

Iconic Cuban statue back on display

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The iconic Statue of the Republic, a giant in-door piece of art, reopened to the public here this week after a year-long repair and gold-plating.

The over 18-meter-high statue returned to the lobby of the National Capitol Building, a public edifice built between 1926 and 1929.

Former President Raul Castro and Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov attended the reopening ceremony.

For eight months, a group of Russian specialists had restored and applied a thin layer of 24-karat gold to the bronze statue, with materials donated by the Russian government.

Apart from that, Russia-based company CMC Development is also responsible for coating the dome of the National Capitol Building for celebrating the 500th anniversary of Havana's foundation in next November.

The statue had also undergone dirt and rust removal as well as repairs in the chips and cracks. Havana City Historian Eusebio Leal called the restoration "very serious."

The statue represents the virtues and long-lasting morale of Cuban people, who began their fight for independence in 1868. It is also an expression of an "undefeated and fighting nation," Leal said.

The 50-ton statue, standing on a marble pedestal two meters and a half in width, was created by lated Italian sculptor Angelo Zanelli.

According to Cuban historians, the statue's contour was modeled after two Cuban girls, while its image was inspired by the Greek goddess Athena.

"I've brought my children to the Capitol, and we always stopped before the Statue of the Republic because it is something admirable," said Irma Echeverria, a mother works for a government-run trade firm.

Her family returned here "to compare and see how beautiful it is" after the restoration."

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