



Michael Dweck: Artist statement

For me, photography is not so much about capturing the moment or a decisive fraction of a second, though all photographs record an instant in time, a brief floating facet of the visible world. My work is more about time and place and how we got there and where we are going next. The isolated fragment of light and shadow that is a photograph is powerful insofar as it is suggestive of what preceded and what is to follow as much as what is there to see. The suggestion of possibilities in store is what especially moves me. But photography is also promiscuous, it gets around, and it allows my work to enter into perhaps a flirtatious dialogue with the viewer. The allure of an image however can never be possessed; it is a constant sort of goad. My work is about seduction and its pleasures, the unfolding process of seduction, the course of events, as evoked in images, singly and in sequence, developing a theme. Cultivation and perhaps a bit of manipulation in the play of images is where the pleasure resides, sometimes in the withholding as much as the showing. First encounters and the wooing of a subject, at once tantalizing and vexing, is what motivates my work. In a way, seduction underlies everything, for the pursuit of an idea is always more interesting in art than the conquest. Mere conquest would easily, quickly descend into tawdriness or tourism or some other decadence.

Habana Libre is something of an island intrigue, playing on the theme of privilege in a classless society, beauty and art in one of the last communist capitals. It explores the charmed life in Cuba among the creative elite as embodied in a particular *farandula* or clique of well connected, accomplished, and comely friends. The elegance and intimacy of this creative social world and the identities of some of the players adds to the mischief, given that this is happening in Castro's Cuba. As interloper, I am pursuing a latent idea that develops as it goes along, subject to my own predilections and intuitions and what I find along the way. Allowed access to such a world inevitably affects one's perception of it, as in the difference of glimpsing something from without and the view from within. Just as in my other projects, I am exploring an allegory of an all too worldly paradise beset by threats from without and by new hierarchies from within, and the inescapable claims of the flesh. Just as the Chinese have made their curious pact between capitalism and communist ideology, Cuba must resolve the contradictions of its revolutionary rectitude and the powerful allure of tropical pleasures. In that tension, as in any autocratic society, there is also the poignant pleasure of a hint of danger, of power at play, and the threat of unforeseen consequences of breaking unwritten, unspoken rules. *Habana Libre* expresses my experience of Cuba emotionally, in the way it made me feel to be there and to be caught up in this exclusive world, but in this narrow, delectable slice of the Cuban experience, I can't help but see some forming outlines of Cuba's future.