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Old Havana / La Habana Vieja: Spirit Of The Living City / El Esp ritu De La Ciudad Viva (English And Spanish Edition)



Synopsis

Old Havana: Spirit of the Living City artistically captures the architecture, people, and daily life of La Habana Vieja (Old Havana) through the lenses of two visionary photographers and colleagues, one American and the other Cuban. Chip Cooper and Nestor Marti began collaborating in 2008, documenting the picturesque features of the oldest and most historically rich quarter in Cuba's capital city at the behest of Eusebio Leal Spengler, the historian of the city of Havana and the director of the Habana Vieja restoration project. Cooper's and Marti's images highlight the spirit of change and renewal underlying the restoration of this international treasure and its revival as a vibrant business and residential area. Inspired by the work of twentieth century American photographer Walker Evans, Cooper and Marti, through perspectives both unique and deeply entwined, capture the humanity of the city, in a language at once universal and transcendent.

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Customer Reviews

“Chip Cooper and Nestor Marti's Havana: Spirit of the Living City / La Habana: El espíritu de la ciudad viva is a gift to all of us. Their images are filled with the life, vitality and passion that is Havana. They tell a story of this magnificent place in the alleys and the plazas, on the facades and in the faces of the living. Cooper and Marti have captured the soul of this truly beautiful place.” --Robert Hicks, author of *The Widow of the South* and *A Separate Country*
“The photographs are full of love for the Cubans and give us the dignity that really fills us with pride.” --Julio Larramendi, photographer and author from Havana, Cuba
“Even if you've been to

the old city of Havana, you haven't really seen it fully, or understood it fully, until you've seen this timeless and timely portrait of one of the most fascinating and romantic places in the world. Cooper and Marti, united in and inspired by their admiration for the great American photographer Walker Evans, are wonderfully complementary masters of their art. Their photographs--vibrant, respectful, witty, and sometimes truly epic in their vision, along with the accompanying texts--create a kind of imagistic dialogue. The result is a moving panorama of past and present, generality and specificity, the stillness of stone and the drama of the sea, the vividness of the human presence and present in a place saturated by the past."--Daniel Menaker, author of *Friends and Relations: A Collection of Stories*, *The Old Left: Stories*, and *The Treatment*, and coauthor of *The Worst*

Nestor Marti has a degree in art history. He also studied documentary, advertising, and fashion photography. As photographer of the Havana Historian's Office for more than ten years, he has developed an extensive portfolio that includes documentary and press photography as well as patrimonial photography, urban landscapes, and portraiture. He has published his work in a wide range of books, magazines, and websites. Chip Cooper was director of photography for The University of Alabama for thirty-three years and is now artist-in-residence in the Honors College and a faculty member in Arts and Sciences. While working for the university, he has published the following books: *Hunting: The Southern Tradition*, *Alabama Memories*, *Silent in the Land*, *Common Threads*, *Crimson: The University of Alabama*, and recently *Tin Man*. He has shown his work nationally and internationally, and his photographs are in many museums, as well as private and corporate collections.

I was slightly disappointed. I was born and raised in La Habana Vieja, and expected more pictures of actual buildings, houses, parks, historical places, etc. La Habana Vieja is full of them. There were some, but the photographs were capturing mostly small architectural details. The photos were artistic, but they could have been taken anywhere and not necessarily in Old Havana. Also, there were many pictures of people, but it seemed to me that the photographer was searching for caricatures or stereotypes. (With one remarkable exception of a little old lady playing ball with her grandson, that cheered my heart. She looked just like my mother.) There were, of course, the obligatory pictures and posters of revolutionary leaders. Obviously, the photographer was ignorant of the fact that many cruel deaths can be traced back to those individuals. Since the leaders were included, I wish they had also included the infamous Police Department building in Old Havana where so many young Cubans had met a cruel fate. So, it was fair as Cuban p.r., but it did not

capture the heart of La Habana Vieja, in both its joys and its misery. This is not La Habana Vieja that I remember.

This publication is a tribute to Cuban-American collaboration. It could not have been accomplished so successfully without the University of Alabama and staff, but could not have been published at all without the Cubans. It is wonderful the way the English and Spanish captions appear side-by-side. Not an easy task to complete, as the English text requires comparatively fewer words. Nestor Marti, our friend and knowledgeable guide in Havana, does a wonderful of displaying Cuba through Cuban eyes in this book. Chip Cooper's contribution of photography and organization is to be commended. I liked it so much I bought two.

These are wonderful photographs with compelling composition and color. When I visited Cuba, I saw many lovely sights, but these photos wonderfully and masterfully capture the beauty and intrigue of Havana.

Excellent, Chip is a master photographer.

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