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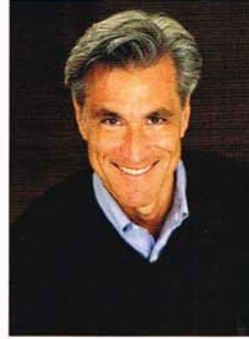
Three alumni get inside the electric—
and electronic—atmosphere of the
Arab Awakening to tell the story
of a lifetime.



A Grand Havana Homecoming

In 29 years of running the illustrious M(Group) firm in New York City, Hermes Mallea, B.Arch. '78, has seen and created his share of great homes. But even this worldly AIA professional wasn't immune to the awe-inspiring residences he found on the research adventure of a lifetime.

Although raised in Miami, Mallea was profoundly influenced by his first five years of life in Santiago de Cuba. The island etched in his mind, he explored its history through the decades, using the University of Miami's Cuban Heritage Collection and amassing his own trove of vintage Cuba-related photographs.



"When I returned to Cuba for the first time in 40 years, I brought with me several mental images of Havana," Mallea explained during a recent presentation hosted by the Cuban Heritage Collection. "In one of them, everything in Havana had been frozen in 1959. In another, everything in Havana was bigger, better, and more beautiful than anywhere else in the world. I had to reconcile my preconceptions with the rich reality that is the city today."

The results of his long-anticipated homecoming were stunning and personal: an exhibition of family photographs, "Luz de Memoria," which he curated last year at Havana's Museum of Natural History, and his first coffee table book, the lush *Great Houses of Havana: A Century of Cuban Style* (The Monacelli Press).

Mallea, who attended Columbia University's graduate program in historic preservation, undertook what he calls "reverse detective work" in these exquisite spaces, ferreting out their secrets, how the homes came to be, how each room was used.

He found his interviews with eyewitnesses of that period among the project's most moving aspects. "I have the sense that those people were waiting decades just to talk to me to share their stories of Havana's glamorous past before 1960," he said at UM.

Once known as the Paris of the Caribbean, Havana had true international cultivation: Christian Dior once made ensembles especially for the Havana market, and the French decorator Maison Jansen kept an office there. The city's architectural sophistication followed suit, notes Mallea.

"I was so impressed by the ambitious aspirations of Cuba's homeowners, architects, and craftsmen," he said. "I hope the book contributes to curiosity about Cuba."

—Tom Austin, B.F.A. '78