

Methodological coordinates for artistic research/creation

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*Coordenadas metodológicas para la investigación/creación artística*

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**Abstract:**

Research in the arts is a form of production of complex knowledge, while subjectivity, culture and social context occupy a relevant place in the artist's own work. During the research-creation process, the artist establishes a set of conceptual relationships that lead to his proposal being understood within artistic research-creation. The article focuses on the artistic research-creation processes that are developed at the University of the Arts, ISA de Cuba, with emphasis on the Art of Audiovisual Communication Media career. What lines of research does the academy conceive? What routes do they follow in their development? What methodological coordinates were designed? How is this methodology deployed in art, in the research-creation process of the audiovisual artist? The answers to these questions arise from the implementation, the experiences and the results obtained in the application of the designed methodology.

**Keywords:** methodological coordinates; research-artistic creation; research-creation for audiovisual production

**Resumen:**

La investigación en artes, es una forma de producción de conocimientos compleja, en tanto en el propio hacer del artista ocupa un lugar relevante la subjetividad, la cultura y

el contexto social. Durante el proceso de investigación-creación, el artista establece un conjunto de relaciones conceptuales que conllevan a que su propuesta, pueda ser entendida dentro de la investigación-creación artística. El artículo centra la atención en los procesos de investigación-creación artística que se desarrollan en la Universidad de las Artes, ISA de Cuba, con énfasis en la carrera Arte de los Medios de Comunicación Audiovisual. ¿Qué líneas de investigación concibe la academia?, ¿Qué rutas siguen en su desarrollo?, ¿Qué coordenadas metodológicas fueron diseñadas?, ¿Cómo se despliega esta metodología en arte, en el proceso de investigación-creación del artista audiovisual? Las respuestas a estas interrogantes surgen de la implementación, las experiencias y los resultados obtenidos en la aplicación de la metodología diseñada.

**Palabras claves:** coordenadas metodológicas; investigación-creación artística; investigación-creación para la realización audiovisual

## **1. Introduction**

The international university community recognizes research as a key element for systematizing and obtaining new knowledge, as well as for strengthening the critical thinking of those who investigate, essential aspects in the teaching-research integration. From these views, the research process stands as a basic tool that contributes to the social and economic development of a territory, a country or universal knowledge.

The term research, according to the Dictionary of the Spanish language, is recorded as "Action and effect of investigating" (2022, p. 809). For its part, the OECD Glossary of Statistical Terms records it as "Any systematic activity undertaken with the purpose of increasing the accumulation of knowledge and the use of this knowledge to discover new applications" (2022, p. 985).

These definitions focus attention on the research process that tries to discover, explain, control, predict, etc., facts and phenomena; is the aforementioned scientific research, however, specialists in more particular research, such as art research, offer us other views.

Francisco Hernandez-Chavarria, professor and researcher at the School of Art, University of Costa Rica, establishes a parallel between the research processes in the arts and the research processes coined by the sciences and specifies: "(...) both processes are different and basically the difference lies in its objective, since in the first it is artistic creation, in which the artist-researchers are part of the process" (2018, p. 7).

For Henk Borgdorff, versed in artistic research at Leiden University, the Netherlands: "Art research defines itself as empirical research as a set of non-systematic methods" (2009, p. 13).

From these multiple perspectives, the term research is borrowed from literature and is assumed in artistic practice- as a way of thinking, expressing and communicating, research in art.

## 2. State of the art: artistic research in Cuba

### 2.1. Art research

Although it is true that research in art is considered a complex form of knowledge production, insofar as the artist's own work occupies a relevant place in his subjectivity as an individual, the culture reached, the circumstances in which the research is carried out, and the Social context; all of which favors expanding the symbolic universe in which the human being develops. It is also true that this criterion began to position itself on university campuses at the end of the 20th century, when the conflict between the way in which the artist investigates and the way of investigating by professionals of other knowledge took place.

Marcelo Zambrano Unda, an Ecuadorian teacher and researcher, asserts that:

Artistic research or art-based research is a relatively new space for reflection on and from the artistic field. It is framed within the academic borders of universities and research centers; however, it maintains an alleged independence and autonomy, mainly due to its ambiguous relationship with the scientific field. (...) In any case, it is the development of this relationship that defines the importance of artistic research (2016, p. 111).

During the research-creation process, the artist-researcher establishes a set of conceptual relationships, which make his proposal understandable within the contemporary coordinates of the artistic.

The Cuban professor and researcher Mayra Sanchez Medina, in the course Epistemological supports for audiovisual production, developed at the University of the Arts, ISA (UA-ISA) of Cuba, when reflecting on research in the arts, as a field of study, argues what:

(...) this type of research constitutes a real challenge for those who, from art universities, try to bring future artists closer to a kind of bottomless toolbox for their creative processes, research that must be flexible enough so that accommodates each one's budding poetics; necessarily expanded so that, from a transdisciplinary approach, it allows broadening the gaze and analysis and, profoundly critical as to incarnate in the "social micro dynamisms", (as Zemelman says)1 generated by themselves" (Note taken in the course, 2021).

Sanchez Medina (2021), makes visible the challenge that it imposes on the university institution of Art, safeguarding research; since the artistic work is preceded by an investigative process that aims at creation, knowledge management, production, realization, interpretation and critical reflection, among other aspects.

The results of research in the arts is a type of knowledge that brings us closer to the work done by the artist and the context in which this fact has occurred, responding to valuable individual or group artistic problems.

In this sense, it is about positioning the artistic fact from a holistic, interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary perspective, which favors the process of creation and experimentation in the artist-researcher; thus, in this type of research, artistic practice is assumed as a way of acquiring knowledge.

For Martha Lucia Barriga Monroy, a colombian researcher:

(...) artistic research in the university field is characterized by the experimentation of the creative subject (artistic educator-artist-researcher) with various elements of artistic languages (musical, plastic and visual, dance, literary, or scenic, among others) selected by him, resulting in a unique individual work, by the creative subject, who through discourse or reflection will attempt a personal approach to knowledge (historical, social, cultural, political, semiological, environmental, ideological, real or fictitious, etc.) of a fact, idea, or experience, about the created object (2011, p. 319).

Paraphrasing Patricia Avila (2008), an argentine artist, teacher and researcher, there is no complete answer to research in art, what there are approaches from two perspectives: that of the artist who makes the work and that of the artist himself who has to learn to see his work, from another perspective, that of the researcher.

In dialogues and reflection workshops with artists and teachers of art careers, it has been possible to confirm their assumption that art research constitutes a creative act, a criterion shared by the authors of this work, since the result of research in art is artistic creation; a process that demands time and space on the part of the person who carries it out, who applies various investigation procedures based on his work -tangible or intangible-, in harmony with other procedures that he borrows from humanistic scientific research, such as social research , anthropology, historiography, among others. In this way, the methodology applied in each creative process is unique.

## *2.2. Artistic research in the Cuban university context*

The UA-ISA was created in 1976, in its course it has graduated hundreds of young people in the careers of: Dance Art, Musical Art, Theater Art, Visual Arts, Audiovisual Media Art and, more recently, in Arts of the Conservation of Cultural Heritage.

The culmination of studies exercises (ECE) to obtain the degree of Bachelor of Arts, in the different careers that the students develop, as well as the master's and doctoral theses follow the course of the lines of research approved by the Ministry of Education Superior (MES), contextualized to artistic knowledge.

What are the lines of research proposed by the academy to its students?

**Line 1:** Contemporary problems of culture and the arts: history, theory and criticism. It stimulates research on the arts, research that escapes the pigeonholes derived from the objectivist scientific tradition, making visible the solid results that are generated at the

creative, theoretical and experimental level within the university; in which the projects that are registered in it, can set their own guidelines, from the necessary poetic quality that sustains them.

**Line 2:** Improvement of the teaching of the arts. It points towards the achievement of defining and perfecting the teaching of the arts aspects such as: the record of its historical trajectory, of the tangible and intangible productions resulting from the teaching-methodological, investigative and creative artistic work; the influence exerted on academic perspectives by the bodies that control their normative and methodological activity; the projection and national and international legitimation of a conceptual platform and expressive practice of the singularity that govern the integral processes of artistic careers and their artistic-pedagogical teaching.

**Line 3:** Cultural policy and management. It deepens the knowledge of the epistemological foundations of cultural studies and its concretion in policies and management models, taking into account the diversity and peculiarities of these processes in Cuba and Latin America. It also designs and applies diagnostic evaluative research, processes, results and impacts of the application of cultural policies and the different components of management models at the national, territorial and local levels.

**Line 4:** Study and conservation of cultural heritage. Promotes theoretical research related to the study and conservation of cultural heritage, while characterizing and evaluating the conservation processes of tangible and intangible cultural heritage that contribute to different institutional actions, their development and support. It delves into the theoretical and conceptual problems of traditional popular culture and promotes the study and conservation of the UA-ISA heritage.

The diversity of methodological procedures, namely: interviews, qualitative surveys, observations of the context, case studies, etc., which are promoted in these lines of research in correspondence with the objectives set in each artistic research-creation process, allow establishing the interdisciplinary relationship within each of the careers and the transdisciplinary approach with other disciplines typical of the cultural context that are developed in the university itself, for example: panorama of art and culture, art history, philosophy, aesthetics, semiotics, etc. In addition, with studies that are generated in other universities and institutions, namely: Faculty of Social Communication and Journalism, and the House of Higher Studies Fernando Ortiz, both attached to the University of Havana; the Faculty of Humanities of the University of Pedagogical Sciences; the Cuban Association of Social Communication, among others; as well as with society as a whole, reaching a resonance in the field of teaching and research, in links with other institutions and scientific poles at the national and international level.

### *2.3. What routes are followed in its development by the artistic research-creation process that unfolds in the faculties of the UA-ISA?*

In interviews with teachers and researchers during the celebration of the XIX Scientific Conference on Art and Culture, UA-ISA (2019), about the processes they develop in the

training of the artist-researcher in their respective faculties, the following criteria were recorded:

Silvia Ramirez Paseiro, Art Faculty of Conservation of Cultural Heritage:

Research is undertaken from an integrating and inclusive perspective, from the most diverse artistic and scientific disciplines, both from the social and humanistic sciences, as well as from the exact sciences, the natural sciences and the material sciences. In the field of Cultural Heritage Conservation, although a predominance of the qualitative approach is observed, research also follows other approaches such as quantitative and mixed. It is a field for which research is carried out from multiple sciences for the study of the development of materials, techniques and methodologies that are put at the service of the processes of conservation, restoration, museography itself, among others. Research is also carried out on the most diverse processes, for example, of interpretation, valuation, patrimonialization of cultural assets and equally from within these processes, from the practice of the conservator, the restorer, the museologist; in which, of course, the subjectivity of each one is expressed and therefore the research itself also has a strong heuristic and hermeneutical component.

Maria del Carmen Mena Rodriguez, Faculty of Dance Art:

In university studies of dance, the research component is deployed throughout the training process, as well as in the final exercise of degree (EFG). The investigative experience of the students contemplates their creative work with motivation to base the dance practice, thus understanding that creation is also a process of investigation and theoretical-practical reflection in the inquiries related to the dance creation that questions the body from the physical, emotional, but also in their thinking, social bonds and in their cultural makeup. That is why the dancer's body is essential to build different investigative strategies in the creation process, to investigate the body to think, create and investigate dance art. It then becomes a necessary and essential reference for analysis so that the creative artist-researcher can, from their experiences and life stories, narrate creative experiences and at the same time dialogue with the various theoretical-practical perspectives of dance work.

Xiomara Pedroso Gomez, Faculty of Musical Art:

The research methodology takes on a very particular physiognomy in the field of music, especially in relation to musical interpretation. Interpreting a musical work requires the deployment of strategies of research that responds to the stylistic intentionality that is pursued to present in the execution. Before the musical interpretation, it is essential to complete a series of steps, such as: the historiographical investigation, regarding the author and his context, and the hearing of possible pre-existing versions. This process of prior inquiry presents multiple edges, in which various theoretical-musical disciplines converge, such as analysis, music history, harmony or counterpoint. In this way, musical

interpretation can be considered as a unifying exercise and synthesis of investigative processes that combine multiple knowledges expressed in a concentrated way in the execution. The musical interpretation implies, therefore, a triple challenge; firstly, to deploy effective investigative strategies that allow access to the information necessary for the work to be interpreted; second, to obtain a holistic understanding of the work, the result of said research; and, thirdly, to condense all of the above to the investigative practice. These challenges, if successfully met, will significantly contribute to making the leap from a purely technical performance to a conscious, informed and more symbolic musical performance.

Eduardo Eimil Mederos, Faculty of Theater Arts:

Research in the theater is essential, especially with regard to the construction of the character by the authors. In this sense, they, of course, must go through various paths that are not limited to theoretical research... I am talking about the character seen, as opposed to the character read. To summarize the three specific ways in which this research is conducted, I want to refer to the three-entry method of Argentine teachers Monica Discepola and Chiqui Gonzalez. They state that the actor can access the character through three specific entrances; the first is the intellectual input that provides theoretical foundations and consists of a deep analysis of the work, of the author, of the time, but also in the handling of literary, visual, and sound references; the second entry is that of the images and with it the actor works on the inner world of the character, this entry is activated through stimuli connected with experiences, memories, emotions, it is actually interesting because in this entry the actor is investigating himself himself and from there he creates a world that is non-existent, it is a fiction, but it is plausible; finally, we have the physical entry that refers to work with the body, with physical actions, with the voice, with the way of walking, with the way of moving, in this entry all the other paths are specified because this is what exactly does the public see? But in all cases it is clear that the main characteristic of theatrical research from the actor is the conjunction of various paths that unite the intellectual and the corporal, paying tribute to the creation of a multidimensional character that is in accordance with the character created by the playwright who imagined the director and they finally commission the actor.

The interviewees recognize that the artistic research-creation processes that they develop with their students enhance the inter and transdisciplinary approach, as well as the deployment of strategies in which the borders between artistic knowledge and other knowledge are blurred, and where they are integrated, in favor of the creative act, theory and practice. However, it is not idle to point out that artistic research-creation, to be considered as such, must be an original work, since it is a particular creative activity, aimed at acquiring and generating knowledge by the artist-researcher.

Paola Villanueva Gonzalez, collaborating professor in art, at the Open University of Catalonia, considers that artistic research is "an interactive, reflective and moving approach, which has particular means and strategies, typical of the arts, that make it unique" (2017, p. 218).



For his part, Fernando Hernandez, professor at the University of Barcelona, defends the criteria that artistic research:

(...) it must be Accessible, a public activity, open to peer scrutiny. Transparent, clear in its structure, processes and results. Transferable, useful or beyond the research project, applicable in principles (although not in specificity) for other researchers and other research contexts (2008, p. 20).

Certainly, there is no single methodology for artistic research-creation, although the qualitative route with its many alternatives favors each project being able to respond to the objectives initially designed by the artist-researcher.

### **3. Methodology proposal for artistic research in Cuba**

#### *3.1. Guidelines for methodological coordinates*

At the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st, research on university campuses, where audiovisual filmmakers were trained, was oriented towards investigating technical aspects of the photography, sound and editing specialties, and occasionally, research was carried out on inherent theoretical aspects to these and other specialties of audiovisual knowledge.

Interpreting Verwoert and others (2010), artistic research tried to adjust to what was established for research in other branches of knowledge such as the social and humanistic sciences, whose hegemonic models prevailed in universities.

Another trend in this stage was "the dispute between the ideological debate of the moment and the way the artist-researcher expresses himself when conceiving his work" (Arguello, 2003, p. 47).

In the introduction of the Educational Teaching Process Plan "D" of the Audiovisual Communication career at UA-ISA, it is stated that "(...) the research carried out by audiovisual filmmakers in the undergraduate course lacked its own methodology. In addition, there was no reservoir of topics that were of interest to the artist or to the institution itself" (2009, p. 8).

Between the years 2010-2013, a research project was registered and developed at the university itself, one of its purposes being to reflect on the development of a particular research methodology, which interweaves the needs and creative interests of the audiovisual filmmakers themselves and the sociohistorical context of the country. As described in the research report, it was necessary to make transformations in the way of teaching and learning to research in art and, at the same time, there was an urgent need to design a methodology that was more similar to the creative act carried out by audiovisual filmmakers.



The methodological proposal designed had, among its guidelines, the recognition that the artist-researcher develops two types of research that are integrated into a single process: the research of the theme and the concept, from where it is intended to deal, and the research that performs from his specialty based on his experiences and his skills to materialize the project; It is from this reflexive look, that it is possible to interweave theory and praxis; parts of the process that are not always visible in research terms.

Interpreting Carrillo Quiroga and others (2015), the theoretical-practical debates around the research-creation process carried out by the artist lack a methodological systematization; among other causes, due to the non-dissemination of some methodologies created in art institutions in Latin American countries such as Mexico, Colombia, Peru, Brazil and Argentina; due to the insufficient validation of the results achieved in its application; for not being of interest to some governments, for not allocating sufficient resources to this type of research and for not having sufficient roots within the academic culture.

The aforementioned guidelines constitute coordinates to be taken into account when designing a methodology for the research-creation-realization of the audiovisual artist.

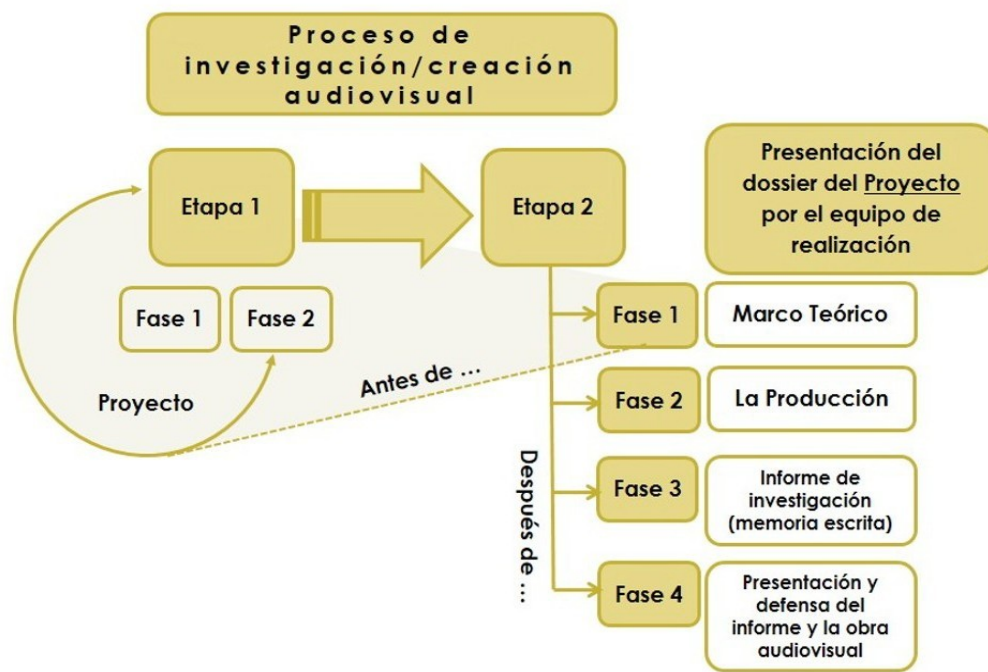
### *3.2. Methodological proposal*

Several exchange sessions, in-depth interviews and observations of the creative process with students-audiovisual producers, teachers, researchers and managers, allowed us to reflect on how to articulate research-art-methodology-audiovisual production. As a result of the application of these methods, in addition to the study of various bibliographic sources, a methodology was designed that allowed research to be assumed as a process that penetrates the creative act: the artistic project -before, during and after its configuration-, now, through image and sound.

The methodology is made up of stages and phases (Figure 1), which articulate with each other from theory and artistic practice, and offers the audiovisual work as an innovative result.

**Figure 1**

*Research process: stages and phases*



*Stage 1, search and evolution of an idea*

During the first phase of this stage, the artist-researcher conceptually manages and records the existing information on the idea-subject, which he will use to build his creative act. In the second phase, it processes the information and writes in detail the research-creation project that will be used for its audiovisual production (dossier).

*Stage 2, phases that integrate*

In the first phase, the subject to be investigated is explored in various sources of information, with the purpose of building the foundations or theoretical framework that will support the investigation.

The initial investigative period, present in both stages, is recognized by the audiovisual artist-researcher as the “before”, relative to the moment prior to the materialization of the work; It is characterized by the use of various research methods such as: interviews, life stories, discussion groups, observation, qualitative surveys, etc., in a frank science-art articulation.

Delving into this topic, in the context of the course Epistemological Supports..., Sanchez Medina, states:

The successive ruptures that have taken place in art for more than a century have made it necessary for the artist, regardless of genre, poetics or the setting in which he is located, to create -in addition to material objects, personal objects, movements or scores- Those conceptual relationships that make your proposal an object, relationship, sound or audiovisual artifact, can be understood within the contemporary coordinates of the artistic. This is where the "before" research in the arts is located. (...) some basic aspects that the artist-researcher "before" must take into account are: the blurring of the limits of art and life has caused its borders to become unstable and, therefore, what it includes or excludes art no longer responds to closed or definitive definitions". The search for meanings, more than for objects, is what characterizes this moment of research; precisely because in the absence of exclusively artistic objects, spaces and textures in the traditional sense, critical distance and the construction of discourses are handles par excellence that guarantee art the autonomy and differentiation it requires as a condition of its permanence. Likewise, the investigative processes that support it must be nurtured by dialogue with other knowledge itself, which has an accumulated study of the social territories in which artists and their audiences move today (Note taken in the course, 2021).

The second investigative phase is characterized by the realization of the audiovisual work itself. It is, in this phase, where the productive and artistic problems that arise from the different specialties "during" pre-production, production and post-production are addressed; it is a kind of research-action and not a pure application of what has been investigated.

It is inherent in the process of making the audiovisual work, to build and rebuild - again and again - the visual, sound, acting, environmental concept, the design of lights and shadows, the capture of ambient sounds, the use of music. incidental, the work with professional actors, the types of frames, shots and camera movements, financing and ways of producing, among other aspects; all of which requires an in-depth investigation that will support the appropriate decision-making of the previously selected production team. From the perspective of each member of the team, the object of study is contextualized.

This phase "during" the configuration of the project is characterized by the proliferation of methods that allow the interpretation of the symbolic practices that underlie the cultural fact.

The report or written memory of the investigation is the third phase of this stage, "after"; It is where the artist-researcher reveals the knowledge and skills acquired during the entire research-creation process for audiovisual production, which is why it must be elaborated with great care, specifying each of the steps developed, so that they can be used by other teams of researchers-creators who carry out audiovisual production projects.

Finally, the presentation of the main results before an evaluating court and the attending public is essential; It is at this moment that the artist-researcher offers the results of his creative act: the audiovisual work, which he sustains from theory with attachment to

practice, explaining how he got there and, at the same time, it is the author's first confrontation and his work with the public, from which comments, questions and reflections emanate that the audiovisual artist-researcher will take into account in future projects. This self-reflection carried out by the artist-researcher is only possible because he recognizes the value of interweaving theoretical production and practical-audiovisual production.

The implementation of this methodology in undergraduate and postgraduate courses, for more than five years, in the Art Faculty of Audiovisual Communication Media of the UA-ISA, favored the art-science articulation in which both processes are weighted and evaluated during the practice. artistic, with an emphasis on how it is investigated.

As a result of the application of the methodology designed in the research undertaken by audiovisual artist-researchers, more than a hundred works for cinema, television and radio have been presented in competitions, public welfare campaigns, exhibitions and festivals, some of which have obtained relevant awards. In addition, there is the publication of books, brochures and articles in different formats and media on issues related to the care and conservation of the environment and heritage, local development, audiovisual scripts, television and radio formats, interactive documentaries, the use of light and color in works of fiction, augmented reality, among others.

#### **4. Conclusions**

In summary, the research process that the artist-researcher unfolds is inherent to the artistic practice that he develops; process that is characterized by being multilateral, interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary, depending on the objective outlined in which science and art are intertwined.

The academic body, the research artists, the specialists and the directors of the UA-ISA assume, among other challenges, in the field of research, to institutionalize their own methodologies for each of the careers and continue reflecting on how to undertake, from other forms of research in art, an investigation when its end is not the work itself.

The audiovisual artist-researcher is convinced of the application of the proposed methodology that takes into account the gaze of the object under investigation, from his perspective as a subject, although he does not always have to use the same tools in each of the stages and phases of the process. , since the creative act is mediated by the multiplicity of factors: social, educational, cultural, community, economic, political, among others, that affect the construction of the audiovisual work, the essential objective of his research.

However, research in the arts, particularly that carried out by the audiovisual artist-researcher, continues to be a topic that should be given attention by part of students, professors, specialists and directors in order to manage processes that accompany their implementation, improvement and validation in the Audiovisual Communication Media Art career of the ISA University of the Arts, in Cuba, both at the headquarters, as well as in its subsidiaries in the provinces of Camagüey and Holguín.

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