

From the classroom to the museum: the emergence of the Museo de la Universidad del Rosario and the development of the museum's educational role

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Background

The Museo de la Universidad del Rosario in Bogota may be rather recent in its constitution as a museum, but both its architectural complex and its collections surely aren't. The museum presents the history of the university deeply intertwined with the history of the country, from its colonial past through its struggle for independence and its first days as an independent republic, up to contemporary Colombia. The discourse around the museum speaks about the history of the institution spanning over 366 years.

The Universidad del Rosario was founded under the name Colegio Mayor de Nuestra Señora del Rosario by the Spanish clergyman Cristóbal de Torres y Motones (1573-1654), an educator and member of the Dominican Order. Upon arriving at the bequest of King Phillip IV to the city of Santafé in 1635 as the archbishop of the city, and observing the need to implement a school to teach young men in the country, he decided to embark on the adventure of founding the school and pursuing the necessary approval from the Spanish King. With this endeavour in mind, Torres donated all of his wealth in the interest of bringing this goal to life, starting by buying the grounds where he decided to build the cloister and its adjacent chapel, the same location where the university has continued to operate until the present day. He also bought estates or *haciendas*, producing goods such as sugar-cane and clay tiles, which would serve as resources to cover the expenses of the school and guarantee its autonomy.

Regarding the construction of the school building, it is important to highlight its strategic location within the city centre. At the time of its construction, the city of Santafé (former name of Bogota) had very few civil buildings and its urban growth was largely dictated by the erection of convents and temples. Therefore, the construction of this two-story edifice with an ample central courtyard (picture 1) had a great impact on the urban landscape. Its geographical location in the core of the city is especially worth noticing, in close proximity to the river Vicachá and to an important indigenous salt road known as the Calle Real (picture 2).



Picture 1 – Cloister of the Universidad del Rosario, part of the campus since its foundation in 1653 and now main location of the university museum Museo de la Universidad del Rosario.
Photo: Universidad del Rosario, Bogotá, Colombia



Picture 2 – Map of Santafé in 1791. Author: Domingo Esquiaqui.
The red square and circle show the location of the school in the centre of the colonial city, and its proximity to the river Vicachá (highlighted in blue) and the Calle Real (highlighted in yellow)
Adapted from: Paláu Rivas-Sacconi and Restrepo Zapata (2018).

From the first years of the school's existence, a considerable number of paintings were commissioned, and throughout the centuries many others have been added to the collection of paintings hanging in different spaces of the architectural complex. The Universidad del Rosario is considered to be one of the few institutions that has conserved a gallery of civil and religious artworks in its original location over such a long span of time. The collection holds a large quantity of civil portraits, mainly from the 17th to 19th centuries. These are of significant historic and artistic value. The early portraits are especially relevant since this genre was very little explored by 17th century painters in the Nueva Granada. In this context, one of the most representative works is the portrait of the founder Cristóbal de Torres by Gaspar de Figueroa in 1643 (picture 3), who painted him at the age of 69 when he was Archbishop, prior to the creation of the school.

The collection holds works made by the hands of some of the most representative artists of Colombian art through a wide span of years, such as Gregorio Vásquez de Arce y Ceballos (1638-1711), Joaquín Gutiérrez (second half of the 18th century), Andrés de Santa María (1860-1945) and Eugenio Zerda, (1879-1945), among others. Together with a number of other artifacts such as textiles, sculptures, furniture, and liturgical objects, all in all the collection's significance is tied to different aspects of the university's history, which runs across all periods of the social and political life of the country.



Picture 3 – Fray Cristóbal de Torres y Motones, by Gaspar de Figueroa, 1643.
Photo: Museo de la Universidad del Rosario, Bogotá, Colombia

Growing heritage awareness and imagining a museum

The fact that the collection has been preserved until now is indeed a reflection of its value to the institution. The collection as we know it today has even survived military occupations during independence and civil wars in the 19th century.

For a large part of the 20th century there has been a clear effort to maintain and preserve the university's cultural heritage. The strong sense of belonging to the place and its historical relevance is something we probably owe to two major figures who led the university for the longest periods in its history. The first one is Rafael María Carrasquilla, university president from 1890 to 1930. He supported the commissioning of a sculpture in honour of the founder and was also responsible for the construction of an important space for ceremonial services which became one of the major highlights of today's museum: the portrait gallery of the university's rectors. Second, there is José Vicente Castro Silva, university president from 1930 to 1968, who was responsible to a great extent for the installation of a substantial number of plaques on the cloister's walls commemorating the relevant figures who have had an impact on the country's development.

With the arising implementation of heritage protection legislation in the 1970s in Colombia, the architectural complex of the cloister was granted with this legal protection, as it was declared a national monument as early as 1975. This is a distinction that today is still interpreted within the institution as

Legal heritage protection: a national monument since 1975.

involving its heritage as a whole, meaning the building together with all of its collections and its heritage values as an inseparable entity.

Despite a strong sense of belonging that should be recognized, a clear intent of actively engaging with the collections was lacking and there was a very limited use of the collection as a learning resource. The common phrase of “sometimes you look, but you don’t see” relates to the situation in which the collection was part of the university environment but in a rather dormant state. This was the scenario before the idea of the museum started to take shape, when the paintings and objects were neither being appreciated to their fullest, nor used as educational resources.

Fantastic collections, strong sense of belonging, but no use of the material heritage as a learning resource: the need for a museum arises.

The need for the museum arose out of this situation, taking into account the uniqueness of the collection and its artistic, symbolic and historic value, as well as the need to promote and communicate this heritage for the appropriation of the Rosario community and the wider public. Furthermore, the issue of open access, which relates to the idea of the public role of museums, was

something completely innovative for this particular collection.

The project to create a museum was initiated with the proposal contained in the Master Thesis in Museology in 2010 by Margarita Guzmán, who at the time was a university professor and currently acts as museum director. This denotes how the educational atmosphere has always called for a museum, even before the idea came up. After a period in which the idea of the museum gradually matured, the *Museo de la Universidad del Rosario* finally was registered with the Colombian Ministry of Culture in 2017 and an official launching event took place in May 2019. Important steps were already being developed at this point: both the virtual tour and the on-site visits were implemented very early on. Therefore, the museum showed from its beginnings a serious commitment to its role in education.

From the classroom to the museum

In order to discuss the role of pedagogy within the museum, it is necessary to present an important precedent to its creation. A crucial experience prior to the establishment of the museum itself is closely related with a specific mandatory academic course teaching the history of the college. This course, known as the “*Cátedra Rosarista*”, was introduced in the curricula in 1993 by the then University President Mario Suárez Melo, noticing that this history was unknown to the young students – contrary to the older generations (Luis Enrique Nieto, personal communication, 30 January 2020). The course still exists as a mandatory requirement for all registered students in their first semesters, no matter what programmes they are enrolled in. However, it has had several changes in its curriculum in the past two decades since it was taught by several professors who would each place a particular emphasis according to their own background. Interestingly enough, these teachers would frequently visit the portrait galleries within the university spaces, along with the monuments, sculptures and commemorative plaques, and use these collections – which would later become part of the museum – as learning resources. The course taught by Margarita Guzmán went further and placed an emphasis on the history of the college through its art collections.

Furthermore, according to Guzmán (personal communication, 29 January 2020), the galleries also became the classroom for the crash course especially designed for graduate students. While the undergraduate students would take these courses during the weekdays and throughout the whole duration of the semester, the graduate ones, who work during the week, would take instead a 6-hour workshop, involving a 2-hour visit to the gallery spaces on weekends. While the gallery spaces are normally used for different purposes such as meetings, graduations or regular office use during weekdays, they could be used exclusively for the course participants on Saturdays. These visits would combine lectures with on-site practical exercises or educational games designed for the learners. They would be guided by the professor, the galleries becoming a classroom and the objects a pedagogical resource.

Mandatory academic course *in situ*: a prefiguration of the museum education programme to come.

As a result of this academic course, not only was the knowledge about the history of the university disseminated, but its methodology of on-site visits to heritage spaces with their heritage collections triggered a series of positive effects. The overall approach of combining lectures with the possibility of “experiencing history” within the actual historic settings and in direct contact with the historic and artistic objects, is believed to have an important effect in fostering a feeling of sense of place. It is thought to promote a sense of belonging to the university’s heritage, hence strengthening the social appropriation which is fundamental for the protection and sustainability of any heritage object, including the place itself and its collections. Therefore, this strategy allowed the students and the professors to feel a connection to the vast cultural heritage that surrounds them in their daily routine, one that had been to some extent hidden.

So how did this positive impact become visible? Some concrete evidence is the fact that the students were greatly motivated to continue learning; they participated in further initiatives, such as assisting academics in the research, communication and education activities that preceded the actual museum creation. Guzmán, current museum director, had envisioned the creation of the university museum within her Museology studies in 2010. From this time, she started discussing the idea of a university museum with the students in her courses, although it would still take another five years for the project to be formally approved by the board in 2016.

This demonstrates how the educational purposes of the museum were crucial for its inception and underlines all the work that had to take place prior to its official constitution. It is also a clear example of how formal education may overlap with the museum field. Likewise, this process also shows evidence of the way a museum approach of informal educational activities may be imbedded into the environment of a university – the symbol *par excellence* of formal education.

The opening of a collection to the public and the transformation of interpretation experiences

How did the creation of the museum change the use of the collections? Probably one of the most evident changes is the issue of access that arises from the museum’s mission towards the public. The museum’s mission is stated on its website and addresses the objectives in managing, collecting, conserving, researching and communicating the

institution's tangible and intangible cultural heritage towards both its rosarist community and the general public (Universidad del Rosario, 2020).¹

This notion of access faces some challenges, considering that the campus of this private institution has traditionally had restricted access. Although the university remains private, thanks to the museum's offer of guided visits, the museum spaces have a public access, although with limited schedules during particular times of the day (twice a day from Monday to Saturday). In the case of this particular museum, managing public access has been

An interpreter, or mediator, is necessary for the visit of the museum: better mediation, better access, more security.

interlinked with the development of the education strategy. Because of the location of its heritage collections, the role of the mediators does not only relate to that of heritage interpretation, but they also provide a solution to a practical need of guiding the public through the university spaces. This is due to the fact that the museum is embedded within

the university. Therefore, different heritage spaces are merged with other educational facilities and most locations may share more than one purpose.

Once the formalisation of the museum took place and prior to the official inauguration, the first attempts of cultural mediation at the museum were carried out by the director Guzmán. Roberts (2004) has described this as a common situation in the history of how education initiatives have evolved in museums. In this case, in the early stages of museum development and in absence of a specific responsible area for education, the task of educative activities ended up in the hands of museum curators or directors.

With the rising interest in the university museum, it became evident that museum interpreters, which have been known in the university as “mediators” (*mediadores*), were necessary to carry out the tours, referred to as “guided visits” (*visitas guiadas*). There have been a number of changes as to how this group has been formed.



Picture 4 – Visitors go to the painting galleries, sites of heritage significance and temporary exhibits that make up the mediation plan of the university museum. Photograph: D. Ramírez (2020).

¹ The mission of the museum is stated in the original language as follows: “El Museo de la Universidad del Rosario es un proyecto cultural dinámico para coordinar, gestionar, adquirir, conservar, investigar y difundir con fines de estudio, educación y esparcimiento, el patrimonio cultural material e inmaterial institucional permitiendo, tanto a la comunidad rosarista como al público general, conocer, valorar y reflexionar sobre los procesos históricos, artísticos, científicos y simbólicos, mediante estrategias museológicas y museográficas en salas de exposiciones y en ámbitos virtuales y digitales” (Universidad del Rosario, 2020).

With the rising demands to participate in a number of internal and external requests for museum activities, a first approach involved the students working in the promotional department of the university. They received training by the curator, who at the moment was the only person covering all aspects related to the project. Although the results of the training were good, there were complications in actually implementing the necessary pedagogical activities when they were required because the interpreters would be occupied with other priorities in the promotional department. So, difficulties due to the dependence on other departments being experienced, it was clear that the museum required greater autonomy in operating its education activities. Therefore, around 2018 a group of twelve students from different undergraduate programmes such as Political Science, History or Sociology, started to undergo training in museum mediation.

The great impact of informal education practices within a university context was recognised, which without any doubt was a major achievement of this education programme in museum mediation. For example, the role of the mediators in reviving and maintaining the university history has been apparent: a drastic change of syllabus of the mandatory course some years before lead to a general decrease of knowledge regarding the history of the university among the overall student community. Nevertheless, those students involved in the museum as mediators have indeed been able to accumulate an important body of knowledge. This learning is in relation to the collections and the university's history but most importantly, it promotes connections with the larger context of the history of Colombia at various levels: local, national and regional.



Picture 5 – Group of museum mediators at the Museo de la Universidad del Rosario. January 2020.
Photograph: I. Frederick (2020).

Now, this group of mediators has reinforced their skills and knowledge, strengthening the mediation practice. The museum has received increasingly more requests to carry out educational activities to different groups related to the university community: students, teachers and guests from other universities, who have participated in guided tours. The audience of the museum has also included external visitors. In 2019, the number of visitors who participated in a guided tour was 1 201 visitors, an 11% increase from the previous

year. Considering the opening periods (6 days a week during the academic semester), this would be equivalent to approximately 5 visitors per day.

One example of the support that the museum has given to other services and events of the university include the educational activities provided for the incoming students. These activities last one day and involve between 800 to 1 200 students each semester. In this phase of orientation, instead of visiting the collections with the guidance of one mediator per group, there is a different approach: during each 90-minutes session, twelve groups of ca. 20 students are formed in order to visit 12 stations where mediators are prepared to briefly discuss a specific theme according to their location and museum object for interpretation. While the group moves from one station to the next, the mediator stays in his or her designated site.

The most interesting of this experience is that several mediators have prepared re-enactments of historical figures that relate to a particular historical theme. Although no proper coaching in acting is provided within the training process, some of the mediators have shown exceptional talent at representing these figures, demonstrating to some degree a sense of familiarisation or identification with certain characters. These activities have

Enthusiastic mediators also contribute to research, to the expansion of curatorial contents and introduce other ways of mediation.

been welcomed by student visitors, and positive remarks have been collected from these particular experiences.

Also, the mediators indeed play an active role in expanding the curatorial contents that are provided as a guide in the educational material. There is therefore a stimulating opportunity to develop further themes and engage in new aspects. These new facets can aim at achieving

greater inclusion, for example where certain populations have been traditionally excluded from the collections and hence could have been overlooked in the mediation processes. In the case of the Universidad del Rosario, whose history started in 1653, women, Afro-Colombians and indigenous peoples were excluded for a long period of time. Let's look at this particular mediation performance.



Picture 6 – Representation of the historical figure of Luis A. Robles by a university student, Juan José Castro, participant in museum interpretation activities. Photograph: I. Frederick (2020).

The museum education programme for incoming students took place in January 2020 in the student orientation week. One of the mediators (picture 6) proposed his wish to

recreate the character of a prominent Afro-Colombian – Luis Antonio Robles Suárez (1849-1899) – also known as “*El Negro Robles*”. A graduate in law from the Universidad del Rosario, Robles is known as the first Afro-Colombian to serve as a lawyer in Colombia. This proposal was supported by his fellow students forming the mediation group at the museum.

This initiative shows how the mediator may feel an affinity towards a certain historical character. This feeling can trigger a powerful effect into the mediation and possibly create a larger impact on the viewers as well: note the characteristics in common between the two, since both the historical figure and the mediator came/come from the Caribbean Coast region of Colombia and their field of study was/is law at the Rosario University. Additionally, the exercise described entails some amount of research and corroborates that museum education fosters a type of informal education whose significance should not be ignored.

The location of the galleries spread all over the campus makes it difficult to access them. Thus, the role of the mediator is essential. It is also related to practical issues such as a basic level of security, since there aren't guards for every site. Additionally, there is a need to provide assistance in the circulation throughout the museum spaces inside the cloister, since this requires navigating the campus. For instance, some of the rooms visited are the portrait galleries located within the rector's office, which holds 45 works (picture 7), or halls that are used for special ceremonies and events within the university, as in the *Aula Máxima*, which holds over thirty portraits (picture 8).



Picture 7 – Entering the rector's office is a step back into the past. It holds altogether 45 works, including portraits of major figures in the Colombian independence movement in the 19th century, all of which are part of the museum's collections.

Photograph: D. Ramírez (2020).



Picture 8 – The hall known as the *Aula Máxima* shows an impressive gallery of civil portraits that constitute a unique collection of Colombian artworks in this specific genre, dating from the middle of the 17th century.

Photograph: I. Frederick (2020).

Today, as part of the interpretation plan of the collections, the museum has extended its education programme. With the active support of students, especially in the fields of Humanities and Social Sciences, the museum now offers a total of six independent educational visits. In addition to the general visit, there are specific tours with a focus on certain time periods or on different themes. The programmes currently available are:

- the general visit, which provides an overview of the history and trajectory of the university;

- *The independence of Colombia and the Rosario*, which focuses on the participation of students and alumni of the Rosario in the independence process in 1810;
- *The Monstrance of the Bordadita*, which revolves around the history of one of the most representative objects of the university chapel;
- *Myths and Legends of the Rosario*;
- *The Calle 11 and the Universidad del Rosario*, which offers an interpretation to sites in the city center surrounding the campus that relate to the history and legacy of the university; and finally,
- *Caminos Agitados: Entre el nuevo orden y las aulas*, which is a visit to the temporary exhibition dealing with the development of education throughout the 19th century in Colombia, from its start as an independent country.

Further visits are in preparation now, following other themes such as art and iconography, the Royal Botanical Expedition, or the history of student movements in the college.

Outlook

The development of museum education at the Museo de la Universidad del Rosario is clearly intertwined with the creation of the museum itself.

Mediation processes at the museum have gone through different stages and have evolved in the course of trial and error. Nevertheless, there are considerable advantages to highlight. The process of training students who later train other students and work together as a team has shown to foster learning among peers, which promotes the sustainability and the transfer of knowledge and skills necessary for mediation practices. In addition, the interpretation practice strengthens a number of soft skills and communication

The training of mediators is of great personal value to them.

skills (oral and gestural) and contributes to the overall academic and professional development of the students participating as mediators.

Furthermore, this educational project has begun to involve alumni as well. It even sparked interest among university employees, who have started to take part in museum training sessions. All in all, the educational visits promote an integration of the university community as a whole, which is vital in order to ensure that this cultural heritage is valued. This is crucial for its preservation in the future and for the sustainability of this project.

As for other results of student involvement as mediators at the university museum, it is important to observe that, on a general note, most outside visitors have mentioned particularly enjoying the fact that the tour is carried out by the students themselves. Furthermore, the dynamics occurring in the transmission of information among mediators is also quite interesting. Since an important part of training in mediation has to do with observing and listening to others, students have incorporated stories that may not have been addressed in the official educational material. However, these stories relate to oral tradition and are part of the living heritage among the university community altogether.

Interestingly, one can also mention that this group of mediators counts a number of leaders who have not only participated in the creation of didactic content for the museum through research, writing and editing, but who also show a continuous commitment to disseminate the history of the university. They are active participants as well in other initiatives that promote heritage. Such initiatives include research groups and radio

programmes managed by the Cultural and Historic Heritage Unit. This department within the university is responsible for the conservation and diffusion of its memory, and this embraces both the museum and the historic archives.

In conclusion, the development of the Museo de la Universidad del Rosario shows that both formal and informal education relate to the work of the museum and should be exploited to enrich the institution's mission. There definitely can be no way to address museum education without the involvement of the university community, in particular the students. The latter have been a core element of the development of the educational activities of the Museo de la Universidad del Rosario, and this has proven to bring excellent results of engagement, interest of the university community, members of other universities and the wider public. As for future challenges, we are looking to find ways to engage alumni continuously, as well as placing a greater emphasis on involving professors and the entire university staff. However, the dynamics of change in a university is something that we will have to continuously work with, since the rotation of students is part of the nature of the university, and thus part of the museum. On a positive note, the museum sees this as an opportunity to extend the invitation to experience "a museum for everyone" and to foster a sense of belonging and hence contribute to the mission of the museum in the long run.

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Summary

This paper aims to present the development of educational activities within the scenario of a recently founded university museum, the Museo de la Universidad del Rosario, located in Bogota, Colombia. Although the official creation only occurred in 2019, it is settled in the heart of the original cloister complex where the university was founded in 1653, and its collections relate to the history of the educational establishment. The discourse around the museum takes up the history of the institution spanning over more than three and a half centuries, which overlaps with key moments of the social and political life in Colombia.

The museum seeks to integrate the galleries and the collections with the architectural spaces – all of which still continue to have an important use both in the academic and administrative life of the institution. The collections include paintings, namely a large number of civil portraits but also paintings of religious subjects, among other collections of textile works, sculptures, furniture and liturgical objects.

The aim of this paper is to put together the particular circumstances of how education was an important starting point to the creation of the museum and discuss how its educational role has taken different forms in the past few years, developing to what it is today. There has been a consistent effort in involving students who have become active participants in the museum, through the creation of content for educational activities, through research work and through a practice in cultural mediation that has been consolidated. Their motivation and drive have been crucial in the course of planning and carrying out museum education activities, such as the inclusion of new storylines and the introduction of theatrical representation elements into educational offers like guided tours and workshops.

The educational programmes of the museum are addressed towards the public in general but also towards the university community, including guided visits requested by students and professors within the context of an academic course. Guided visits are also asked for by the university staff in order to support events or specific requests that involve a majority of visitors from other universities and different parts of the world. Overall, because of its very nature, since its collections and its historic architectural complex are deeply connected to the university's foundation and day-to-day life, the museum is perceived as a living museum which triggers institutional memory and which has a strong bond with the university environment with its commitment to education.

Key words: university museums, education, heritage interpretation, mediation, Museo de la Universidad del Rosario

Résumé

Le but de cet article est de présenter le rôle fondamental des activités éducatives dans le développement d'un musée universitaire fondé tout récemment, le Museo de la Universidad del Rosario, situé à Bogota en Colombie. Bien que sa création officielle n'ait eu lieu qu'en 2019, le musée se trouve au cœur du complexe du cloître d'origine où l'établissement d'enseignement a été fondé en 1653. Ses collections se rapportent à l'histoire de l'université. Le discours autour du musée raconte l'histoire de l'institution sur plus de trois siècles et demi, qui est étroitement liée à certains moments clés de la vie sociale et politique de Colombie.

Le musée investit les galeries de l'université et intègre les collections universitaires directement dans les espaces architecturaux d'origine, tout en gardant une fonction et une utilisation importantes dans la vie à la fois académique et administrative de l'institution. Les collections comprennent des peintures, notamment un grand nombre de portraits civils mais aussi des tableaux aux sujets religieux, ainsi que des collections d'œuvres textiles, de sculptures, de meubles et des objets liturgiques, entre autres.

Mon objectif est de relater les circonstances particulières et la façon dont le rôle éducatif du musée s'est développé, montrant les formes qu'il a prises au cours des dernières années pour arriver à ce qu'il est aujourd'hui. Plus particulièrement, les efforts constants pour impliquer les étudiants ont porté leurs fruits : ils sont devenus des participants actifs du musée par la création de contenu pour les activités éducatives, par des travaux de recherche et par une pratique de médiation culturelle qui a été consolidée. Leur motivation et leur dynamisme ont été essentiels lors de la planification et de la mise en œuvre des activités innovantes d'éducation muséale, comme par exemple le développement de nouveaux scénarios ou l'introduction d'éléments de représentation théâtrale dans les activités éducatives telles que les visites guidées et les ateliers.

Les programmes éducatifs du musée s'adressent au grand public ainsi qu'à la communauté universitaire, très friande des visites guidées demandées par les étudiants ou les professeurs dans le cadre d'un cours universitaire, mais aussi par le personnel universitaire afin de relever des événements ou des demandes spécifiques pour accueillir des visiteurs d'autres universités et de différentes parties du monde lors de congrès, colloques et autres. Dans l'ensemble, du fait de sa nature même avec ses collections et son cadre architectural intrinsèquement liés autant à l'histoire et qu'à la vie quotidienne de l'université, le musée est perçu comme un musée vivant. En cela, il ravive la mémoire institutionnelle et garde un lien étroit avec l'environnement universitaire et avec sa raison d'être première, la fonction d'éducation.

Mots-clés : musées universitaires, éducation, interprétation du patrimoine, médiation, Museo de la Universidad del Rosario

Resumen

El propósito de este trabajo es presentar el desarrollo de las actividades educativas dentro del escenario de un museo universitario recientemente fundado – el Museo de la Universidad del Rosario ubicado en Bogotá, Colombia. Aunque el lanzamiento del museo solamente ocurrió hasta el año 2019, está ubicado en el corazón del complejo arquitectónico original del claustro donde se fundó la Universidad en 1653, y sus colecciones se relacionan con la historia de la institución educativa. El discurso alrededor del museo habla de la historia de la institución a lo largo de más de tres siglos y medio, la cual coincide con momentos claves de la vida social y política de Colombia.

El museo busca integrar las galerías y las colecciones con los espacios arquitectónicos – los cuales continúan teniendo un importante uso tanto en la vida académica como administrativa de la institución. Las colecciones incluyen pinturas, a saber un gran número de retratos civiles pero también cuadros con temas religiosos; entre otras colecciones relacionadas con textiles, esculturas, mobiliario, y objetos litúrgicos.

El propósito de este trabajo es recopilar las circunstancias particulares de cómo la educación fue un detonante importante de la creación del museo, así como discutir cómo su rol educativo ha tomado diferentes formas desde los años recientes hasta hoy. Se ha trabajado de manera consistente en involucrar a los estudiantes que se han apropiado del museo, participando activamente en la generación de contenidos para las actividades educativas, por medio de un trabajo de investigación y una práctica en mediación que se ha venido fortaleciendo. Su motivación y vocación ha sido primordial en el momento de planear y desarrollar nuevas actividades de educación en el museo, a veces al incorporar nuevos ejes temáticos y al traer elementos de representación teatral a las actividades educativas tales como visitas guiadas y talleres.

Los programas educativos del museo han sido dirigidos al público en general y a la comunidad universitaria, incluyendo visitas guiadas solicitadas por estudiantes, por profesores como parte de sus cursos académicos, y por el personal de la universidad para apoyar eventos que involucran en su gran mayoría a personas externas de otras universidades y partes del mundo. En general, debido a la naturaleza misma de este museo, donde sus colecciones y su complejo arquitectónico histórico está conectado profundamente a la fundación de la universidad y a la vida diaria universitaria, el museo se percibe como un ente vivo, el cual activa la memoria institucional y tiene una fuerte conexión con el ambiente universitario y con su compromiso con la educación.

Palabras clave: museos universitarios, educación, interpretación del patrimonio, mediación, Museo de la Universidad del Rosario