

Georgian student architects' Havana square project awarded Golden Mention at TerraViva Competitions



The group's vision for revitalising the historical square in Havana involved use of verticality as well as green spaces for the Plaza. Image: TerraViva Competitions

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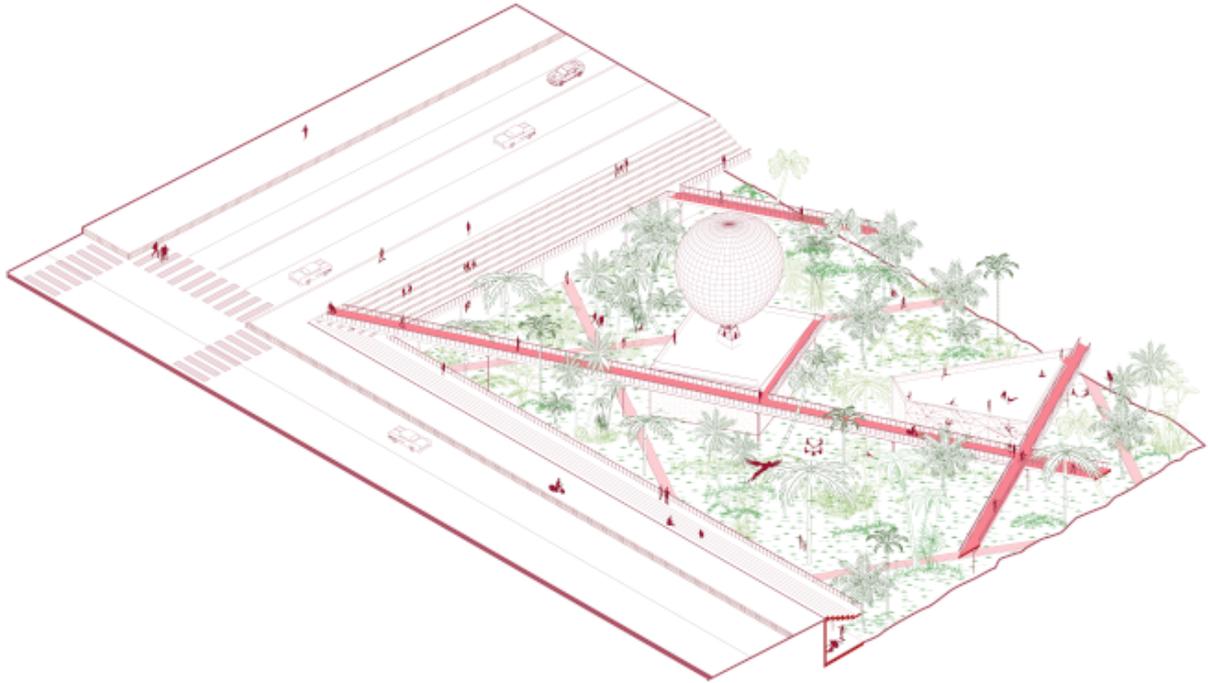
A project by student architects of University of Georgia was awarded the Golden Mention of a contest hosted by TerraViva Competitions, a platform celebrating new generations of professionals in the field, this week.

In the platform's competition The Cuban Square - set up for submissions on rethinking Plaza de la Revolución, a major square in the Old Town of Cuba's capital Havana - the group's work, entitled *Intersection for Interaction*, earned the honour and the seventh place among submitted projects.

The challenge for the square had called for an "innovative concept" of reimagining the 72,000-square-metre area rich with history. The Plaza had served as a central location in numerous events during the Cuban Revolution but has been recognised as being in need of a revitalisation.

The team involving Nina Avdalyan, Ivane Gventsadze, Mariam Megeneishvili, Beka Kalabegashvili, Nodar Kvanchiani and Salome Gugunava had submitted their vision for the space that realised the "conceptual integrity of the new square's role" in its linking of the historical and contemporary parts of the capital

"based on the superimposition of the urban grids of both parts".



In the project, the square is configured into a "multidimensional system of paths connecting the three levels of the square". Image: TerraViva Competitions

[The setup creates] a multidimensional system of paths connecting the three levels of the square and a complex of solids, two of which serve as a platform for hot air balloon trips to the historical and modern parts of the city and act as a metaphor for unity

- *summary for the project*

In their approach, the group used the technique of the perception created through descent to "defamiliarize the public void and make visitors see the square in a new way", acknowledging the previously less visible surfaces while also offering a solution to noise pollution and offering shelter from winds.

They also used ample green spaces in their layout for providing ventilation, reducing energy use, improving air quality and more, and enabled the square to assume the role of a "primary public area" of the city.

Intersection for Interaction was one of four submissions selected for the Golden Mention as organisers **unveiled their selections (<https://www.terravivacompetitions.com/the-cuban-square-competition-results-2022/>)** on Monday, distinguishing the work of the fourth year students of the Georgian university for whom the project marked their first collaboration, as well as their first foray into designs on urban-centred problems.



The student submission imagined the space of the 72,000-square-metre location in environmental, spatial and socialising aspects. Image: TerraViva Competitions

Living pretty far from Cuba, we found it a bit challenging to solve the problem and not affect the user experience of the locals. So we decided to dive into the history and current lifestyle of Cuba. Coming from a post Soviet country, the historical events were quite familiar to us

- the team's interview with competition organisers

Before their project for the contest, the architects of the group had worked as freelancers and trainees at Georgian-based companies, and submitted their works to international competitions, with several of their members winning the first place in the Best Student Project category of this year's International Architecture Awards.

Before being selected among the top seven of the contesting submissions for The Cuban Square, their project had been picked as one of 30 finalists of the competition earlier this month, after a 17-day first phase.

The second stage, launched on December 6, involved jury members in a week-long deliberation over submissions, and their votes for the eventual selection that was made public this week.

The results mark the second successful participation of Georgian professionals in TerraViva Competitions this year, following the **Honourable Mention** (<https://agenda.ge/en/news/2022/148>) for an international group involving architects from the country early this year.

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