

VERVE

THE SPIRIT OF TODAY'S WOMAN

SOUTHERN SUPERSTAR
ILEANA D'CRUZ
causes a flutter in bollywood

the debutants
12 GEN NEXT ACHIEVERS

fashion
IN PLAY

TUTU SKIRTS
NEON CLUTCHES
LACE GOWNS
PINK GLOVES

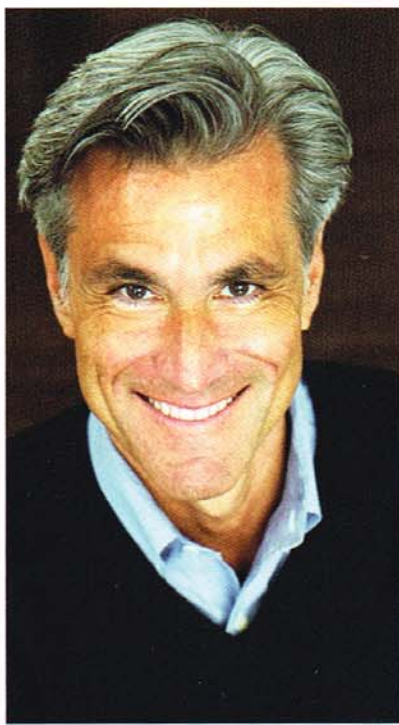
FARHAN AKHTAR
DON AND BEYOND

the high LIFE

A MUSCAT MEDLEY
HOT NEW HANGOUTS
THE CADBURYS IN LONDON

DIRECTOR'S FIRST
AVANTIKA AGARWAL
GAURI SHINDE





IN GREAT HOUSES OF HAVANA

Cuban style architect and author **HERMES MALLEA** gives the first ever insider's tour of Havana's architectural gems bringing the never before published homes, with their fascinating personal histories. The book allows one to experience the fancy life within the gated mansions of the city's grandest neighbourhoods. It incorporates the reminiscences of eye witnesses – architects, historians, present and former homeowners – whose memories of mid-century Havana were on the verge of being lost. The writer is a collector of vintage Cuban photography and a Cuban American expert in residential design and offers portraits of important homes built in the city between 1860 and 1960.

How did you think of compiling this book?

The book grew out of my typical tourist activity, something I do around the world, walking around a new city and taking pictures of the architecture. Quickly, I was stunned by the vast amounts of very high quality 20th century residential architecture. I knew Havana had grand 17th and 18th century houses but I wasn't aware that the city was a rich archive of all important styles of the 20th century as well.

Any surprises along the way?

When I began the research for the book, I thought I understood what Cuban style was all about. I soon realised that just like most other people my ideas about Havana were based on stereotypes and 50 years of misinformation. We think of the city as frozen in time since 1959 but that's wrong. One thinks one has a sense of what Cuba is about, yet the reality is so much richer. What struck me over and over were the ambitious aspirations of Havana's designers, homebuilders and craftsmen and I was very proud of their accomplishments. Another surprise is how closely Havana followed international trends in architecture – Beaux Arts Classicism, Eclectic Revivals, Art Deco, etc. Then, in the 1950s Cuba's architects synthesised the international style modernism with the essence of Cuba's centuries of home-building traditions – creating uniquely Cuban works.

How did writing this book affect you as a Cuban American?

This is the first book on Cuban design by a Cuban American architect with 25 years of successful NYC practice; so I bring a special perspective, both as a professional and as someone who intuitively knows the milieu. I am trying to reconstruct for my reader. The book

involved so many interviews and archival research in Cuba; I don't think that a non-Cuban could have established the personal connections which I did in these situations. I often had the sense that my 'interviews' had been waiting for me for decades, just to share with me their reminiscences, which were on the verge of being lost.

