

***Taller de superación para profesores de historia del arte.  
Alternativa desde la didáctica del patrimonio universitario  
Improvement workshop for art history teachers. Alternative  
from the teaching of university heritage***

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**RESUMEN:** La Universidad de la Habana contiene una serie de museos, que atesoran incontables objetos de valor, discretamente utilizados en la formación profesional de los estudiantes de la Carrera de Historia del Arte. El artículo está dirigido a mostrar el valor del patrimonio cultural universitario desde la preparación de los profesores de la Carrera, quienes resultan promotores del patrimonio universitario, en tanto lo conciben en las salidas académicas de asignaturas y disciplinas. El resultado está estructurado desde la concepción de un sistema de talleres metodológicos que se articulan con la utilización de técnicas para el reconocimiento y utilización del patrimonio universitario.

**Palabras clave:** Superación; Preparación metodológica; Patrimonio cultural; Puesta en valor

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**ABSTRACT:** The University of Havana contains a series of museums housing countless valuable objects, discreetly used in the professional training of students in the Art History program. This article aims to demonstrate the value of university cultural heritage from the perspective of the program's professors, who are promoters of university heritage, as they understand it in academic outings for subjects and disciplines. The result is structured around the conception of a system of methodological workshops that are articulated with the use of techniques for the recognition and utilization of university heritage.

**Keywords:** Overcoming; Methodological preparation; Cultural heritage; Enhancement

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## **Introduction**

As a result of the understanding of UNESCO's objectives, declared in the Convention for the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (Paris, 1972), which regulates the conservation of World Heritage properties and requires them to be a legacy for Humanity, the need arises to seek concrete results aimed at “identifying, protecting, conserving, revaluing, transmitting

and educating current and future generations in the precepts of cultural and natural heritage of outstanding universal value”.

In tune with this, the policy of the Cuban state, signatory of the aforementioned convention, approved in May 2022 through the General Law for the Protection of Cultural Heritage and Natural Heritage, which is responsible, among other elements, for regulating the orderly, rational and organic functioning of museums, as well as the responsibilities and obligations of state entities, and to precisely establish citizen participation as an important vehicle for the transmission of experiences, skills and knowledge between generations, the idea of conducting a research that would yield results related to the real possibilities and concrete aspirations was supported.

Particularly, Article 6 of the referred national norm establishes the principles for the protection of Cultural Heritage and Natural Heritage, through which cooperation, citizen education and the transmission of the referred heritage to present and future generations are promoted, all of which constituted the referent in the scientific perspective of the object and field in question.

The initial context and scope of the research are based on the role of the Direction of University Heritage of the University of Havana and the scientific-methodological activity it must carry out within the object of work. From there arises the challenge to value the heritage treasured in the University of Havana in its almost 300 years and to make it known.

The task, articulated through the research work, unveils the set of experiences achieved in the structuring of knowledge on the subject; projecting the multiple forms that in the academic-institutional universe can be recognized and of exit to the mentioned objectives, taking into consideration the potentialities of the nearby environment, all of which gave rise, in principle, to the conception of the subject Didactics of Heritage and later to the implementation of a methodology for the Art History career.

The subject, in its academic development, has reached significance and prestige, to the extent of being recognized in the optional curriculum of the above mentioned career of the Faculty of Arts and Letters of the University of Havana. At present, Didactics of Heritage is taught within the optional curriculum, and is part of the cultural management that guarantees the incorporation of practical knowledge within the Promotion discipline, in addition to providing a link with the Interdisciplinary Work Practice, specifically in the second year.

The system of objectives conceives it as an exceptional didactic vehicle aimed at forming in students the system of knowledge, scientific methods and values, as well as the principles and

norms of professional ethics that allow them to influence the conservation and protection of cultural heritage as premises of the values in which they should be formed, in correspondence with the educational policy of the Communist Party of Cuba and the Cuban State. At the same time, the subject has the purpose of providing a basis from the theoretical, methodological and practical references of didactics, the most appropriate research technology, as well as the methods for the interpretation, valuation and presentation of cultural heritage most used for their efficiency.

The present work also reveals the set of relationships established between the development of a patrimonial thinking and the experiences achieved in the management of the university cultural patrimony itself, as well as its methodological output through the preparation of the faculty of the Art History career, structured from the conception of a system of workshops based on the use of certified techniques and conceived for the recognition and adequate use of the University Patrimony.

## **Development**

Heritage education is key to the preservation and perpetuity of history, as stated by Fernández and García (2024). The social importances of the traditions of a given region are framed in the collectivity, in being part of it, from varying degrees of participation. The objective position defines identity from common objectives (inheritance, genealogy), language, religion, collective psychology or “base personality”, territory, among others. In the opposite position is the subjectivist vision, where cultural identity cannot be reduced to attributes, nor can it be considered immovable.

The faculties of Higher Education Institutions are committed to establishing closer and closer relationships with the surrounding heritage. In its broadest conception, the process is understood as the conscious approach to the material and spiritual goods treasured by the university in the historical-cultural evolution, especially the goods related to the specialty, being by definition the values contained in and from the career itself, or those existing in the environment in tangible and intangible form, generated through the sociocultural, scientific and research interaction of the faculty or personalities linked directly or indirectly to the institution.

In the profile of the careers, it is recognized that the training processes should not only promote knowledge, but also go deep into the enjoyment and understanding of the contents that make up

the universe of knowledge that sustains it, so that each member of the university community becomes a manager, protector and promoter of cultural and patrimonial assets.

When exploring the didactic possibilities, in the patrimonial order, in order to enrich the formation process in the Art History career, it was a milestone to take advantage of the potentialities offered by the university patrimony contained in the University of Havana for the study of certain subjects and disciplines that find in the works of art an ally for the analysis of the cultural and artistic facts inherent to the formation of professionals.

In view of the situation described, it became necessary to reconcile the most effective proposals for the enhancement of the university heritage associated to the career, with a didactic approach, since the most appropriate way to achieve the interrelation came from the possibility of linking the curricular objectives and requirements of the Career with the museum potential of the university environment, discreetly used previously.

It favors the purpose that the career faculty is characterized by the constant improvement of the broad profile training model; the adequate balance between academic, work and research activities; the level of essentiality of the selected contents; the extension of the time spaces contemplated in the curriculum for the students' self-preparation; the convenient curricular flexibility; and the essential strengthening of the students' protagonism in the training process, as established by the Ministry of Higher Education.

In line with the above, the professional model proposes that artistic and cultural events should not be explained solely within the framework of the dominant theoretical discourse of art, but rather that integrative methodological strategies are required to condition the plural and organic inclusion of diverse forms of knowledge. Thus, both the principles that operate for the construction of art and its history, and for establishing the synergy of teaching art history itself, assume open and flexible concepts of the notion of art, which require the concurrence of increasingly transdisciplinary approaches in the implementation of practice.

The demands raised led to an approach to the study of the training process of Art History graduates and its inner workings, which in turn are related to the mission and vision of the University Cultural Heritage Department.

Accordingly, the work establishes links with the research project: **Multidisciplinary approach to the management of university cultural heritage**, approved in the National Program "Social sciences and humanities. Challenges facing the development of Cuban society." Secondly, it aims

to relate the expected results of the degree program to the strengths of the already established training process.

Overall, the intention of the work described was to engage students through sociocultural projects in order to expand their professional, scientific, and research skills. Thus, this document describes the joint concept assumed and developed between both instances, specifically aimed at revaluing cultural heritage from a pedagogical perspective, conceiving a system of workshops for teachers that articulate the use of certified teaching procedures for the enhancement of university heritage.

Among the most significant challenges for higher education in terms of cultural processes and heritage education, according to García and Fernández (2022), are: integration into cultural processes and links with communities; direct and indirect links with those involved in cultural processes; assessment of the impact of cultural processes and their inclusion in university outreach; the perception of cultural processes from educational, social, and environmental perspectives, among others.

We begin by characterizing the Interdisciplinary Practical Work Discipline: recognizing that it constitutes the set of subjects that make up the Study Plan, as it is a fundamental subsystem of the student training process in which the knowledge, skills, and values articulated by the rest of the disciplines during the degree program converge. Its fundamental purpose is, therefore, to combine theory and practice through the exercise of the different modes of professional activity of the art historian and to complete, from Marxist and Martí foundations, their comprehensive training.

The development of the discipline spans from the first to the fourth year, and this gradual structuring is conceived through organic interaction with the objectives set out in the professional model for each academic year, in constant dialogue with the other organizational forms of the teaching process, which presupposes its conception based on a systemic approach to teaching, research, and work practice.

Considering that the discipline will contribute to the students being able to: know and enrich through practical experience, the wide spectrum of artistic and cultural facts and expressions that constitute the artistic and cultural facts and expressions that constitute the object of work of the art historian, as well as to understand their multiple conditioning, from a creative scientific perspective that encourages them to act in favor of the aesthetic transformation of reality. That in turn will make it possible to exercise in the mastery of the basic skills for the realization of didactic,

informative and promotional tasks in the field of artistic culture and in the elaboration of the documentary records that complement them, contributing to the achievement of cultural didactic objectives appropriate to different types of audiences and to the sensitization of the population, in general, towards artistic production. And finally, it will enable them to develop the conviction of the need for conservation, safeguarding and protection of the environment from an integral conception and of the patrimonial values through the knowledge of the procedures and strategies implemented by the nation's cultural institutions for such purposes.

In this way, the essential knowledge that will be acquired through work practice will guarantee the linking of students to practical work in Teaching Units and labor entities so that they can exercise “in situ” at least a part of the spectrum of activities carried out by the art historian in his or her various fields of professional activity.

The insertion of students in these centers and institutions should constitute an ideal vehicle to promote and consolidate in them the best habits of work conduct. At the same time, the tasks assigned to them should contribute to the fulfillment of the general objectives of the Plan of Study and the specific ones of the academic year in question, always working under the direct advice of a specialist of the institution itself who acts as a tutor to guide, control and actively intervene in the evaluation of the results.

To advance in the conception it is necessary to know that the elective and elective subjects reserve a total of 224 hours (6.50% of the total), whose implementation is suggested structured throughout the four years (eight semesters) of duration of the career, so that students, when exercising their criteria of choice, do so in line with professional or personal interests that are revealed and consolidated throughout their training.

In relation to the above, the Promotion discipline considers subjects aimed at deepening different types of cultural management. This is when the career collectives design the optional and elective subjects, in order to periodically evaluate their performance and update the offers according to the interests of the professional field, the social demands both national and territorial; the opinions of the students and the availability of faculty for their teaching.

By providing students with knowledge about the complex and systemic nature of cultural promotion, as well as the main historical and current notions of museology, collecting and curatorship, especially in the Cuban environment, it stimulates their exercise in the relevant

evaluation of artistic and patrimonial values, training them in the conception of actions aimed at their conservation, control and safeguarding, as an essential part of the defense of cultural identity and the Cuban nation.

Thus, students must critically analyze the different models and experiences in the development of museology, curatorship and cultural management in general -both in their historical evolution and in selected practices of our own contemporary artistic and cultural reality-, evaluating the level of application of a systemic approach to promotional work and the efficiency of its results; displaying in such analysis the exercise of personal judgment and the culture of debate that should distinguish the art historian.

Observing the set of previous requirements, the possibility arose of enriching the knowledge associated with cultural promotion from within the university institution itself, so that the perspective of the work carried out daily by the direction of University Heritage would be part of the curriculum itself and of the elective option in favor of the deepening, the complement and the desirable updating required by the students. For this purpose, a scientific and methodological exercise was carried out together with the faculty of the career, reaching the determination of linking the subject: Didactics of University Heritage to the defined purposes.

It is important to consider that from the approach made, it was decided that the subject should be taught as part of the optional curriculum in the first semester of the second year of the Art History course. This was supported by a group of necessary definitions of the curricular context, such as, for example: Article 79 of the Resolution of Methodological Work of the MES; likewise Article 80 which establishes: “elective subjects are those that are included in the study plan and from which the student selects a certain number to take on a compulsory basis” Ministry of Higher Education (MES, 2018a). In relation to the profession and to project the contents, a thorough review was made of the study plan, corresponding to Plan E, approved by the MES in 2018, particularly in the Model of the Professional, a document that provides timely information for the projection of actions since it implicitly contains and defines the characterization of the career, the characterization of the profession, the general objectives of the career and the system of values to be developed (MES, 2018b).

Thus, the general objectives are established as follows: Demonstrate by example and daily performance the system of knowledge, scientific methods and values, as well as the principles

and norms of professional ethics that allow them to have an impact on the conservation and protection of cultural heritage as premises of the values to be formed, in correspondence with the educational policy of the Communist Party of Cuba and the Cuban State; permanently raise their ideopolitical, economic, legal, scientific-pedagogical and cultural preparation, through scientific ways and methods for research, self-preparation and the achievement of an integral general culture that allows them to defend in different contexts the inherited cultural heritage and its transcendence; and to base from the theoretical, methodological and practical referents of didactics, technology and Research, the interpretation, valuation and presentation of cultural heritage from their experiences and the knowledge acquired in the subject.

The knowledge system was structured in three fundamental themes: **Theme 1:** Theoretical and didactic foundations on cultural heritage.

Contents: Cultural heritage. Definitions of Heritage. The international community and its position regarding the protection and safeguarding of heritage. Symbols, institutions, programs, and objectives. UNESCO World Heritage List (2005), site selection criteria. Heritage in danger or threatened. Heritage legislation.

**Theme 2:** The didactics of cultural heritage. Approaches and enhancement.

Contents: The didactics of heritage in the educational curriculum, European vision as a discipline under construction. The object of study of the didactics of heritage: the relations between goods and people. The communication of heritage. The interpretation of heritage. The didactics of heritage. Research in heritage education: “Interrogating the objects”.

The patrimonial education. Concepts. Heritage education in Europe and Latin America: case studies. The educational value and the didactic use of heritage. The role of heritage education in the formation of citizenship, heritage awareness and social participation.

**Topic 3:** The cultural heritage of the University of Havana (UH).

Contents: The university cultural heritage. Its diversity. Definition and examples. Historical and patrimonial places in the UH. Representative figures of the plastic arts and architecture in the UH. Works of art at the UH. Sculptures as a form of university artistic manifestation. The Alma Mater and the staircase as university symbols. The buildings. The “Felipe Poey” Building. The Aula Magna. Museums, buildings and the central library. The squares and monuments.

In this way, the fulfillment of the set of qualities and values that should characterize the Art History graduate is guaranteed, to which is contributed through: the transdisciplinary and interinstitutional character; the use of virtual learning environments; the development of independent work; the stimulation of self-learning; the development of professional skills; the link with the communities; the enhancement of the university heritage; the development of the conception of heritage didactics; the possibilities of working from an extensionist approach; and the opening of new approaches for heritage research.

In order to achieve an adequate interpretation of the purposes described above, the need arose to develop a series of methodological activities, together with the faculty of the career and especially those who make up the discipline described above. Thus, a first methodological workshop was designed under the following thought structure, reflected in the following figure 1.1

**Figure 1.1.**

*Description of the first moment or Transdisciplinary Methodological Workshop*



**Source:** Self elaboration

**Participants:** Professors of Art History, heritage, related specialties and museologists.

**Objective:** to relate the possibility of using objects of heritage value as an indispensable means to bring Art History students closer to the culture existing in museum environments.

**Theoretical foundation:** to demonstrate the existence of an object-based didactics. **Theoretical framework:** to certify that contents are related; to define that objects and images are fundamental instruments for teaching and learning; to sustain that the great thinkers of the modern school, especially Maria Montessori and Decroly, built didactics around objects; to demonstrate that university “intra” patrimonial spaces are containers of objects for learning; to expose that there are didactic arguments in favor of teaching through objects, related to the purposes of the Art History career.

The following didactic arguments appear: Objects are concrete elements that can be observed from all possible angles; what is taught through the image of an object attracts attention more easily; objects allow teaching through the use of the hypothetico-deductive method, the basis of historical analysis; the inductive method allows going from the particular to the general, suitable for making inductions; objects are a resource of the imagination and obey specific historical-cultural interpretations; the teacher can use objects as authentic inclusions of a dense network of concepts; the object facilitates remembering the concept because it is in itself a concept defined and materially structured under rigorous laws coming from science at a given cultural moment; therefore, objects are real elements of an epoch. “The didactics of the object consists of relating objects or products with concepts, in order to establish links that make these concepts comprehensible and fixed in the memory”.

To demonstrate the above precepts, techniques from research in heritage didactics are used: “Interrogate objects”.

### **Description of the second moment or Workshop Class:**

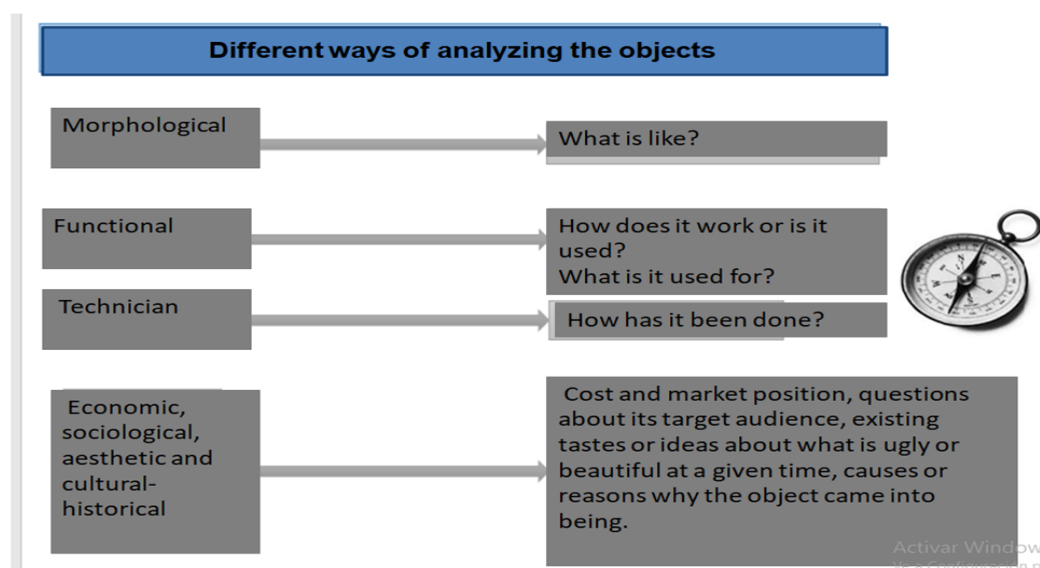
**Objective:** To present the results of the observation and exploration of heritage objects and their enhancement through the method of object analysis, taking into account the experiences obtained by interacting with the scientific instruments of the astronomical observatory of the University of Havana.

**Description of the activity:** The analysis of any object contains knowledge based on the following principles: Any object, put in value, shows a part of the technical culture of the moment in which it was built. For example, a compass from the 15th century tells us about the technique with which it was made. The object contains a part of the scientific knowledge of its time. The compass shows the state of cosmology and cartography of the time in which it was disseminated. The object also

encloses the historical evolution, i.e. the set of changes it underwent since the first specimen appeared until the examined one. The design of any object hides the aesthetic criteria of the author and the period. See figure 1.2

**Figure 1.2**

*Analysis of objects*



**Source:** Self elaboration

**OBJECTUAL METHOD OF ANALYSIS: Object identification:** Name of the object; place where it was manufactured, where it was found or where it is today; author or production mark, if any; identification number, if any; bibliographic reference, web, filmography, etc.

**Morphological analysis:** Description of the shape of the object, trying to geometrize it; dimensions of the object to be analyzed; parts or pieces that compose it, if possible; materials involved in the composition of the object; surfaces, colors, etc.; conservation or current state (is it broken or whole, is it damaged?); drawing, sketch, compositional scheme or photograph.

**Functional analysis:** What uses the object may have, if known; describe how it functions or what it could be used for; elucidate, if possible, the function of each component or part; relate the form to the function; observe whether its form facilitates its function; if it uses energy to function, say which; reveal whether at the time it was put in value as a museum object its use or functioning was at risk.

**Technical analysis:** Describe, if possible, the techniques with which it could have been manufactured or produced; describe the production process, if it is easy to deduce; make hypotheses; what tools could have been used; characteristics of the materials used in each of the parts; advantages or disadvantages of the materials used.

**Historical/cultural analysis:** absolute or relative chronology of the object; in what context it arose; was or did the object or this type of object represent a great change with respect to what existed before? Does the object represent a continuity of something previously existing? Of what? Can it be related to someone or some movement or period? How did the object subsequently evolve? Does something similar exist today?

**Aesthetic or artistic analysis:** Is the object symmetrical or not; color properties, if any; does the form respond to the function; is it simple or complex; does it respond to current aesthetic criteria or not?

**Sociological analysis:** Study what needs can the object satisfy; What sectors can it be aimed at; Is it an element of general and massive use or of very restricted use; Is it a very common, accessible and cheap element for the majority; Is it specifically designed for either sex or for a certain age group; Is it specifically designed for either sex or for a certain age group?

**Economic analysis:** Is it an own production, domestic or foreign (manufactured, industrial, etc.); study how much it could have cost to manufacture (degree of specialization of the authors, technical difficulties, cost of materials, etc.); study the production costs, that is to say, the factors that imply import of products, special transports, protection of routes, existing intermediaries in this trade, etc.; could the object be produced with other materials at lower costs; who or who marketed it, if it was the case?

## Conclusions

The results presented are related to the joint approach between the Art History Career and the Direction of University Patrimony and it is structured from the conception of a system of methodological workshops that are articulated with the use of certified techniques for the recognition and adequate use of the University Patrimony treasured by the house of high studies of Cuban Higher Education. It also reveals the set of relations established between the development of a patrimonial thinking and the experiences achieved in the management of the university cultural

patrimony itself, as well as its methodological output through the preparation of the Art History career staff,

The intentionality of the work was aimed at linking students through socio-cultural projects in order to expand labor, scientific and research capabilities. Through the actions developed, the cultural heritage is revalued from the pedagogical dimension, and important updates are achieved in the didactic procedures certified for the valorization of the university heritage.

By means of the actions carried out, we can enter into the requirements of Study Plan “E”, whose purposes are aimed at guaranteeing the training of professionals with a broad profile, trained to face the functions and general problems of the profession in what constitutes its basic link, whose continuity of training should be ensured through postgraduate studies, the latter conceived with a systemic vision that favors the updating, broadening and deepening of knowledge, in accordance with the national and territorial needs correctly identified.

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