the person in charge of building works in Cuba's eastern region. In this position, she was Betancourt's client for twelve years when he worked for the state from his office Santiago de Cuba. Coyula is a renowned Cuban architect and urban

development specialist, with great knowledge of Cuba's urban and architectural history. Paul Meurs, professor of Restoration and Transformation at the Technical University Delft, puts the *Casa de la Cultura* in the context of 'the Exotics of Modern Architecture'.

All the information that surfaced, confirmed that we had 'discovered' a remarkable building at the time, certainly worthy of a publication. All the help and information received from Cuba contributed greatly to the realization of this issue of *Forum*. From the field research, the interviews and the reflections on Betancourt as a person and his entire oeuvre, an image emerges of a project that is unique in many ways. At such a remote location and from such a lengthy and laborious process, a building grew without comparison. An exceptional piece of architecture was constructed with limited means and from very ordinary materials, thanks to the talents of Betancourt and his colleagues and the perseverance of Velasco's inhabitants. Thus, a document has been created worthy of *Forum's* long tradition and was first published in the issue 01 of the Annual XLVI in March 2012. For the purpose of a separate issue, solely on the *Casa de la Cultura*, we decided to have an updated version and received another subsidy by the Society *Architectura et Amicitia* to make it possible. We sincerely hope that this publication, through international recognition of the cultural-historical value of the building, will lead to a serious renovation, so the community may be able to use it for cultural purposes for many years to come.

THE EXOTICS OF MODERN ARCHITECTURE

Paul Meurs

Walter Betancourt was an American architect who travelled the world and realised his most important buildings in Cuba. In Velasco of all places, a farming village in the far east of the country, he tried as hard as he could to realise his architectural masterpiece. Both building materials and builders were in scarce supply. The local community had to provide the funding and construction took decades. It is a miracle the Casa de la Cultura even exists. That is precisely the feeling that haunts you when you visit Velasco. The building unites Betancourt's architectural wealth with the structural and economic poverty of eastern Cuba in the late sixties, seventies and eighties. The cultural centre does not resemble anything, but it does conjure up a world of meanings. It is the work of a singular figure, an exception. This makes it impossible to ascribe it to a specific architectural school. At the most it reminds one of 'critical regionalism', but in Betancourt's case it is difficult to call his views on regional design.¹ Betancourt did not choose a regional style of building for idealistic or artistic reasons, as he was restricted to Velasco's available options, which were few.

There are scores of Betancourts in the history of modern architecture, who realised their oeuvres across the world and who have all been branded exceptions in the course of time. Sometimes this exceptional situation emanated from the isolation in which the architects lived, far away from large centres of population. Sometimes they are self-educated, having worked their way round the established order of architectural schools, developing their own views and practice. Sometimes it concerned architects working in the shadows, producing autonomous works of art.

Go to Sri Lanka. The local Betancourt there is called Geoffrey Bawa (1919-2003). He was inspired by the history of architecture: the medieval cities of Italy, British mansions, Greek ruins, Romans, Mexicans and Buddhists; the Alhambra, Ronchamp, the Mongolian forts, the palace of Padmanabapuram, Cambridge and Rome – in short, he cannibalised the world's architecture. But his designs remained firmly rooted in Sri Lanka, building on age-old traditions which, fueled by historical invasions, have absorbed universal influences.



Geoffrey Bawa, Kandalama Hotel, Dambulla, Sri Lanka. AetA collection





Lina Bo Bardi, Salvador da Bahia, Brazilië



Lina Bo Bardi, Salvador da Bahia, Brazilië



Lucio Costa, Novo Friburgo, Brazilië



Lucio Costa, Novo Friburgo, Brazilië

There are also Bawas and Betancourts in Brazil. Severiano Porto (1928) built wooden palaces in the tropical rainforests of the Amazon region, such as the university campus of Manaus. His architecture is organic, takes maximum advantage of the humid tropical climate and is enriched by the use of unique wood types and complex constructions. Lina Bo Bardi (1914-1992) is another Sunday's child of Brazilian architecture. She assimilated the folk art and artistic traditions of the North-East of the country into her work. Her projects for the historic city of Salvador are constructed from refurbished monuments, ruins, palm-tree shoots, concrete structures, African tribal huts and traditional coverings. Lúcio Costa (1902-1998) was also an exceptional architect. He drafted the urban development plan for the capital of Brasília and is seen as the founder of Brazilian modern architecture. He, on the other hand, sought simplicity in his built architecture and a connection with his country's traditions. It is possible to discover Le Corbusier's spatial compositions in his buildings, implemented with tree trunk constructions, colonial roof tiling and other traditional workmanship, materials and details. Exceptional architects in other Latin-American countries are, for example, Eladio Dieste in Uruguay and Rogelio Salmona in Colombia, who both employed brick in their own way.

Betancourts abound in Europe, especially in provincial towns. A nice example in the Netherlands is Jos Bedaux (1910-1989) from Tilburg, self-taught, whose work might just as easily refer to Le Corbusier as to the details and finishing of a farmstead in his province of Noord-Brabant. It is inte-

resting to see how he used the archetypes of the house, the farm, public building and tower to give symbolic expression to his projects involving villa's, town halls or a university.

Betancourt, Bawa, Bo Bardi or Bedaux. They are quite random examples of a generation of exceptions, who spent their lives in the shadows of modernism. They are difficult to lump together, because their architectural and societal motivations differed from one to the next. All these singular figures put together constitute too many exceptions to maintain with dry eyes the canon of the modern movement. The exotics of modern architecture call into question how modern and universal modern architecture, which we were presented with at school, actually is. In contemporary architecture, identity, idiosyncrasy, a sense of context and historical continuity have become key concepts. To go beyond the retro or pastiche, we really need the experience of the eternal exceptions of the twentieth century. All of the previous century's Betancourts inspire us to see this creative challenge.

1 This notion was introduced by Alexander Tzonis and Liane Lefaivre and described in 1983 by Kenneth Frampton in 'Towards a Critical Regionalism. Six Points for an Architecture of Resistance'.



Jos Bedaux, farm in Belgium



Jos Bedaux, farm in Belgium



Detail of the Torres del Parque in Bogotá-Colombia, bij architect Rogelio Salmons



Interior of Eladio Dieste's home in Montevideo, Uruguay

‘CUBA SEEMS SO DISTANT TO US, NEGLECTED AND POVERTY-STRICKEN. STILL, THE ARCHITECTURE OF THE SIXTIES, SHORTLY AFTER THE REVOLUTION, SHOWS NOTABLE SIMILARITIES TO WHAT WAS DESIGNED IN EUROPE IN THOSE DAYS. THE ART SCHOOLS IN HAVANA BY PORRO, GARRATTI AND GOTTARDI STRONGLY RESEMBLE THE WORK OF ALDO VAN EYCK. THE CULTURAL CENTRE IN VELASCO COULD PERHAPS HAVE BEEN DESIGNED BY PIET BLOM. STRUCTURALISTIC, SPATIAL AND WELCOMING BRICK ARCHITECTURE. AFTER SOME FORTY YEARS IT IS STILL CONTEMPORARY AND PRACTICAL. SURPRISING TO FIND A BUILDING IN THE EASTERN PART OF CUBA THAT FEELS SO FAMILIAR.’

Hans van Heeswijk: Architect

MARGIN, IDENTITY, ARCHITECTURE

John A. Loomis

Our living depends on our ability to conceptualize alternatives, often impoverished. For me this space of radical openness is a margin – a profound edge. Locating oneself there is difficult yet necessary... [M]arginality nourishes one’s capacity to resist. It offers the possibility of radical perspectives from which to see and create, to imagine alternatives, new worlds...¹

Bell Hooks

The practice of architecture tends to favor centers – economic, political, cultural, and intellectual. But bell hooks theorizes that the margin can be a locus where creativity can take a stand in opposition to the centers, producing work that would otherwise be unthinkable or impossible in the centers. Cuban-American architect Walter Betancourt had a uniquely creative life where his creativity, very much intertwined with issues of identity, flourished in the margins of Cuba’s *oriente*.

Walter Betancourt was born July 18, 1932 in New York City. His grandparents, people of very modest means, had emigrated from Cuba to Tampa at the time of the Cuban War for Independence, and through their hard work, and that of his parents, the

family had risen up the economic ladder and achieved the American Dream by the time of his birth. Walter grew up in the cosmopolitan comfort of a solid urban middle class family. Family vacations to Cuba served to connect him to his heritage, but by and large he lived a very “American” existence. He studied architecture at the University of Virginia, bastion of Anglo-American identity, graduating in 1956. In that same year he served a brief tour of duty in the U.S. Navy, stationed at Guantanamo, where he witnessed from afar the Moncada Uprising of the July 26th Movement, the beginnings of the Cuban Revolution.

In 1957, just married, Betancourt moved to Los Angeles with Leonor, his new wife and a second cousin from Cuba. He went to work for Richard Neutra, whom he admired as both a designer and as a person of progressive social commitment. But the reality of Neutra’s office, where he worked without pay, did not meet his expectations nor ideals, and he left after six months. Betancourt stayed on in Los Angeles while in Cuba the revolution gained momentum. It also gained support from abroad and Betancourt participated in solidarity

activities as he continued to develop his professional skills in the offices of John Lautner, Hal Levine, and Victor Gruen where the young Frank Gehry was also working. In addition to architectural work, he enrolled in post-graduate courses at UCLA.

Living and working in Los Angeles was an important step in Betancourt's formation. LA was a place where people came to create and recreate their identities. This was especially true in the film industry but it was true in other fields as well. Both Rudolf Schindler and Richard Neutra left the comparatively restrictive society of post-Habsburg Vienna to re-identify themselves and their talents in the artistic freedom of Los Angeles. Frank Lloyd Wright turned a new stylistic chapter in his work with his exploration of pre-Colombian identities in the work of his Los Angeles period. Later the identities of an influx of intellectual émigrés fleeing Nazism would be marked and would leave their mark on the culture of Los Angeles. But when Walter Betancourt arrived, Los Angeles was no longer the bohemian avant-garde environment it had been in the pre-war era. It had itself gone from being a margin to a center. Several things happened to Betancourt during the late fifties in Los Angeles. He grew and gained experience as a professional and became more confident of his design abilities. His idealism convinced him of the value of the art of architecture and of the responsibility of the architect as primary guarantor of a work's cultural value. But he became profoundly disillusioned with architecture as practiced in the U.S. under capitalism.

He experienced a political awakening that coincided with soul searching concerning his own political, cultural, and ethnic identity. This identity, as it were, as an American became challenged and began to deconstruct and reconstruct itself. The Cuban Revolution was the catalyst that brought this about. Walter Betancourt's move to Cuba was a primary act of identification, of defining who he wanted to be.

Walter Betancourt arrived in Havana August 8, 1961, when the young revolution was still in a state of euphoric bacchanal. However, Betancourt seemed to foresee the forthcoming doctrinaire path the revolution would take and the resulting consequences for architecture, so he decided to move far from Havana's ideological and political center.² He practiced a politics of location – of the margin – which took him to Cuba's eastern provinces, Holguin and finally Santiago. Santiago and eastern Cuba have historically been resistant to Havana's center, and have had a certain degree of political and cultural independence, something that the revolutionary government continued to respect.

In 1963 private architectural practice was abolished in Cuba and the architect's professional association, the Colegio de Arquitectos, was abolished. Architects were now primarily cast as technicians, part of a team of engineers, who would resolve Cuba's many building needs through massive industrialized solutions based on Soviet models. That Walter Betancourt was able to survive and thrive under this condition is truly remarkable, a testament

to both the power of marginality to nourish the capacity for creative resistance and Betancourt's own charming, persuasive personality that would not easily take no for an answer. It is interesting to note that Walter Betancourt's embracing of the work of the marginal Frank Lloyd Wright was more than a stylistic choice; it was ideological, a rejection of the massive, bland, prefab Soviet model. Kenneth Frampton notes a parallel development of a similar Wrightian tendency in the Italian Alps of Ticino in the mid 1950s when there was a conscious attempt to establish an organic regional alternative to international style modernism.³

Despite local appreciation of his work, Walter Betancourt's architecture has been virtually unknown in Cuba up until 1992 when through the efforts of Gilberto Seguí Divinó, Eduardo Luis Rodríguez, Rosendo Mesías González, and others, a small exhibit of his work was organized to coincide with the Havana Biennial. While the exhibit received support from the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Construction and the Union of Architects and Engineers were decidedly absent. For these two authorities, charged with overseeing the country's construction needs, Cuban revolutionary identity was embodied by functionally and technically determined projects that were repeated on a massive scale with little or no consideration to site and local conditions. The marginality of Betancourt's architecture presented an uncomfortable challenge to the "one correct line" official mentality.

Ultimately Walter Betancourt's example, as an architect, is a rather compelling, perhaps even disturbing. It challenges those of us who practice within a normative system of rewards. His example suggests that one might just take leave of it all, retreat to a margin, and quietly make one's mark, disregarding the rest of the world, not caring for recognition, confident in only the nature of the creative act.

*This is an intervention. A message from that space in the margin that is a site of creativity and power, that inclusive space where we recover ourselves . . . Marginality is the space of resistance. Enter that space. Let us meet there.*⁴

Bell Hooks

1 Hooks, Bell, *Yearnings: Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics*, (London, Turnaround, 1991), 149.

2 For a further discussion of architecture under the Cuban Revolution see John A. Loomis, 'Architecture or Revolution? – The Cuban Experiment,' *Design Book Review*, (summer 1994): 71-80. For further information about Walter Betancourt see: John A. Loomis, 'The Architecture of Walter Betancourt's Quiet Revolution,' *Progressive Architecture*, (April 1995): 41-44.

3 Frampton, Kenneth, *Modern Architecture, A Critical History*, (New York, Thames & Hudson, 1992): 322.

4 Hooks, b., op. cit: 152.



The rolling landscape between Holguín and Velasco. Picture Joop Slangen



Streetscape of Velasco. Picture Joop Slangen

ICON IN CUBA'S GRANARY

Johanna van Doorn, Lara Voerman



Oriente de Cuba province, the most eastern part of the country.



Oriente Province

Oriente Province is the eastern part of Cuba. It is Cuba's hinterland, hundreds of kilometres away from lively, bustling Havana. The travel guides recommend it as the authentic Cuba, coloured by a combination of Caribbean and African influences and the presence of Spanish African Son music.

The area around the city of Holguín has its own significance within Oriente Province. The substantial farming population has

nicknamed the region El Granero de Cuba, Cuba's granary. Corn, beans, cane sugar and tobacco are the crops cultivated in the rolling landscape. It is on this fertile soil that Fidel Castro was born. He returned there with his guerrilla's, using it as a place of sustenance for his army on the way to Havana from the Sierra Maestra. The poor and often illiterate farming population sheltered him and supported his ideas for an equal society.



Streetscape of Velasco. Picture Joop Slangen





Streetscape of Velasco. Picture Joop Slangen



Streetscape of Velasco. Picture Joop Slangen

About thirty kilometres north of Holguín lies the peaceful rural village of Velasco. It is quite large for a village (with 24,500 inhabitants) but it looks a lot smaller. There is just one paved main street with a wide network of sandy streets and low-rises. In contrast with the rest of Oriente Province it lacks the African influences, because there was never a sugar industry here. The villagers are mostly descendents of immigrants from the Canary Islands, who were drawn here by the fertile soil. The most famous inhabitant is baseball player Guillermo (Willy) Miranda, who made his name in the fifties playing for the New York Yankees, which is precisely the reason nobody talks about it. There are no hotels and due to a lack of customers, the state-owned restaurant has not served meals for a long time. This is the setting of one of the most remarkable buildings of Cuba.

Construction of a cultural complex began in 1964, a 'casa de la cultura', which in size and appearance would have been an attraction in Havana. The complex is taller than the village church and larger than the town hall. It distinguishes itself from the typical stuccoed shoebox housing by the organic structure, the use of brick and the peculiar roof designs. However, why is it located on this remote spot? Was it part of Castro's political program to educate the people through culture? Was it a gift in gratitude for the aid during the pre-revolutionary guerrilla years?

Donate a brick

The building of the Casa de la Cultura was a never-ending story. It demanded extreme perseverance from all concerned, as

construction lasted no less than 27 years. The villagers supported it from start to finish. Who took the initiative to build this? And why here? A name plate over the entrance to the Casa de la Cultura states that it is officially called the Centro Cultural Felix Varona Sicilia. Varona was an artist, a theatre man and a local celebrity, who committed himself, after the Cuban revolution, to making art and culture accessible to everyone in his native village of Velasco. In 1959, he set up a theatre group consisting of people from different social backgrounds. As a true edifier of the people, he tried to enrich his village in the sixties with the institution of a public library, a music school, a bookshop and a small theatre. In 1961, Varona ultimately had the grand idea of building a cultural centre to house all those amenities under one roof.

State support was not to be expected. Right after the revolution, most funding went to building schools, hospitals, civil buildings and infrastructure. Construction took place in epicentre Havana in particular, not in small villages in the far east. The first building materials were bought by Varona. He soon launched a campaign to raise more money, with slogans like 'done usted un ladrillo' (donate a brick). He organised theatre and dance events in exchange for building materials, he sold art and made collections. Drivers even had to pay twenty cents to cross the main street. The 10,000 peso's gathered plus a building site donated by the village council meant they could draft a design. But who should design Varona's life's work? After disappointing presentations by a number of architects – none of them



A group of builders/villagers poses in front of the building under construction, circa 1975. Jorge Santana collection



Architect Walter Betancourt (left) and supervisor Nicasio Santana, circa 1975. Jorge Santana collection



The Santana brothers, just like their father, worked intensively on construction. Jorge Santana stands to his brother's right in front of the theatre's rose window, circa 1975. Jorge Santana collection



Jorge Santana in front of his house in Velasco, 2010.

DE LA PRENSA CUBANA

REVOLUCION Y CULTURA

El castillo encantado de Velasco

Por Jorge Santana



Foto: Archivo de la Casa de la Cultura de Velasco. El castillo encantado de Velasco.

Este castillo encantado, cuyo nombre completo es Castillo de Velasco, se encuentra en el barrio de Velasco, en la ciudad de La Habana. Fue construido por el arquitecto español Juan de Velasco, quien llegó a Cuba en 1810. El castillo es un ejemplo de la arquitectura neoclásica de la época, con sus líneas rectas y su simetría. Su fachada principal está decorada con columnas y frontones, y cuenta con una gran escalera que conduce a la entrada principal. El interior del castillo también es impresionante, con sus salones y habitaciones decorados con muebles y obras de arte de la época. El castillo de Velasco es un monumento histórico que merece ser preservado y restaurado para que pueda ser disfrutado por las generaciones futuras.

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Castillo de Velasco, Habana.

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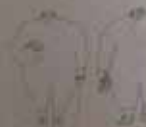
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Castillo de la península de...
Por Jorge Santana, Landa, 1988

dedete



meeting his high expectations – Varona was brought into contact with Walter Betancourt by a friendly architect.

Betancourt had grown up in New York. Right after the Cuban revolution an exodus abroad had taken place of the liberal professions, while he chose to head for Cuba for ideological reasons. Despite Betancourt's concise portfolio, there was an immediate rapport. The young architect took this opportunity with both hands and in collaboration with his client drew a gigantic structure with remarkable shapes. A Cuban newspaper article spoke of 'two knights' who built an 'enchanted palace' together.

Apart from the farming population's enthusiasm, there was also criticism of the over-ambitious plan. The provincial authorities approved the building plans, but remained sceptical. They saw the project as an 'idea loca de Félix y el Americano'. Construction began in 1964 and progress was extremely slow, depending on the funds available and especially on the supply of building materials. Varona bought all the materials he could find: bricks from Velasco itself, floor tiles and wood from elsewhere in Cuba. The quality and finish of each consignment varied, which is visible in some parts of the building. The materials were implemented per building layer, not per building section, another reason why the building as a whole was only delivered after 27 years: the wooden roof had not been fitted until then. Materials were in short supply, especially in later construction years. Even if there were materials available, they were often

assigned by the central authorities to more important and urgent projects. In the Cuba of quick Russian construction practices, this organic building process was unique.

The memories of Jorge Santana, son of the supervisor who worked with Betancourt for years and was himself involved in construction, give an interesting insider's view. His father Nicacio worked as a volunteer, as did all the other builders, on the project that could sometimes shut down without notice after an intensive period of construction. Betancourt charged neither his hours nor his expenses. Once every few months he travelled to Velasco and spent the night at the building site. Besides being an architect, Betancourt was mostly a builder. Every project was set up by hand and he improved his designs on site. The organic and complex character of the Casa de la Cultura was mainly created through this working method. The builders did not use specifications or drawings. At the most, Betancourt would draft detailed sketches, floor plans, cross-sections and aspects. He carried every detail in his mind. Father Nicacio Santana was an experienced bricklayer and, as Betancourt's right-hand man, translated his ideas and sketches into building practice.

Betancourt passed away in 1978. His work was continued by an architect friend, Gilberto Seguí Divinó. He finished the two most important spaces: the theatre and the dancehall. The rest of the impressive structure was never realised. At the end of the seventies the central government became interested in the building when a Ministry for Culture was set up. Through

the involvement of the local inhabitants and making both art and culture accessible to everyone, the Casa de la Cultura unwittingly became a symbol of the revolution. This became clear at the opening in 1991, when senior politicians travelled to the village, numbering just 10,000 inhabitants at the time. The Minister of Culture opened the building. Varona is still a local hero. A painted portrait hangs beside a picture of Che Guevara in the director's office and in the main auditorium a red plush chair is reserved for him in commemoration. Velasco derives a new identity from the cultural centre. Regionally, the inhabitants are no longer known as 'people from Cuba's granary', but the 'cultural people' or 'Felix Verona's people'.

Cubanidad or modular construction

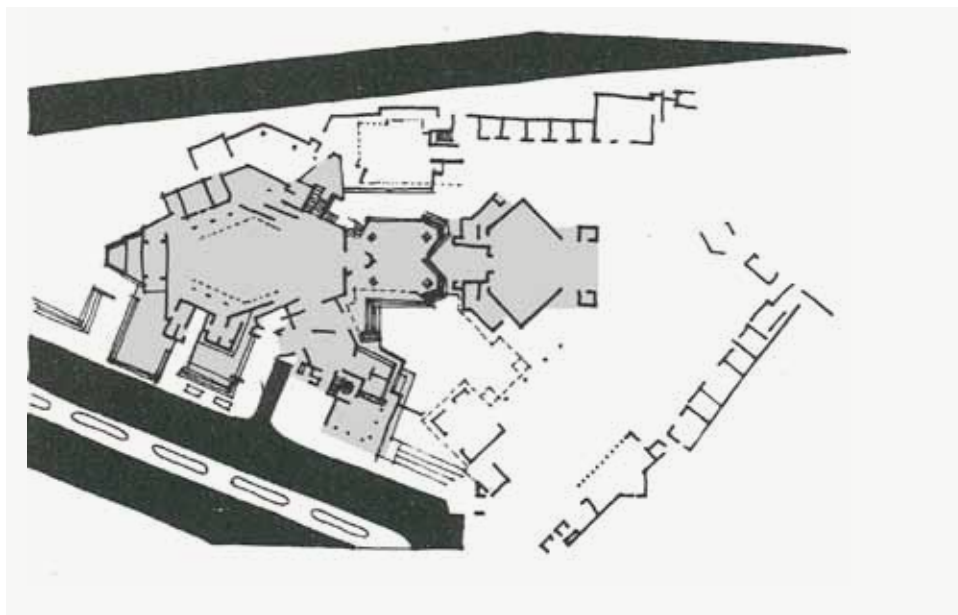
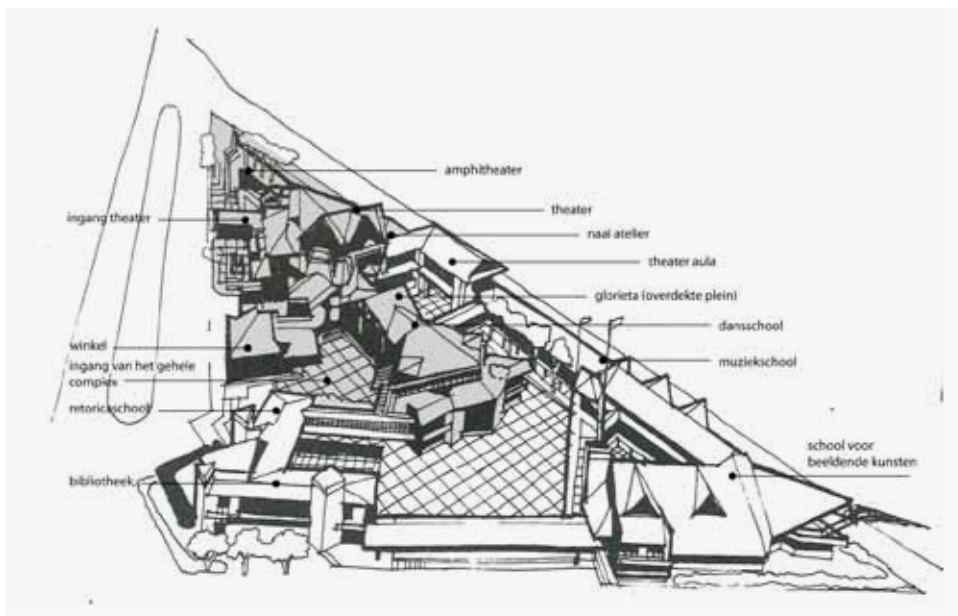
In the euphoric years directly after overthrowing Batista's regime, designers sought a typically Cuban form language, the *cubanidad*, a chiselled representation of the Revolution. The most well known example is the renowned National Academy of the Arts in Havana. In 1961, this assignment was given to architects Richard Porro, Roberto Gottardi and Vittorio Garatti by the Ministry of Construction (MICONS). Their form language was sculptural and organic, using age-old Catalan techniques, traditional red brick and terracotta tiles. The Casa de la Cultura in Velasco resembles this project a little. Architect Walter Betancourt drew heavily on Cuba's African, Spanish and Caribbean history for the Casa de la Cultura. He combined local building materials and techniques with pre-Columbian motifs, African patterns, colonial

military roof constructions and Andalusian gravel paving.

From 1961 onwards, the political situation worsened. The Bay of Pigs invasion, the missile crisis and the trade and travel embargo by the United States meant a sudden economic decline. As the influence of the Soviet Union and the import of cheap modular construction grew, so did the aversion against the use of traditional wood and brick construction, which reminded people too much of an archaic past. In 1964, during one of his lectures, Castro spoke out strongly in favour of standardised construction. He criticised architects with too personal a signature or if their buildings had too much fussy detail. The course of the MICONS changed: flexible concrete prefab elements became a symbol for the new socialist future. Individualism, extravagance and monumentalism became suspect. Construction of the National Academy of the Arts in Havana, of which the form language suddenly no longer tallied with what the state wished it to portray, was stopped halfway. Under the radar, faraway from Havana, construction of the Casa de la Cultura with its distinct architecture continued, nevertheless.

A metaphor for the revolution or a house of love?

Client Felix Verona envisaged a cultural complex with spaces to accommodate all possible cultural forms of expression: dance, theatre, rhetoric, the visual arts, graphic design, literature and music. The design that Betancourt presented to him was more than twice the size of the present



Sketch and floor plan of the cultural complex, much larger in the original plans. The grey-coloured buildings were actually constructed. Floor plans: *Arquitetura e urbanismo da revolução Cubana*, Roberto Segre

building: it was a complete cultural city. The design is characterised by a ring of buildings along the plot's borders.

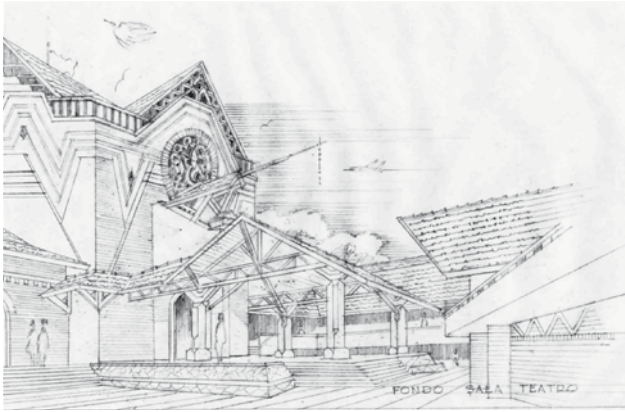
Betancourt positioned the main volumes in the corners. The dance hall lies in the middle, surrounded by secluded square spaces that flow together seamlessly. A 'glorieta' (an elevated square) functions as a central meeting place, directly accessible from the main entrance. This created a world in itself, in which the buildings and exterior spaces formed one single cultural cosmos. Hierarchy is created through the different building heights. The spaces are made up of triangles, quadrangles and polygons. No single construction volume is identical and consequently both the interior and exterior spaces are unique. Betancourt tied the shapes together as if each space naturally evolved from the preceding one. The facades consist of stone plinths topped with unplastered brick. Fair-face brickwork is a curiosity in Cuba. Decorations are applied in brick (belt courses), stained glass (windows) or concrete (both the sealed lower walls and the cut-away balustrades of galleries around the building). A limited material repertoire was used to maximise aesthetic variation. Architectural expression of the cultural centre lies both in the morphological composition and in the tactility of materials used, the plasticity of the details and ornaments. A minimum of building materials maximise expressiveness.

Betancourt's son possesses wonderful artist impressions, which evoke the building's complicated structure. The intricate roof constructions, the joints

between building elements and various materials, the use of height variations, have all been considered from every angle. In Betancourt's architectural universe 'the back' does not exist as such and exterior spaces are of equal importance in sultry Cuba as interior spaces. The organic succession of spaces facilitated phased construction and extension. The most important spaces came first: the theatre and the dancehall. These took so long to build that the rest was abandoned. Nevertheless, in its present state the building looks just as complete as the large complex in Betancourt's first drawings.

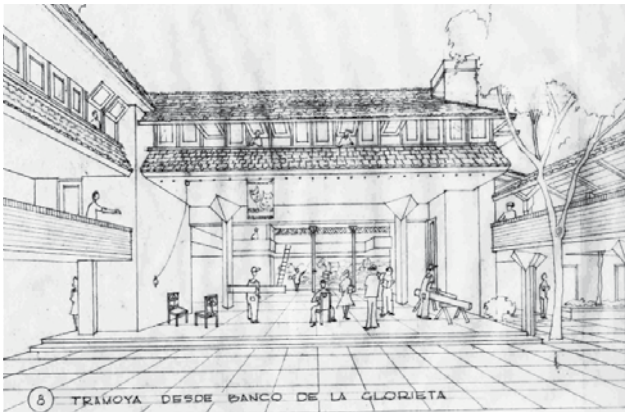
The only commentary known to us appeared in a brochure coinciding with the official opening of the building in 1991. The text is attributed to Betancourt, even though he had long since died. The text, which is undated and written in high-flown language – typical of the revolutionary idiom – compares the sequence of spaces with the successive phases of the Revolution. Betancourt – if it is actually the architect speaking – describes the building, but it remains unclear where he begins or ends. It is not even apparent whether he refers to the never completed city of culture or to a half-finished version of it. It does not really matter: it still provides a glimpse into Betancourt's design methods, in which transitions in building height, use of materials and spatial succession all prove essential, as do variations in light intensity and dimensions.

In this piece, Betancourt compares the shape of the theatre to a fertile mountain in which the seeds of new national ideas have

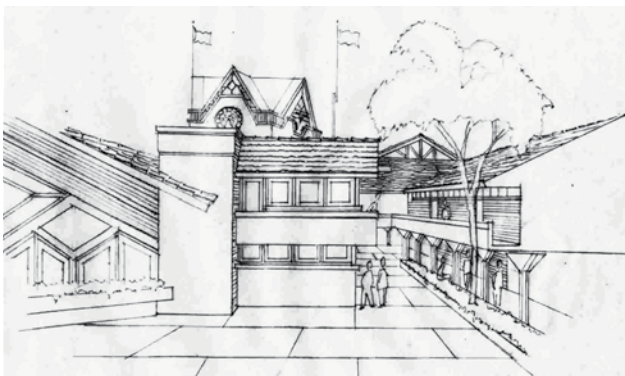


The original design provided space for all forms of cultural expression: dance, theatre, rhetoric, the visual arts, graphic design, literature and music. Betancourt's son, Lorgio, possesses wonderful outline drawings giving an impression of the complex's complicated structure. The intricate roof construction, the joints between building elements and various materials, the use of height variations, have all been considered from every angle.

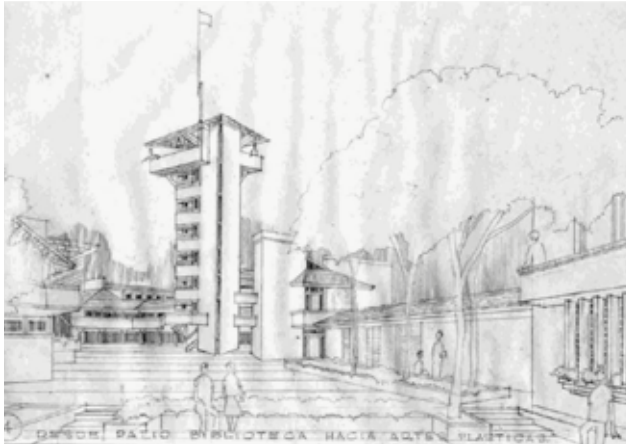
View of the theatre fly loft (left), with a 'glorieta' in the middle (a covered and raised square) that connects the theatre functionally and visually with the dancehall (right). In the background a building element never realised for a theatre hall. Lorgio Betancourt collection



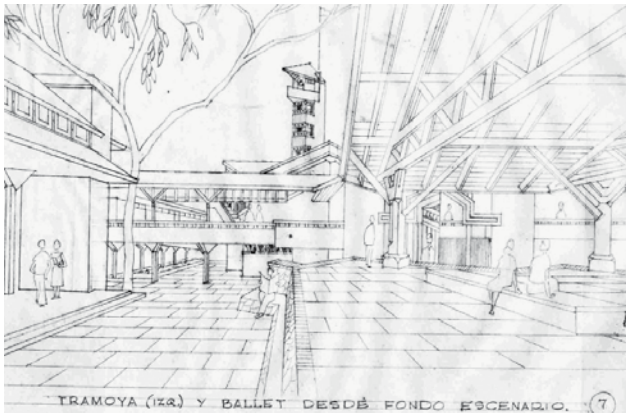
View from the bench of the 'glorieta' passing under the never produced theatre hall. Lorgio Betancourt collection



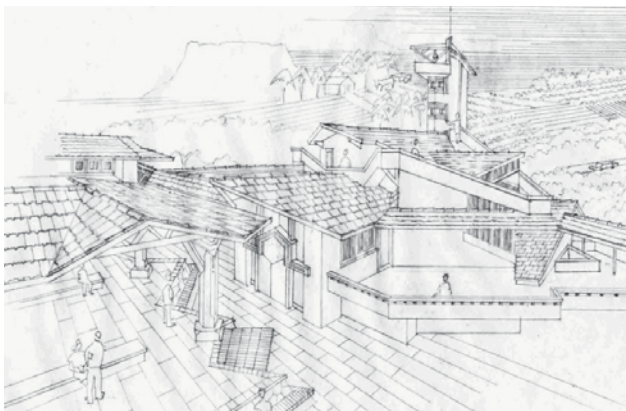
Visible in the background is the tall theatre fly loft. Left, a part of the dancehall. The buildings on the right were planned as a music school, but were never realised. Lorgio Betancourt collection



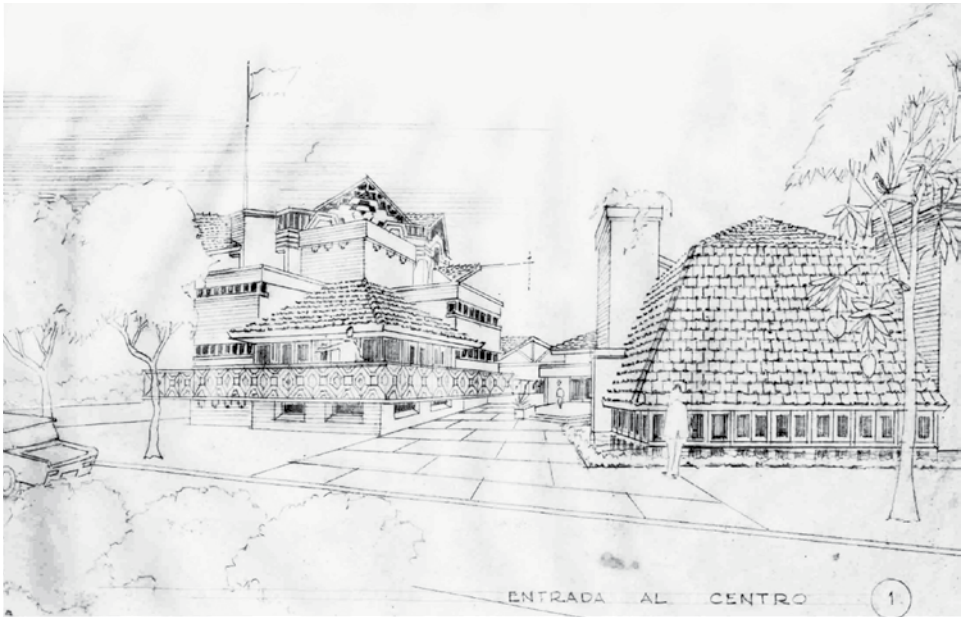
View from the square in front of the library to the visual arts school, all unrealised. Lorgio Betancourt collection



View of the unrealised theatre hall (left), the glorieta in the middle (a covered and raised square) that connects the theatre with the dancehall (back right). Lorgio Betancourt collection



View from below the glorieta to the dancehall. The buildings on the left, the walkway and the tower were never realised. Lorgio Betancourt collection



The main entrance. The building section on the right is never executed. Lorgio Betancourt collection

CASA DE LA CULTURA VELASCO HOLGUIN



CUBA

descriptive summary

Steps, as a big mountain where the national ideals were seen, and sometimes triumphantly proceeding.

Progress, Architecture and of the revolution.

the entrance's welcome is as a big threshold so that the step sees as the people rise to their ideals (the tower), the — wall of this great era high with the welcome without difficult to be found out to get in, we entered in experience's passage and we find a terrace with sculpture (the struggle way has the bright moments).

we come up stairs to higher triumphs and successes where the light, coming from our great liberators that we must understand and appreciate moreover we fight, cover us, we have to continue through a great tunnel that surrounds us to the left (where we walk) but sometimes we did not perceive the victory.

but the big moment will come and come, a light at the end — of the trajectory shows us that when we get closer (in the extremes), we the message that after all, the collectivity — of our culture origins had triumphed over the imperialism that despoiled us completely (the place disappears), suddenly, we — find ourselves in final straight line direction where the — victory glories us and all the end we are surrounded not for a foreigner but for ours.

now we should get of the triumph to make it useful, we cannot be a ceiling or an elevated plain that we will follow to perceive, think and analyze — we enter again into the building (tower), we continue going down (towards the entrance), getting toward to the end we found that: "all the doors are open".

Explanation of a run in the Velasco Culture House, written by writer Betancourt, without determining with precision the date.

The only explanation known to us appeared in a brochure at the official opening of the building in 1991. The text is attributed to Betancourt, even though he had died years earlier. Jorge Santana collection



Western façade with the 'amphitheatre': an outdoor stage fronted by a square with benches.



Entrance to reception and offices at Avenida 26 de Julio.

been sown, come to fruition and continually renew. The building's entrance signifies the beginning of the revolution. It is a high threshold you have to step over, while the walls on either side are disconcertingly tall. However, the building's access has been clearly marked, the written explanation reveals. The climb to the entrance is a difficult one, just like the 'threshold of the revolution'. The higher we climb, the greater the triumph. 'The light of the liberators' makes itself felt. We suddenly go into a dark tunnel, where we wait and, so Betancourt relates, where it is sometimes hard to see the light at the end of the tunnel. We continue and come to a space in which you can sense victory (is he referring to the auditorium with its colourful rose window?). The yoke of imperialism has been cast down and the Cuban people have ousted the oppressors. Now it is a matter of holding on to that triumph by stepping outside and contemplating, analyzing on a higher plane what has happened. We enter the building once again, slowly descending and find, once we have returned to solid ground, that 'all the doors have been opened'.

When you try to repeat the walk as a non-initiate, you actually do not arrive at the Cuban Revolution. However, the building does take you by the hand. Betancourt lays down staged routes for visitors in his design, but at the same time creates space to meet up. The multiplicity of shapes, passages, staircases and balconies are both confusing and surprising.

Be it a metaphor for the continuous revolution or no, the succession of spaces

so different in shape and character, cause the building to fit the visitor like a glove. Comparisons to Aldo van Eyck's Burgerweeshuis or Herman Hertzberger's Centraal Beheer are easily drawn. The presence of the many intimate corners, vista's and secluded spots in the building formed the occasion for the villagers to give the building its present nickname: the house of love.



Walkable roof edge around the dancehall.



Ground Floor

- 1 theatre entrance
- 2 gallery
- 3 stage
- 4 entrance to reception and offices
- 5 shop
- 6 glorieta (covered and raised space)
- 7 dancehall
- 8 square area
- 9 square area with low stage
- 10 outdoor stage/amphitheatre
- ▶ entrances to buildings



Square in front of amphitheatre (10)



Entrance to reception and offices on Avenida 26 de Julio



Reception (4)



Gallery (2) and stage (3)



Glorieta (6)



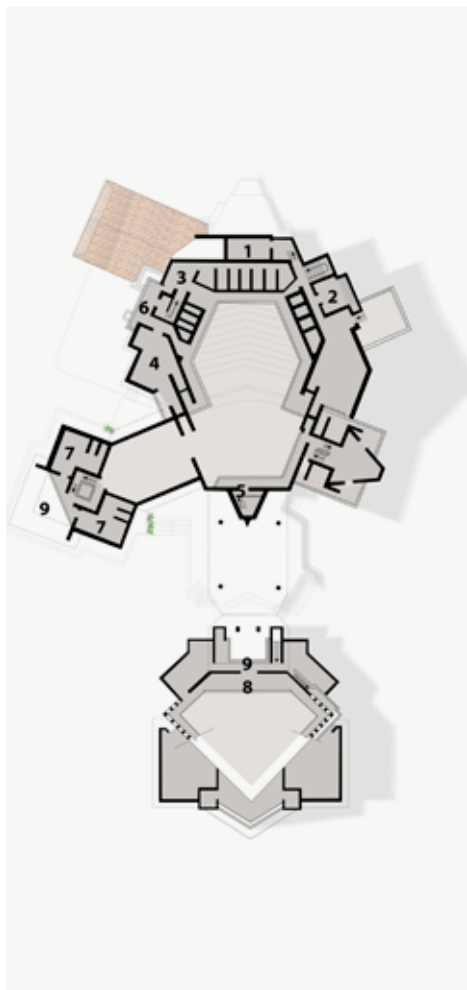
Entrance to dancehall



In the dancehall (7) Picture Joop Slangen

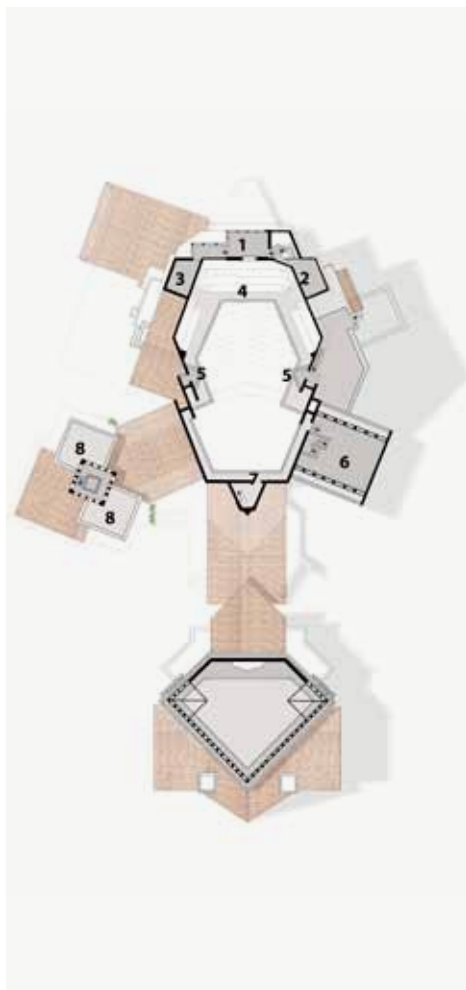


Square with cobbled paving (8)



Floor plan first floor

- 1 storage room
- 2 meeting room
- 3 waiting room
- 4 terrace
- 5 props balcony
- 6 accounting office
- 7 offices
- 8 public zone
- 9 balcony



Floor plan second floor

- 1 projection room
- 2 lighting booth
- 3 sound cabin
- 4 seating ring
- 5 lighting balconies
- 6 hall 'for history and theory'
- 7 props balcony
- 8 terrace



View of the theatre building from outdoor balconies (9) of the dancehall



View of the theatre from the east



Steel roof construction in theatre hall



View of dancehall stage from the public zone



Stairs to the cabins for projection (1), lighting (2) and sound (3) on the second floor Picture Joop Slangen



View of the glorieta from the dancehall balconies



Roofscape

Theatre

The main volume is the impressive theatre fly loft, surrounded by smaller, lower service spaces. Decorations on the exterior are extensive. White plastered belt courses along the roof edge pointing down like teeth at the corners. A colourful rose window at the corners. A colourful rose window at the centre of the façade reminds one of an Inca mask. On the inside, the hall has an Elizabethan shape, which means that colonnades separate the gallery from the aisles. The interior finishing is plain, with a steel roof construction. A covered and raised square ('glorieta' in Spanish) may be reached from a side-porch in the fly loft. The roof provides shade. When we visited the building a private guitar lesson was being given on the steps. Suspended from the steel roof construction are lights designed by Betancourt. The 'glorieta' connects the theatre building visually and functionally with the dancehall.









Dancehall

The dancehall is a compact, diamond-shaped building. You step into a shaded front porch through the transparently designed entrance with an iron fence and an opened-out wall. The contrast with the beautiful incidence of light in the dancehall from a continuous strip of windows between outer wall and roof, is striking. A remarkable seating area runs along this ribbon window. It is a narrow concrete edge from which you can watch the show. A similar seating area also runs along the roof edge. The steel and wood roof construction has an industrial feel.



Exterior spaces

The exterior spaces are similar to the interior ones. They have been carefully designed and lined with low walls. Various walls are bordered by brick lampposts. There are no less than three squares for recreation and performance purposes. There are benches (often integrated into the wall) in various places and raised stages. Floors have been designed like tapestries with patterns of grey and white cobbles. Betancourt employed planting to emphasise certain aspects of his design, for example trimmed hedges below balconies or three palm trees at one of the building's corners. The northern edge of the site is bordered by a ditch with hedges and trees alongside it.





POOR CONDITION



Dry rot in the roof ridges and deposits in the joints



Broken windows in dancehall strip window



Rotten wooden floors in the dancehall



Broken and missing roof tiles



Deposits on the brickwork



Decayed wooden roof ridges



Decay of the roof



Original interior of the house in Santiago de Cuba. The furniture, lamps and paintings were designed by Betancourt. Guía de Arquitectura Oriente de Cuba



The furniture has been replaced in the meantime, while the paintings are still hanging on the walls.

CASA BETANCOURT

Johanna van Doorn, Lara Voerman

Betancourt was a mysterious figure, even to his fellow countrymen. He hardly ever published. We know very little of his personal life. Cuban articles give him heroic titles of honour like 'fabulist' or 'knight'. In Santiago de Cuba we got to know Walter Betancourt's son, Lorgio. He describes his father as a nature lover who enjoyed playing sports and regularly took his children on long nature expeditions. According to Lorgio, Betancourt was humble, passionate and adventurous. Before he emigrated to Cuba, he went on a world tour with his wife through 27 countries, amongst others Italy, Greece, Spain, France, Great Britain, India, Mongolia, China and Russia. Before that he had made a trip through Latin and South America on his own, concluding it at a friend's place in Havana.

What better way to get to know an architect than by visiting his house? Lorgio Betancourt lives in the house his father moved into with the family in 1965. Betancourt was at first stationed in Holguín in the northern Oriente province. Architects were employed by MICONS, the Ministry of Construction. Architectural production became centralised, assignments only came from the Ministry itself. When the northern and southern provinces were merged in 1964, he left for Santiago de

Cuba, the new provincial capital. His manager was the young architect Selma Diaz. Architects were given priority in distributing new houses. They made a substantial contribution to the construction of the socialist state and so were allowed to be among the first to profit from their labour. Betancourt was assigned a spacious house in a leafy suburb of Santiago de Cuba. He, however, chose a smaller house overlooking the mountains and a large, nearby sports ground.

Betancourt's house illustrates his views on architecture. The house was a standard dwelling that he adapted to his personal wishes. He designed both the garden and the entire interior: wall coverings, lamps, couches, chairs, tables and even the flowerpots. In his architectural projects he also designed on various scales: both interiors and exteriors and both large and small. The subjects of wall paintings are anthroposophic, but stylised in design. They recall motifs and details of the Casa de la Cultura. The largest panel covers the entire wall and depicts the birth of the universe. There are South American patterns and figures portrayed in others. All the wall paintings are still intact, but compromised by the damp. They were painted on paper, not canvas. The furniture had to be replaced out of necessity: the



Walter Betancourt's paintings.

layers of pressed wood had expanded due to the moisture. But other than that, the house still breathes the atmosphere of the sixties. When you are there, you expect Walter Betancourt to walk in at any moment.

BETANCOURT IN CUBA

Flora Morcate Labrada

From the moment Walter Betancourt established himself in the eastern part of Cuba in 1961, he began working on various building assignments. His projects differed in size and complexity. He carried out both designs on an urban development scale and refurbishment and newbuild projects. Between 1963 and 1978, Betancourt designed seventeen buildings in all, of which the *Casa de la Cultura* in Velasco is the most well known. Betancourt was an influential figure in the former Oriente Province. Those who knew him, felt attracted to his strong personality, his convincing attitude to design as an architect and his calling to educate young people in the field. I was also influenced by him, which led to years of study into his oeuvre, resulting in the thesis 'La obra de Walter Betancourt en la cultura arquitectónica cubana', [The Oeuvre of Walter Betancourt within Cuban Architecture].

Betancourt is recognised because of his continuing search for a contemporary architecture, which was introduced in Cuba from the fifties onwards, but with the addition of the essential components of the Cuban building tradition. Through creative use of the possibilities of the building materials available in the sixties and seventies, he found new ways to implement

traditional building techniques and local materials. In this way every assignment brought its own solution, while Betancourt's hand remained visible in every building. A recurring part of his designs is the importance of the aesthetic aspect. Every time you look at one of Betancourt's buildings, you discover new facets or express surprise when recognising something you had noticed before. The search for expression and the relationship with the site constitute the most important reason for Betancourt's work to take up a notable place within Cuba's historico-cultural inheritance.

Most of Walter Betancourt's work consists of redevelopment and refurbishment of existing estates. This ranged from reconstructions and refurbishments of buildings to urban developmental interventions in the historical city. The design depended on the given situation. Most notable are projects which consciously distinguish themselves from their surroundings, aiming to increase the image quality. This is the case with 'Las Piramides' and the 'Parque del Ajedrez'.

The café *Las Piramides* was built in 1966 and is situated in a city quarter of Santiago de Cuba. The location of the building is a kind of island surrounded by roads. The

building has an elongated shape and was constructed symmetrically. It is flanked on both sides by pillars. The shape is strongly reminiscent of Egyptian and Meso-American architecture, with references to truncated pyramids and burial tombs with small apertures. However, according to Betancourt there were also related buildings to be found closer to home: ‘(...) the massive and solid walls on the slope share many characteristics with the walls of the 17th century *Castillo del Moro* [The Moor’s Castle] in Santiago de Cuba. (...)’

The *Parque del Ajedrez* [The Chess Park] was also landscaped in 1966. It lies on a street corner in the historical city centre of Santiago de Cuba. The park is based on a combination of triangular shapes and broken lines together forming a kind of colonial patio. The street corner has been rounded off and is accentuated by a structure of pyramid-shaped columns carrying identically shaped lamps and a pergola of steel reinforcing bars. Behind this lies an elevated terrace, covered in plants. People can play chess here at specially designed tables. There is also a bar. The result is such a characteristic design that writer and architect Eduardo Luis Rodríguez claimed it to be ‘one of the greatest achievements of the country’s urban environment’.

Conversely, other works by Betancourt deal creatively with existing values, as with the ‘José Joaquín Palma’ theatre in Bayamo (1971-1978) and the ‘Fruticuba’ shop in El Caney (date unknown). In both cases existing buildings were redeveloped and transformed by Betancourt. He also carried

out reconstructions, like those at the ‘Cuartel Moncada’ fortification and the ‘Museo de la Lucha Clandestina’ in Santiago de Cuba. For this museum Betancourt produced a reconstruction of a traditional home from colonial times.

Given the aesthetic qualities and the self-evident layout of the buildings, they enrich a site’s culture in a natural fashion. His buildings transform a location into sites with a positive image. This is what makes the *Casa de la Cultura* or the ‘Centro Cultural Felix Varona Sicilia’ (1964-1991) so special. A different organic design of his is the ‘Estación Experimental para la Repoblación Forestal de la Sierra Maestra’ (1969-1971). This building consists of five parts adapted to the existing topography and connected by galleries following different height variations. The building may be seen as an extension of the mountain range. The dialogue between nature and building is palpable everywhere, so that it appears the building is emanating from the landscape.

One of the immediately noticeable characteristics is the importance Betancourt attached to the environment and the harmonic way in which his buildings blend into it. The design as reflection of ‘the genius loci’ could well relate to the typically organic character of his entire oeuvre.

At the same time, Betancourt’s interest in the development of a personal architectural language and his modes of thought and practice may be the reason that his architecture resembles Expressionism and Brutalism. Walter Betancourt is perhaps the



Parque del Ajedrez, Santiago de Cuba.

most 'organic Wrightian' architect of all Cuban architects, as he kept using traditional building materials and techniques and was always in search of a contemporary design. That design was based on reinventing traditional Cuban architecture, taking its core values as a starting point.

The significance of Walter Betancourt lies in the way in which he focused on the unique aspects of a site. His designs were geared to the assignment and its context, such as the locale and its user. There are no standard solutions in Betancourt's work. In his quest for the right answers in design, he managed to intelligently transform an idea into matter.



Parque del Ajedrez, Santiago de Cuba.





Museo de la Lucha Clandestina, Santiago de Cuba. Picture Flora Morcate Labrada





Museo de la Lucha Clandestina, Santiago de Cuba.

Picture Flora Morcate Labrada





Fruticuba de El Caney, Santiago de Cuba. Picture Flora Morcate Labrada





Sala-Teatro José Joaquín Palma, Bayamo. Picture Flora Morcate Labrada





Estación Experimental para la
Repoblación Forestal de la Sierra
Maestra, Guisá. Picture Flora Morcate Labrada





Estación Experimental para la
Repoblación Forestal de la Sierra
Maestra, Guisa. Picture Flora Morcate Labrada

‘IT WAS HOT AND WE WERE BASKING IN THE SUN. SUDDENLY, IN THAT TINY MODEST VILLAGE THERE IT WAS, THAT HUGE BUILDING. FOLLOWED BY THE WARMTH OF THE PERFORMANCE, STAGED ENTIRELY FOR OUR BENEFIT. APART FROM THE ARCHITECTURE ITSELF, THE BUILDING IS OF GREAT SIGNIFICANCE TO THE LOCAL COMMUNITY. TO TAKE YOUR MIND OFF THINGS AND REVEL IN THE SINGING, DANCING AND MUSIC.’

Karin Laglas: Dean of the Faculty of Architecture Technical University Delft.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Johanna van Doorn (1980) grew up in Honduras and studied Architecture at Delft University of Technology. She graduated at RMIT in the Olinda – Brazil studio. Since 2007, she works at SteenhuisMeurs as an architect-researcher. She is specialised in translating historical knowledge into spatial analyses and requirements for (re)development. In 2009 she collaborated on the NAI exhibition Brazil Contemporary and facilitated various architecture trips to Latin America. Currently she is also teaching at Delft University of Technology.

John A. Loomis is an architect, author, and educator at San José State University. He is the author of *Revolution of Forms - Cuba's Forgotten Art Schools*, Princeton Architectural Press (1999 & 2011). His other writings have appeared in Design Book Review, Casabella, Progressive Architecture, and many other publications. Research for this article was assisted through the generosity of The Getty Research Institute, the Asociación Hermanos Saiz of the Cuban Ministry of Culture and the Union Juventud Comunista de Cuba. The author is also indebted to assistance of Gilberto Seguí Divinó, Rosendo Mesías, Eduardo Luis Rodríguez, Flora Morcate Labrada, the late Arturo Duque de Estrada y Riera, and the late Julia Maria Leonor Fernández Bulnes de Betancourt.

Paul Meurs (1963) is an architect specialised in advising on transformation assignments in the existing city. He has been a part-time professor at the department of Restoration, Modification, Intervention and Transformation (RMIT) of the Faculty of Architecture, Urbanism and Building Sciences of Delft University of Technology (TU

Delft) since 2006. He works, on both a national and an international level, as an advisor and supervisor for municipalities, housing corporations, property developers and design bureaus. Paul graduated in 1988 from TU Delft with the specialisation 'Architecture and Restoration', on a design for revitalising the inner city of Salvador da Bahia (Brazil). Subsequently, he worked as a guest researcher at São Paulo University (FAU USP) and for many years he organised research and exchange projects with Brazil. In 2000 he took his doctoral degree on the subject of 'The modern historic city', a study on the transformations of Dutch inner cities in the period 1883-1940.

Flora de los Ángeles Morcate Labrada is both architect and professor of architectural and urban developmental theory and history at the Faculty of Architecture at Universidad de Oriente (UO). She is a doctor in technical sciences, based on the thesis 'The oeuvre of Walter Betancourt in Cuban architecture'. She heads the research team Ciudad-Architecture, dealing with research into built heritage in the Santiago de Cuba area. In 2010 she was awarded the national prize by the Academy of Sciences in Cuba for her scientific achievements in: 'Identity and Heritage of Santiago's Architecture'. During her career she co-authored many books, such as: *La Vivienda Colonial Santiaguera*, *Apuntes Sobre la Arquitectura Santiaguera* (1996, 2002), *Santiago de Cuba y sus Monumentos* (1996), *Arquitectura de la Casa Cubana* (2001), *Oriente de Cuba. Guía de Arquitectura* (2002), *El reparto Vista Alegre en Santiago de Cuba* (2008), *La Arquitectura del Movimiento Moderno. Selección de Obras del*

Registro Nacional (2011). She also published various magazine articles in: Vitruvius, Ciencia en su PC, Arquitectura y Urbanismo, Hito and Oculum.

Lara Voerman (1982) grew up in the Hoeksche Waard (Zuid-Holland) and studied architectural history at Leiden University. Since 2004, she has been working as a historian with SteenhuisMeurs. At this office, she became specialised in twentieth century landscape architecture and urban design. She published in professional journals such as *Blauwe Kamer* and *Groen* and on architectural website *Archined*. She also collaborated on the publication *Maakbaar Landschap* (Engineered Landscape; NAI Publishers, 2009) and she was the author of the project surveys in *Bureau B+B Urban Design and Landscape Architecture. A Collective Talent 1977-2010* (NAI Publishers, 2010). She gives lectures and workshops on a regular basis, on the application of cultural history in spatial situations.

COLOPHON

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