

Remarks by Regla Barbón

At tribute to Mario Coyula • The New School, New York • November 1, 2014

I met him through Architect Gina Rey, at that time director of the Group for the Comprehensive Development of the Capital, introducing him to us as subdirector of the Group and as a man not only of academic prestige but also as one of the people with the greatest love for Havana and commitment to its transformation.

He was also founder, along with Gina, of the Workshops for Comprehensive Neighborhood Transformation in 1988, placing great confidence and hope in their work to help transform the city.

I remember Professor Coyula coming to the Atarés-Del Pilar workshop on many occasions with his students from the School of Architecture, sitting in a circle with us, both the students and the staff from the workshop, in master classes that he would impart to us.

He showed us that behind the physical decay of a community, there is always history that reveals architectural values and cultural values that in one way and another have built the cultural and community identity of the neighborhood.

He took interest always in the development of our work and the decision-making processes, something that he considered both difficult and necessary. He took pleasure in our stories of how we had won approval for different projects and once, after hearing of a setback, he declared – *Remember, one keeps learning all the way through autopsy* — a phrase I heard from him in other settings and which has stayed with me.

His manner — gentlemanly, cultured, respectful, both critical and understanding, prepared always to share his knowledge — places him among us as one of the most exceptional of human beings.

For all these things of which we speak today, he received the respect and admiration of all the members of Havana's Workshops, from the residents of the communities, teaching us all to love Havana, our capital, which will always be with me, as will he.

We are grateful to life for the opportunity to have him among us.

Thank you.