



PRETEXT

A METHODOLOGY BOOKLET FOR PAUSE IN TIME
NAZLI CAN · METHODOLOGY S2 · ISTITUTO MARANGONI

THREE THINGS AT ONCE

The mid-review feedback came from Ariel Camara Bretas at Vogue Italia. I have read it as three instructions. Two of them are written down and they pull against each other. The third was said in the room, and it is the one that changed the work.

“Explore more in-depth Cuba and its diversity to get better inspired on how you can interpret it.”

“Cuba for you is only the inspiration or a pretext to develop in a contemporary way, mostly pay attention to what’s been presented during the FW26 Collections.”

MID-REVIEW FEEDBACK · VOGUE ITALIA × ISTITUTO MARANGONI · MAY 2026

The third instruction was not written. The mock-up looks were built out of high-end SS26 product while the story was about people who have very little and are joyful anyway. The register did not match the argument.

Between that afternoon and the delivery on 8 June I re-sourced every look, added hair and make-up, cast the model and shot it. This booklet is the methodology I followed through the whole preparation, re-read against those three instructions: what I already had, what I changed, what I kept, and what I found when I finally went looking.

WHAT WAS ALREADY RIGHT

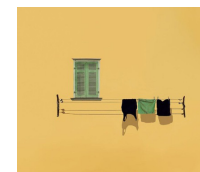
THE OBSERVATION WAS NEVER THE PROBLEM.



HAVANA, 2026 · PHOTOGRAPHED BY THE AUTHOR

This photograph opened the mid-review and it opens the final: a girl with a lollipop in a doorway, a cat asleep on the step, both entirely at ease, in a house with no door and no window. Nobody had to be told what it meant.

The written concept was right too. It describes a reality “set in a minor key” and a styling that emphasises “beauty within imperfection” — both titles of this unit, in my own words, months before any feedback.



AND THE SET WAS RIGHT. THE WASHING LINE WAS NOT INVENTED IN A STUDIO — IT WAS COLLECTED FROM WALLS, MONTHS BEFORE THE SHOOT.

2 — FAKE OUTFITS, REAL OUTFITS

FAKE OUTFITS

For the mid-review I built four looks out of SS26 product. Lilac tulle over a full skirt, by Alexander McQueen and Giambattista Valli. Green lace over shorts, Brandon Maxwell and Dôen. A red feather skirt under a white shirt, Hermès with Staud and Balenciaga. A cream drape with a floral scarf, Chloé. Shoes by Manolo Blahnik and Isabel Marant, a turban by Missoni, a headband by Jennifer Behr.



MOCK-UP LOOKS · MID-REVIEW · APRIL 2026

WHAT WAS WRONG

- Four different ideas shown at once. A range, not a wardrobe: monochrome, then pattern, then extravagant colour, then ruffles.
- SS26 product at full price, read against a story about people who keep things because they have to.
- Everything arrived finished. Nothing on these four figures could be wrapped, tied or knotted.

2 — FAKE OUTFITS, REAL OUTFITS

REAL OUTFITS

For the final I sourced differently. A polka-dot bra top over a rust denim skirt, with a blue and white striped skirt layered underneath. A pink-red striped blouse with an asymmetric floral skirt. A black crop with burgundy, yellow and cream wrapped and tied at the hip. A striped knit with royal blue trousers and a teal scarf knotted at the waist.



STYLING · FINAL · DELIVERED 8 JUNE 2026

WHAT WORKED INSTEAD

- Sourced, not borrowed. Cheaper, older and more ordinary than the mock-ups.
- Every look is finished on the body — wrapped, tied, knotted. A headscarf in all four.
- One register with four variations, instead of four registers. This is what the notebook had been describing in April.

3 — THE RESEARCH

SIX WAYS INTO CUBA

Before the mid-review I filled a notebook. The first page is a hand-drawn Caribbean with Cuba shaded in, and under it six ways into the subject. The reading was done. Putting it on a wall is a different skill, and it is the one I had not learned yet.

01

COLONIAL HISTORY

Spanish rule, the African diaspora, the war of independence.

02

REVOLUTION

1959, and the state that came out of it.

03

MUSIC

Son, rumba, salsa. Not entertainment — a form of address.

04

CINEMA

ICAIC, founded to produce not films but a new person.

05

PHOTOGRAPHY

Korda, a fashion photographer before he was a witness.

06

EVERYDAY AESTHETICS

The aesthetics of everyday life: worn, mended, faded, still in use.

→ SIX, AND THE LAST ONE IS THE PROJECT. WRITTEN IN APRIL. NONE OF IT REACHED THE BOARDS.



READ, NOT INVENTED.
ARCHIVE MATERIAL.

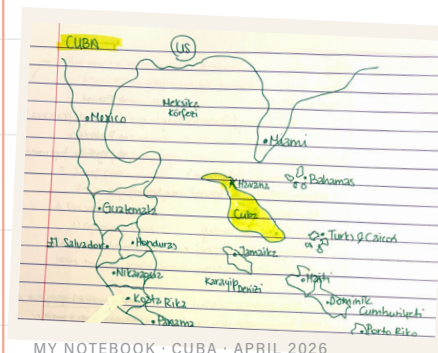
3 — THE RESEARCH

WHAT THE NOTES ALREADY KNEW

One page works through 1902 to 1959: sugar as a single-crop dependency, the Platt Amendment, foreign investment, and Havana sold as a “Caribbean Las Vegas” of tourists, casinos and mafia money. It ends in two lines.

**ELITE LIFE
IN THE CITY.
EXTREME POVERTY
IN THE COUNTRYSIDE.**

That is the contradiction the feedback pointed at, written down a month before anyone said it. A two-tier society is not a backdrop; it is a structure, and it decides which clothes can honestly stand in front of it. The product on my board belonged to the first line. The story I wanted to tell belonged to the second.



MY NOTEBOOK · CUBA · APRIL 2026



EUROPEAN ENGRAVING, 19TH C.

→ NOT A DESIGNED OBJECT. NEVER MEANT TO BE SEEN. IT IS HERE AS EVIDENCE: THE RESEARCH EXISTED, AND IT STAYED IN A DRAWER.

4 — PRETEXT, OR GRAMMAR

A PLACE USED
AS A BACKDROP

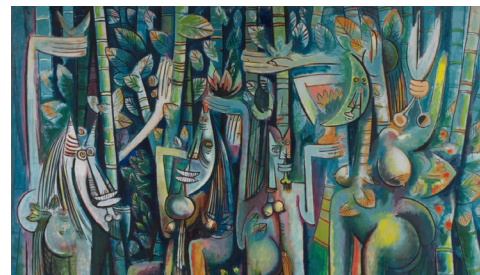
CHANEL CRUISE 2016/17 · KARL LAGERFELD · PASEO DEL PRADO, HAVANA · 3 MAY 2016

Under the heading Research, in my own notes, there is a line that reads: “Karl Lagerfeld — Cuba show.” It went onto the concept map without a question mark.

Lagerfeld showed Cruise on the Paseo del Prado on 3 May 2016. Models smoked cigars on the runway. Havana’s vintage cars came back as a printed silk. Seven hundred guests were flown in; local crowds watched from behind a barricade of those same cars. The show notes named no Cubans.

→ ON MY CONCEPT MAP, UNQUESTIONED

4 — PRETEXT, OR GRAMMAR

SHE DID NOT
PHOTOGRAPH CUBA

WIFREDO LAM · LA JUNGLA, 1942-43 · MOMA.
→ ON MY CONCEPT MAP TOO, AND THE ONE
THING ON IT THAT SURVIVED THE FEEDBACK.

Scott built a whole collection on Lam without photographing Cuba once. Made with Refugee Atelier and Diotima’s Jamaican crochet artisans, credited by name. Take the grammar, not the picture.



DIOTIMA AW26 · RACHEL SCOTT · NEW YORK · FEBRUARY 2026 · WITH THE WIFREDO LAM ESTATE

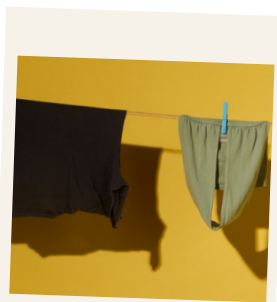
5 — WHAT THE SEASON WAS DOING

I DID NOT INVENT THIS

The second half of the feedback said look at FW26. I expected a season I would have to argue my way into. Instead four houses were already working on the thing I had noticed in Havana and could not name.

1 · PRADA — THE DEMOLISHED APARTMENT

MIUCCIA PRADA & RAF SIMONS · MILAN · 27 FEBRUARY 2026

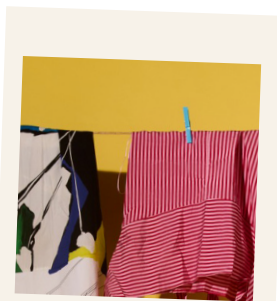


→ A DEMOLISHED BUILDING USED AS A SET. THAT IS MY WASHING LINE, WITH A BETTER ARGUMENT BEHIND IT.

Sixty looks, fifteen models, each walking twice with a layer removed. The collection revealed by subtraction.

2 · MAISON MARGIELA — THE RELIC

GLENN MARTENS · SHANGHAI · 2 APRIL 2026

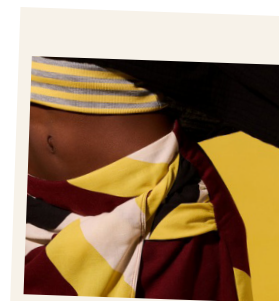


→ THE CLOTHES ON MY LINE ARE WORN AND SECOND-HAND, NOT NEW. THAT WAS ALREADY THE POINT.

A nocturnal flea market. Porcelain shattered and reassembled onto cloth, dresses sealed in beeswax.

3 · PROENZA SCHOULER — THE UN-SMOOTHED

RACHEL SCOTT, DEBUT · NEW YORK · 13 FEBRUARY 2026

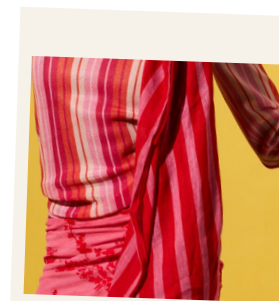


→ NOTHING IN MY SHOOT IS PRESSED. THE WRAP IS KNOTTED ON THE BODY, NOT FITTED.

Mis-buttoned, buckled, left to fray. A woman who “didn’t smooth it down properly.”

4 · MARINE SERRE — VALUE FROM THE VALUELESS

"THE GRACE OF TIME" · PARIS · MARCH 2026



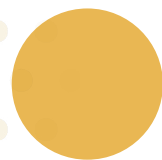
→ STRIPE ON STRIPE, DOT ON DOT: MY LOOKS ARE ASSEMBLED FROM FRAGMENTS TOO.

The Louvre let her remake the Mona Lisa. A corset armoured with upcycled paint tubes, hammered flat.

Four houses, three cities, one season, one idea: the garment that carries time on its surface. My subject was never Cuba. It is this. Cuba is only where I happened to notice it.

THE YELLOW SURVIVES. EVERYTHING ELSE DROPS.

BEFORE — SAMPLED FROM THE APRIL BOARDS



WALL OCHRE

C0 M23 Y75 K9

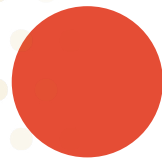
the set-design board, 14% of it



MOCK-UP LILAC

C18 M21 Y0 K12

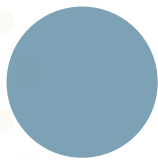
the loudest garment on the board



FEATHER RED

C0 M83 Y83 K5

the red feather skirt



CARIBBEAN TEAL

C30 M3 Y0 K32

shutters, in every reference



BLEACHED CREAM

C0 M11 Y30 K7

the sunlit wall, the drape

→ FOUR OF THESE FIVE SIT ABOVE 70% BRIGHTNESS. A SUN-BLEACHED PALETTE, TAKEN FROM OTHER PEOPLE'S PHOTOGRAPHS OF CUBA.

THE SAME KEY, LOWERED

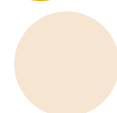
AFTER — SAMPLED FROM THE DELIVERED IMAGES



GROUND OCHRE

C0 M25 Y99 K11

the ground I built and lit



DOT CREAM

C0 M8 Y15 K3

the ground the dots sit on



FLORAL ROSE

C10 M47 Y16 K0

the floral skirt



BRICK

C0 M68 Y67 K35

the denim skirt



BURGUNDY

C0 M78 Y74 K75

the wrap — FW26's leading non-neutral



STRIPE COBALT

C78 M53 Y0 K27

a striped skirt, layered underneath



SCARF TEAL

C94 M20 Y0 K42

the scarf, knotted at the waist



ROYAL BLUE

C100 M99 Y11 K2

the trousers



KNIT CITRON

C14 M5 Y56 K0

the striped knit



The ground measures Co M25 Y99 K11. The April wall measured Co M23 Y75 K9 — the same hue, 44°, held. What moved is everything around it: the palette's median brightness fell from 91% to 75%.

WHAT I KEPT, WHAT I CHANGED

The shoot happened and the images were delivered on 8 June. A methodology is not a confession. It is a record of what held under pressure and what had to move.

KEPT

THE WASHING LINE. From real walls, not a studio.

THE DOORWAY PHOTOGRAPH. It opened both.

THE WRITTEN CONCEPT. Both unit titles, in April.

ONE MODEL, FOUR LOOKS, NO CROWD.

THE OCHRE GROUND, AND THE RED.

CHANGED

THE CLOTHES. Bought product out, sourced pieces in.

THE FINISH. Nothing pressed. Wrapped and tied.

THE GROUND. Someone else's wall, then mine.

THE READING. Chanel from reference to counter-example.

THE CREDITS. Everyone on the shoot named.

→ THE CONCEPT MAP ITSELF NEVER CHANGED. WHAT CHANGED IS HOW I READ IT.

A place is not a subject. It is where you noticed something. Find the condition underneath, and build the method out of that. Take the grammar, not the picture. Re-key the colour instead of abandoning it. Credit whoever taught you.



THE FRAME I DIDN'T SHOOT.

Found inside frame 10241, where the model was standing just below the line. I never made this picture on the day.

SOURCES & CREDITS

PRIMARY DOCUMENTS

Pause in Time, mid-review presentation. Vogue Italia × Istituto Marangoni, April 2026.

Mid-review feedback, Ariel Camara Bretas, Vogue Italia, May 2026.

Pause in Time, final industry project. Delivered 8 June 2026.

Author's research notebook, Cuba, April 2026. Seven pages.

FW26 COLLECTIONS

Diotima AW26, Rachel Scott. New York, February 2026, with the Wifredo Lam estate; made with Refugee Atelier and Diotima's Jamaican crochet artisans.

Proenza Schouler AW26, Rachel Scott, debut. New York, 13 February 2026.

Prada AW26, Miuccia Prada & Raf Simons. Milan, 27 February 2026.

Maison Margiela AW26, Glenn Martens. Shanghai, 2 April 2026.

Marine Serre AW26, "The Grace of Time". Paris, March 2026, with the Musée du Louvre.

Marni AW26, Meryll Rogge, debut. Milan, 26 February 2026.

Fendi AW26, Maria Grazia Chiuri, debut. Milan, 25 February 2026.

Bottega Veneta AW26, Louise Trotter. Milan, February 2026.

Celine AW26, Michael Rider. Paris, March 2026.

Dior AW26, Jonathan Anderson. Paris, 6 March 2026.

ART & PHOTOGRAPHY

Wifredo Lam, 1902–1982. La Jungla, 1942–43, and Omi Obini, 1943.

Wifredo Lam: When I Don't Sleep, I Dream. MoMA, New York, 10 November 2025 – 11 April 2026.

Alberto Korda, 1928–2001. A fashion photographer before Guerrillero Heroico, 5 March 1960.

CUBAN GRAPHIC DESIGN

Cuban film posters of the twentieth century. UNESCO Memory of the World Register, 2023: 2,230 posters, Cinemateca de Cuba / ICAIC.

ICAIC founded March 1959. OSPAAAL founded at the first Tricontinental Conference, Havana, January 1966.

Posters: Cuba Baila, dir. Julio García Espinosa, ICAIC 1960; Noticiero ICAIC Latinoamericano, dir. Santiago Álvarez.

COUNTER-EXAMPLE

Chanel Cruise 2016/17, Karl Lagerfeld. Paseo del Prado, Havana, 3 May 2016.

CREDITS

Creative direction and styling: Nazlı Can.

Photography: Marco Malingambi.

Model: Franchesca Tejada.

Hair and make-up: Marina Magoni.

IMAGES

Havana doorway and notebook pages photographed by the author.

Set-design references collected by the author for the mid-review board; photographers unidentified.

Nineteenth-century European engravings of the Cuban cane harvest and of a sugar plantation; artists and publications unidentified.

Runway, poster and archive imagery reproduced for academic study only.

Both palettes on pages 12–13 were measured from the source files, not chosen by eye.



RHYTHM FROM AFRICA. MELODY FROM SPAIN. THE STREET IS THE STAGE.

FROM MY NOTEBOOK, APRIL 2026

PRETEXT

NAZLI CAN

FASHION STYLING, CREATIVE DIRECTION & DIGITAL CONTENT

ISTITUTO MARANGONI MILANO · METHODOLOGY S2

BEAUTIFUL FAILURES & IN MINOR KEYS · 2026