CUBA

CELEBRATING THE 12TH HAVANA BIENNIAL

MAY 21-26, 2015

The Harvard Alumni Association is operating this educational program under the General License authorized by the Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC). This program differs from more traditional trips in that every hour must be accounted for. Each day has been structured to provide meaningful interactions with Cuban people or educational or cultural programming. Please note that Stanford University intends to fully comply with all requirements of the General License. Travelers must participate in all group activities. Each individual is required to keep a copy of their final program which could be requested by OFAC officials at any point in the next five years.

Exact details of the 12th Biennial exhibits have not yet been announced. As we get more information about the exhibits and venues we will update this program to incorporate events and exhibits.

Coinciding with the 2015 Havana Biennial, this immersion program focuses on the city’s rich art, architecture, and culture. Over the course of the trip you will meet with artists from Cuba and around the world. Enjoy private access to the studios of emerging artists and dinner and receptions in private homes. Meet with experts from a variety of backgrounds from economists to foreign policy experts resulting in meaningful exchanges between cultures and nations. You will be staying at the beautiful Saratoga Hotel, a boutique property ideally located in Old Havana.

Established in 1984, long before the worldwide boom of Biennials in the mid-nineties, the Havana Biennial has become an important meeting place for artists from all over the world with a focus on emerging artists from “non-Western” countries. For an entire month, the vibrant metropolis of Havana is transformed into a sprawling, city-wide exhibition, as both Cuban The 2015 Biennial will include the work of approximately 150 artists from Latin America, the Caribbean, Africa, the Middle East, Asia, Europe, Australia, Canada, and the United States. The works of these artists will be shown in different spaces and galleries throughout the city, often in very spectacular locations. Under the theme “Between the Idea and Experience,” the 12th Biennial will exhibit a group of works from artists that reflect this chosen thesis. The Biennial organizers are interested in using art to explore the wide spectrum of problems that affect us day after day in our countries, and in our relations with the rest of the world. They expect the 12th Biennial to focus less on specific topics and more on the creative process. It intends to expand on the efforts of previous Biennials involving the local and professional communities in the country.

STUDY LEADER: To be announced

GROUP SIZE: 12 to 25 guests

PRICING: To be announced
SCHEDULE BY DAY

B=Breakfast, L=Lunch, D=Dinner, R=Reception

Please note the schedule may be modified depending on the activities of the Biennial.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 20
INDEPENDENT ARRIVALS IN MIAMI

Since the flight to Havana departs early in the morning on Thursday, May 21 you will need to arrive in Miami no later than Wednesday, May 20.

You are responsible for your own travel arrangements to Miami and for your own hotel reservations on May 20. We strongly suggest the Miami Airport Hotel as it is located within the airport and will allow you easy access to the charter flight check-in area, but there are several other hotels in the airport vicinity.

THURSDAY, MAY 21
HAVANA

Depart Miami on a charter flight bound for Havana. Upon arrival, drive to the Hotel Nacional for lunch.

Transfer to the Saratoga Hotel, ideally located in Old Havana, your home for the next five nights. Before dinner meet in the Prado Room for an introductory tour briefing.

This evening attend a lecture given by Ayleen Robaiyna, an architect with the Historian’s office. Enjoy a private cocktail reception followed by a welcome dinner on the hotel roof-top.

(L, D)

FRIDAY, MAY 22
HAVANA

This morning explore Havana by foot. Begin by walking from the hotel to the center of Old Havana to view a scale-model of the city, which serves as an excellent introduction to the lay-out of the city.

Close by is the Plaza de Armas, which was built in 1584 for military exercises. Most mornings used books are sold here, mainly post-revolution editions on Cuban history. Havana’s town hall is located on the square—now the city museum, it gives an overview of the city’s history.

Admire the Cathedral of Saint Christopher located on the cobbled Plaza de la Catedral. The cathedral has been described by one Cuban writer as “music set in stone”. The square is surrounded by some of Havana’s oldest buildings; the wealthiest families built their mansions here.

End the morning at the Plaza Vieja, a stunningly beautiful old square. Although the square was in a sad state of repair for many years, that decay is being reversed by the caring restoration of Habana Vieja. Visit the Wilfredo Lam Center, the organizers of the Havana Biennial. As a cultural institution it is dedicated to the study, research and promotion of contemporary visual arts from developing countries in Africa, Latin America, Asia and the Caribbean. It was founded in 1983 as homage to Wifredo Lam, the great Cuban artist (1902-1982). Along with a permanent exhibit of Lam’s lithographs and etchings, the center hosts temporary shows with works by contemporary Cuban and South American artists.

Lunch is at the superb La Moneda Cubana restaurant and features local music.

This afternoon enjoy visits to various studios in Havana. During the Biennial, International artists take over urban spaces, galleries and cultural institutions. The past several Biennials have showcased increasingly sophisticated and poignant works by Cuban artists and is one of the best barometers of how Cuba is changing.

Before dinner this evening enjoy a performance by the Camerata Romeu. This is an all women group of musicians who play stringed instruments. The director, Zenaida Romeu, selects music from Cuba as well as different parts of the world, ranging from Leo Brouwer and Esteban Salas to Bach and Mozart.
Dinner tonight is at Café Oriente, an elegant government-run restaurant located in the heart of old Havana. 

(B, L, D)

SATURDAY, MAY 23
HAVANA

This morning attend a lecture and discussion on US/Cuban Relations led by Professor Raul Rodriguez from the University of Havana. Dr. Rodriguez has written extensively on US-Cuban Relations including an article written for the David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies.

Then visit the Instituto Superior de Arte (ISA), a center of advanced studies in the fields of theatre, dance, music, visual arts and communication art. Originally the grounds of the Havana Country Club, President Fidel Castro converted it into an arts complex in 1961. The school was designed by three young “rebel” architects: Italians Roberto Gottardi and Vittorio Garatti, and Cuban Ricardo Porro. Porro’s art school was a deliberate evocation of the female form and as the five main buildings emerged, they were thought too sensual, too avant-garde for grim Communist tastes. The project was halted, though the school did open. The ghostly complex fell into ruin, with long tentacles of branches and roots creeping into the buildings, and the school was closed. Amazingly, in 2001 the Cuban government approached the three architects and asked them to complete the project. Restoration was completed in 2009.

Enjoy a private lunch at the home and studio of artist Jose Fuster, who has turned his neighborhood into one enormous piece of mosaic art. Fuster is dedicated to his creations, a vast array of artwork from ceramics evoking the nation’s African roots, as represented in the Santeria religion, to whimsical paintings drawn from ordinary life in Cuba.

Visit Biennial exhibits near Fuster’s home.

Next, take a special visit to the Laboratorio para el Arte in Romerillo where Alexis Leyva Machado (Kcho) opened a new art center on January 8, 2014, the 55th anniversary of Fidel’s Freedom Caravan’s arrival in Havana. The art center is made up of several exhibits one of which a Wilfredo Lam exhibit called “Lam, eres Imprescindible” (Lam, you are indispensable). It provides a significant collection of original works by one of Cuba’s most renowned painters. Also part of the center is Kcho’s exposition, El Pensador (The Thinker) displayed in a hall named La Nave (The Ship), a space dedicated to contemporary art which also houses the Comandante de la Revolución, the Juan Almeida Bosque Library, equipped with all media and resources needed for studies, as well as the Romerillo Experimental Graphic Workshop and the Tocororo theater.

This afternoon return to the hotel stopping at the 331 ArtSpace studio to view the works of three young and emerging artists: Adrian Fernandez, Frank Mujica and Alex Hernandez.

Enjoy drinks with Kadir Lopez followed by dinner this evening at the home of artist Sandra Ramos who studied Fine Arts at the Higher Institute of Arts of Cuba graduating in 1993. Her works focus on the recovery of a social and individual memory, linked to the difficulties of the daily life in Cuba. She is an outspoken critic of the political manipulation of Cuba’s political history and uses her art to express this.

(B, L, D)

SUNDAY, MAY 24
HAVANA

This morning, enjoy a round-table discussion with Dr. Rena Pérez, formerly with the Ministry of Agriculture and an advisor to the Ministry of Sugar. Dr. Perez’s discussion, documented with slides, which will address “Living in Cuba Today.”

Continue on to the new Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes: Arte Cubano (Cuban
Collection) accompanied by curator Lucila Fernandez. The Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes is actually divided into two sections, occupying two buildings: the Cuban Collection and the International Collection. The museum’s origins date back to 1842 when the San Alejandro Art Academy started its collection, which forms the nucleus of the museum founded in 1913. It expanded greatly after Castro took over in 1959, notably with works from the private collections of Julio Lobo and Oscar Cintas. The museum always hosts special Bienial exhibits which the group will enjoy.

Lunch today is at the studio of Esterio Seguro.

After lunch drive to the home of noted photographer Figueroa and his wife Cristina Vives, a well-known Cuban art critic and dealer. Figueroa will talk to the group about his work and show his photographs and Cristina will talk about contemporary Cuban art and will show the pieces she has in her home.

The day ends with a visit to the studio of Yoan Capote.

Enjoy dinner at leisure this evening.

(MONDAY, MAY 25)

HAVANA

This morning attend a dance rehearsal at the Danza Contemporanea de Cuba. This extraordinary dance group melds the techniques of classical ballet and American modern dance with the rippling spines and head rolls of traditional or folkloric, Afro-Cuban dance; the complex rhythms of Cuban rumba; and the twirling hands and syncopation of Spanish flamenco.

Continue on to the Biennial exhibits at PabExpo.

Enjoy lunch at the home of art curator Milagros Borges Gomez to enjoy her lovely home and admire art works by many different Cuban artists including Kunta, Ruben Rodriguez, Salvador Corratge and Orestes Hernandez.

This afternoon, enjoy visiting the Biennial exhibits.

Attend an early evening reception at the Ludwig Foundation. The Ludwig Foundation of Cuba (LFC) is an autonomous, non-governmental and non-profit institution in Cuba created to protect and promote contemporary Cuban artists and culture, develop research works and new technologies applied to the artistic field, and encourage dialog with both Cuban and international cultural communities. LFC acts as a cultural center to encourage the creation of bridges of understanding in Cuba and abroad.

Tonight you will be hosted at a farewell dinner at La Guarida. This well-known restaurant served as the setting for the main apartment in the film Fresa y Chocolate.

(TUESDAY, MAY 26)

RETURN TO U.S.

This morning transfer as a group to the airport for your charter flight back to the US.