Vincenzo Pietropaolo

HAVANA | *City at a Crossroads*

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Cover: *Andino Building, San Lázaro, Havana*, 1999. Chromogenic print, 20 in. x 16 in. Edition 3/15 Left: *Sergio and Margarita, Havana, Cuba*, 2001. Chromogenic print, 20 in. x 16 in. Edition 5/15.

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Vincenzo Pietropaolo
HAVANA | *City at a Crossroads*

Giuliana Colalillo

James Rottman Fine Art presents the works of internationally acclaimed photographer, Vincenzo Pietropaolo. **Havana: City at a Crossroads**, showcases a significant body of work capturing the essence of Havana and exploring the spirit of its people. The stunning chromogenic and silver gelatin prints featured in this exhibition were selected by James Rottman Fine Art, together with the artist, from an image collection created over the course of nine visits to the city of Havana from 1996 to 2002.

Through these uniquely beautiful prints, Vincenzo Pietropaolo illuminates the texture of everyday life of the people of Havana; their spirit, as well as the beauty and decay of the city. Pietropaolo's exquisite photographs of Havana have been exhibited in art galleries in New York City, Philadelphia, Hamilton, Toronto and Havana. The extensive series of photographic works on Havana by Pietropaolo on display were previously featured in the book *Making Home in Havana* (Vincenzo Pietropaolo and Cecelia Lawless, Rutgers University Press, New Jersey, 2002).

Left: *Neighbours on Front Stoop, Havana,* 2001. Gelatin silver print, 10 in. x 8 in. Edition 1/15.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF HAVANA

Vincenzo Pietropaolo

Founded in 1519 by Spanish colonists, Havana is one of the oldest cities in the Americas, and undeniably, one of the most beautiful. Situated on the northern coast of Cuba, the young port city became a magnet for the pirate ships that once dominated the Caribbean Sea. It suffered numerous pirate attacks until the Spanish monarchy designated it as the marshalling port for ships that regularly plied the trade routes of the Caribbean laden with cargo from its South American colonies destined for Spain. As a result, the city grew quickly and was regularly visited by the Royal Navy. These visits were occasions for great revelry in the city, marked by the consumption of vast quantities of alcohol and general mayhem in the streets. People flocked to the city to trade in valuable goods such as fine porcelain from the Philippines, gold and silver from Peru and Mexico, and exotic feathers from Central America.

Designated as the capital city of Cuba in 1553, and with a constant infusion of government resources, coupled with trading activities from all corners of the empire, Havana became a major economic and administrative centre of the country.

Major fortifications were built as defensive measures against pillaging pirates, and these early massive structures defined the subsequent pattern of development of the city that consists of long east-west avenues interconnected by north-south streets in an orderly checkerboard pattern. Designated as the capital city of Cuba in 1553, and with a constant infusion of government resources, coupled with trading activities from all corners of the empire, Havana became a major economic and administrative centre of the country. By the 1720s, it had become the third largest city in the New World. The University of Havana, established in 1728, is one of the oldest in the Americas. The city justifiably earned its moniker as the *llave del mundo*, or key to the world, and "Protector of the West Indies," so designated by Royal Decree. Large shipyards were built in the early 1700s, both for the Royal Navy and for private companies, thus consolidating its economic and military primacy in the region. Havana began its evolution as a sophisticated cultural destination that would continue to its present day, attracting influential intellectuals, writers, artists, and scientists from Europe and the Americas. By the 1830s, urban development spread beyond the city's original walled boundaries, and large suburban homes for the city's moneyed classes were built throughout the 19th century in sprawling new communities.

By the end of the 19th century, the nationalist movement led by the Revolutionary Party of Cuba agitated for a War of Independence against Spain in 1895-98. Following the 1898 sabotage sinking of the American naval vessel, Maine, in Havana harbour, the United States intervened militarily and drove the 400-year old Spanish power out of Cuba. A new republic was created through an accord signed in Paris by the Americans and the Spanish; Cubans were not invited to the peace table. The United States imposed a special provision on the new republic's constitution in 1901, permitting it to intervene in Cuba's affairs. It supported a series of dictatorships, including the notoriously brutal regime of Fulgencio Batista, who was overthrown by Fidel Castro's popular-based revolution in 1959. Soon after, a Communist government was established, and the United States imposed a trade embargo that had the effect of severely limiting development. In 1961, under Prime Minister John Diefenbaker, Canada was one of only two countries in the Americas to recognize Fidel Castro's government, in the face of counter pressure from the United States.

During the Batista regime, many apartment complexes were built in Havana, which had already enjoyed a disproportionate amount of the country's wealth based on the success of the flourishing sugar industry.

During the Batista regime (1933-58), many apartment complexes were built in Havana, which had already enjoyed a disproportionate amount of the country's wealth based on the success of the flourishing sugar industry. At the same time, rural areas of the country were underdeveloped; characterized by substandard housing and crumbling infrastructure. For example, in the 1950s, the vast majority of Havana's dwellings had electricity, whereas comparatively few homes in the rural areas could boast basic services such as plumbing or electricity. Yet the housing in Havana was not always of a high standard. A typical residential building was the *ciudadela*, which literally means "citadel", and is basically a form of tenement housing built around an interior courtyard designed to accommodate up to 100 families. These housing communities were overcrowded and often, poorly maintained, as the city's wealth was channelled increasingly to the ruling classes. For their part, the ruling classes built palatial homes of the finest craftsmanship and materials; using fine woods, ceramic tiles, and wrought iron to build homes in communities such as El Vedado and Miramar.

The Malecón, a magnificent boulevard along the seafront, contains block after block of architectural gems that face the Caribbean Sea directly and are among the finest buildings in the continent.

The economic disparity in the living conditions of rich and poor became so intense that the city, which for the previous four and a half centuries had enjoyed supremacy in terms of development, no longer was the focus of attention as the newly-founded revolutionary nation struggled to develop neglected rural areas and national educational and health care systems. With public resources no longer being diverted to maintain them, many houses in Havana began to deteriorate so drastically that they had to be removed for safety reasons, sometimes even collapsing on their own. Yet these homes were never abandoned and people continued to live in them, sometimes many to a room, as citizens made do with whatever scant resources they had. During this period, no new buildings were built, and Havana appeared to be frozen in time, showing peeling paint, rusty doors, leaky roofs, broken staircases, missing windows, and heaps of rubble.

Interestingly, homelessness was never an issue, as everyone was guaranteed the right to housing, however inadequate it may have been. As one government ad posted prominently outside the airport gates (where it would be visible to Pope John Paul II as he entered the city in 1998) boasted: "There are 200 million children in the world living on the street. None is Cuban." Housing had been nationalized, and enshrined as a free public service by the 1960 Law of Urban Reform. There was no room for the concept of real estate profit typical of capitalist countries.

Havana was spared the shopping mall phenomenon that dominated urban development in many North American cities in the 1980s; consequently entire blocks of architecturally unique houses were left intact, though up to 50% of the neighbourhood of Old Havana was significantly deteriorated. In 1982, UNESCO took note of Old Havana's special character and declared it a World Heritage Site for its unique architecture. The Malecón, a magnificent boulevard along the seafront, contains block after block of architectural gems that face the Caribbean Sea directly and are among the finest buildings in the continent. An innovative program of restoration was established in 1993, led by the Office of the City Historian but largely limited to the neighbourhood of Old Havana. This program diverted profits generated by tourism to the restoration of landmark buildings, starting with historic hotels.

In an attempt to redress the dire housing situation in Havana, a new Law of General Housing Reform was enacted in 1984, providing for limited private home ownership – the concept of personal property – in order to encourage active participation in the repair, maintenance, and operation of buildings, though still under strict government control.

With the disintegration of the Soviet Communist regime in 1989, huge Soviet subsidies were no longer available to the government, and the Cuban economy went into severe decline. Pope John Paul II's historic visit in 1998 was a momentous occasion for Cuba, when the world focused its attention on it, a lone communist state surviving against the "spectre" of capitalism next door. In 2008, Fidel Castro was succeeded as President by his younger brother Raúl, who embarked on a program of economic reforms.

Today, major change is imminent, as evidenced by US President Obama's official visit to Havana in May, 2016, the first such visit by a US president since Fidel Castro's Revolution of 1959. Unthinkable only a few years ago, this historic event signalled a new era in Cuban and American relations, including the gradual removal of the American trade embargo and of travel restrictions between the two countries, making Havana once again a city at a crossroads, this time at the intersection of communism and capitalism. How will the looming changes on the socioeconomic and political horizon affect Havana's housing stock? And what will be the fate of the architectural heritage of residential areas like El Vedado?

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Front Door and Leaf, Havana, 1999. Chromogenic print, 20 in. x 16 in. Edition 2/15.

Inner Courtyard with Spiral Staircase, Havana, 1999. Chromogenic print, 16 in. x 20 in. Edition 1/15.

Ceramic Tiles and Wood Door, Havana, 2001. Chromogenic print, 8 in. x 10 in. Edition 1/15.

Abandoned Second Floor, Havana, 1999. Chromogenic print, 16 in. x 20 in. Edition 2/15.

*Disappearing Mural, Havana, 1*999. Chromogenic print, 16 in. x 20 in. Edition 1/15.

Apartment House with Chevrolet on San Lázaro, Havana, 1999. Chromogenic print, 20 in. x 16 in. Edition 2/15.

Boy Climbing Seawall, Malecón, Havana, 1999. Gelatin silver print, 8 in. x 10 in. Edition 1/15.

Two Boys on Front Porch, Havana, 1999. Gelatin silver print, 8 in. x 10 in. Edition 1/15.

Schoolchildren on Recess, Parque Aguirre, Havana, 1999. Gelatin silver print, 16 in. x 20 in. Edition 5/15.

Stray Dog, Havana, 1999. Gelatin silver print, 16 in. x 20 in. Edition 2/15.

Tombstone Angel, Colón Cemetery, Havana, 1999. Gelatin silver print, 8 in. x 10 in. Edition 1/15.

Lobby of Apartment House, Havana, 1999. Gelatin silver print, 8 in. x 10 in. Edition 1/15.

Granma Welcomes Pope John Paul II, Havana, 1998. Gelatin silver print, 16 in. x 20. Edition 3/15.

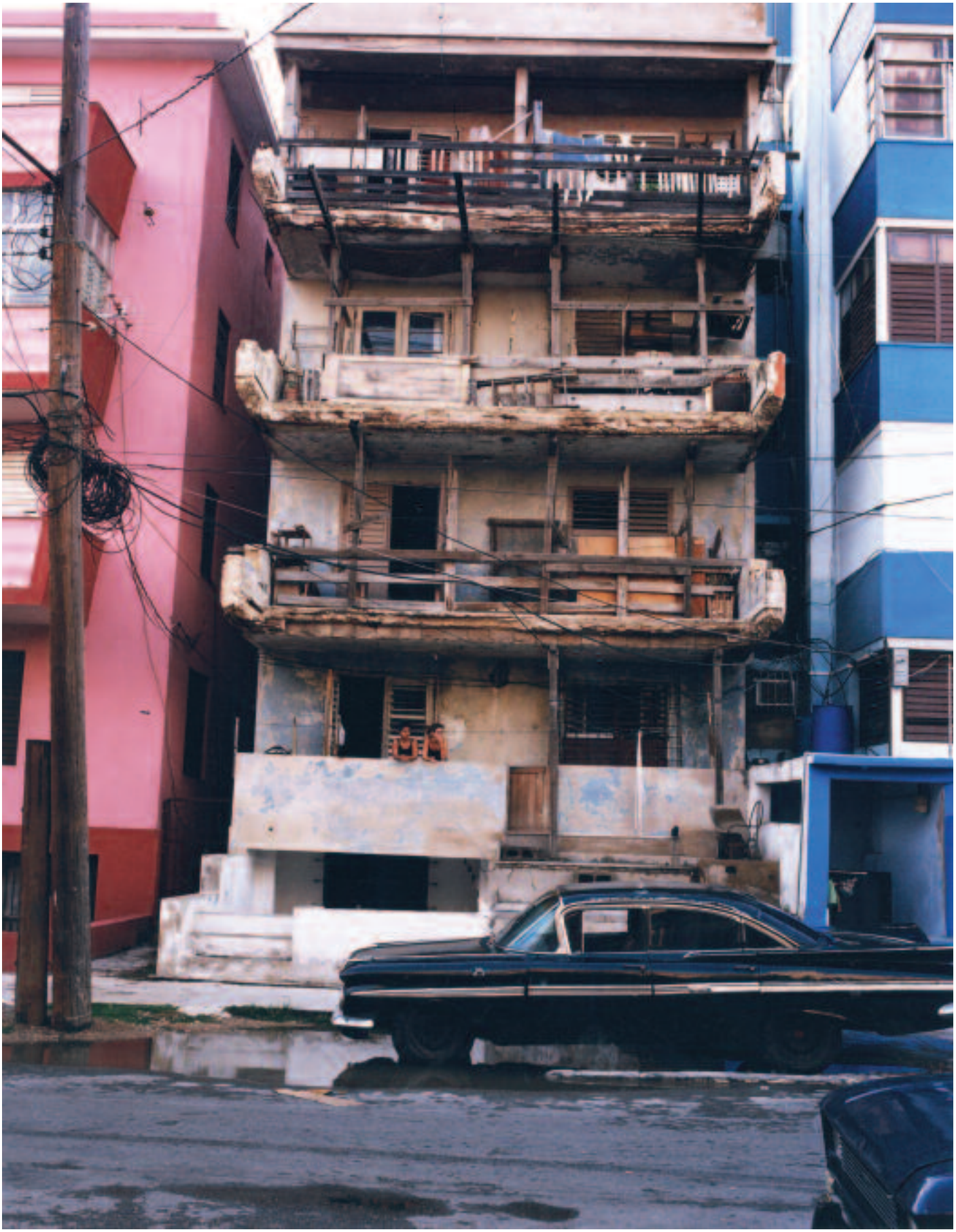
Family Greets Arrival of a Rare Flight from Miami at Havana's Airport, 2001. Gelatin silver print, 16 in. x 20 in. Edition 1/15.

Office Refrigerator, Havana, 1999. Gelatin silver print, 10 in. x 8 in. Edition 2/15.

Aspiring Ballet Dancers, Havana, 1999. Chromogenic print, 10 in. x 8 in. Edition 1/15.

Garden Sculpture, Havana, 1999. Chromogenic Print, 20 in. x 24 in. Edition 1/15.

Entrance to Former Mansion, Havana, 1999. Chromogenic print, 20 in. x 24 in. Edition 1/15.

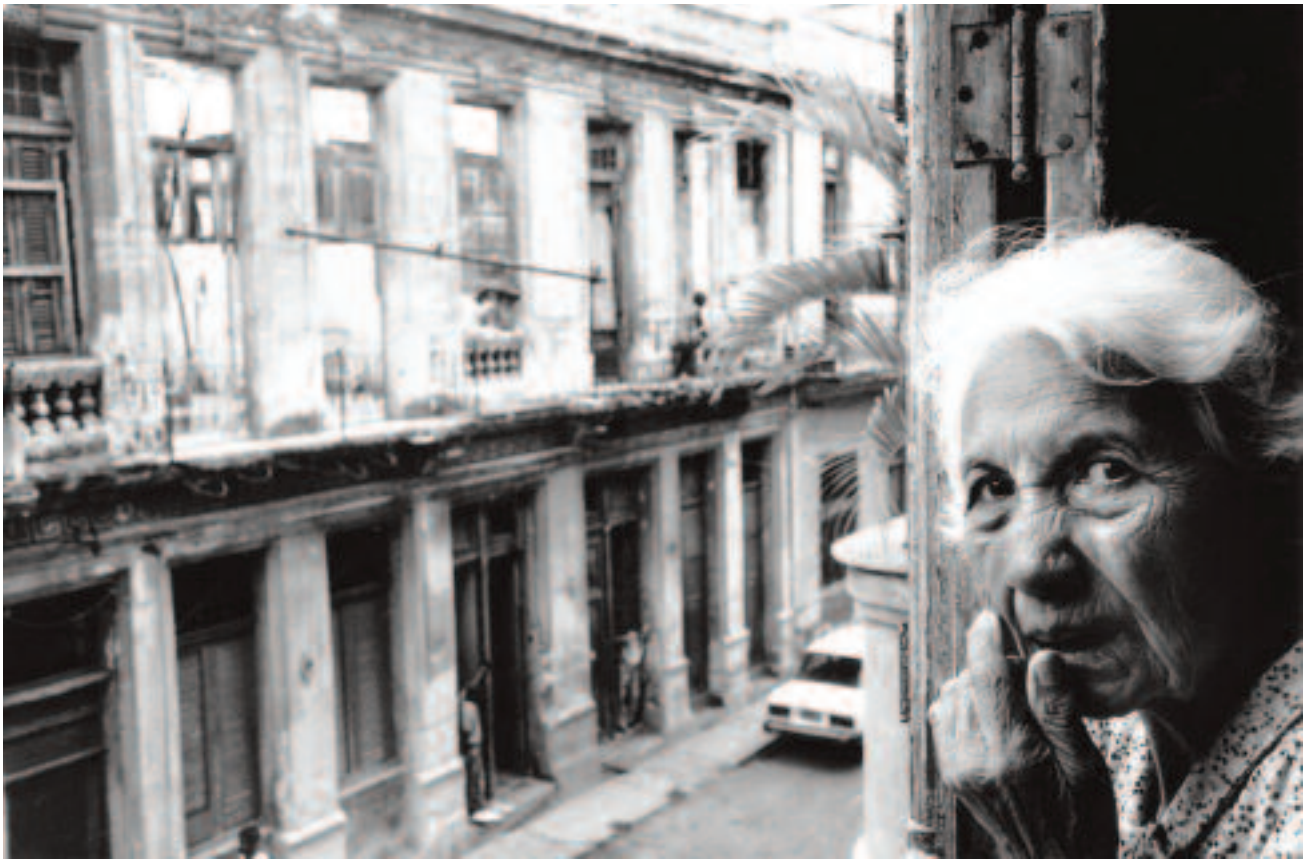


Still Inhabited Building, El Vedado, Havana, 2001. Chromogenic print, 10 in. x 8 in. Edition 1/15.

Painted House, Havana, 1999. Chromogenic print, 8 in. x 10 in. Edition 1/15.

Two Doors, Havana, 1999. Chromogenic print, 8 in. x 10 in. Edition 1/15.

Reflection of Capitolio, Havana, 1998. Gelatin silver print, 8 in. x 10 in. Edition 1/15.



Woman at her Window, Havana, 1999. Gelatin silver print, 8 in. x 10 in. Edition 1/15.

Rooftop Pig Dwelling, Havana, 2001. Gelatin silver print, 16 in. x 20 in. Edition 1/15.

Home Restoration, El Vedado, Havana, 1999. Gelatin silver print, 16 in. x 20 in. Edition 1/15.

Man Fixing Car on Calle Neptuno, Havana, 1998. Gelatin silver print, 8 in. x 10 in. Edition 2/15.

Apartment House with Peeling Paint, Malecón, Havana, 1999. Chromogenic print, 16 in. x 20 in. Edition 3/15.

Family on Bicycle, Centro Habana, 1999. 16 in. x 20 in. Chromogenic print, Edition 3/15.

Column, Paseo, El Vedado, 1999. Chromogenic print, 20 in. x 16 in. Edition 2/15.

Demolition, Padre Varela, Havana, 2001. Chromogenic print, 20 in. x 16 in. Edition 3/15.

Entrance with Stagecoach, Havana, 1999. Chromogenic print, 10 in. x 8 in. Edition 1/15.

Madrina in a Trance, Santería Ritual, Havana, 2001. Gelatin silver print, 10 in. x 8 in. Edition 1/15.

Altar with Madrina and Godson, Santería Ritual, Havana, 2001. Gelatin silver print, 16 in. x 20 in. Edition 3/15.

Woman in her Garden, Havana, 1999. Gelatin silver print, 8 in. x 10 in. Edition 2/15.

Woman and Child on Bus, Centro Habana, 1998. Gelatin silver print, 16 in. x 20 in. Edition 1/15.

Schoolboy with Broken Arm, Havana, 1996. Gelatin silver print, 16 in. x 20 in. Edition 2/15.

Interior with Alabaster Column, Havana, 1999. Chromogenic print, 20 in. x 16 in. Edition 1/15.

Two Boys Play-Fighting on Porch, Havana, 1999. Chromogenic print, 8 in. x 10 in. Edition 1/15.

Apartment Houses and Bicycle Taxi on Malecón, Havana, 1999. Chromogenic print, 16 in. x 20 in. Edition 3/15.

Construction Worker on the Malecón, Havana, 1999. Chromogenic print, 20 in. x 16 in. Edition 1/15.

Vincenzo Pietropaolo

SOCIAL DOCUMENTARY PHOTOGRAPHER

"I photograph the human condition. Photography is a way of life for me, like an innate language. It is the unceasing search for those ordinary moments that resonate with the timelessness of lives lived, a simple gesture or momentary glance perhaps, all those little miracles of daily life that move us to a deeper appreciation of human existence as individuals, and propel us forward collectively toward the realization of greater social goals."

Vincenzo Pietropaolo is a social documentary photographer who has travelled extensively to document various cultures, cities, people and their way of life. His passion for social justice and human rights is a common thread in his work, ranging from Mexico, Cuba, Italian immigration to Canada and seasonal migrant farm workers to Canada. The preservation of the natural environment is another theme seen in his series on trees in both Italy and Canada.

Vincenzo Pietropaolo was born in 1951, in Maierato, Italy, and immigrated as a young boy with his family to Toronto, Canada. He holds a Master of Fine Arts degree from Ryerson University, Toronto.

He has distinguished himself as a photographic book maker, mixing photographs with his own original writing. His works and documentary photographs have been the subject of over 12 books and featured in art magazines like *Border Crossings*, as well as receiving critical acclaim in periodicals like the *Globe and Mail*, *Toronto Star*, and *Canadian Geographic* has called him "one of Canada's pre-eminent documentary photographers." Recognizing his empathetic approach and social commitment, *Geist Magazine* wrote that his work "is a brilliant example of photography at its most 'communicative': for Pietropaolo, the camera is a tool for touching the world."

He has produced extensive photo essays on workers across Canada, seasonal migrant farm workers from Mexico and the Caribbean, cities in Italy, religious ritual, architecture, historical preservation, and a variety of social justice issues such as refugees, disadvantaged youth, people with disabilities and the elderly.

He is particularly interested in cities, and has spent considerable time documenting street life and architecture in Toronto, New York City, Havana, Mexico City, and several cities in Italy. His photographs of Toronto were selected to illustrate a landmark exhibition of Jane Jacobs's seminal book *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, held at the Faculty of Architecture, University of Toronto.

Pietropaolo has taught part time at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, York University, and Seneca College (Toronto), and has also been invited to give lectures and workshops in many schools, universities and institutions – in Canada, Italy, Mexico and the United States. He is a member of the Documentary Media Research Centre at Ryerson University, and writes regularly on photography for *POV Magazine*. He recently lectured on Toronto as the annual Leo Srole speaker at Hobart and William Smith Colleges in Geneva, N.Y.

TYPES OF PHOTOGRAPHIC PRINTS PRODUCED BY PIETROPAOLO:

The black and white prints – gelatin silver prints – are individually produced from negatives, by Pietropaolo himself, on Agfa photographic fibre paper processed archivally. Agfa paper has not been manufactured for a few years now, making these prints a rare commodity. An acknowledged master printer, Pietropaolo has made his own gelatin silver prints throughout his career, and his prints are known for their luminous quality. Today he is one of the few active photographers who will not give up his traditional darkroom.

The colour or chromogenic prints produced by Pietropaolo are made under Vincenzo's supervision, on photographic paper manufactured by Kodak and Fuji. The papers are no longer manufactured, making these prints equally rare to the black and white prints.

Vincenzo now works with digital cameras, and the prints from his current work – archival pigment prints – are made from his original digital captures using archival inks and papers. Future prints from his early analog work will be made mostly as archival pigment prints from scanned negatives or slides.

Pietropaolo has exhibited internationally including in New York City, Mexico City, Havana, Rome, Amsterdam, and Zurich. His work has been featured in over 100 solo and group exhibitions in North America, Latin America, and Europe.

Pietropaolo's works are in many private collections and leading Canadian institutions, including the National Gallery of Canada, the Art Gallery of Ontario, Library and Archives Canada, University of Toronto Art Centre, and the City of Toronto Archives. Many of his works are currently featured in exhibitions at the Canadian Museum for Human Rights. His most recent solo exhibition was at the Ryerson University Artspace, in June 2015, and his most recent group exhibition opened at Museum London in December 2015.

SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2015 *Ritual*, Ryerson University Artspace, Toronto, ON.
2012 *From the Land of Olives to the Land of Maples*, part of the Tree Project, McMichael Canadian Collection, Kleinburg, ON.
2011 *In Retrospective*, De Luca Fine Arts, Toronto, ON.
2011 *Invisible No More, Nuit Blanche, Abilities Festival*, Carlton Cinema, Toronto, ON.
2010 *Peregrinos de la Cosecha*, Museo de las Migraciones, Zacatecas, Mexico.
2009 *Harvest Pilgrims*, Workers Arts and Heritage Centre, Hamilton, ON.
2009 *Peregrinos de la Cosecha*, El Atrio, Embassy of Canada, Mexico City.
2008 *En misa y en procesión* (Religion in Cuba), Galeria Espacio Abierto, Havana, Cuba.
2007 *Not Paved with Gold.* Italian-American Museum, New York, USA.
2006 *Not Paved with Gold*. Fototeca de Cuba, Havana, Cuba.
2005 *Essential Work: Mexican Farm Workers in Canada*. Art Gallery of Windsor, ON.
2003 *Latin Traces/Huellas Latinas: photographs of Cuba and Mexico*. Ryerson University Gallery, Toronto, ON.
2003 *Vincenzo Pietropaolo: A 30-year Retrospective,* Stephen Bulger Gallery, Toronto, ON.
2000-02 *Growing Cultures*, Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto, ON.
1999 *The Streets Were Not Paved With Gold*, Pier 21, Halifax, NS
1998 *New York/Toronto*, David Mirvish Books on Art, Toronto, ON.
1996 *Harvest Pilgrims*, curated by Canadian Museum of Contemporary Photography. Opened at El Atrio, Embassy of Canada, Mexico. Later traveled through ten locations across the Caribbean, the United States, and Canada.
1995 *Safe Haven*, Heritage Gallery, Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto, ON.
1994 *Peregrinos de Cosecha*. Fotoseptiembre, Morelia, Mexico.
1993 *Harvest Pilgrims*. Photo Passage, Harbourfront, Toronto, ON.
1991 *The Death and Life of Great American Cities.* (Based on Jane Jacob's seminal work.) Faculty of Architecture, University of Toronto, Toronto, ON.
1987 *Ritual*. Photographers Gallery, Saskatoon, SK.
1986 *Italiani* in Canada. Touring exhibition opened at Sasso di Castalda (PZ), Italy.
1985 *Primers and Kiln Hangers*. Photo Union Gallery, Hamilton, ON.
1984 *The Italian-Canadians*. Canadian Academic Centre, Rome, Italy.1974.
1974 *I Paesani: Faces of Italy in Toronto*. St. Lawrence Centre, Toronto, ON.
1971 Toronto Public Library, five month traveling exhibition in five locations, Toronto, ON.

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2015 *The Daily Grind*, December 19, 2015 to April 24, 2016. Museum London, London, ON.
2011 *State of the Arts*, Venice Biennale - Italian Overseas Pavilion, Italian Cultural Institute, Toronto, ON.
2010 *Migrante*, Università di Roma Tre, Rome, Italy.
2006 *A Collected View*, City of Toronto Archives Centre, Toronto, ON.
2005 *Viajeros: North American Photographers' Images of Cuba*, Zoellner Arts Centre, Bethlehem, PA, USA.
2005 *Paradiese auf Erden*, Credit Suisse Bonviva, Zurich, Switzerland.
2003 *Documents and Dreams*, Narrative 360, Vancouver, BC.
2003 *Havana Returns*, You Me Gallery, Hamilton, ON.
2003 *Growing Cultures*, Birmingham Civil Rights Institute, Birmingham, AL.
2003 *Cuba Now: Glimpses of Daily Life*, Photo West Gallery, Philadelphia, PA.
2003 *Presenza*, Canadian Museum of Civilization, Ottawa, ON.
2003 *Toronto Photo Grid*, York Quay Gallery, Harbourfront Centre, Toronto, ON.
2003 *Canadian Photographers in Cuba*, Toronto City Hall, Toronto, ON.
2002 *Making Home in Havana*, Leica Gallery, New York City, USA
2001 *Fotografía Canadiense*, Fototeca de Cuba, Havana, Cuba.
1999 *La Vita Nuova*, Ontario Workers' Arts and Heritage Centre, Hamilton, ON.
1998 *Spirit of Resistance*, Mayworks Festival, Toronto, ON.
1998 *Trois Perspectives du Mexique*, Galerie Mistral, Montreal, QC.
1997 *Who Grows Our Food*, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, ON.
1995 *Five Photographers*, Steven Bulger Gallery, Toronto, ON.
1994 *Peregrinos de Cosecha y El Tiempo de Nuestra Vida*, Morelia, Mexico.
1993 *The Magic Assembling*, City of Toronto Archives, Toronto, ON.
1991 *Imaging Labour,* Ministry of Culture and Communications, Toronto, ON.
1988-90 *Fotografia Canadiense Contemporanea*, Touring exhibition through Mexico.
1988-90 *Italy Outside of Italy, Touring exhibition*, Rome and Italy.
1988 *The Month of Photography*, Merida, Mexico.
1985 *The Art Bank at Work*, Winnipeg Art Gallery, Winnipeg, MN.
1986 *Toronto in Focus*, De Meervart, Amsterdam, Netherlands.
1983 *The Portrait*, Espace Ovo, Montréal, QC.
1982 *Humor in Photography*, New York University, New York City, USA.
1981 *Sights of History*, National Film Board traveling exhibition across Canada.
1974 *Bittersweet: Women in Ontario, 1900-1975*, Traveling exhibition, Ontario.
1973 *Two Documentations*, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, Toronto, ON.

COLLECTIONS

Vincenzo Pietropaolo's works are included in many public and private collections:

Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, ON
Art Gallery of Windsor, Windsor, ON
Canada Council Art Bank, Ottawa, ON
The Canadian Museum of History, Gatineau, QC
National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, ON
University of Toronto Art Centre, Toronto, ON
The Robert McLaughlin Gallery, Oshawa, ON
Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan, Regina, SK
City of Toronto Archives, Toronto, ON
Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa, ON
The Howard and Carole Tanenbaum Family Charitable Foundation
Centre for Health and Safety Innovation
Unifor Family Education Centre, Port Elgin, ON
Goodman and Goodman
Ursel Phillips Fellows Hopkinson LLP
Industrial Accident Prevention Association
Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety
Institute for Work and Health, Toronto, ON
Janusz Dukszta Collection
Kensington Gardens
Labatt's
National Labor College, Washington, D.C.
Ontario Ministry of Labour, Toronto, ON
Skyworks Charitable Foundation
Workers Health and Safety Centre
Fototeca de Cuba, Havana, Cuba
Canadian Museum for Human Rights, Winnipeg, MN
Peter Paul Charitable Foundation

Right: *Couple in their Living Room, Havana,* 2001. Gelatin silver print, 10 in. x 8 in. Edition 1/15.

Back cover: *Woman Waving Goodbye, Havana,* 2001. Chromogenic print, 20 in. x 16 in. Edition 1/15.

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