

**CALIFORNIA BLACKSMITH ASSOCIATION GRANT:**

**BLACKSMITHING IN CUBA**



THANK YOU ALL FOR COMING.

BEFORE GETTING STARTED,

I WANTED TO THANK THE CBA FOR GRANTING ME THE opportunity TO TRAVEL TO CUBA IN SEARCH OF BLACKSMITHS.

IT WAS KIND OF AN INSPIRATION OF MINE TO SEE CUBA IN THIS TIME OF GREAT CHANGE FOR THE COUNTRY, AND I WAS EXCITED TO GO AND MEET OTHER MAKERS AND HEAR THEIR STORY. CBA LISTENED TO THAT INSPIRATION, AND HELP MADE IT HAPPEN.

THANK YOU TO

MIKE KOCHAN, OUR PRESIDENT,

FRANK GOLDING FOR MAKING THE HAMMER-IN HAPPEN,

BETH HOLMBURG,

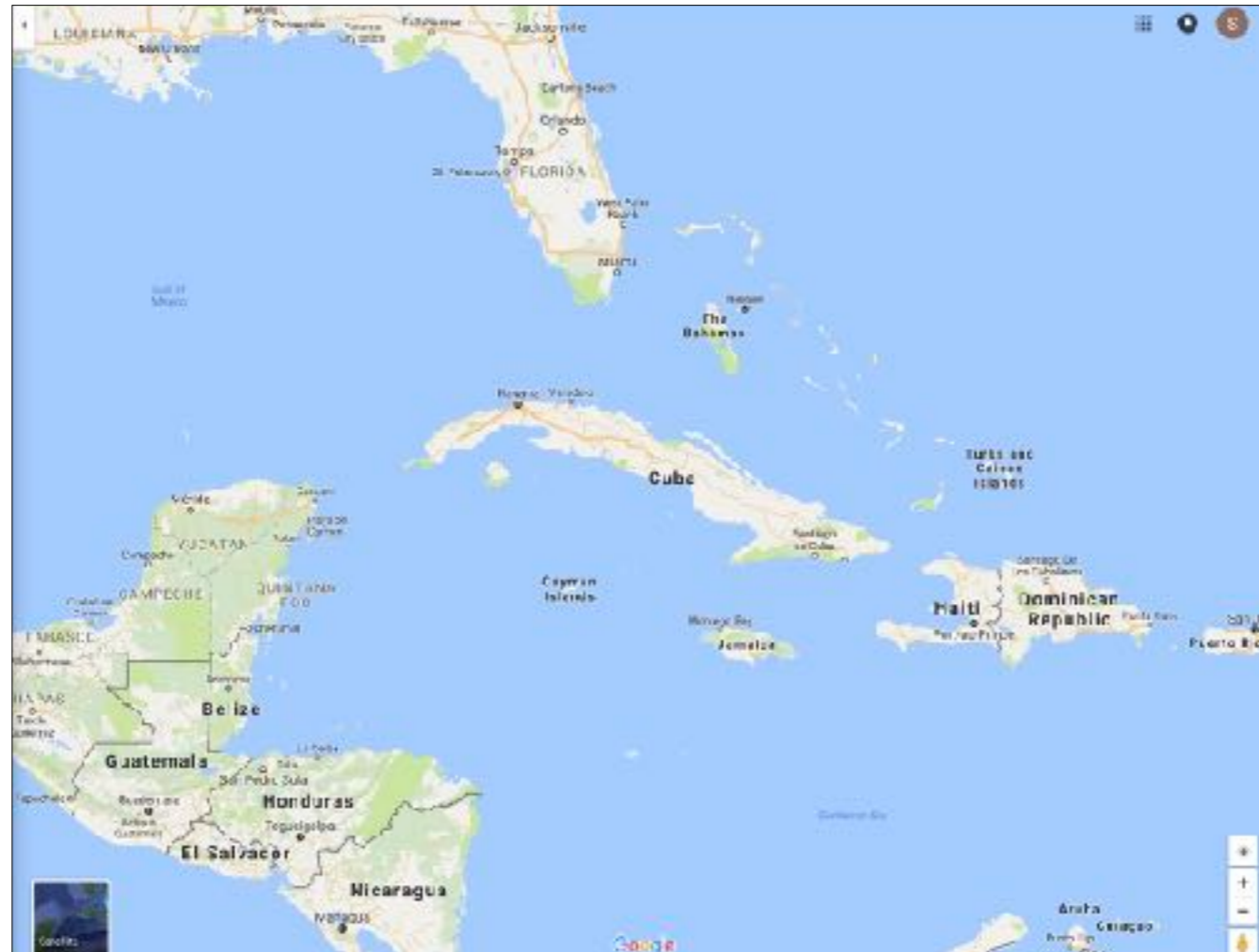
FOR STEPPING INTO THE GRANT APPLICATION PROCESS,

Dennis Dusek, FOR HOLDING MY HAND THROUGH IT ALL

AND TO KIRK MCNEILL OF FREEDOM FORGE, FOR BEING A TEACHER AND AN INSPIRATION.



THIS IS A HUGE MAP OF CUBA MADE OF KEYS IN A GALLERY WALL IN HAVANA.  
BUT REALLY:  
WHY CUBA?



CUBA IN SOME WAYS IS SO CLOSE TO US,  
AND YET SO FAR REMOVED FROM OUR WESTERN, CAPITALIST CULTURE.  
I COULD TALK YOUR EAR OFF ABOUT CUBAN HISTORY, AND SOCIALISM, AND IM HAPPY TO HAVE THAT CONVERSATION,  
BUT I DONT WANT TO TURN THIS INTO A HISTORY LESSON.

LET ME SAY:

I WAS CURIOUS TO SEE WHAT METALWORKING LOOKED LIKE OVER THERE IN AN ESSENTIALLY PRE-INDUSTRIALIZED NATION. IN ADDITION, WITH A RAPIDLY MODERNIZING DEVELOPMENT PLAN CURRENTLY UNDERWAY IN CUBA, I WAS INTERESTED IN SEEING HOW THE SCALE OF PRODUCTION WOULD CHANGE IN A GLOBALIZED NEW ECONOMY OF CUBA.

I had some romantic notions of a more “pure” form of blacksmithing without the aid of power hammers and hydraulic tooling.

However, the shops and schools are mostly teaching and turning out simple scroll work, with the same flat stock and relatively similar designs. I found that everyone we met was VERY interested in learning new techniques, were unfamiliar with the concept of making ones own tools AND DIDNT HAVE THE KNOWLEDGE OF ACTUALLY MAKING THE METAL MOVE.

I realize this “first world teaches developing world” lens is problematic and fraught with power asymmetry, but in the case of Cuba in particular, and their isolation from the outside world, I feel like CBA has a wonderful opportunity to help disseminate this lost art form. This is exactly the stated intent of CBA, and I think we have a wonderful opportunity to enrich the quality of blacksmithing in Cuba, as well as bring back a lost art to the island.





THIS SLIDE SHOW WILL HAVE MANY PICTURES OF  
ARCHITECTURE,  
METALWORK,  
TOOLS AND  
SHOPS,

BUT I WANTED TO START OUT BY JUST GIVING YOU SOME RANDOM VIGNETTES OF CUBAN LIFE, IN ORDER TO HELP RECREATE THE EXPERIENCE OF WHAT IT  
WAS LIKE TO BE THERE.

SO SIP ON YOUR MOJITOS, SIT BACK AND ENJOY THE SCENERY FOR AS MINUTE



I FEEL LIKE YOU COULD NEVER DESCRIBE CUBA WITH ONE WORD:  
BECAUSE OF ITS INHERENT PARADOXICAL NATURE.

WE PLAYED A GAME ONCE WHILE LOOKING OUT OVER THE CITY OF TRYING TO ENCAPSULATE CUBA WITH AS FEW A WORDS AS POSSIBLE.

MINE WAS:  
DECAYING LIFE.

IT IS BOTH LITERALLY CRUMBLING AND FALLING INTO THE SEA, AND ALSO EXPLODING WITH THIS PALPABLE AND VIBRANT ALIVENESS.

SOME BUILDINGS LIKE THIS SIT RIGHT NEXT TO BEAUTIFULLY . RESTORED ONES, BUT MOST OF THE TIME, PEOPLE JUST INHABIT THEM AS IS



WITHOUT GETTING INTO TOO MUCH OF AN ECONOMIC DEBATE ABOUT SOCIALISM VS. CAPITALISM, LET ME JUST SET THE STAGE FOR YOU ABOUT CUBANS ACCESS TO MONEY.

THE GOVERNMENT WILL GUARANTEE  
EDUCATION  
HEALTHCARE  
A JOB,  
FREE HOUSING  
HEAVILY SUBSIDIZED PHONE AND ELECTRICITY

BUT THE FLIP SIDE IS, THEY TRY AND PROVIDE ALL OF THESE SERVICES TO PEOPLE, SO THEY DONT HAVE NEED FOR MONEY.

BUT IF YOU TAKE A GOVERNMENT JOB, AS OUR TRANSLATOR SHARED HER EXPERIENCE WITH US:

AFTER GRADUATING WITH A FREE DEGREE IN URBAN PLANNING, SHE WAS GIVEN A 40 HOUR A WEEK CUBICLE JOB, WHERE HER WORK LOAD ONLY TOOK ABOUT 6 HOURS A WEEK, WHEN SHE ASKED FOR RELEVANT WORK, THEY SAID THEY COULD OFFER HER A JOB, BUT NOT NECESSARILY A RELEVANT ONE. SHE WAS EXPECTED TO SIT AND WAIT OUT THE REST OF THE DAY.

FOR THIS, SHE GOT PAID \$25.00/MONTH. WORKING 40 HOURS A WEEK FOR \$20.00, YOU CAN SEE WHY PEOPLE DONT HAVE EXTRA INCOME TO DO MUCH OF ANYTHING.



THIS MAKES FOR AN EXPLODING BLACK MARKET, WITH SUPER HIGH PRICES ON SMUGGLED GOODS, THAT ARE EXTRODINARILLY HARD TO FIND BECAUSE OF THE EMBARGO, AND AFTER, THE FALL OF THE USSR.









LIKE MANY DEVELOPING COUNTRIES, THEIR TRASH SITUATION GETS OUT OF CONTROL. THEY CLEARLY DONT HAVE CURBSIDE GARBAGE, SO THEY HAVE DUMPSTERS SPRINKLED THROUGHOUT THE NEIGHBORHOODS. EVERYONE JUST PILES THEIR TRASH THERE, AND OVER THE WEEK, IT OVERFLOWS ONTO WHOLE CITY BLOCKS.









THIS IS A SMALL WOODEN PANEL ON A LARGE ORNATE, HAND CARVED DOOR, THAT IS JUST FALLING APART WITH AGE AND TIME.



OUT OF HAVANA, WE ALSO TRAVELED TO RURAL AND SMALL TOWNS THROUGHOUT CUBA.







THESE CEMENT, HIGH DENSITY HOUSING BLOCKS GO ON FOR MANY CITY



WE WENT TO THE TABACCO GROWING REGIONS IN THE MOUNTAINS AS WELL





















THIS ESPLANADE RUNS THE LENGTH OF THE CITY, AND AT NIGHT ITS A PLACE WHERE HUNDREDS OF CUBANS HANG OUT AND DRINK AND PLAY MUSIC AND HANG OUT. ITS REALLY A SITE TO SEE







## Art In Cuba

THIS IS ONE OF MY FAVORITE PICES OF METALWORK IN THE CITY. ITS PICES OF STRIATED METAL ALL FABRICATED TOGETHER WITH THE MOST BEAUTIFUL MOVEMENT AND SENCE OF LINE. LOOK AT THE NAPE OF THE NECK AND HOW IT CAPTURES THE QUALITY OF ORGANIC LINE



AND JUST TO GIVE YOU CONTEXT, THATS ME STANDING ON A PILLAR, AND IM NOT EVEN NEAR HER CLAVICOLE, ITS GOT TO BE AT LEAST 30 FEET TALL.

AND SHE SITTS ACROSS THE STREET FROM THE ESPLANADE OVERLOOKING THE CITY AND THE SEA.





WE ORIGINALLY SAW THIS PIECE IN THE DAYLIGHT, AND CAME BACK TO CHECK IT IN THE EVENING. IT LOOKS RADICALLY DIFFERENT DEPENDING ON THE LIGHT, BUT ITS ALWAYS STUNNING











Relentlessly fight the enemy.

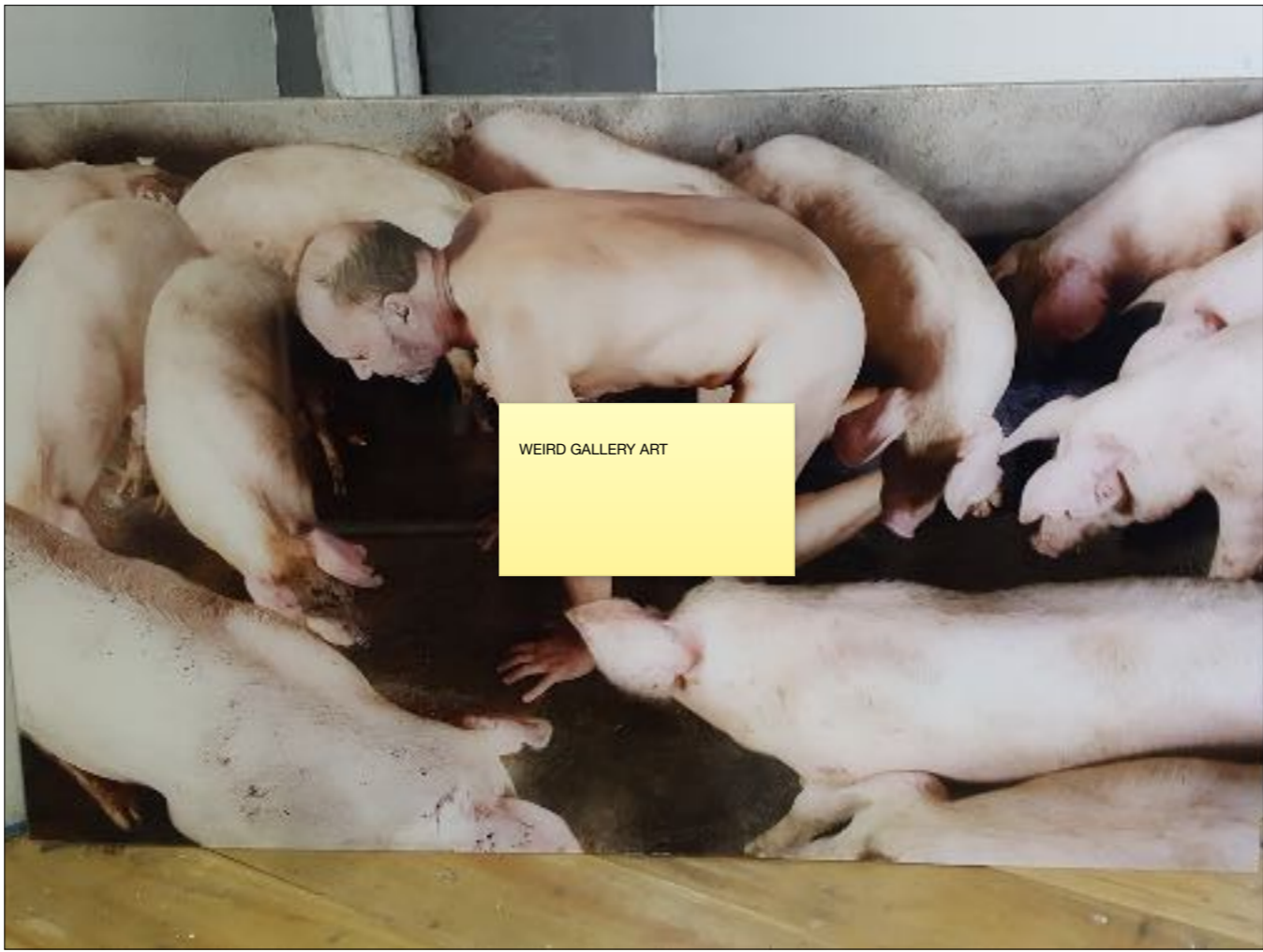
theres revolutionary art everywhere sponsored by the government to make everyone remember.





THIS WAS WEIRD ART THAT WAS PANARAMICS ABOUT 15 FEET LONG, EVERYONE DRESSED AND LOOKING IDENTICAL, EXPLORING THE CONCEPT THE SAMENESS WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF SOCIALISM, AND THE LACK OF INDIVIDUALITY AND CHOICE.





WEIRD GALLERY ART





But really, this is what the Cuban youth does. They can't afford to go into the clubs, and so they pile outside and have their own dance parties. Or drink in the streets and benches...EVERYONE is out on a warm summer night.



we have to address the car thing, at least a little bit, because its such an iconic aspect of Cuba. And its true, classic American cars are everywhere.

WE CONTRACTED PRIVATE TAXIS EVERYWHERE WE WENT, BECAUSE THE COST WAS SLIGHTLY CHEAPER SPLIT 3 ways, and THE GOVERNMENT TOURIST BUSSES WERE SOLD OUT AT LEAST 3 DAYS IN ADVANCE, AND WERE FILLED WITH TOURISTS.

THIS CAR IN PARTICULAR WE DROVE IN FOR 8 HOURS FROM TRINIDAD BACK TO HAVANA.

WE



The thing is, that under the hood there almost always chinese diesel engines. This is because when the immediate embargo went into effect, All imports froze, and cars were scarce with no public transportation



an imploded public transportation system. So the cubans went out into the fields to the cars that were aLREADY PARKED AND LEFT, AND REVAMPED THEM WITH ENGINES SUPPLIED BY CHINA



ANOTHER CAR WE DID A LONG DRIVE IN...



NOW SAME CAR GETTING A TICKET. COPS PULL CUBANS OVER ALL THE TIME, BECAUSE THERES BIG MONEY IN PRIVATE TRANSPORTATION, and they want to make sure they're credentialed, so the government gets their cut.









I couldn't help myself with this beauty



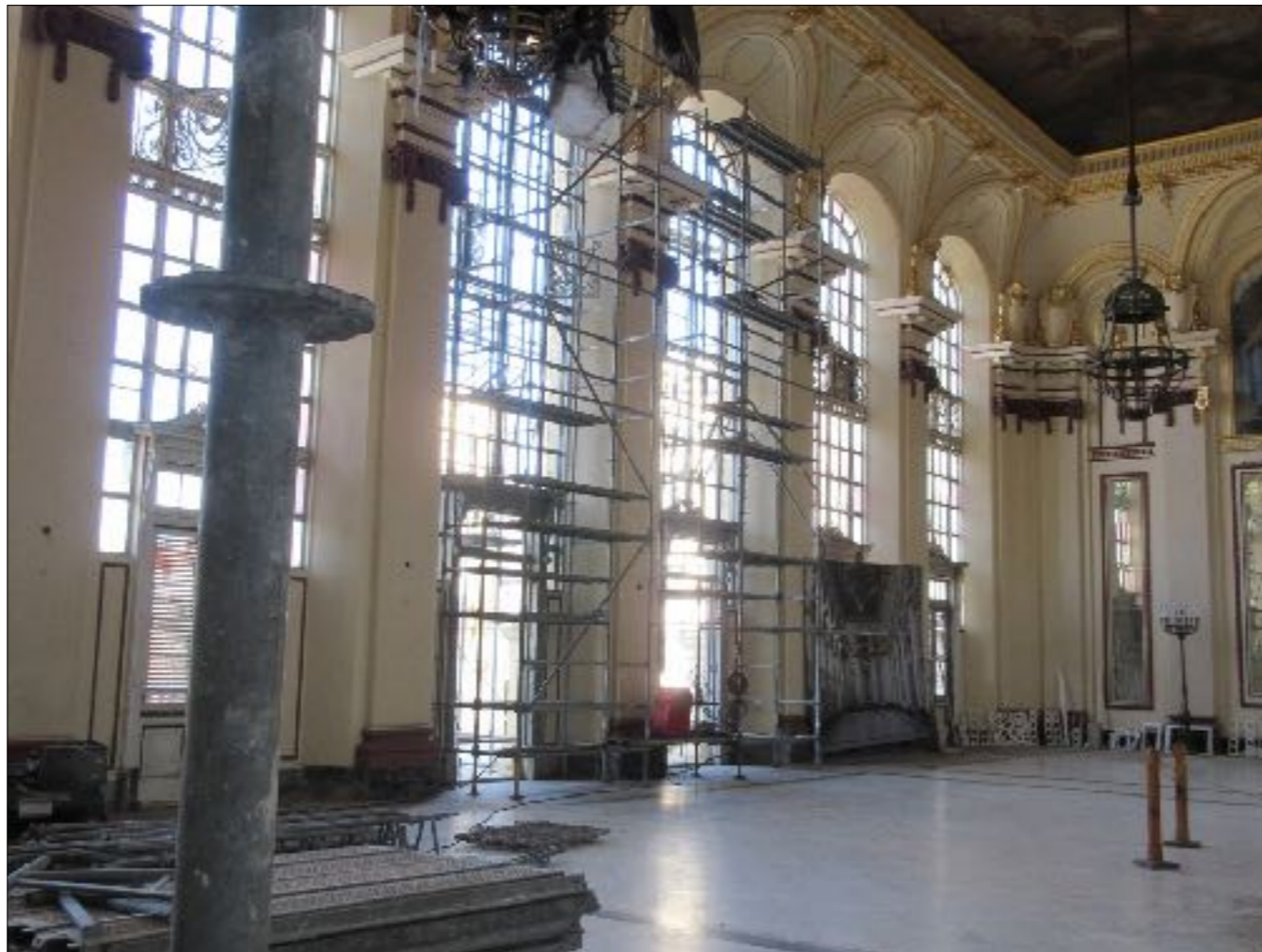
NOTE THE DRINK HOLDER







ARCHITECTURE  
AND ORNAMENTAL  
IRONWORK



THIS IS A RESTORATION PROJECT ON THE PRESIDENTIAL PALACE WHERE IN 1959 CASTRO STORMED THE DOORS AND TOOK OVER THE BUILDING,  
SIGNALING AN OFFICIAL TRANSFER POWER.  
ITS SINCE BECOME THE REVOLUTIONARY HISTORY MUSEUM





NOTE THE BULLET HOLES.





ITS BEAUTIFUL IN THE AFTERNOON LIGHT. I DONT KNOW IF YOU CAN SEE THAT THERE ARE DOORS WITHIN THESE HUGE WINDOWS, WITH SWINGING METAL SHUTTERS



AND HERES THOSE SHUTTERS READY TO BE HUNG WAITING ON THE OPPOSITE WALL OF THE SAME ROOM



THIS IS CLEARLY CAST, BUT ALSO WHATS GOING ON IN CUBA













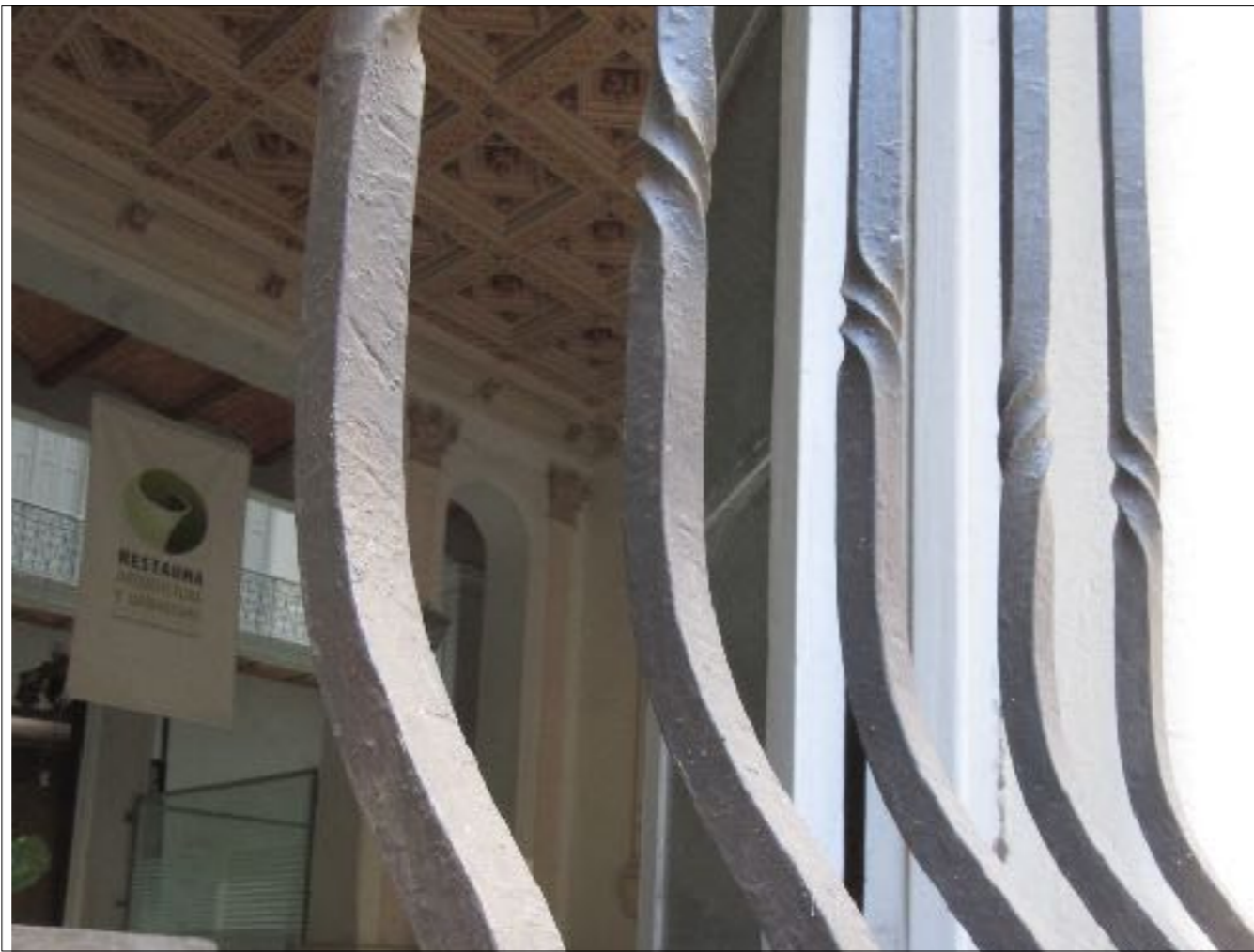


THESE ARE ACTUALLY REALLY LONG AND SLENDOR WINDOWS

WITH WOODEN SHUTTERS BEHIND, THAT CAN BE OPENED IN THE HEAT OF THE DAY.

THOSE WOODEN SHUTTERS ARE JUST FALLING OFF THEIR HINGES, WITH PEOPLE LIVING INSIDE





BEAUTIFULLY IMPERFECT TWISTS



SOME NICEISH JOINERY.

THE FACXT OF THE MATTER IS, THERE WASNT A LOT OF SOPHISTICATED MANIPULATION OF METAL GOING ON.  
TAPERS WERE RARE, AND MOST OF THE METALWORK WAS COLD WORKED INSTEAD OF HOT.





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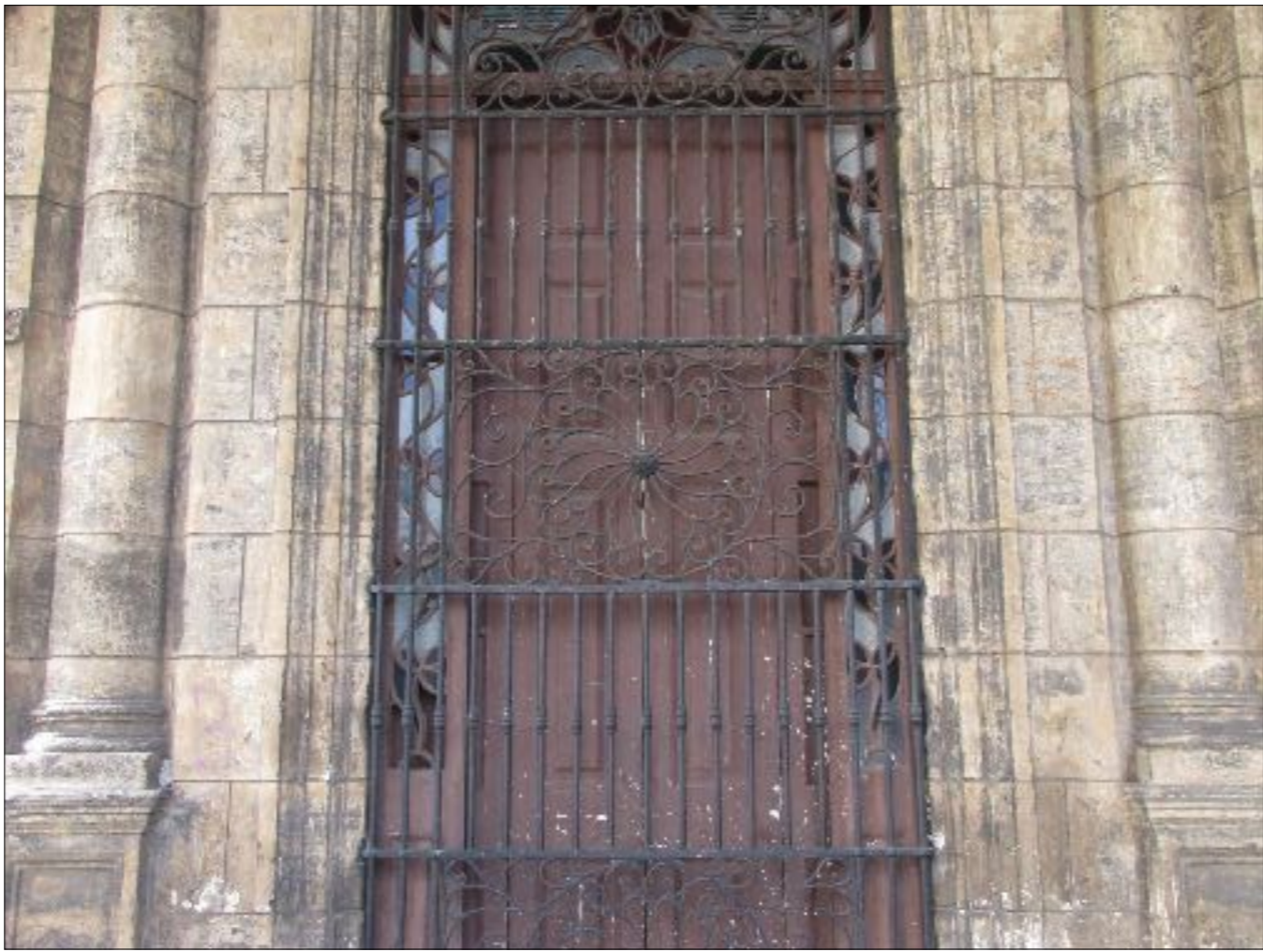






RIVETS AND COLLARS  
MOSTLY COLD WORKED,  
BUT STILL INTERESTING









THIS PLACE WE FOUND WHILE RANDOMLY EXPLORING THE STREETS OF HAVANA. WE SAW THE TOOLS OUTSIDE OF THIS URBAN, BUT VERY RESIDENTIAL APARTMENT, AND HAD TO POP IN AND SEE WHAT HE WAS UP TO.

HE WAS MAKING DOORS IN HIS KITCHEN. LITERALLY



AND SO IN WE WENT













EVERYWHERE WE WENT I PACKED IN MY BAG WITH ME:

CBA MAGAZINES  
CAMERA  
RUM

THE CBA MAGAZINES WERE WONDERFUL, BECAUSE THEY HAD GREAT PICTURES, THAT WERE COMPELLING AND TOLD A STORY, ALSO WHILE ILLUSTRATING THE COMMUNITY ETHIC WE AS THE CBA OPERATE UNDER.



AND THEN WE SHARED A DRINK.

HE TOLD ME HIS STORY OF BEING A SHIP WELDER IN THE 60'S, AND OF THE HARD TIMES HE HAS HAD FINDING WORK, EVEN THOUGH HES CERTIFIED THROUGH THE GOVERNMENT



DISTRIBUTE BOOK

THIS MAN, LORENZO, IS THE DIRECTOR OF THE HAVANA SCHOOL OF METALWORK. THIS SCHOOL IS SPONSORED THROUGH THE GOVERNMENT IN ORDER THE TRAIN CUBANS IN VARIOUS TRADES INCLUDING :

- WOODWORKING
- PAINTING HISTORICAL BUILDINGS
- SCULPTURE AND
- METALWORKING









CHARCOAL WAS THE HEAT SOURCE AT THE SCHOOL, SO NEEDLESS TO SAY IT WAS DIRTY AND REALLY SPARKY, AND HARD TO GET HOT ENOUGH









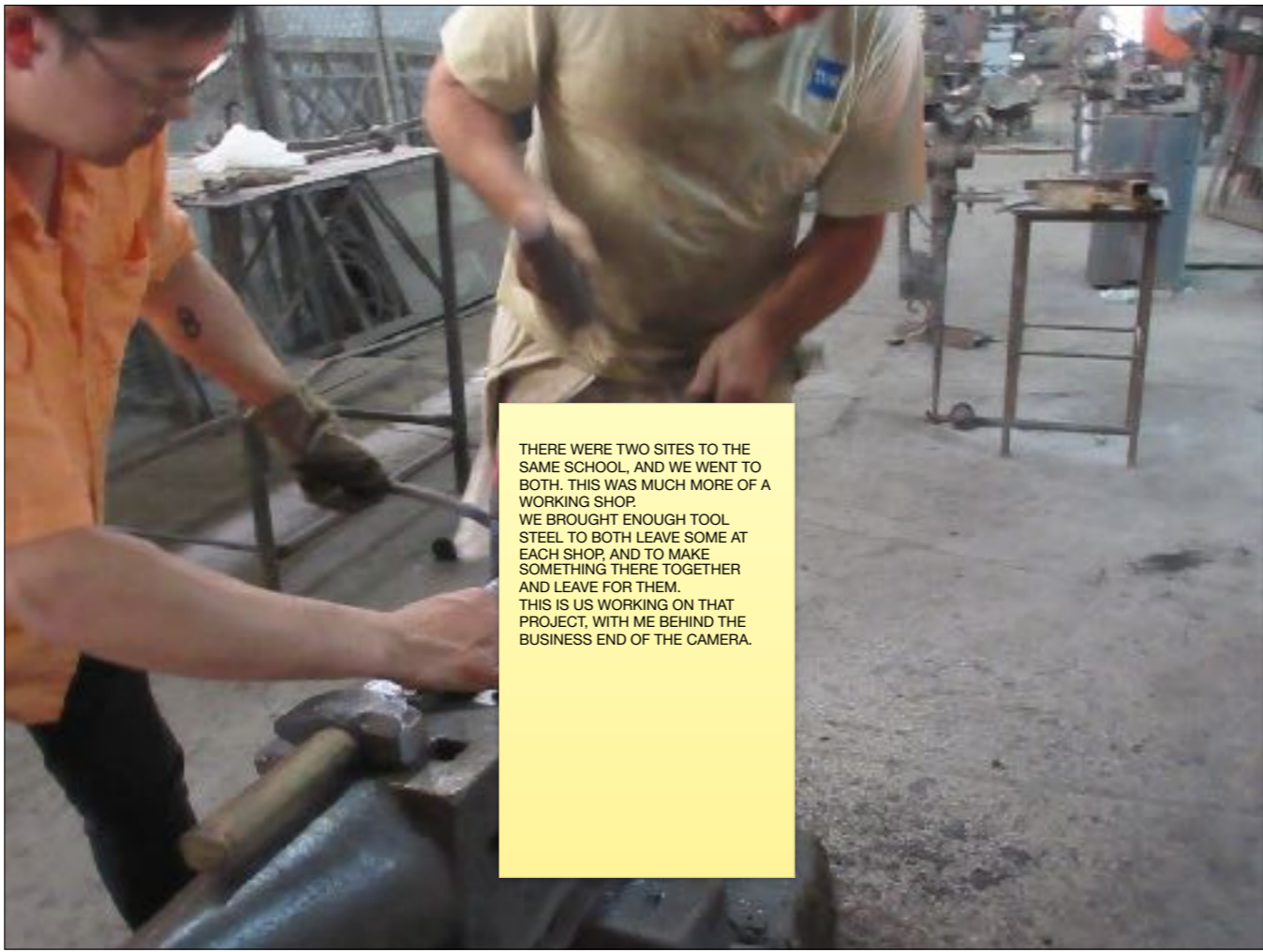
LIKE ALL OF HAVANA, THIS SCHOOLS SHOP LOOKS LIKE ITS HALF ABANDONED, WITH CRUMBLING INFRASTRUCTURE, AND INSUFFICIENT TOOLING.



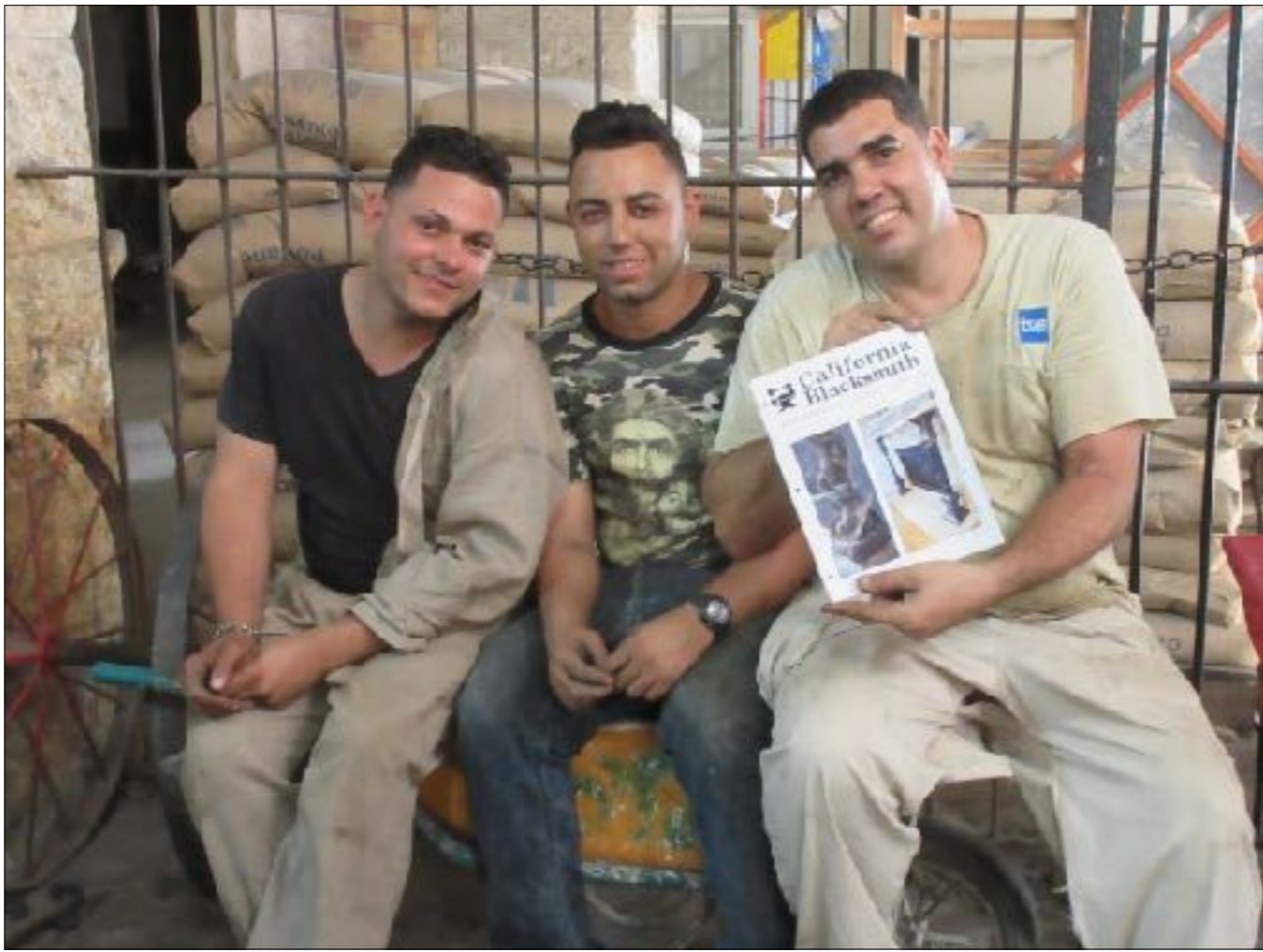








THERE WERE TWO SITES TO THE SAME SCHOOL, AND WE WENT TO BOTH. THIS WAS MUCH MORE OF A WORKING SHOP.  
WE BROUGHT ENOUGH TOOL STEEL TO BOTH LEAVE SOME AT EACH SHOP, AND TO MAKE SOMETHING THERE TOGETHER AND LEAVE FOR THEM.  
THIS IS US WORKING ON THAT PROJECT, WITH ME BEHIND THE BUSINESS END OF THE CAMERA.









THERE WAS ANOTHER SHOP THAT WE WENT TO THAT ASKED US TO NOT PHOTOGRAPH BECAUSE ALTHOUGH THEY WERE LICENCED , THEY HAD MORE STALK THEN THEY WERE SUPPOSED TO, AND SO DIDNT WANT ANYTHING DOCUMENTED. THEY MADE PRETTY STREIGHT FORWARD, FABRICATED GATES AND WINDOW COVERINGS, BUT THEIR INFORMATION ABOUT OPPERATING AND SOURCING METERIAL ON THE BLACK MARKET WAS REALLY INTERESTING.

SHOPS THAT ARENT WORKING FOR GOVEWRNMEN T CONTRACTS, AND INSTEAD FOR PRIVATE PARTIES ARE FORCED TO SOURCE ALL METERAILS FROM THE BLACK MARKET FOR EXHOBETENT PRICES.-

\*\*\*\*SHOW STOCK NOW\*\*\*\*

AS YOU CASN SEE THIS RHOMBIS STOCK IS AWEFUL!  
IN ADDITION, THEY ARENT ALLOWED TO ALLOWED TO HAVE



THIS IS OUR FINAL DESTINATION OF SHOPS, AND BY FAR THE MOST ORGANIZED AND PROFICIENT. ITS A HUGE OUTDOOR SPACE, GOVERNMENT CONTRACTED, OVERLOOKING THE CITY OF HAVANA. This is the total other side of the shop we just talked about.

THIS IS THE SHOP I HOPE TO RETURN TO,  
AND HOLD AN "ENCUENTRO",

BRINGING CBA MEMBERS BACK FOR A MULTI DAY WORKSHOP.

THE ENTIRE TIME WE WERE THERE, THE SHOP OWNERS, AND WORKERS WERE INCREDIBLY ENGAGED AND INTERESTED IN WHAT THE CBA WAS ALL ABOUT...THE THEME WAS "REGRASAR", WHICH MEANS, WE WILL RETURN. THEYRE VERY EXCITED TYO HOST US SHOULD WE ORGANIZE A TRIP BACK TO CUBA, AND OFFER THE BEST INFRASTRUCTURE SHOULD A RETURN TRIP OCCUR









AND THEY HAD 7 EMPLOYESS THAT THEY PULLED FROM WORK IN ORDER TO PARTICIPATE FULLY IN US BEING THERE.



SOME PICTURES OF TOOLING, AND LAYOUT OF THE SHOP FOR ALL YOU TO SEE WHAT WELL BE WORKING WITH WHEN WE GO BACK!





ALL OF THESE HAMMERS WERE WELDED LIKE THIS











THEY ALSO HAD MORE STALK SQUIRLED AWAY THEN ANYWHERE ELSE I SAW IN ALL OF HAVANA





HOWEVER, THEIR COAL/COKE FORGE WASNT WORKING, AND HADENT FOR YEARS. THE GEARS WERE RUSTED , AND THE CONNECTIONS TO THE FIRE BOX WAS FALLING APART



THEY DID HAVE A NATURAL GAS STOVE, BUT NO FIRE BRICKS OR INSULATION. SO KASUDA ACTUALLY COMBINED BOTH FORGES TOGETHER IN ORDER TO CREATE A FORCED AIR NATURAL GAS FORGE. THIS KNOCKED THEIR SOCKS OFF. THEY WANTED TO CONTINUE TO USE THE NATURAL GAS, BUT AFTER GETTING THE FORGE WORKING, WE WERE ABLE TO SHUT THE NATURAL GAS OFF AND JUST USE THE COAK. THIS FRANKENSTEINED FORGE WAS ABLE TO GET THEIR STOCK WAY HOTTER THEN THEY HAD EVER DONE.



THIS IS THE CURRENT PROJECT THAT THEY WERE WORKING ON IN THE SHOP. YOU CAN SEE THAT ITS MOSTLY SCROLL WORK, AND LOOKS LIKE MUCH MORE OF THE WORK DONE COLD THEN HOT. BUT IS ALSO MORE ARTISTIC THEN MOST OTHER PLACES WE SAW.





IF YOU NOTICE IN THE VIDEO HOW COLD THEIR WORKING THEIR METAL.

they didn't use gloves here, because they work the metal at such a lower temperature.

I noticed that what they did when they did need some kind of heat shield, that they used an old stick welding glove, doused in water, and then used it like a potholder, more than a glove.



AS USUAL,AND WITH EVERY SHOP WE WENT TO, EACH TIME THE DEMOED THEIR PROCESS, IT WAS WORKING COLD STOCK







AS FOR OUR DEMO, AFTER ASKING THEM ABOUT POTENTIAL TOOLS THEY NEEDED THAT WE COULD MAKE ON HAND, WE ENDED UP SETTLING ON A PUNCH, BECAUSE THEY HAD SAID ITS DIFFICULT TO GET REPLACEMENT PARTS FOR THEIR DRILL PRESS. WE BROUGHT TOOL STEEL TO EACH OF THE SHOPS AND MADE SOMETHING TO LEAVE WITH EVERYONE WE ENCOUNTERED.

HOWEVER, THEIR TONGS WERE NEEDLE NOSE PLYERS THAT WERE STICK WELDED, AND NOT SUFFICIENT TO HOLD THE TOOL STEEL. SO, THE DEMO BEGAN WITH TAKING SCRAP FROM A PILE IN THEIR SHOP, AND MAKING TONGS.

THE IDEA OF MAKING THEIR OWN TOOLS FROM SCRAP WAS NOT SOMETHING THEY DID, SO THEY WERE REALLY INTERESTED IN THIS PROCESS. AND THIS PROBABLY BLEW THEM AWAY MORE THEN ANYTHING. WERE TOTALLY UNFAMILIAR WITH THE CONCEPT OF







I WAS PHOTOGRAPHER, TRANSLATOR AND PARTICIPATED IN THE DEMOS, AND AFTER THIS POINT, WE REALLY GOT INTO IT AND I DIDNT TAKE MORE PICTURES.

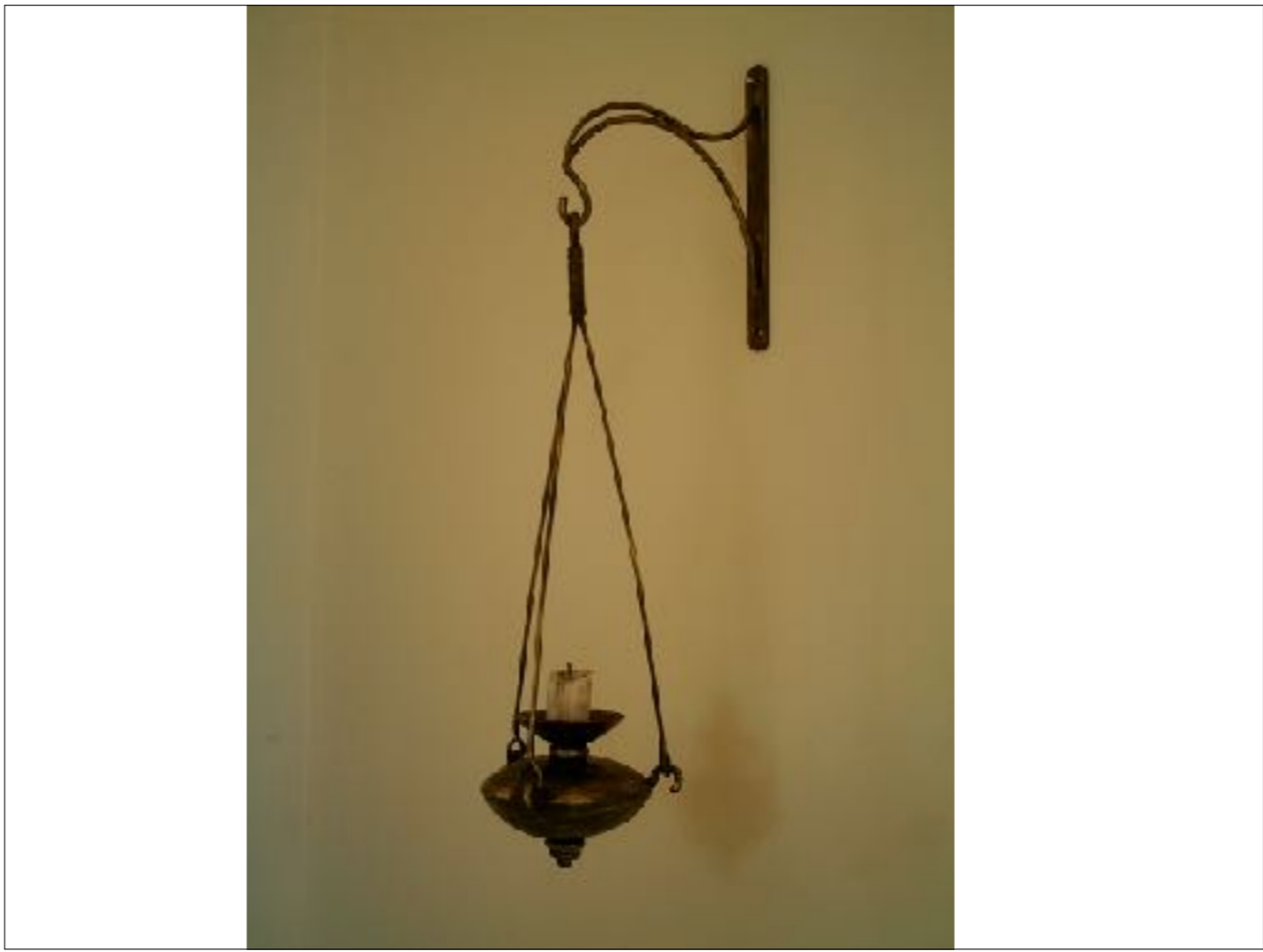
BUT WE SUCCESSFULLY MADE TONGS, DISCUSSED HEAT TREATING THE TOOL STEEL, WHICH WASN'T SOMETHING THEY HAD EVER DONE BEFORE, AS WELL AS CREATE A NICE TAPERED PUNCH THAT COULD BE USED IN HOT WORK.

THEY WERE SO STOKED WITH THE PUNCH, AND SAID THEY WERE GOING TO HANG IT ON THE WALL, BUT WE URGED THEM TO USE IT, NOT DISPLAY IT.





AS YOU CAN SEE, ALTHOUGH THESE ARE INTERESTING, THEY'RE NOT TAPERING OR MOVING METAL IN A COMPELLING WAY. THEY HAVE NOT FIGURED OUT THE MALUABILITY OF METAL, IN PART BECAUSE THEIR CHINESE METAL IS MORE HARD, BECAUSE THEY'RE NOT HEATING IT ENOUGH TO REALLY EFFECT THE METAL, AND BECAUSE THEY DONT KNOW HOW.











AFTER WE BOTH DEMOED FOR EACH OTHER, SPENDING MOST OF THE DAY AT THIS SHOP, THEY ASKED US TO STAY FOR LUNCH.

WE TRIED TO TURN THEM DOWN, SINCE WE KNEW IT WAS EXPENSIVE FOR THEM TO PROVIDE BUT THEY INSISTED. THEY ALSO WOULDNT ACCEPT MONEY FOR THE FOOD.

THERE WAS A WOMAN WHO LIVED IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD WHO MADE A DELICIOUS LUNCH FOR US OF RICE, BEANS, SALAD, FRIED AND BREADED PORK AND CHICKEN, AND WE SET UP A TABLE IN THE SHOP, AND ALL OF THE WORKERS, OWNERS AND FAMILY MEMBERS SAT DOWN TO BRAKE BREAD TOGETHER. IT WAS A HIGHLIGHT OF THE ENTIRE TRIP



TO MAKE THINGS EVEN BETTER, WE ENDED THE ENCOUNTER BY GOING UP TO THE ROOFTOP IN ORDER TO HAVE SOME RUM, AND TOAST TO OUR NEW FORGED CONNECTION.



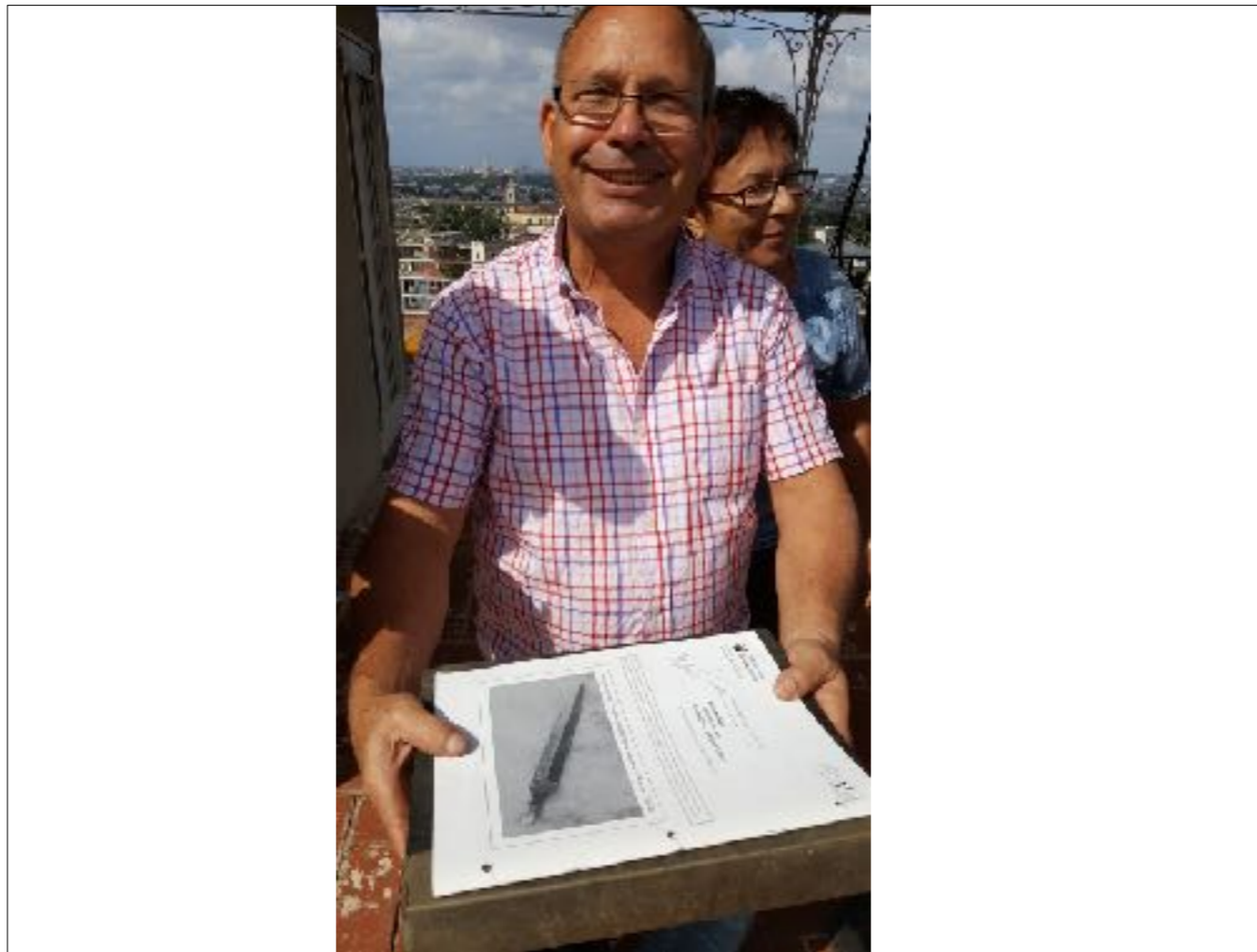


THIS IS THE VIEW FROM THE ROOFTOP OF THE SHOP, AND ALSO THE VIEW FROM THE OPEN AIR SHOP JUST DOWN ANOTHER STORY. T WAS AN EPIC VIEW OF ALL OF HAVANA









AFTER, THEY ASKED IF THEY COULD KEEP THE CBA MAGAZINE, AND ASKED US TO BOTH SIGN IT, AS IF WE WERE STARS.  
...I SWUNG THROUGH KIRK'S SHOP BEFORE LEAVING FOR CUBA, IN ORDER TO BRING A COUPLE MORE MAGAZINES WITH US.

FREEDOM FORGES ADDRESS IS ON THE BACK, AND WE EXPLAINED TO THEM THAT THIS WAS OUR TEACHER. THEY WERE ELATED, AND NOW KIRK, THERE'S A PIECE OF YOU IN HAVANA TOO!

THE THEME OF THIS DAY WAS "REGRESSAR", WHICH MEANS TO RETURN. THEY VERY MUCH WANTED TO HOST THE CBA AT THIS SHOP SHOULD WE DECIDE AS AN ORGANIZATION TO RETURN.

WITH OUR TRANSLATOR, GRETTEL'S HELP, SHE COULD ORGANIZE TRANSPORTATION, AND WE STAYED WITH A GREAT FAMILY FRIEND



IN CONCLUSION:

GETTING A GRANT TO GO TO CUBA THROUGH THE CBA AFFORDED US TO FORGE CONNECTIONS WITH PEOPLE, WHICH WAS THE MOST VALUABLE ASPECT OF OUR TRIP.

THIS WAS YONI, AND WE MET HIM IN A NIGHT CLUB LAZTE ONE NIGHT AND HE JUST WANTED TO HANG TOUGH WHILE WE WERE THERE...



WE STAYED IN PEOPLES HOMES, SAT WITH GRANDMOTHERS AND CHILDREN AT THE KITCHEN TABLES, AND HEARD THEIR STORIES ABOUT LIFE IN CUBA IN A MUCH MORE INTIMATE WAY THEN WE WOULD HAVE EVER HAD A CHANCE TO INTERACT WITH PEOPLE IF WE STAYED IN HOTELS.

AS PART OF THE GRANT MONEY, WE BROUGHT READING GLASSES, ART AND SCHOOL SUPPLIES, KIDS TOYS, FIRST AID GEAR, KEVLAR GLOVES, TOOL STEEL AND A DESIRE TO LEARN ABOUT THIS STRANGE AND WONDERFUL COUNTRY CALLED CUBA.



THIS IS LA CASA FORTUNA, WITH NICHOLIS AND RIVERA, AND WE CELEBRATED HER BIRTHDAY TOGETHER WHILE STAYING IN THEIR HOME. NICHOLIS AND I EXCHANGED BOOKS SINCE I WAS READING MITCHNERS CARIBBEAN WHILE TRAVELING THROUGH CUBA, AND HE WAS A FEROCIOUS READER. IN TRADE, HE TAUGHT US HOW TO ROLL CIGARS AND WE SAT AND SMOKED THEM ON THIS FRONT POCH AND TALKED ABOUT LIFE IN CUBA.



THINGS NEEDED IF WE RETURN TO CUBA:

EVERYTHING, BUT SPECIFICALLY,

WIRE BRUSHES

MOTORS

VARIABLE MACHINE BELTS

ELECTRIC BLOWERS OR HAND CRANKS

HAMMER HANDLES

METAL STOCK

SANDPAPER

COPPER SHEET

SAND PAPER



THANK YOU GREATLY TO CBA FOR FACILITATING SUCH A WONDERFUL AND FRUITFUL ADVENTURE, AS WELL AS TO THE PEOPLE OF CUBA WE MET ALONG THE WAY THAT SO ENRICHED OUR EXPERIENCE OF THE COUNTRY.  
NOW, WHO WANTS TO GO BACK?