

With the expanding art scene in Singapore, LUMAS Gallery has recently opened a prime location in Paragon Shopping Center on Orchard Road. Founded in 2003 in Berlin, now with 40 locations globally, LUMAS started its business with the motto "The Liberation of Art" making high quality photography art accessible and affordable to all art enthusiasts. With prices starting under SGD \$200.00, these hand signed limited edition photography prints are an excellent way to begin or expand your current art collection. New and more experienced collectors can view artwork in the gallery with curators who offer their assistance in collecting the right piece for your home or office space. In an effort to maintain a fresh and dynamic offering, LUMAS combines artwork from a mix of international emerging and established photographers. While living in NYC, our visits to the LUMAS gallery in Soho were a post weekend brunch ritual to leisurely discover the ever-changing artwork on display.

LUMAS Singapore opened with the *Viva Cuba!* exhibition featuring works from Larry Yust, Luigi Visconti, and Werner Pawlok, who's images have captured the exceptional charm of Cuba. At the opening, we were fortunate to meet with LUMAS' featured artist, German photographer, Werner Pawlok. Please read below for our exclusive interview with Werner Pawlok on his inspiration and documentation of *Cuba-Expired* as well as a sampling of the Pawlok's photography series available at LUMAS worldwide.

INTERVIEW WITH PHOTOGRAPHER WERNER PAWLOK ON HIS *CUBA-EXPIRED* SERIES



Link to Werner Pawlok's Gallery: *CUBA-EXPIRED*

TL: As a self-taught photographer, how did you get started with photography? Were there any specific subjects which first inspired you to become a photographer?

WP: I always took photographs of what I loved, but never imagined I would do this as a profession. Once I worked in studio with a photographer, I watched how he conducted the business, and it was like a light switch went off, and I thought, "I can do this." I opened my own studio, and one of my first customers was Mercedes-Benz. They saw my photo transfer work, a process in which I transfer a large-format Polaroid negative onto a canvas to make an impression and asked if I could apply this technique to their car images, which resulted in a 6-year collaboration with Mercedes-Benz. But, as far as a specific subject that inspired me, nothing specific. If I see something that I connect with emotionally and artistically, then I get inspired.

TL: How did you develop a relationship with LUMAS?

WP: LUMAS contacted me about three years ago and said they were interested in my work. I didn't really know much about LUMAS then and wasn't really aware that they worked with established photographers. Heike Dander from the Berlin office said she was going to fly over to visit me and my work, and I thought, ok, maybe they are serious. Heike was incredibly professional and from the beginning knew how to select the right works that would be attractive to LUMAS customers. She really did a great job selecting, placing, and promoting my work. Now, with a global network of branches of LUMAS, my work is being exposed internationally, just like being here in Singapore now. It's been a great opportunity.

TL: I understand that you have been photographing Cuba since 2004. The first time you arrived in Cuba, what was your first impression of the country-its landscape, people, and culture? What is it about Cuba that you find fascinating?

WP: Cuba is a very special place. There are so many fascinating aspects about Cuba, and for me, Havana is Cuba. The first thing that initially impressed me was the extraordinarily beautiful and pure landscape. Most captivating however is the people's "jolie de vivre". They have very little, and they love life. They have such a simplistic way of entertaining themselves, and it does not take much for them to be happy. It's wonderful to watch them gather effortlessly at the Malecón talking and dancing.

TL: What was the process for selecting locations for Cuba-Expired? What do you know about the history of the owners who previously occupied these homes?

WP: These locations are not easy to find. I have a wonderful local production contact in Havana who is completely in sync with the atmosphere that I hoped to discover. About 50% of the scenes were selected from special places that she helped me identify through images she photographed. For the other 50%, we literally drove around looking for exteriors that looked interesting, stopped, and rang the doorbell asking if we could come inside. It was incredible that they let us inside their homes so freely. They certainly did not understand why we wanted to photograph these interiors. Once we were inside, the selection process was quite instinctual, I either connected with it emotionally or I didn't. As far as the original owners, we don't know this for the most part, but many of course were the sugarcane aristocrats.

TL: What is it about the environments photographed in Cuba that attracts you?

WP: When I see these environments, it's like sitting in the cinema. A scene comes to life, and I can feel the mood and atmosphere and imagine what was happening in these spaces. There are so many layers that I can continue to look at these images, and each time, even now, still discover something new and surprising.

The first time I was exposed to this type of environment was in 1984, when I went to East Berlin to do a photo shoot for an Austrian Magazine, featuring fashion designer Helmut Lang. We were the first Western photographer and designer to go to East Germany for a fashion photo shoot. I worked with the designer to choose the location, clothes, and East German models. The locations we selected were in total despair from the war with holes in the walls, but stunning. They totally captivated me. The first time I went to Cuba was also for a fashion shoot, and again I was drawn to these environments in decay, yet still possessing this raw beauty.

TL: Many of the scenes show the decay of a once opulent, grand culture, which are both gorgeous and grim. What do you hope viewers will see and experience when they observe your work?

WP: I hope the observer sees what I see. I hope my photographs wake up their imaginations and take them on a journey to discover this special time when Cuba was flourishing and the beautiful layers that exist there.

TL: What camera are you using to capture these images?

WP: I use a Phase One Camera System, a professional system from Denmark. It features 80 mega pixels, which is great for the large-scale photography printed for LUMAS.

TL: Now with Cuba opening to the American market, rapid changes will occur for the Cuban culture and quite possibly this historic architecture. Do you have any plans to document Cuba in this next phase?

WP: Yes, it is likely there will be changes, but I am not interested in making a documentary. I never set out to do documentary work. My connection with these spaces is artistic, more emotional. I will go back to Cuba, to Havana, but only to visit.

TL: Have you considered doing a photography series of any themes in Asia?

WP: I previously did a project with Kodak in Bali, but I would like to explore some of the less commercial areas throughout Asia. I like suburbs, and I would like to visit Malacca, Malaysia.

TL: What are you working on in 2016?

WP: Since I finished the *Cuba-Expired* series, it has been my dream to go back to Havana and show the local Cubans these photographs. I want to see their reaction to the work. With LUMAS, we are planning a 3-city exhibit tour between New York, Miami, and Havana targeting February of 2017. I am also working on finishing my book, *Cuba-Expired* with German publisher, Frederking and Thaler, Munich. The hardcover book, *Cuba-Expired* is scheduled to be released later this year and will include 320 pages of images and weigh 4.5 kilos.

Link to Werner Pawlok's Gallery: *CUBA-EXPIRED*

Headline Photo and Werner Pawlok Cuba-Expired series provided by © www.lumas.com.

LUMAS founded in Berlin in 2003 currently operates 40 galleries world wide and online, featuring hand signed original limited edition works ranging from 75 to 150 prints from a collection of 200 emerging and established photographers. Artwork is available at LUMAS in various sizes and framing services are provided in house as well as a Corporate Art Service Program (artservices@lumas.com) offering consultation for corporate and private space. Gift vouchers and photography books are also available in store and online. Singapore Location: Paragon Shopping Center #04-47, Orchard Rd.

<http://www.lumas.com/galleries/singapore/>

Werner Pawlok is a renowned self-taught German photographer and artist who has worked internationally in the fashion and commercial space, best known for his signature technique of Polaroid Transfer Paintings transferring large-format Polaroid negatives onto canvas or handmade paper to create an impression, then adding painting to the impression. Photography series including *Cuba-Expired* and *Photography Paintings* are available through LUMAS worldwide. Additional notable series by the artist include, *Crying Animals*, *Stars and Paints*, *Master Pieces*, *Leigh Bowery*, *Views-Faces of Literature* and *Dantes Commedia*.

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