

# **Cuba and The U.S. Collaborate Across the Political Divide:**

## **Collaboration Under The Radar: American and Cuban Designers**

A groundswell of grassroots interaction is rising as Americans and Cubans build bonds of friendship and trust despite the longstanding U.S. government embargo against Cuba.

## **International Event Brings Cubans And Americans Together Despite Embargo**

Every year, thousands of people flock to Cuba to participate in the Digital Design Conference. Even Americans can exploit a loophole in the embargo laws and build bonds of trust and hope with the Cubans as they share their common goals and visions. An important part of the Conference is the Shared Dreams project: a unique program specifically designed to bring together American and Cuban artists to share their common dreams of life, peace, and freedom.

## **Better Late Than Never: Americans in Cuba**

Even though 2006 marks the eighth year of the International Digital Design Conference in Havana, Cuba, the “Shared Dreams” collaboration began in 2004. It marked the first time that US designers had ever reached across the border to collaboratively develop works of art with Cuban designers. Their common goals of greater peace, understanding, and new friendships have dramatically flourished in the Shared Dreams project. This year’s theme, “Love Conquers All”, have produced works of beauty and compassion that provide a glimpse into the future of relations between Americans and Cubans.

## **Political Differences Melt Away Through Technology**

Through their art and design collaborations, the artists show that their ideas about political and social awareness are strikingly similar. Despite the 40 year embargo by the U.S. government and the steadfast commitment by Fidel Castro to a communist regime in Cuba, the average person on the street in each country seems to have a similar vision of what peace and security look like for themselves and their families.

## **The Cuban Embargo Is Nowhere In Site**

Americans would be surprised to find out that one area NOT covered by the U.S. embargo on Cuban product is that of Cuban culture: books, magazines, CDs and even digital art. Even though the U.S. disagrees with the form of government in Cuba, Americans and Cubans are free to exchange ideas through art and culture. Shared Dreams is an example of how individuals in each country are paving the way for collaboration and friendship in spite of our respective government’s differences.

# Event:

## **Cuba and the U.S. Collaborate Through Art and Technology During ICOGRADA Design Week at the University Of WA**

On July 1<sup>st</sup>, ICOGRADA, in association with the American Institute of Graphic Design will host ***Shared Dreams*** at the University of Washington during ICOGRADA Design Week. ***Shared Dreams*** is a collection of unique artworks resulting from the collaboration of American and Cuban artists who shared their dreams of peace and friendship through art. This artwork is unique in that it was designed and created **solely** through collaboration over the internet.

***Shared Dreams 2006*** is part of a larger picture: the 8<sup>th</sup> Annual Digital Design Conference, held every year in Havana, Cuba. The Conference brings together designers from around the world to use the Internet and digital design as a collaborative tool to find common ground between disparate cultures.

With ***Shared Dreams 2006***, 14 designers – 7 from the U.S. and 7 from Cuba – were selected to represent their respective design communities in a collaborative exchange using the language that they know best: visual design and digital technology. Using the power of the internet, the artists shared their ideas and expertise to create unique works of art.

The theme of ***Shared Dreams 2006*** is ***Love Conquers All***. The designers provided commentaries, online exchanges, the exhibit in Havana, and their final artwork, to focus on their visions for the future.

A number of the designers' works have been reproduced as original posters in special limited edition, signed and numbered, commemorative prints. The entire collection of originals and numbered editions will be at the University of Washington Gould Hall beginning on July 1<sup>st</sup> and available for viewing until July 16<sup>th</sup>. On July 13<sup>th</sup> at 6pm at Gould Hall there will be a special reception marking the Pacific Northwest premier of ***Shared Dreams 2006***. This event is for members of the Media and attendees of the ICOGRADA Design Week.

Proceeds from the sale of the limited edition commemorative posters are donated to the Cuban Artists Fund (CAF) and the New York Foundation for the Arts (NYFA). CAF provides resources to Cuban and Cuban Diaspora artists in the performing, visual, music, and literary arts, and organizes and funds local and international programs that support the Cuban arts community and forge new and long-lasting associations and networks between artists, arts professionals, academics, institutions, and communities in Cuba and the United States.

The AIGA (American Institute of Graphic Design), a non-profit organization based in New York City, and The Center for Cross Cultural Design co-produced the event with their counterparts in Cuba. Their aim is to help people reach break through the barriers of geographic 'borders' using digital communication in a non-commercial environment in order to communicate with diverse audiences.