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ABSTRACT

The authors review the 5th volume of *Studies on Conservation, Restoration, and Museology* (Spanish: *Estudios sobre conservación, restauración y museología*), which contains fifteen papers whose main topic is cultural heritage. The papers, organized around four subtopics (problems affecting heritage; conservation-restoration boundaries; heritage disciplines and the heritage professional), were the subject of debate at the 10th Academic Forum of the *Escuela Nacional de Conservación, Restauración y Museografía (ENCRyM)*, from the 25th to the 28th of July 2017 before the 50th anniversary of the ENCRyM. The review emphasizes the focus on the local-global tensions affecting archeological, urban, and ethnographic heritage; the various disciplinary fields that serve as a basis for heritage professionals; and the experiences in new work contexts, as well as a corresponding educational paradigm based on competences and a different curriculum design.

KEYWORDS

cultural heritage; heritage professionals; conservation boundaries; heritage disciplines

The *Escuela Nacional de Conservación, Restauración y Museografía (ENCRyM)*, of the *Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia (INAH, Mexico)*, hosted the presentation to the public of the 5th volume of *Studies on Conservation, Restoration, and Museology* (De la Torre, & García, 2018), on the

FIGURE 1. E-book cover of De la Torre, G. and García, E. (cords.). (2018). *Estudios sobre conservación, restauración y museología, vol. V. (Studies on Conservation, Restoration, and Museology, vol. V.)* Mexico: National School of Conservation, Restoration, and Museography of the National Institute of Anthropology and History. ISBN: 978-607-539-152-6. Recovered from <https://www.encrym.edu.mx/Uploads/Publicaciones/PDF-33553.pdf>

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27th of September 2018, within the commemorative framework of the 50th anniversary of the institution (Figure 1). The central theme deals with cultural heritage, around which there is a versatile set of voices of heterogeneous disciplinary origin —both from social sciences and the humanities—, representing the host venue and distinguished public institutions of higher education in the country.



Volume V brings together fifteen papers and is divided into four thought-provoking threads, described herein. Reading it is a pleasurable experience in observing a careful search for balance in terms of the dialogue between the disciplines that integrate volume V, a concern also perceptible in the previous volumes. Hence the processes concerning training and teaching, documentation and its praxis, as well as management and outreach with communities or social groups, emerge less frequently than those dealing with the history and background of heritage, particularly of built heritage, or those focusing on conservation strategies or unique manufacturing techniques.

There is also an emerging presence of a museological perspective and its concomitant exhibitionary practices regarding the complex and controversial aspects of museum objects, spaces, and processes. A fortunate exception in this volume, to the benefit of heritage education, is the topical conceptualization offered by Manuel Gándara (De la Torre, & García, 2018, pp. 132-145) of three figures linked to museum practices: the curator, the mediator, and the interpreter.

Regarding the threads and sections to examine in detail, “The problem of cultural heritage” (De la Torre, & García, 2018, Ch. 1) is the first of these. This section addresses diverse types of current issues concerning cultural heritage, both political and legal, as well as those regarding social tensions, whether of an economic character or relating to commercial exploitation, management, or conceptualization.

The opinions of the authors therein expressed advocate for the sustainability of two heritage areas. María Concepción Obregón discusses one of them in “Changes and contradictions in public policies regarding Mexican archeological heritage.” The article focuses on the contradictions between conservative-nationalist conceptions, which the author identifies as “nostalgic-conservationist”, and conceptions that promote the commercialization of public services in general, and heritage in particular. Therefore, she warns about the urgency of designing sustainability policies that allow a negotiated balance between the economic and identity factors as well as between sociocultural improvements and the proper use and enjoyment of the heritage.

Regarding the other area, built heritage, in “Challenges for the management of cultural heritage: a decolonial approach to the case of the Historic Center of Mexico City,” Georgina Carbajal presents a challenging thesis: to confront the notion of *heritage* as inheritance and expose it as an obstacle to reflection on history and memory. Daniel Monroy, in turn, issues an invitation to transcend stigmas and paradigms concerning the incompatibilities between the tangible values of real estate and the intangible values of conservation in his article “The impact of real estate on the conservation of urban architectural heritage in Mexico City.” Similarly, in “The dichotomy of public and private built heritage: an axiological approach for its conservation,” Francisco José Casado explains the urgency of addressing the continuous dialogue between the public and the private in their interaction with built heritage from a philosophical perspective, in other words, from an approach to the nature of values and value judgments.

In the liminal space between archaeological and built heritage lies an irresolute gap between past and present, and also the unchartered territories of popular art, crafts, popular cultures, traditional knowledge, and even ethnography. Two of the three papers on the topic focus on the misuse of indigenous intangible heritage. “Tenango embroidery: from cultural heritage to collective brand” by Diana Macho illustrates the complex web of advantages and obstacles that collective brand registration entails. For their part,

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Libertad and Ociel Mora, in “Indigenous heritage and iconography: dichotomy in discussion,” try to resolve the tricky ideological breach between art and craft. They intend to expose both the racist practices behind this dichotomy and the impunity of plagiarism that threatens the indigenous iconographic repertoire.

The work of Ana Lizeth Mata and Claudia Coronado, “Between art and craft: what it is and how to preserve it,” completes this trilogy. With the restoration of the work *Nierika* by artisan José Benítez, part of the collection in the *Museo Regional de Nayarit* (Mexico), the authors tackle the challenge of reconceptualizing the notions of art and craft. They maintain that the substantial differences once said to exist between the two are no longer valid today, which is why the permeability between their borders is increasingly visible.

The second section of the volume is “Borders between conservation and restoration,” which contains different themes concerning conservation and restoration activities and practices, their links, and distinctions, particularly regarding functionality, documentation, decision-making, and intervention. This section is also comprised of three articles.

In “The notion of functionality and its impact on the restoration of musical instruments,” Lourdes Nava reframes the notion of *functionality* to widen its conceptual limits beyond the simple “use to produce sounds.” Considering a pair of ophicleides and a pipe organ of the San Juan Tepemasalco chapel, in the state of Hidalgo (Mexico), the author proposes studying the context as a framework to determine the usefulness of musical instruments. She thus makes clear that the primary function of many of these instruments is not always the production of music.

In “The visual document in the conservation of electronic art in Mexico: a case study,” Fernando Monreal addresses the visual images produced in the documentation of electronic art in the exhibits of the *Laboratorio de Arte Alameda* and the *Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes* (INBA). The author focuses on the artistic-legal implications and the intelligibility and documentary information qualities of these documents as a means of conservation.

Finally, in “Consolidating decisions: reflections on the intervention process in two paintings by the New Spanish artist José de Ibarra,” Magdalena Castañeda, Mariana Flores, Alberto González, Paola Limón, and Paula Mues present the decision-making process that takes place in the Easel Painting Restoration Laboratory of the ENCRyM. They use the series of paintings *Vida de la Virgen* of Tlacotes, in the state of Zacatecas (Mexico), by José de Ibarra, as an example to detail the processes of recovery of the unity of

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the object from the theoretical point of view, the links with the lines of research developed in the workshop, and the links between the diagnosis and the proposal of restoration of the works.

“Heritage and its disciplines,” the third section of the volume, comprises three articles on museology, archaeobotany, and research on art, aesthetics, and materials. It is an eclectic example of the space of disciplinary coexistence that supports cultural heritage. Manuel Gándara begins with a “guided visit” to the intricate construction and geo-historical singularities of some concepts of museology: *curatorship*, *mediation*, and *interpretation*. The author outlines the scope and limitations of each concept and presents their relationships and applicability in specific heritage contexts: museums, archeological settlements, or heritage sites.

From other places —the Metropolitan Cathedral and Tabernacle, the National Palace, the Templo Mayor, among others— the remains of 176 archeological, pre-Hispanic, and colonial wooden piles have emerged. The authors, Ana Laura Avelar and Aurora Montúfar use these samples in “Archaeobotanical study of some wooden objects found in the subsoil of Mexico City” to contribute to building the taxonomic identity of the timber resources used by ancient societies.

Karla Rebolledo, Darío Meléndez, Ana Lizeth Mata, Claudia Coronado and Sulema Sánchez issue an invitation to promote a fresh look and broaden the mind of the restorer in the face of contemporary artistic production in order to arrive at an appropriate intervention proposal. In “*Uncontainable: between artistic creation and conservation*,” the authors share their experience in expanding the role of the restorer considering emerging sensibilities and unforeseen scenarios in the contemporary world. They also narrate the unique experience of artists and restorers in the creation process, when, as in this case, the artist is interested in anticipating the sustainability over time of the materials that make up their creative project.

“The cultural heritage professional” is the last section of this fifth volume. It highlights both the challenges of the contemporary art restorer in the face of the emerging needs of daily work and those of the teacher-trainer of conservation professionals.

Ana Lizeth Mata and Claudia Coronado present “The contemporary restorer: open mind for creative solutions.” The article, based on 34 drawings by Francis Alÿs belonging to the *Museo Universitario de Arte Contemporáneo*, of the *Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México* (MUAC-UNAM, Mexico), explains the complexity of contemporary work, in which the diversity of creations, mate-

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rials, techniques, tools, and meanings relate to the contexts and lives of the artists. All of this requires a critical and open stance from the restorer for the adequate restoration or conservation of often misunderstood objects.

Finally, to finish off this section and the volume, there is “An introspective look. The Photograph Conservation Laboratory at the ENCRyM”, by Javier Hinojosa, Liliana Dávila and Estíbaliz Guzmán. In this essay, the authors recapitulate the teaching practices in that laboratory. They do so within the framework of the new paradigms of education and according to a pedagogical model that, based on competencies and curricular design, aims at training socially, ethically, and environmentally committed professionals.

In conclusion, volume V illustrates the spatial-temporal breadth of cultural heritage and its problems, and, consequently, the diversity of theoretical, methodological, and practical approaches that enliven it, with the support of professionals trained in different fields of knowledge.

The articles reviewed in this paper point towards a series of concerns. For example, the interest in defending heritage in a world impacted by different processes of globalization, by questioning the capacity of public policies to guarantee its proper conservation for future generations. Also, the redesign or emergence of a series of terms that devise new conceptual horizons, theoretical and methodological tools, and heritage intervention practices. Other concerns focus on the training of future professionals, showing the complicated boundaries between the fields of activity of each specialist and the spaces in which they converge.

Volume V of the series *Studies on Conservation, Restoration, and Museology* is evidence of the consolidation of ENCRyM's role in the dissemination of knowledge therein produced concerning cultural heritage. A process of consolidation of which the subtle imbalances mentioned at the beginning of this review form a substantial part. It is a tradition whose substrate lies in the heterogeneity of an academic and professional community. With shared interests and goals, research occupies a privileged place in its midst, since its mission is both to provide creative and efficient solutions to the pressing threats to heritage and to understand and publicize how heritage is recreated or transformed.

Therefore, after the Mexican earthquake of September 19, 2017, there is anticipation for volume VI of this series. Surely it will provide a rich set of new and encouraging experiences and proposals.

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