

MILLS

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MILLS COLLEGE ART MUSEUM

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PRESS CONTACTS: Lori Chinn, Curatorial Coordinator, lchinn@mills.edu, 510.430.3340
Abby Lebbert, Publicity Assistant, alebbert@mills.edu, 510.430.2164



Central Park View / Vista del Parque Central

Cuba: Beauty and Decay

Photographs by Vivian M. Stephenson with texts
by Carlota Caulfield

Exhibition Dates: September 2–December 13, 2009

The Mills College Art Museum is pleased to present *Cuba: Beauty and Decay* featuring photographs by Vivian M. Stephenson and texts by Carlota Caulfield, on view from September 2 through December 13, 2009.

A Havana native and tireless traveler, Vivian Stephenson returned to Cuba in 1999 and 2002 after a long absence, writing, with her Nikon 80, a four hundred-year history of Cuba in pictures. In this exhibit Stephenson offers us a splendid series of photographs of the cities of Havana, Trinidad, and Sancti-Spiritus.

Founded early in the sixteenth century, among the first seven colonial towns ("villas") set up in Cuba by the Spanish, the architecture of these three cities is today not only a testament to centuries of history but is also part of our human heritage. What Stephenson has done in her photographs is precisely to document the most important architectural treasures of these three cities. Among her photos we can find forts, palaces, churches, plazas, civil buildings, and even a ruined sugar mill.

Viewing these photographs is like going back in time. As in Alejo Carpentier's short story, "Voyage to the Seed"—a tale told backwards, unexpected, full of subtle shadings and of great discoveries—these photos are a trip to the beginnings, a round-trip path seen through Stephenson's eyes. Past and present become two sides of a reality in which we take part. A trip inward, toward stone and wood, toward the wall, the sentry-box, the grille, the wrought-iron grating, the doors and gates, the star-shaped latticework and the lacy wood frames and ceilings, toward galleries of inner patios and balconies, toward columns, rounded arches and art-glass windows, all part of a rich *mélange* of materials, forms, and styles.

A resident of San Francisco, California, **Vivian M. Stephenson** has a BA degree in mathematics from New York University and an MBA from the University of Havana. She also received an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters from Mills College in 2005. In 2004, Ms. Stephenson was a

co-recipient of the Kile Ozier Award for volunteerism in the fight against HIV/AIDS. She has been named one of the San Francisco Business Times "100 Most Influential Women" in the Bay Area.

Carlota Caulfield is a poet, literary critic and translator. She earned a Licenciatura in History at the University of Havana, a M.A. degree in Spanish and Latin American Literature at San Francisco State University, and a Ph.D. in Spanish at Tulane University, New Orleans. Born and raised in Havana, since 1992 she has made her home in the Bay Area.

The Mills College Art Museum, founded in 1925, is a dynamic center for art that focuses on the creative work of women as artists and curators. The museum strives to engage and inspire the diverse and distinctive cultures of the Bay Area by presenting innovative exhibitions by emerging and established national and international artists. Exhibitions are designed to challenge and invite reflection upon the profound complexities of contemporary culture.

Museum Hours are Tuesday-Sunday 11-4pm and Wednesday 11-7:30pm. Admission is free for all exhibitions and programs. Docent tours of the exhibition are available by appointment. Please call for additional information. For more information: 510.430.2164 or <http://www.mills.edu/museum/>

**Mills College Art Museum
5000 MacArthur Boulevard
Oakland, CA 94613**

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