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REAL UPM PROJECTS

4

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Havana Project

RECONSTRUCTION AND REMODELLING OF OLD HAVANA BUILDINGS

FINAL-YEAR PROJECT

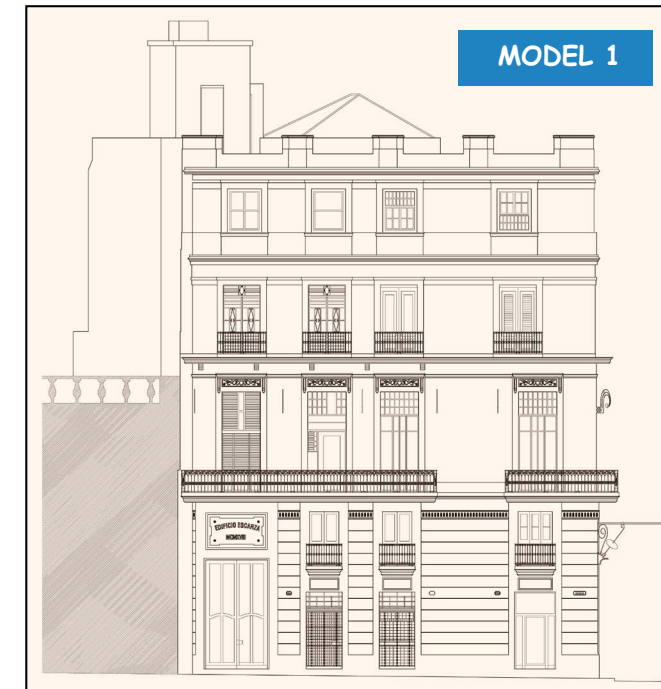
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ON 23 APRIL 2012 I LEFT MADRID FOR HAVANA IN THE COMPANY OF EIGHT STUDENTS FROM THE UPM'S UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF ARCHITECTURAL TECHNOLOGY. THE STUDENTS' FINAL-YEAR PROJECT WAS TO REMODEL TWO BUILDINGS, 204 OBRAPÍA STREET AND 214 SAN IGNACIO STREET, RIGHT IN THE CENTRE OF OLD HAVANA, DECLARED A UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE SITE IN 1982. WE WERE RECEIVED IN THE CUBAN CAPITAL BY RICARDO MACHADO JARDO, A LECTURER AT THE SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE, CUJAE (JOSÉ ANTONIO ECHEVARRIA POLYTECHNIC), AND MEMBER OF HAVANA CITY HISTORIAN'S OFFICE. THE EIGHT STUDENTS (ANA, MARÍA, CARLOS PASCUAL, RUBÉN, CARLOS ORIHUEL, MERCEDES, ADRIÁN AND JAVIER) WERE DIVIDED INTO TWO GROUPS AND TASKED WITH MEASURING AND PHOTOGRAPHING THE BUILDINGS IN ORDER TO DRAW UP BUILDING PLANS, CRACK AND DAMP SURVEYS, ETC.



ANA, RUBÉN, CARLOS PASCUAL AND MARÍA WERE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE OBRAPÍA STREET BUILDING, WHICH, IN VIEW OF ITS PROXIMITY TO SAN GERÓNIMO DE LA HABANA UNIVERSITY COLLEGE, LOCATED ONLY A BLOCK AWAY ON OBISPO STREET, THEY WERE TO CONVERT INTO A HALL OF RESIDENCE FOR STUDENTS.

THE STUDENTS SHOWED ME THE FRONT VIEWS OF THE OBRAPÍA STREET BUILDING BEFORE AND AFTER THE REMODELLING PROJECT. MODEL 1 IS THE FRONT VIEW OF THE BUILDING BEFORE REHABILITATION, AND MODEL 2 IS THE FRONT VIEW OF THE SAME BUILDING AFTER RENOVATION.



WHILE THEY WERE TAKING NOTES ON THE STATE OF THE BUILDINGS, THEY REALIZED THAT NOT A BIT OF SPACE WAS WASTED, AND THEY OFTEN CAME ACROSS LIVING QUARTERS TO WHICH A MEZZANINE (SECOND FLOOR) HAD BEEN ADDED TO DOUBLE THE LIVING SPACE. IN HAVANA THESE MEZZANINES ARE CALLED **BARBACOAS**, AS THEY ARE BUILT WITH ALL SORTS OF MATERIALS, RANGING FROM WOOD AND BOARD TO CONCRETE AND METAL STRUCTURES.

THE STREETS WERE NARROW AND THE BUILDINGS TALL, MAKING IT REALLY HARD TO PHOTOGRAPH THE FAÇADES FROM STREET LEVEL: THE ANGLES WERE WRONG AND THEY COULD NOT CAPTURE ALL THE DETAILS.

THE STUDENTS DECIDED THAT THE BEST THING WOULD BE TO TRY TO GAIN ACCESS TO THE SURROUNDING BUILDINGS AND SEE IF THEY COULD GET BETTER SHOTS FROM THE ROOFTOPS.





BUT IT WAS NOT ALL HARD SLOG. WE ALSO HAD TIME TO LOOK AROUND HAVANA. DR. RICARDO MACHADO JARDO TOOK US ON A TOUR OF THE CITY, RECOUNTING ITS HISTORY, EVOLUTION AND CURRENT STATUS.

FINALLY, WE TOOK A TRIP TO THE CITY OF TRINIDAD, LOCATED TO THE SOUTH OF THE PROVINCE OF SANCTI SPIRITUS, WHERE CUJAE LECTURERS INTRODUCED THE STUDENTS TO EXAMPLES OF CUBAN ARCHITECTURE WHICH HAD BEEN REHABILITATED ALONG THE LINES OF WHAT THEY HAD IN MIND FOR OLD HAVANA. THE VILLA DE LA SANTÍSIMA TRINIDAD WAS THE THIRD CUBAN TOWN FOUNDED BY THE SPANISH CROWN, IN THIS CASE BY THE PIONEER DIEGO VELÁZQUEZ DE CUÉLLAR IN EARLY 1514. THE TOWN SOON FLOURISHED AND BECAME ONE OF THE MOST PROSPEROUS SETTLEMENTS ON THE ISLAND.



THIS TRIP ILLUSTRATES HOW UPM STUDENTS GET A CHANCE TO DEVELOP THEIR FINAL-YEAR PROJECTS IN PLACES THAT HAVE REAL NEED OF THEIR ASSISTANCE.

