

**BREAKING BOUNDARIES**

FLORMAYORAL

## Breaking Boundaries

Occasionally, stories unfold more often as a result of happenstance than what reason would dictate in the chronology of an event that took place in a precise place and time. I feel however, that very few things we do can be exempt from the essence of an era. It is in this spirit that *Breaking Boundaries*, an exhibition by CubanAmerican photographer Flor Mayoral, creates the discourse between the works of two great architects of Cuban origin. I am referring to the Miami Marine Stadium, by Hilario Candela and situated in Key Biscayne in Miami since 1963, and the stadium at Parque Deportivo José Martí, (built 1960), located in the Vedado area of Havana, facing the city's seawall and conceived by Octavio Buigas.

Both architectural complexes emerge in an atmosphere in which the modernist architecture worldwide is taking its practices to an unprecedented radicalness. Similar structures in the form of shells predate them like the ones Max Borges Recio used to design Tropicana Cabaret in 1951. Hilario Candela and Octavio Buigas' pieces coexist in time with such influential works as the TWA Terminal Station at (now) John F. Kennedy International Airport in New York, 1956 – 1962, designed by Eero Saarinen, The Palazzetto dello Sport in Rome, designed by Pier Luigi Nervi and Annibale Vitellozzi and built in 1957, The Stadthalle Bremen in Germany, by Roland Rainer or the St. Vincent de Paul Chapel in Coyoacan, Mexico, 1959, made by Félix Candela and Enrique de la Mora; the latter edifice stands out for its organic nature that brings the hyperbolic paraboloid to the religious complex.

When reviewing encyclopedias of world architecture, Cuban and Latin American architects are not the most favored. It is difficult for the inaugural architecture of works like Hilario Candela and Octavio Buigas' be recognized in the midst of what was occurring in their discipline at the time. The organic sense in which these innovators worked, how they incorporated the relationship with the environment, the rhythm of forms, the play with nature and the way that they moved between the rational and the Baroque, makes these pieces true sculptures that incorporate in an inconspicuous manner their functional purpose. That has been the major motivation for artist Flor Mayoral to immerse herself into the soul of these buildings.

When this project was conceived, the start of negotiations for the normalization of relations between Cuba and the United States had not yet been announced. Havana and Miami were two nearby cities in the emotional and geographical sense, but with politically distant orders: art always anticipates diplomacy to enter life's own interstices and offers it from a symbolic perspective.

Parque Deportivo José Martí was a training site for many competitors from different specialties, and post 1959, it was used for the training of exalted Cuban athletes, and nautical shows, and memorable concerts by artists such as Ray Charles, Jimmy Buffett, Dave Brubeck, The Beach Boys and Gloria Estefan were carried out at the Miami Marine Stadium. To this, we can add the presentation of political rallies, and the execution of major religious ceremonies.

Nonetheless, the mundane made these two buildings run a similar fate and their original function was abandoned so they became alienated and forgotten, but with the freedom to fetch the curiosity generated by the marginal and forbidden of any ruin; ranging from artistic interventions initiated by graffiti artists with a rudimentary approach in Havana and with an impressive display in Miami. In this ad hoc, interventions of the sketch come together, anxious couples making love or some other homeless person looking for a quiet place to sleep.

Herein lie the observations of Flor Mayoral's lens. Her desire is to scrutinize the flesh of each space; her obsession is to make evident what is not easily perceived. In each of the photographs we feel the present; we imagine the past from indelible patterns on the surface of the concrete. The horizon is transmuted in the details because for Flor, it is essential to distinguish the relationship that may exist between seeing and understanding the gradations of light, difficult to tame both in Cuba and Miami. The museography of the exhibition traverses different counterpoints starting from the deformation to the transparency of the scales. Each structural aspect is part of a natural environment that frees the assemblage to incorporate a human conversation. It is also a provocative reflective viewpoint with all the semantic richness that art can contribute.

It is not accidental that the two images around which the exhibition is constructed are situated on opposing walls that have the best focal points in the room. For the narrative of the Miami Marine Stadium, a vulture emerges, perched in a way that cuts the plane transversely, and sits between the mirage of a concrete overhang and a sky oversaturated by light, heightening the stridency of the blue. We do not know why the bird is there, or the position of its possible prey. The restraint in its posture is what makes us feel the enigma of its future action. Flanking the other extreme of the space emerges a snapshot of a photo made in Cuba. A stray dog observes a text that says 'Cuba Libre' between the graffiti of two images made by street artists. In this instance, coincidence weaves the fragments and the phrase based on its epic meaning attains another level of interpretation in an atmosphere of squalor and decay.

La Siesta appears as part of the images that belong to the Martí Sports Complex, a title that parodies the emblematic work by Miguel Collazo, except that the bucolic scene from the costumbrist master of Cuban painting has been upturned by the ambiance of neglect of a facility that can be easily overlooked when we are faced by the corporal abandonment of a sleeping person, unaware that he is being captured with all the intensity that such a configuration can generate. This piece contrasts with the unbridled expressionism of a large eye that is painted on one of the sidewalls of the Miami Marine Stadium and becomes an unusual witness to the indifference and neglect. Someone alerts us and we do not know whom. The general focus is dominated by the chromatic array of colors to take us on a voyage that seems more virtual than real and that generates a sense of displacement in the physical-spatial plane.

Each of the works by Flor Mayoral opens the possibility of discovering the power of these sites, as we glean information from isolated data that are part of a narrative that brings us closer to the most visceral within them, leaving us with the sentiment that we had previously rushed by without fully appreciating them. It is as if we needed glasses to view a 3D projection, which is not mechanical but rather human. It exudes an SOS to protect a structure that is about to perish, and as an alleged ruin, still has strength and charm. Flor weaves in and out of a framework that lives like a virus in her eye and her passion. Within these confines, the era of Hilario Candela and Octavio Buigas also resides.

Jorge Fernández Torres  
Curator and Art Critic



Cuba Libre, 2015





*Estadio y Nube, 2015*



*Frente al Malecón, 2015*





*La Siesta, 2015*



*Vigilia, 2014*





El Beso, 2015



Key Rats 4 Life, 2014



Cascarón, 2015



Abanico, 2015



*Let the Games Begin, 2014*





**Fototeca de Cuba**

VIP RECEPTION: Friday, September 18<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 pm

Exhibition runs through October 19<sup>th</sup>, 2015

Calle Mercaderes No. 307 Habana Vieja, Cuba