

National Schools of Art: A Flow Often Disrupted in Cuba

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The Escuelas Nacionales de Arte (National Schools of Art) of Cuba, located in Cubanacán, formerly the upscale residential subdivision of Havana Country Club and currently within the municipality of Playa in La Habana, were designed by the architects Ricardo Porro from Cuba, and Vittorio Garatti and Roberto Gottardi, who lived in Cuba at the time, from Italy. The group of five schools, programmed for higher education in the plastic arts, modern dance, ballet, music, and dramatic arts, was originally meant to attract students from Cuba as well as Asia, Africa, and Ibero-America. The complex was incompletely constructed between 1961 and 1965. Subsequently, the schools suffered from abandon, neglect, and inappropriate interventions until partially restored in 2008 and 2009. In spite of all, the schools of art have become an icon of local modernism in Cuba.

Founded by Fidel Castro after playing a round of golf with Ernesto Guevara at the Country Club, the schools were intended to characterize the utopian aspirations

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of the Cuban socialist revolution. Perhaps more importantly, they also represent a significant moment of autochthonous, local modernism in the development of Cuban and Ibero-American architecture. But by 1965, work had stopped due to the insistence by the Ministerio de la Construcción (Ministry of Construction) on the externally imposed, standardized functionalism in construction dictated by the Soviet Union. In 1959, Castro had said “Se acabaron las obras de lujo...ahora tenemos que construir para el pueblo.”¹ (Luxury works are finished...now we have to build for the people). But paradoxically, after being asked to design “las mejores escuelas de arte...del mundo”² (the best schools of art...in the world), the architecture was criticized, as bourgeois, expensive, and unproductive.³

The construction of the schools was directly affected by the United States commercial, economic, and financial embargo against Cuba. The embargo was imposed in response to the nationalization by the socialist government of property owned by United States citizens and corporations in Cuba. Partly implemented in October of 1960, it became a virtually total embargo in February of 1962. As a result, materials, such as steel and cement to make concrete, were not readily available for the construction of the schools. But the limitations actually served as a powerful catalyst for an intrinsically local expression. With clay locally plentiful,⁴ the architects specified clay brick for the walls and terra-cotta tile for the floors, domes, and barrel vaults, as naturally and culturally unifying materials for the schools. But the architects not only specified the artisanal material, but also implemented a vernacular craft.

For the erection of domes and vaults, the architects revived the construction technique of the *bóveda catalana* or Catalan vault,⁵ reminiscent of the forms of the *barroco cubano* in La Habana,⁶ but forgotten with the advent of reinforced concrete. In the late nineteenth century and early twentieth centuries, this vault had been mastered formally by the Catalan Antoni Gaudí (1852–1926), and structurally by the Valencian Rafael Guastavino Moreno (1842–1908), who successfully introduced it in the United States.⁷

Although the work of Gaudí and Guastavino, and the interest that Le Corbusier (1887–1965) and Josep Lluís Sert (1902–1983) had in the vaults were well known to the architects of the schools, it was the Catalan master mason Gumersindo, whose last name has been forgotten and who had come to La Habana for the eventually unrealized restoration of a convent, that directly influenced their use of the vaulting technique at the schools.⁸ For the construction of the schools, the master mason trained some eighty *albañiles* or construction workers from the Ministerio de Construcción on the technique of the *bóveda catalana* that his father, who had worked with Gaudí, taught him to erect.

However, the use of the Catalan vaults was affected by haste in the construction and inexperience with the structure, which limited their full potential as very expressive, but rather thin, simultaneously architectural and structural shells, requiring no interior or exterior cover. Only in the school of dramatic arts were relatively thin vaults traditionally used, but over limited spans, under 6 meters (about 20 feet). The rather spacious, but thicker than typical, vaults in the schools of plastic arts, modern dance, and ballet were redundantly strengthened with reinforced concrete tie and rib beams, among which the Catalan vaults span. In these schools, concrete columns were also clad with brick.⁹

But, in a larger context, the schools of art represent a pivotal point for a flow of ideas often disrupted—positively and negatively—in Cuba. Originally, their now

iconic designs instituted a paradigmatic break with the European influence of the International Style, which had previously offered another rupture—one from Spanish influences. At its zenith in Cuba from 1933 to 1959, the globalizing modernist expression paradoxically provoked a heightened sense of national identity during the architectural period that has been labeled “constitutional modernism.”¹⁰ As exemplified by the work of Max Borges Recio, Manuel Gutiérrez, Frank Martínez, Mario Romañach, and Nicolás Quintana, among others, the architecture of constitutional modernism had acclimated to a large degree the dogmatic modernism of the Congrès Internationaux d’Architecture Moderne to the natural and cultural landscape of the archipelago.

The schools were part of a “resistance movement,”¹¹ a fluent but uneven “tradition” where “the past should be altered by the present as much as the present is directed by the past.”¹² Architecturally, they characterized an effort toward a more critical regionalism, an architecture of resistance¹³ that was uniquely Cuban and more broadly Antillean, that is, at once American, European, and African. In this sense, the schools were precursors of contextualist postmodernism, without historicism, but in a “historical sense...not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence.”¹⁴ Thus, literally and figuratively, the schools are emblematic of “the uncompleted project” in “the other tradition of modern architecture.”¹⁵

The spirit of resistance at the time is still echoed by one of the original architects, vividly in the present tense: “Se cuestiona todo. Todas las cosas habidas, consagradas por años se cuestionan y si se consideran que están equivocadas, se cambian”¹⁶ (Everything is questioned. All things that have been, that have been established for years are questioned. And if it is considered that they are mistaken, they are changed). This regionally contextualizing development was arrested by the globalizing influence of the Soviet Union. Then after years of neglect, it was the insistence of the international and Cuban community of architects that highlighted their significance and prompted the restoration of two of the schools.

Publication of *Revolution of Forms* by John Loomis in 1999 drew global attention to their architecture.¹⁷ In 2002, Loomis and Marissa Oliver co-chaired the international meeting of the Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture, entitled *Architecture, Culture, and the Challenges of Globalization*, in Havana, where the World Monuments Fund directed a session dedicated to the schools.¹⁸ As a result of the book and the conference, the schools were included in the Watch List of the World Monuments Fund in 2000 and 2002, and in the Tentative Lists of the World Heritage Sites of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 2003.

The schools were declared a protected area initially and a national monument in 2010 by the Consejo Nacional de Patrimonio Cultural (National Council of Cultural Heritage) of the Ministerio de Cultura (Ministry of Culture).¹⁹ One architectural critic considers the schools the “highest accomplishment of modern architecture in Cuba,” but their incompleteness is regarded as the missed opportunity “that might have opened up a whole new dimension in Cuban architecture.”²⁰ Only the schools of plastic arts and modern dance were completed, while the finished and unfinished buildings stood in the state of abandon for approximately a decade. Then, from 2007 to 2009, the restoration and rehabilitation of the completed schools was undertaken under the auspices of the Ministerio de Cultura and certain direction by the original architects. But soon again funding ceased.

Porro served as coordinating architect for the complex of schools and as design architect for two of the schools that were sited on higher ground. The team agreed on three concepts for the schools: integration with the landscape, expression in free form, and use of clay as building material and of the *bóveda catalana* as construction technique.²¹ He designed the Escuela Nacional de Danza Moderna (National School of Modern Dance). Its form is underscored by the contrast of rotundity in the profile of its domes and barrel vaults, and of angularity on plan, especially in the patio with pronouncedly acute and obtuse corners, in reference to the feelings of anxiety and tension at the time (Figure 1).

He also designed the Escuela Nacional de Artes Plásticas (National School of Plastic Arts). Its form is marked by sinuosity and sensuality, even eroticism, in the plan and section of the patio, galleries, and art studios, although it is also contrasted with the rectilinearity, in this case, of the offices, lecture halls, and engraving studios. The design is inspired, not by European influences, but by an African village and the African goddess of fertility, Òsun. Abstractly represented



Figure 1. Ricardo Porro, Escuela Nacional de Danza Moderna, Cubanacán, 1961–1965 (Image by author).

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are the female breast in the domes and the female sex in the courtyard sculpture by Porro, which is clad in the *trencadís* technique of tile fragments. The access to the school avoids monumentality with multiple entrances reminiscent of the *zaguán* or entrance hall that is very common in the traditional Cuban house (Figure 2).

Garatti designed the Escuela Nacional de Ballet (National School of Ballet) and Escuela Nacional de Música (National School of Music). Sited by the river Quibú, the almost finished (except for fenestration and wood flooring) school of ballet is marked by its sinuous and cavernous undulations on plan and profile. It also incorporates domes and barrel vaults, accessible on foot, but the high domes over the stages are each punctured by an oculus that dramatically illuminates the interior, while reaching out to the landscape in a perfect adaptation to the terrain. The arched fenestration under the vaults, was inspired by the wooden fanlights typical of the traditional houses of Trinidad on the southern coast of Cuba, reinterpreted in a modern vocabulary (Figure 3).

Figure 2. Ricardo Porro, Escuela Nacional de Artes Plásticas, Cubanacán, 1961–1965 (Image by author).



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Even more organically embedded by the river, the only constructed portion of the music school winds through the landscape with its circulation gallery flanked by offices, classrooms, and practice rooms. This linear element contrasts with the unfinished cluster of offices, symphonic theater, and chamber and operatic theater surrounding a patio. Both of these schools are in need of dire need of stabilization, restoration, and rehabilitation (Figure 4).

Gottardi designed the Escuela Nacional de Artes Dramáticas (National School of Dramatic Arts). The functionalist design envisioned three clusters of compact buildings, a large one and two smaller ones on the sides that defined a landscape theater sloping down to the river, with the vegetation of the riparian corridor serving as *scaenae frons*. Only portions of the larger cluster, including a small, open-air architectural theater, were constructed, with tightly enclosed spaces reminiscent of plazas and streets (Figure 5).

Figure 3. Vittorio Garatti, Escuela Nacional de Ballet, Cubanacán, 1961–1965 (Image by author).

The schools of art were not only aesthetically unique and appealing, but also most significant and meaningful within Cuban architecture. Their cultural



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context, underscored by a certain euphoria of great intellectual and political complexity, was also characterized by hope and uncertainty, dreams and expectations, anguish and new ideas. The striking beauty and artistic values of their architecture, which remind us that “a thing of beauty is a joy forever,”²² have served as a stage for profound poetic inspiration and interpretation to numerous architects. Even today, they are still an obligatory pilgrimage for students of architecture, architects, and visitors from all over the world.

There was neither a competition undertaken nor qualifications requested for the design commission of the schools of art. The selection of the site and lead architect was made exclusively by Castro, as head of the newly empowered revolutionary government, in an early attempt to reach out to the Third World with the offer of a free arts education.²³ This approach will define the official process for all construction projects in Cuba for the next fifty years, including the incompleteness of the early main, but ill-fated, projects, such as the Unidad Vecinal (1961), a housing project in La Habana del Este, and Ciudad Universitaria José Antonio Echeverría (1964), a new campus for technological careers in La Habana del Sur. Apparently, Porro was recommended to Castro by Selma Díaz, who brought the news of the design commission, uninvited and unannounced, to the lead architect.²⁴ Driven by the new political context in Cuba, Porro then teamed up with Garatti and Gottardi, whom he had met during his political exile in Venezuela.

The former club house became the office where a large number of architectural students served as draftsmen and draftswomen, and volunteered long hours to contribute to the project in an ambiance described as one of great creativity and hope, joy and shared experiences, as the designs of the project were developed in parallel with the construction of the buildings. From a certain perspective,

Figure 4. Vittorio Garatti, Escuela Nacional de Música, Cubanacán, 1961–1965 (Image by author).



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Figure 5. Roberto Gottardi, Escuela Nacional de Artes Dramáticas, Cubanacán, 1961–1965 (Image by author).

naïveté seemed to ignite the general enthusiasm of all the participants: they were all immersed in something that was very new and romantic, yet socially and culturally meaningful.

The impact of the extraordinary schools was unprecedented in modern Cuba, especially since their aesthetic ambiguity, in particular that of the schools designed by Porro, anticipated the contextualist ideas of postmodernism in architecture. They represent the climax of the quest for cultural identity that was started long before by the aforementioned group of local architects, as well as the most iconic and genuine group of modern buildings ever done in Cuba. Their true significance lies in the synthesis achieved between tradition and the avant-garde, the multiple readings and interpretations that stem from their own powerful images, and the integration of their architecture with the landscape.

Considered an architectural masterpiece as a whole, individually the five schools are each a work of art. And despite the individual approach of each author and the distinct tectonics of each building, the schools collectively captured the essence of both Cuban culture and architectural practice across the centuries. The outcome reflects the way the architects resolved the program in concert with the tectonic technique to achieve a high level of parallel quality in aesthetics and construction.

As the site was exceptional due to the beauty of the landscape, the team of architects agreed to locate their buildings along the periphery of the golf course in a respectful gesture for preserving the wonderful scenery. The setting of the schools as pavilions in the landscape is reminiscent in many ways of the internationally influential Glass House (1949), designed by the architect Philip Johnson (1906–2005) in New Canaan, Connecticut. The five schools offer a sense of total openness that blurs the boundary between indoors and outdoors, establishing a dialogue with the surrounding landscape. Fountains are also incorporated in the courtyards, as a culturally meaningful element evocative of Islamic and *mudéjar* patios, including runnels of water at ground level and upon the roofs in the school of plastic arts by Porro and the school of ballet by Garatti.

The chromatic and tectonic unity and consistency of the schools is outstanding and praiseworthy. Even though the different personalities and backgrounds of the three architects left their own mark on each work, the ensemble of schools is distinctly unified. Due to the organic forms and the play of light and shadows, the schools also possess a sensual and yet mysterious appeal that makes them so compelling and intriguing.

The schools of art are radically modern, but at the same time they assimilate the significant features and characteristics of Cuban architecture through a very personal interpretation. Vaulted porches supported by columns, one of the trademarks of urban La Habana, coolly shelter pedestrians along street-like corridors and around plaza-like courtyards, where these elements become the articulators of the plan. The pillars that support the vaults not only anchor the buildings to the ground, but insufflate the vaults with the echo of their own musical rhythm.

As an architectural trend in the early 1960s, the free-flowing shapes and layout of the schools was a reaction against the rationalist orthodoxy of modernism and the exhausted Corbusian lexicon. But looking critically at the design of the schools, variegated influences can be appreciated, ranging from the vaults of Gaudí to even the forms of Le Corbusier. However, the influence of one of

the most talented architects of modern Cuba has been insufficiently acknowledged—that of Borges Recio (1918–2009), a graduate of the Georgia Institute of Technology and the Harvard University Graduate School of Design. He experimented with thin concrete vaults in the early 1950s, after a period of Bauhaus orthodoxy that included his own house (1948–1950). His designs for the soaring vaults of the Arcos de Cristal at the Cabaret Tropicana (1951) and Club Náutico (1953) seem to be undeniable precedents and sources of inspiration, though masterfully reinterpreted, for the schools of art by Porro and Garatti.

Since the incomplete construction of the schools, there has been much published in the architectural press, often turning to polemics. Recently, Carlos Acosta, Principal Guest Artist of The Royal Ballet of the United Kingdom, who was born and educated in Cuba, engaged the renowned British architect Norman Foster to assist the dancer with his vision for an arts center at the school of ballet. Controversy has arisen, since the original architects are still alive, Foster is professionally involved, and Acosta wants to programmatically and physically alter the school. In addition, the Ministerio de Cultura apparently lacks the financial capability to undertake the project.

Porro has been living in Paris, Garatti in Milan, and Gottardi in La Habana. But as architect of the school of ballet, Garatti feels that the commission for its completion, restoration, and possible rehabilitation should be his, since he has the rights of authorship and thus of approval or disapproval of any modifications to the original design. He also argues that the original designs should be respected as a collaborative effort of considerable merit—recognized as a national monument on the Watch List of the World Monuments Fund and as an architectural work currently under consideration by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site.²⁵

After meeting in London with Acosta in October of 2011, Garatti wrote an open letter of protest to Raúl Castro and Fidel Castro, dated 8 May 2012, requesting that he be given the opportunity to defend his design against the perceived isolation and privatization of the school of ballet. In his letter, the architect reminded them that the schools were originally conceived as an architectural totality in both program and expression. He further stated that the rehabilitation proposed by Acosta would destroy the original concept, especially the articulation of free and open spaces. Specifically, he mentioned that the changes advanced by Acosta for a more orthodox education would recast the open classrooms as dormitories; remodel the open, circular theater for experimentation as a stage for traditional ballet, a performance use that was originally programmed for the theater in the adjacent school of music; and add a movie theater between the schools of ballet and modern dance, an intrusion that would compromise the architectural unity of the group of schools.²⁶

In an open letter dated 5 July 2012, Acosta responded that his only interest was to leave a legacy that would foment a city of the arts in his native country. He claimed that the project would be self-funded and that the gratuitous involvement of Foster and Partners was limited to providing cost estimates and a model of the existing school for the purpose of fundraising. In addition, Acosta dismissed the unfinished classrooms as useless and the incomplete experimentation theater as pointless.²⁷

Subsequently, after receiving no answer from Foster to his letter dated 19 May 2012, Garatti wrote an open letter in the form of a petition on the Internet to the British architect on 13 November 2013. In this letter, Garatti demanded that the

ENDNOTES

1. Fidel Castro in his 1959 address to the Colegio de Arquitectos (College of Architects), quoted by Roberto Segre in *Unfinished Spaces: Cuba's Architecture of Revolution*, DVD, directed and produced by Alysa Nahmias and Ben Murray, starring Ricardo Porro, Vittorio Garatti, and Roberto Gottardi (Unfinished Spaces, 2011; Arlington, VA: Public Broadcasting Service, 2013).
2. Fidel Castro quoted by architect Selma Díaz, who brought his commission offer to Ricardo Porro and who was the wife of the head of the Ministerio de Construcción, the architect Osmany Cienfuegos, in *Unfinished Spaces*.
3. Architect and architectural historian Mario Coyula Cowley in *Unfinished Spaces*, referring to the boastful statement made by Fidel Castro in 1961 and to the negative criticism by architect and architectural historian Roberto Segre.
4. The fabrication stamp on loosened terra-cotta tiles lying scattered around the site of the school of music indicate the source as neighboring Calabazar de La Habana. However, there were other sources.

5. The constructs are called voltes de *maó de pla* or “flat tile vaults” in Catalan and *bóvedas tabicadas* or roughly “layered vaults” in Spanish. Typically, the *rasillas* or tiles measure 15 x 30 x 1.5 cm (about 6 x 12 x 5/8 inch), and the vault thickness is 7 cm (2-3/4 inches) for three layers and 10 cm (about 4 inches) for four layers of tile, with mortar beds approximately half to full tile thickness.
6. Refer to the Iglesia del Convento de San Francisco de Asís (1738), Iglesia de San Francisco de Paula (1745), Catedral de La Habana (1748–1777), and Iglesia del Convento de la Merced (1755, XIX century); Joaquín E. Weiss, “Siglo XVIII,” *La arquitectura colonial cubana: Siglos XVI al XIX* (La Habana: Editorial Letras Cubanas, [1972] 2002), 203, 243–244, 252–255, 257–258.
7. For example, visit the Church of Saint Francis de Sales in Philadelphia, Union Station in Pittsburgh, Boston Public Library, Rockefeller Chapel at the University of Chicago, Cathedral of Saint John the Divine in Manhattan, Basilica of Saint Lawrence in Asheville, among hundreds of buildings constructed with the vaulting tiles patented by Rafael Guastavino Moreno and his son Rafael.
8. María José Pizarro Juanas and Óscar Rueda Jiménez, “Una nueva expresividad de las bóvedas tabicadas: Las Escuelas Nacionales de Arte de La Habana,” *Arquitectura y Urbanismo* 34, no. 1 (April 2013): 73–86.
9. Pizarro Juanas and Rueda Jiménez, “Una nueva expresividad.”
10. Timothy Hyde, *Constitutional Modernism: Architecture and Civil Society in Cuba, 1933–1959* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2012), 299.
11. Colin Saint John Wilson, *The Other Tradition of Modern Architecture: The Uncompleted Project* (London: Black Dog, [1995] 2007).
12. T. S. Eliot, “Tradition and the Individual Talent,” *The Sacred Wood Egoist* 6 (New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf [1919] 1921), I, 4.
13. Kenneth Frampton, “Towards a Critical Regionalism: Six Points for an Architecture of Resistance,” *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture* (Port Townsend, WA: 1983), 16–30.
14. T. S. Eliot, “Tradition and the Individual Talent,” I, 3.
15. Wilson, *The Other Tradition of Modern Architecture*.
16. Roberto Gottardi speaking in *Unfinished Spaces*.
17. John A. Loomis, *Revolution of Forms: Cuba’s Forgotten Art Schools* (New York, NY: Princeton Architectural Press, [1999] 2011).
18. Architecture, Culture, and the Challenges of Globalization: Havana/La Habana, *Proceedings of the 2002 Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture*, Havana, Cuba, 21–24 June 2002 (Washington, DC: ACSA Press, 2004).
19. Comisión Nacional de Monumentos, Resolución número 3, 8 November 2010.
20. Eduardo Luis Rodríguez, *The Havana Guide: Modern Architecture, 1925–1965* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2000), xxxiii.
21. Ricardo Porro, “Écoles d’Art à la Havane,” *L’Architecture d’Aujourd’hui*, no. 119 (March 1965): 52–56.
22. John Keats, “Endymion,” *The Complete Poetical Works of John Keats* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, [1818] 1907).
23. Selma Díaz speaking in *Unfinished Spaces*.
24. Ricardo Porro and Selma Díaz speaking in *Unfinished Spaces*.

five-school campus be properly respected as an indivisible and inseparable whole based on a program of integration, interchange, and experimentation among the arts, and that the architectural responsibility for the restoration of the school of ballet be reassigned to him as original author.²⁸ Apparently, Foster has also not responded to the open letter. However, Foster purportedly offered to Acosta the professional services of his firm *pro bono publico* to assist him launch the fund raising campaign.²⁹

In an effort toward the completion of the school of ballet, the Ministerio de Cultura had signed an Acuerdo para el Intercambio y la Colaboración Cultural (Agreement for Cultural Interchange and Collaboration) with the Carlos Acosta International Dance Foundation, which is registered as a charity in the United Kingdom, in May of 2011.³⁰ The agreement was the basis for the establishment of the Centro de Arte as a multicultural and multifunctional center that is to be headed by the dancer Carlos Acosta.³¹ Consequently, the Ministerio de Cultura established the Centro de Arte under the aegis of the Consejo Nacional de las Artes Escénicas (National Council of the Performing Arts) with the provision for the free use of the school of ballet land and building.³²

Also, a coordination meeting among the minister of culture, a representative of the national commission on monuments, the president of the performing arts council, the vice-president of the Unión Nacional de Escritores y Artistas de Cuba (UNEAC) (National Union of Writers and Artists of Cuba), Garatti, Acosta, and the director of the project management firm ATRIO had been held at the Ministerio de Cultura on 15 December 2011. The minutes of the meeting stipulated that ATRIO be responsible for assembling the technical team for the reclamation of the school of ballet, and that the agreement between this firm as project manager and the performing arts council as investor be finalized during the earliest project phase.³³

During this meeting, it had been agreed to maintain constant communications with Garatti for information and consultation purposes. In addition, the minutes stated that the anticipated undertakings will respect the authorship rights of Garatti, because the work to be performed will respect the integrity of his work and because the country will be responsible for the care and preservation of its architectural heritage. But, most significantly, the role of Garatti as project architect had not been addressed.³⁴

To clarify the controversial situation, a meeting was held at the UNEAC on 14 July 2012, where the open letter from Acosta to Garatti was read.³⁵ At the meeting, architect Mario Coyula appropriately commented on the presumed, but unclarified, participation by Foster as an issue of ethics. But Coyula added that Garatti must also recognize that some changes are necessary after half a century.³⁶ Likewise, architect Eduardo Luis Rodríguez added summarily that the crux had ethical (rights of approval), legal (rights of authorship), and practical (alterations to the original design) difficulties.³⁷

However, the sometimes polemic debate has not emphasized the leveraging of local rather than global resources, except for the insistence by Garatti on participation, in order to celebrate and perpetuate the thrust of the “uncompleted project.”³⁸ The contemporary tendency toward globalization, exemplified by the opportunities and restrictions of international funding and programming afforded by Acosta and Foster that in turn are underscored by the legal obligations and financial limitations of the Ministerio de Cultura, threatens to radically

interrupt the critical development of a local modernism in Cuba. Against such disruption, the paradigmatic spirit can only be furthered by the original architects, together with a new generation of Cuban architects who are also knowledgeable about contemporary design practices. The original fabric of the locally weaved modernism needs to be recaptured, rather than be allowed to wither under global homogenization.

As architect and wife of Osmany Cienfuegos, brother of Camilo Cienfuegos, one of the three main revolutionary leaders, Díaz apparently relayed the message from Castro to Porro with certain authority.

25. Garatti: «Debería ser yo él que reconstruyera la Escuela de Ballet», *Diario de Cuba*, 9 September 2013. In this interview, Garatti refers to the contract between the Ministerio de Cultura and the enterprise ATRIO, dated 15 December 2011, that confirmed his rights of authorship and approval, although it did not commission him as architect. See note 26.
26. Open letter from Vittorio Garatti to Raúl Castro and Fidel Castro, Milano, 8 May 2012, <http://cubanuestra.wordpress.com/2012/07/01/carta-protesta-a-raul-y-fidel-castro-de...genera-polemica-electronica-involucran-a-fundadora-de-la-asociacion-sueco-cubana/>.
27. Open letter from Carlos Acosta to Vittorio Garatti, London, 5 July 2012, <http://cubanuestra.wordpress.com/2012/08/26/carlos-acosta-responde-a-la-carta-de-garatti/>.
28. Open a letter from Vittorio Garatti to Norman Foster, Milano, 13 November 2013, <http://www.change.org/it/petizioni/architect-sir-norman-foster-respect-the-authenticity-of-an-artwork>.
29. Acosta to Garatti.
30. Quoted in Universo García Lorenzo, “Acuse de recibo: Sobre el proyecto de Carlos Acosta y Norman Foster para la Escuela de Ballet,” *Penúltimos Días* 27 June 2012.
31. García Lorenzo, “Acuse de recibo.”
32. Ministerio de Cultura, Resolución Número 68, August 2011.
33. Quoted in García Lorenzo, “Acuse de recibo.”
34. Quoted in García Lorenzo, “Acuse de recibo.”
35. “Síntesis de la reunión en la UNEAC, en relación con las Escuelas de Arte de Cubanacán,” *La Jiribilla: Revista de Cultura Cubana* 18–24 August 2012. In attendance at this UNEAC meeting were minister of culture Rafael Bernal, vice ministers of culture Fernando Rojas and Julián González, director of the Consejo Nacional de Patrimonio Gladys Collazo, director of ATRIO Vilma Rodríguez Tápanes, president and vice president of UNEAC Miguel Barnet and José Villa, curator and art critic Luisa Marisy, urbanism researcher Lohania Aruca, and architects José Choy, Mario Coyula Cowley, Selma Díaz, José Fornés, Roberto Gottardi, Isabel Rigol, and Eduardo Luis Rodríguez. Also in attendance were Rómulo Fernández, Julia León, and Ángela Rojas.
36. Quoted in “Síntesis de la reunión en la UNEAC.” Also, see the Carlos Acosta International Dance Foundation website, which shows a model of the school and a rendering of the proposed ballet theater stage without any attribution (www.carlosacosta-foundation.org). In the meeting, Rafael Bernal mentioned that he has written documentation that Alicia Alonso, *prima ballerina assoluta* of the Ballet Nacional de Cuba, rejected the ballet stage and the rest of the school as unusable, before it was transformed into the Escuela de Circo (Circus School). But Garatti claimed in an interview (See “Garatti: «Debería ser yo»”) that Alonso never spoke ill of the school, and decided to operate from the urban center of La Habana due to the incompleteness of the school and the lack of public transportation service.
37. Wilson, *The Other Tradition of Modern Architecture*.
38. IBID.