

REVIEW

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about the candidature for the scientific degree "Doctor" in the field of higher education 8. Arts,
professional field 8.2. Fine Art - for the needs of the Design Department, NBU
of Nikolay Krasimirov Pachev and the documents submitted for the award of the scientific degree
"Doctor", as well as a scientific thesis on:

DESIGN PROJECT - MODERN DESIGN TECHNIQUES IN FASHION

Scientific supervisor: prof. Dr. Elena Todorova

I. General presentation of the applicant

Nikolai Krasimirov Pachev is the only candidate in this competition. He is a graduate of **New Bulgarian University**: graduated from **BA Fashion Design** in 2003 and **MA Fashion** in 2005. For the period 2003 - 2004 was a graduate student at **Kunsthochschule**, Berlin, Germany. He has received two awards from New Bulgarian University: for Best Student in 2006 and for his contribution and special achievements in 2005. In addition to the recognition for his successful ideas and projects, Pachev has been nominated in many international fashion competitions and has been a finalist or awarded in some. I will mention two of the awards: 1st award - **Mittelmoda** Gorizia, Italy in 2005; nomination for stylist in magazine - **Pantene Beauty Awards** (national competition) Sofia, Bulgaria in 2007.

He is a PhD student in DP "Design", as well as a lecturer at BP "Fashion" and MP "Styling" since 2014. Nikolay Pachev has extensive creative experience, numerous specializations and successfully realized fashion projects. It is worth mentioning his specializations in Vojd (2012), Berlin, Germany - 3-D printing technology; in Little Big (2007), Istanbul, Turkey - design; in Maria Cleo 2006, Trieste, Italy - tailoring, in Fabrica - Benetton (2005), Treviso, Italy; in Antonia Goy (2004), Berlin, Germany - tailoring and screen printing.

His professional development is currently related, besides teaching in the fashion programs at NBU, to his role as chief designer at **Y.CHROMA** (fashion brand - menswear), as well as co-founder and art-director of **NOIEE** (textile print production). This is his momentary development after the period between 2010 - 2020, when he was art director and buyer of **ALL U RE** (high-end multi-brand store).

Two publications related to the present topic are also submitted with the thesis. In the creative CV of the candidate, he himself highlights the following projects, which, in his opinion, shape his creative career, among which we can mention: the **HUG** fashion collection, presented in the UK in 2022 by Identity Fashion The Chesnut Appel in a charity event, also including an experimental video by Zlatimir Arakliev for it; **COPYCAT** (2019) - styling and costumes for a short fashion film by YO-VO, an official selection at twelve international festivals and an award winner at two of them; interior design for **ALL U RE** boutique, in collaboration with YO-VO and Albena Alexandrova (2018).

Beyond the emphasis that the PhD student places among his original creative projects and performances, I would like to mention **Dragon and Moth** - a collaboration with Sarah Burger from Zurich, Switzerland, performed in the space of Aether (Voyne de Voyne) in 2022, of which I was part of the audience. Pachev is here a member of the team responsible for textile printing. The collaboration was very successful and led to a second collaborative project in 2023, **In Between Things IV**.

II. Relevance and Significance of the Scientific Work

The theme that Nikolay Pachev has chosen focuses on the life path of the garment, which is beyond the direct control and abilities of fashion designers, due to the ecological changes that are changing the face of fashion for the current generation, but will definitely influence fashion in general and in the future. Also important is the sustainability debate, which, according to the PhD student, currently hardly goes beyond the topic of recycling.

What also seems interesting and significant is the direction in which the PhD student presents a pragmatic basis not only for the creative process in the work of the fashion designer, but proposes a model to work with that would allow designers to create garments that are ahead of their time. According to Pachev: "a complete and comprehensive design concept, such as the context of the real functioning fashion industry requires, is a set of techniques, coherent expert solutions and different thematic answers to specific questions, on which the foundations of any new design idea can be laid."

The topic of design methods in fashion, modern techniques in building a design project and portfolio will always be topical, especially in relation to the ever-changing environmental and social environment, climate change and even the extremely dynamic technological times in which we live. In the light of the above, I confirm the relevance of the topic.

III. Objectives and methodology of the research

One of the main objectives of this dissertation research is to construct and present a system of techniques - manipulative apparatus to stimulate creative thinking, creative development of the conceptual idea and all the detailed information that accompanies it, following the logical sequence and content of a fashion project - portfolio. In pursuit of this goal, the PhD student divides his tasks into research and theoretical and practical/creative directions.

In the practical part of the research Nikolay Pachev sets himself two main tasks: to prove the main view and the main purpose of design - the idea; to adapt the classical portfolio structure to the needs of the research to create a sustainable idea in the form of a design project; to adapt to the design a system of comprehensive referencing of technical parameters of garments at launch, which meets the standards of the fashion industry with synthesized those technological specifics that are directly relevant to design and should be a design solution.

In the research-theoretical direction, the PhD student sets the following goals:

- To highlight all important steps, issues from classical education and fashion design practices that could be potential guidelines - techniques
- To discover, discredit and call into question outdated understandings and practices, describing in a reasoned way how and what they are transformed into
- To highlight and cite those techniques that are qualitatively affected as theory in Bulgaria
- To analyse in depth and argue the contemporary techniques that are most relevant to the present in fashion design

- To summarize in general - to ground a system for the creative act as sequential actions with the right components, interactions between them and a plan of action to provide a backbone for a sustainable idea.

IV. Main part of the research

The present work of Nikolay Pachev has a total volume of the main part of 220 pages, structured as follows: introduction, five chapters in logical sequence, conclusion, statement of contributions and applicability of results, list of terms and bibliography. The PhD student has chosen to include the terminological apparatus of the chapters in the thesis, to all the individual points for a clearer logical line.

Included with the main text are 60 complex images - groups of illustrations, graphs and photographs that support the theoretical study. The bibliography contains a total of 139 titles, 25 of which are internet sources. An appendix, in the form of a short video of an author's project presentation has been added to the main body of the thesis.

In the beginning of his dissertation Nikolay Pachev clearly formulates the arguments in favour of the thesis topic. It clearly outlines the aims of the research and presents the methodology by which he intends to prove its main view and defend its contribution.

In the first chapter, the PhD student presents the general background, concepts and objectives of the fashion project. He highlights key objectives and contemporary issues in developing a fashion project. He looks at the idea as the main principle goal in the fashion project, as well as its sustainability. In this chapter Nikolay Pachev also presents a classical understanding of portfolio, but also its transformation into a fashion project as a methodological system of techniques for reaching and building a sustainable idea.

In the second chapter, the PhD student theoretically explores the parts of the fashion project: moodboard, cultural research, gradation and construction of archetypes (types with simplified symbols and typology). Examines the construction of principle differences and connections inspired by contemporary cultures and social phenomena. In this chapter Nikolai Pachev gives a brief overview of some contemporary trends and forms in art, design and fashion. He considers fashion as a component of multidisciplinary art. In structuring the sequence of the facts and views presented in this chapter, the PhD

student chooses to start with contemporary techniques, and then draw our attention to historical influences in fashion and analyse old techniques and new technologies, not omitting of course artificial intelligence, which has an increasing influence on art in general. Reversing the perspective from historicity to contemporaneity he underlines the stated relevance of the PhD student's research.

In the third chapter, the PhD student discusses design - the creative part of the fashion project. He focuses on the individual components of the fashion collection: colour; textiles and materials; shape and shaping - silhouette, proportions, volume; identity of the garment - concrete and hybrid. The following is a presentation of various possible creative developments: line-up, fashion illustration, sketchbook. In this chapter, Nikolai Pachev also presents five design development exercises. A sample structure of a fashion collection is also presented: planning, commercial balance and coordination of the fashion collection.

In the fourth chapter, the PhD student presents the technical documentation or reference part of his research. It goes through the technical specifications of the pre-production period, the technical drawing and colour variations, the construction, stitching and labels, and the "artwork" itself.

Chapter five is the presentation/styling part of the fashion project. In this chapter Nikolay Pachev defines the principles and distinguishes between design concept and styling concept. Examines the multi-layered cultural references of the styling concept under an unified visual framework. Styling references are also included: clothing; model; make-up; photographer; background, environment and props.

Each of the presented five chapters of the dissertation ends with conclusions that support the main view of the PhD student.

V. Findings and conclusions

At the very end of the dissertation Nikolay Pachev presents a summary of the conclusions of his research, as well as its main implications. This final part of the dissertation is formulated entirely around an analysis of the objectives achieved and their practical applicability specifically to a fashion project in the form of many well-articulated conclusions. Again, I will focus on only some of them, which I consider more important and credible in supporting the main view of the PhD student.

One of the main conclusions, which Nikolay Pachev marked at the very beginning of his research (in the first chapter), is that the main purpose of designing is the idea. And he introduces us to this *idea* of his by analysing the concepts in their purest definitions. This to some extent *universality* of the conceptual

apparatus is in favour of the more universal applicability of the thesis, in defence of its contributory character.

One of the views advocated in the conclusions is that theoretical methods of idea building in the fashion project as its main goal appear to be the most important. The artistic methods have a clear purpose to help the idea, respectively they are subordinate and secondary. According to the PhD student, they are hard to submit to a scientific argument to derive the view of the dissertation because they are subject to subjective factors such as talent, conditioning and general culture.

According to the PhD student, the fashion project can be seen as a methodological system that builds a structure. The meaning in this structure is in the system of questions, in the analysis of the terms in their philosophical context, as they are embedded in the current of structuralism, to be adapted to (any) fashion project.

The thematic issues of fashion project structure can be methodically used as design techniques. The precise formulation of the themes and the practical focus they create can be used purposefully to build the project and lead to very different and original outcomes.

Main conclusion - the proposal of the PhD student is to use the known classical structure of a fashion project in the way it is set as an academic basis in the fashion programs of the NBU as a backbone for building the proposed methodological system (in the form of a structure of thematic questions). The relationships between popular definitions of portfolio elements, and how they translate to the needs of a fashion project, are clearly stated in relation to views derived in the thesis.

According to Nikolay Pachev, treating the fashion project as a structure of questions without a pre-set topic is a useful methodology in teaching because it enables, trains thinking and prepares students for independent idea development - something they encounter in their real work and is required in the practice of the profession. The structure provides a scaffold through which students can address potential and varied questions that the framework of a pre-set topic would limit.

A distinction is made between generally accepted, outdated and state-of-the-art useful practices in fashion design.

The PhD student's main claim in this section of conclusions is that **"fashion design is a system of techniques– manipulative apparatuses to stimulate creative thinking, design concept development processes and design referencing."**

VI. Contributions of the thesis

The contributions of the dissertation are outlined by the doctoral candidate in eleven points. I will focus on six of them, listed in the sequence proposed by the PhD student, which I consider to be the most strongly defended, through the theoretical, creative-research and authorial work of the PhD student in this thesis:

1. One of the main contributions of the dissertation is the proposed new model-approach to design project, without being tied to a specific topic, but as a proposal for structure - with clear parameters in the form of thematic questions - techniques.

2. Provides a concrete practical strategy for working with fashion information - trends, defining specifically the designer's particular uses of the information; provides a potential reasoned resolution to the scholarly debate regarding the *uses of other people's designs* and how much and where they have a place in the design process.

3. He adapts contemporary techniques that are real practical exercises to move from research to design, generating and multiplying patterns into a fashion collection.

4. He creates a system adapted to the needs of designers to comprehensively reference technical parameters of garments at launch that meet fashion industry standards, with differentiated technological specifics that are directly relevant to the design and should be a design solution.

5. He creates foundations for new topics in fashion design education.

6. He responds to the contemporary and emerging needs of the real fashion business to adapt fashion education to modern reality and the needs of the industry.

VII. Opinions and recommendations

I have no critical remarks to make about the candidate, but I do have a recommendation that I believe will contribute to applying the research into an expanded catalogue edition that also has the necessary visual framework not allowed by the dissertation.

The proposed structure of questions, as well as the visual examples provided, would correspond nicely in an artistic portfolio, with enough informative and useful applicable content - a relevant and visually appealing *learning tool* for fashion students.

Some parts of the thesis could be presented in more depth, and more visual examples could be included, which would be possible in an eventual printed edition of this thesis.

VIII. Summary

The abstract reflects the content of the thesis. The PhD thesis is well structured logically and the aims and objectives of the research are clearly stated. The above contributions of the thesis are also available.

IX. Conclusion

I give a positive evaluation of the scientific qualities and contributions of the research work and scientific work of Nikolay Krasimirov Pachev on: "Design project - modern design techniques in fashion", its completeness and scientific-creative significance, as well as the relevance of the research problem.

I propose to the distinguished members of the scientific jury to give their consent for the award of Education and Science Degree Doctor to Nikolay Krasimirov Pachev in the field 8.2 "Fine Arts" (Fashion) - Department "Design", Doctoral Program "Design" of New Bulgarian University.

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City of Sofia

/Assoc. Prof. Dr. Kalina Hristova/