

# A Comprehensive Review of University Patrimony

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The National Autonomous University of Mexico's infrastructure is amazing. Today, few countries have universities the size of the UNAM, with its facilities and patrimony, undoubtedly backed by centuries-old tradi-

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Tláloc, Sebastián, 1978.

José Alejandro Vázquez Reyes/DGPU-UNAM

## ■ 1974

On February 19, the creation of the National School for Professional Studies (ENEP) is approved, to be built in Cuautitlán, State of Mexico. This is a new kind of school, with its own administration and majors independent from those of the UNAM's traditional schools. Months later, the creation of two more ENEPs, in Acatlán and Iztacala, is approved.

## ■ 1976

On December 30, the UNAM Philharmonic Orchestra gives its first performance in the Nezahualcóyotl Concert Hall, the first building opened at the University Cultural Center.



Elsie Montiel

## ■ 1979

On February 26, the Juan Ruiz de Alarcón Theater and the Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz Forum are inaugurated in the University Cultural Center. On April 23, the Sculpture Space is inaugurated, designed by



renowned sculptors Helen Escobedo, Federico Silva, Manuel Felguérez, Hersúa, Sebastián, and Matías Goeritz. In September, the San Pedro Mártir Observatory begins operating in Baja California.



José Alejandro Vázquez Reyes/DCPU-UNAM

*The Welcome*, F. X. Zettler, Royal Bavarian Establishment, 1899.

tions and maintained by noble educational ideals and a bounteous heritage. The UNAM boasts an impressive physical area for teaching and research: 57.7 million square meters distributed in 2 103 buildings including faculties, schools, centers, and institutes in University City and throughout Mexico City's metropolitan area.

In addition, the university has 46 institutions distributed in more than 20 states of Mexico. Examples are the Center for Sciences in Ensenada, Baja California, where the San Pedro Mártir National Observatory is located; the Center for Genetic and Biotechnological Research and the Center for Nitrogen Fixing Research in Cuernavaca, Morelos; the Centers for Ecology, Astrophysics, and Applied Mathematics in Morelia, Michoacán; the Institutes of Neurobiology and Applied Physics and Advanced Technology in Juriquilla, Querétaro; plus centers in Campeche, Hidalgo, Jalisco, Puebla, Quintana Roo, Sinaloa, Sonora, Aguascalientes, Mérida, and Tlaxcala, and university extension facilities in the United States and Canada.

In addition, we should point to the “natural patrimony,” which includes the 237-hectare Pedregal de San Ángel ecological reserve area in University City, with its significant collections of flora and fauna, plus the Faustino Miranda and Manuel Ruiz Oronoz Greenhouses and the Open-Air Botanical Garden, with plants distributed by climate region, arranged in biological order and by taxonomic group. The UNAM also does research at its Los Tuxtlas and Chamela tropical biology stations in Veracruz and Jalisco respectively, each with its own ecological preserve. The Los Tuxtlas Station is a true natural sanctuary of approximately 644 hectares, while the Chamela Station extends over 3 319 hectares, all dedicated to the conservation of the tropical deciduous and sub-deciduous forest.

#### CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

The university's Cultural Center is the scene for intense activity, particularly in the Nezahualcóyotl Concert Hall and the Carlos Chávez and Miguel Covarrubias Halls, the Juan Ruiz de Alarcón Theater, the Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz Forum, and the Julio Bracho and José Revueltas Movie Theaters, all spaces with remarkable architecture. The monumental building of the University Contemporary Art Museum (MUAC), the host to very important exhibitions, has recently been added to this complex. This new addition joins the previously existing artistic programming in other Mexico City venues such as the Echo Experimental Museum, the MUCA-Roma Gallery, the Tlatelolco University Cultural Center, the House on the Lake, the Old College of San Ildefonso, and the El Chopo University Museum.

The work of other museums dedicated to the sciences deserves separate mention: Universum, the museums of Light, Geology, of Mexican Medicine, of Dentistry, and the Regional Mixtec Tlayúa Museum in Tepexi de Rodríguez, in the state of Puebla, just to mention a few.

#### SPORTS

The university has played host to many international sports events in its Olympic Stadium and swimming pool. It also boasts training facilities for different kinds of sports activities, like the Roberto “Tapatío” Méndez Stadium, the Valencian fronton court; the university gymnasium; soccer, soft-

ball, and baseball fields; and basketball, volleyball, and tennis courts.

#### HISTORIC AND ARTISTIC PATRIMONY

None of the above would have the same value if we ignored the institution's history, beginning in 1551 with the foundation of the Royal Paper University of Mexico, as well as the prestigious colleges that gave form to the cultural heritage our institution has today, a wealth materialized in famous buildings in the old City of Palaces, as colonial Mexico City was known. This is particularly the case since the university was made autonomous and its July 22, 1929 charter was issued and it was officially given ownership of the buildings and furnishings in the Schools of Philosophy and Letters, Law and the Social Sciences, Medicine, Engineering, Agron-

**Down through its history, the university has sponsored monumental projects: this is how the cultural area's unique Sculpture Walk and Sculpture Space came about, testimony to the vitality of the visual arts in our country.**



José Alejandro Vázquez Reyes/DCPU-UNAM

Sketch for the mosaic on the south wall of the Central Library by Juan O'Gorman, 1952.

#### ■ 1980

The First International Book Fair sponsored by the UNAM Engineering School is held at Mexico City's Mining Palace, with the participation of 216 publishing houses.



#### ■ 1983

In September, the UNAM's Ecological Reserve opens, covering 124.5 hectares of University City. The Regional Center for Multidisciplinary Research (CRIM) is created, headquartered in Cuernavaca, thus initiating the university's national expansion, which by 2010, includes campuses in several states nationwide.

#### ■ 1985

Two strong earthquakes shake Mexico City, leaving great destruction and a large number of dead, injured, and homeless in its wake. UNAM professors, students, and administrative workers participate in rescue efforts and support activities for the public.



#### ■ 1992

The University Council approves the establishment and operation of Academic Councils by Area and of the Academic Council for UNAM High Schools. The University

omy, Dentistry, Chemical Sciences and Industries, and Commerce and Administration; the Higher Normal School; the preparatory schools; the Schools of Fine Arts, Physical Education, and National Veterinary Medicine; the National Library; the Institutes of Biology and Geology; the National Observatory; and the Room for Free Discussions of the Old San Pedro and San Pablo Church.

#### ART COLLECTIONS

One very representative collection is that of easel art, which includes works from the seventeenth, eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries. Particularly important are the vice-regal canvases by Juan Miranda, Miguel Cabrera, and Luis Juárez; works by late-nineteenth-century painters like Pedro Gualdi, José Salomé Pina, Petronilo Monroy, Gregorio Figueroa, and José María Velasco; and modern creations by Saturnino Herrán, Cecil Crawford O’Gorman, José Chávez

**The search for new forms of expression in mural painting had one of its high points in the construction of University City. The guiding principle was visual integration, that is, the communion of architecture, painting, and sculpture.**

Morado, Leonardo Nierman, Luis Nishizawa, Arnold Belkin, Vicente Rojo, Gilberto Aceves Navarro, and Imanol Ordorika, just to name a few.

This patrimony also includes several exceptional collections linked to the forging of aesthetic canons that reigned in the San Carlos Academy, which for a long time was the proud owner of the country’s most complete collection of paintings, sculptures, engravings, sketches, books and other objets d’art used for educating artists. Outstanding among all of these is the collection of graphic art created for the most part by the genius of Albrecht Dürer, Martín de Vos, Anthony van Dyck, Lucas van Lyden, Agostino and Annibale Carracci, Guido Reni, José de Rivera, Francisco de Goya, Giovanni Battista Piranesi, and Rembrandt.

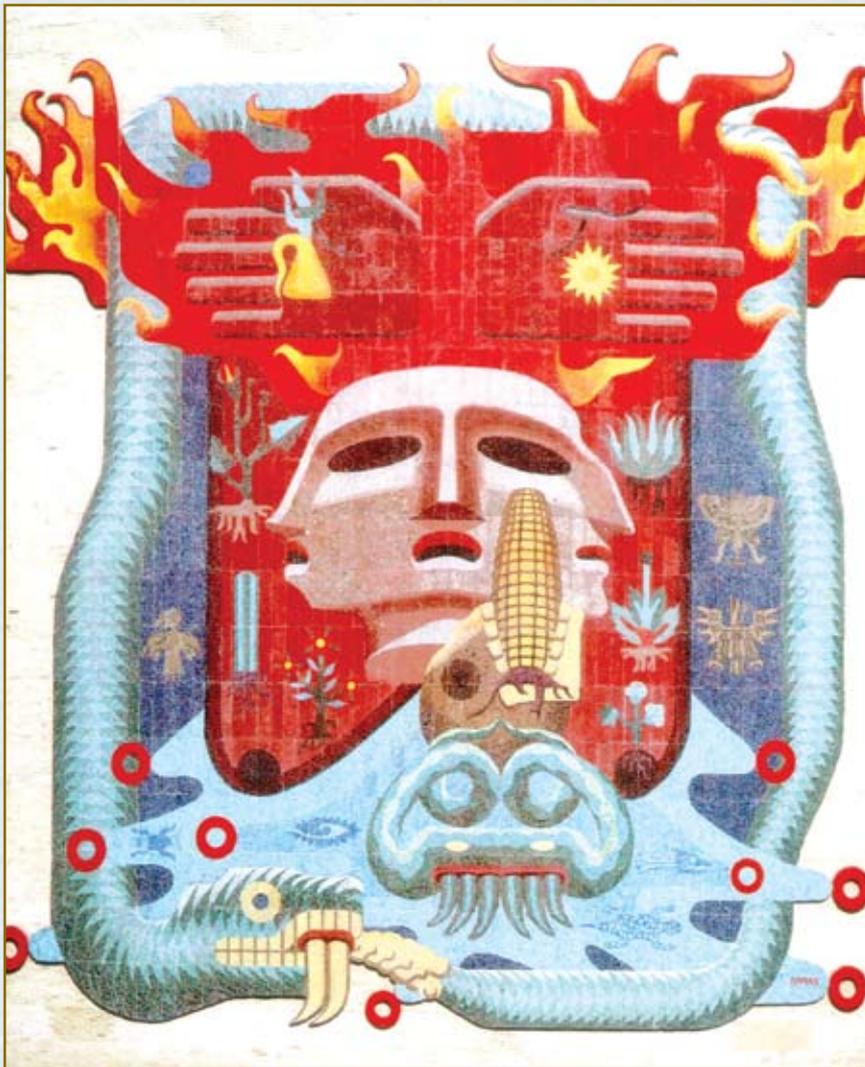
Additional aesthetic enjoyment can be derived from the plasterwork in the old sculpture galleries that belonged to the academy, with the best of classical, Hellenistic, Greco-Roman, and Italian Renaissance works. The mural paintings on university walls are also of enormous transcendence, an undeniable national contribution to universal art made at the hand of artists like Roberto Montenegro, Diego Rivera, José Clemente Orozco, Jean Charlot, David Alfaro Siqueiros, Fernando Leal, and Fermín Revueltas. In addition, our institution preserves works by these painters in the Old San Pedro and San Pablo Church and the Old College of San Ildefonso, both in the city’s historic center. Examples of these are the murals *The Tree of Life*, *Creation*, *Social Falsehoods*, *The Trench*, *Cortés and the Malinche*, and *Disembarking the Cross*.

#### THE VISUAL INTEGRATION OF UNIVERSITY CITY

The search for new forms of expression in mural painting had one of its high points in the construction of University City. The guiding principle was visual integration, that is, the communion of archi-



Untitled, Kasuya Sakai, 1972.



DGRU-UNAM

*Life, Death, Mixed Blood, and the Four Elements, Francisco Eppens, 1952, mural at the School of Medicine.*

itecture, painting, and sculpture, including the use of new techniques in open spaces and experimentation with materials. Concrete cases were the works by Diego Rivera in the Olympic Stadium; David Alfaro Siqueiros's mural *Sports and Mixed Blood in Mexico* on the Rector's Tower, *The People to the University and the University to the People*, *Dates in the History of Mexico*, and *New University Emblem*; the work by Juan O'Gorman on the Central Library; the works by José Chávez Morado, *Historic Representation of Culture* on the side of the Antonio Caso Auditorium, *The Conquest of Energy*, and *The Return of Quetzalcóatl*; and the works by Francisco Eppens, *The Four Elements* on the walls of the School of Medicine, and *Man's Realization* on the walls of the School of Dentistry.

Down through its history, the university has sponsored monumental projects: this is how the cultural area's unique Sculpture Walk and Sculpture Space came about, revealing

Gender Studies Program (PUEG) is founded. In December, the Museum of Sciences, better known as Universum, is inaugurated.

▪ **1994**

On January 1, the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN) heads an armed uprising in the state of Chiapas. Members of the university community organize collections and marches to send aid to communities in need.

▪ **1995**

On October 11, the Swedish Royal Academy gives the Nobel Prize for Chemistry to UNAM graduate and former professor José Mario Molina Pasquel, together with his colleagues Frank Sherwood Rowland and Paul Crutzen, for their research on the ozone layer.



▪ **1996**

On September 5, the UNAM becomes the third academic institution in the world to successfully launch its own satellite, the UNAMSAT-B, completely designed and built by Mexican scientists at the university itself.

▪ **1999**

A student movement breaks out against a hike in tuition and the abolition of the automatic admission of UNAM high school graduates to university-level studies, among other reasons. The student members of the General Strike



Simón Bolívar Amphitheater, Old College of San Ildefonso.

Ernesto Peñalosa Méndez/DCPU-UNAM



*Geological Eras*, José María Velasco, 1905-1906.

DCPU-UNAM

**The value of the university's patrimony is linked to the need to foster and create awareness among the public of its correct use, in order to also make it accessible to future generations.**

the vital presence of the visual arts in our country and achieving harmony between the manmade and natural spaces. The figures, created by artists like Sebastián, Hersúa, Mathias Goeritz, Manuel Felguérez, and Helen Escobedo, offer the viewer a lush artistic panorama framed by the vegetation and the igneous rock spewed out by the Xitle Volcano in ancient times.

#### BIBLIOGRAPHICAL TREASURES

The bibliographical and documentary materials gathered in a network of 147 libraries and information centers, with a total of nine million volumes deserve separate mention.

The main center of attention, naturally, is the collection of the National Library's Restricted Section, heir to the treasures owned by Franciscan, Dominican, and Augustinian monasteries. Some sub-collections include works that illustrate Mexicans' cultural education, for example, the *incunabula* of printing: fifteenth-century gems on topics like the Sacred

Writings, theology, philosophy, literature, and history; an eighteenth-century collection of responsorials, commonly called hymnbooks or "choir books"; the Mexican collection of writings by Friar Alonso de Molina, Friar Alonso de la Veracruz, Luis Becerra Tanco, Francisco de Florencia, Carlos de Sigüenza y Góngora, Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, Francisco Javier Clavijero, and Juan José de Eguiara y Eguren.

#### SCIENTIFIC AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL COLLECTIONS

In addition, the paleontology, mineralogy, rock, and meteorite collections exhibited in the Geology Museum occupy a privileged position. The museum's rooms include fossils of plants, mollusks, vertebrates, and even ichthyosaurs (animals that preceded the dinosaurs), which lived more than 180 million years ago. One outstanding item is the 4.52-billion-year-old Allende Meteorite.

The archaeological collections, highly representative of the pre-Hispanic world since they include a large part of the experiential horizon of the Meso-American cultures, are also important. They include examples of the Totonac, Mexica, Teotihuacan, Maya, and Purépecha cultures, of the so-called Western Cultures, and those from the Tlapacoyán and Tlatilco complexes. In general, these are ceramic pieces and sculpture distributed among the Roch, Spratling, Kamffer, Cordry, and Lindau Collections.

## EQUIPMENT AND FURNISHINGS

Lastly, we cannot forget the significance of the goods that make it possible to carry out the university's diverse, usually complex, activities, like equipment, furniture, and mobile and didactic materials. For example, the oceanographic ships *El Puma* and *Justo Sierra* are memorable, based in the ports of Mazatlán, Sinaloa, and Tuxpan, Veracruz, as is the School of Medicine's PET-Cyclotron Unit, specialized in oncology; the Institute of Nuclear Science's gamma irradiators; the scanning and atomic force electronic microscopes of the Institute of Physics; the Osiris Optical System Verification Chamber developed by the Institute of Astronomy and used in a telescope in the Canary Islands; the Center of Genomic Sciences' protein sequencer; the Institute of Biotechnology's spectrometer; or the Kam Balam supercomputer that belongs to what used to be the General Office of Academic Computer Services, today the General Offices of Computing and Information and Communications Technologies.

The value of the university's patrimony is linked to the need to foster and create awareness among the public of its correct usage. The use and dissemination of a cultural good must be linked to its preservation, in order to also make it accessible to future generations. Therefore, it is one of the university's primary concerns to continually readapt its infrastructure, a task carried out with true diligence, commitment, responsibility, and pride. ■■■



Brass telescope, Desbordes, nineteenth century.

José Alejandro Vázquez Reyes/DGPU-UNAM

Committee close down and complete the university installations for more than a year.

- **2000**  
February 14, classes resume in most UNAM campuses.
- **2001**  
450<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Royal Papal University of Mexico, predecessor of the UNAM.
- **2003**  
The name of the UNAM is inscribed in gold letters on the Wall of Honor of the Chamber of Deputies.
- **2005**  
TV UNAM begins broadcasting its own signal. The UNAM is put on the list of the 100 best universities in the world, in 20<sup>th</sup> place in the field of arts and the humanities, and in 93<sup>rd</sup> place in the area of sciences, according to the World University Rankings published by *The Times* of London's supplement *Higher Education*.



*Mammutus imperator*, Leidy, located in downtown Mexico City.

Ernesto Peñafoza Méndez/DGPU-UNAM



- **2006**  
The university is given the buildings that used to make up the Ministry of Foreign Relations' complex so that it can develop the Tlatelolco University Cultural Center, where there is a permanent exhibit of a Memorial of 1968.
- **2007**  
The UNESCO declares the central esplanade of Uni-