

MICHAEL DWECK HABANA LIBRE

The Book. The Exhibition. The Other Side of the Story.



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American Photographer Michael Dweck's Allegorical Narrative of Seduction -The Secret Life of Cuba's Creative Class-

Almost immediately upon his arrival in Cuba for the first time, American photographer Michael Dweck was swept up in a cultural bohemia reminiscent of 1930's Paris salons. His unprecedented (and unrestricted) access to this hidden society of keenly observant artists, writers, film makers, musicians and glamorous models had never before been experienced by anyone in the West and is still not acknowledged within Cuba itself.

Dweck's personal exploration of this creative class existing in a classless society, a compelling aspect of Cuba's contradictory status in the world today, is the basis of his third published work **Michael Dweck: Habana Libre** (Damiani editore).

"**Habana Libre** is a story suggested, never told," he explained. "Its sub-text is an allegory of seduction, a 'forbidden island' that embodies a provocative mix of danger, charm, and authority; teeming with an intoxicating air of sensuality and a rhythmic, almost hypnotic undercurrent."

Michael Dweck's black and white photographs are exhilarating, sensual and provocative, with a sexy and hypnotic visual rhythm. Here too are interviews by William Westbrook which together provide a glimpse into the secret lives of one closely guarded group of friends - the underground intelligentsia who will define the country's post-Castro generation. Their every move is an elaborate dance of success and survival, a constant play of appearances, a tempting game of cat and mouse.

To gain entrée into this world is to be a member of several *farandulas*, small circles of friends intersecting like Olympic rings. Each ring an interest: music or fashion; cinema or art. Actual money is not always necessary for the above-average life. Social connection trumps politics, status, wealth and even race.

Dweck's subjects are an international, elegant, sophisticated and socially connected circle which includes Kelvis Ochoa, Musician; Rene Francisco, Painter; Yaday Ponce Toscano, Dancer; Rachel Valdez, Painter; Carlos Quintana, Painter; Leonardo Padura, Novelist; Francis de Rio, Musician. Also notable are the never before photographed or interviewed sons of Che Guevara and Fidel Castro, both photographers in their own right.

They are sensual and warm, romantically intertwined with one another, moving easily in a tightly controlled society. They have cars and passports, and travel easily in a country where ordinary people can only dream of it. They are fashionable, though there are few stores and no magazines. They exude a sense of joy and hope, while clichéd press images of crumbling buildings, peeling paint and a struggling, unhappy people held back from progress persist.

They are socialists who would be lost without capitalism to sell their creative wares in the world's markets. They are the pride and flesh of Cuba's culture. With brush and shutter and clay and chord they put their conscience on record. Their art is their vision of the country.

Michael Dweck: Habana Libre will be published by Damiani editore (Italy) and released in the U.S. in October, 2011 and internationally in November, 2011. A collector's limited edition box set of **Michael Dweck: Habana Libre**, along with an 8x10 print both signed by the artist is also available.

The **Michael Dweck: Habana Libre** exhibition opened in San Francisco at the Modernism Gallery on September 8th and will continue until October 29, 2011. In February 2012, it will be shown in the Fototeca de Cuba Museum in Havana. The exhibition will also travel to Tokyo, Paris, Miami (Art Basel) and New York. For more details visit Michael Dweck's blog habanalibrebook.com.

Artist's statement available upon request.

MICHAEL DWECK: HABANA LIBRE

Interviews by William Westbrook

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MICHAEL DWECK: HABANA LIBRE Limited Edition Box Set

Signed and numbered book in a stamped, custom made linen-covered clamshell box or Plexiglass slipcase, including a signed, numbered 8x10 silver gelatin print.

Retail: \$800.00

Publication date: October 1, 2011

Edition size: 100

Michael Dweck

The photographs of Michael Dweck were first exhibited at Sotheby's, New York in 2003, in the auction house's first solo exhibition for a living photographer. His first major photographic work, **The End: Montauk, N.Y.**, (2004) blended documentary and staged photography to produce a compelling portrait of a beach community that exists as much in the realm of memory and desire as in the real world. His acclaimed 2008 volume **Mermaids** explored the female nude refracted by still and roiling waters. His work has become part of important international art collections and has been shown in major solo gallery exhibitions around the world.

Michael Dweck currently lives in New York City and Montauk, N.Y.

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