

# REVIEW

by

Prof. Dr. Elena Todorova

for

a competition for the academic position "associate professor (docent)"

for the needs of NBU in the field of university education 8. Arts,

professional section 8.2 Fine Arts.

In the competition for "associate professor (docent)" announced in State Gazette,

SG No. 92/18.11.2022 for the needs of the "Design" Department

participates one applicant -

Dr. Ivanka Dobрева - Dragostinova, Chief Assistant

New Bulgarian University

## **I. Assessment of compliance with the minimum national requirements and the requirements of the New Bulgarian University:**

The materials submitted for review for the habilitation of Dr. Ivanka Dobрева-Dragostinova, Chief Assistant, fully meet the minimum national requirements, they are also in line with and cover the requirements of the NBU for habilitation for holding the academic position of "associate professor (docent)".

Dr. Ivanka Dobрева-Dragostinova, Chief Assistant, has the required number of points in all indicator's groups of the chart with minimum requirements for the scientific, teaching

and artistic-creative activity of the applicant for occupying an academic position in the professional field 8. Arts, 8.2. Fine Art, in accordance with the Regulations for the Implementation of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff of the Republic of Bulgaria and the requirements of the New Bulgarian University. Besides her indisputable achievements in the field of design, she is the author (on her own) of theoretical texts in the sphere of her specific professional interests - children's environment design, sustainable design, product design, her doctoral thesis defended in 2009 "Children's health design. Interior design for children's medical care institutions", with scientific supervisor Prof. Georgi Gikov, defines various theoretical aspects that constitute the basis for her subsequent creative realization, and at the same time outlines certain theoretical directions in her research and teaching activity.

## **II. Research (creative) activity and results:**

- **Evaluation of the monographic work, creative performances or other publications corresponding in volume and completeness to a monographic work, including an evaluation of the scientific and scientifically applied contributions of the author:**

In the current competition, Dr. Ivanka Dobрева-Dragostinova, Chief Assistant, presents her habilitation work in the form of an extended summary, where she describes the process of creating the works for two of her author's creative performances: the exhibition "21 IN BLUE" - Boris Hristov Museum, Sofia, May 21 - June 4, 2021 and the exhibition "JOURNEY IN BLUE" - Yuka Gallery, Varna, August 16 - September 10, 2021. The summary consists of 61 pages, 47 pages of text, 12 pages of illustrative part and 2 pages of bibliography.

This creative work presents a detailed research and a theoretical survey, which lies in the basis of the precision and the author's view in the realization of these two series of color and graphic compositions. These two exhibitions, presented by Dr. Ivanka Dobрева-Dragostinova, Chief Assistant, are the result of artistic intuition and accumulated proficiency and also of visual and spiritual experiences.

The first series of paintings with the title "21 IN BLUE" is an interesting perspective on the time of isolation when we were all locked down by the Covid pandemic. In the year 21 of the 21st century, the author presents 21 paintings and 21 pencil compositions. This repetition of the number 21 is an interesting idea that provokes the viewer's attention to tap into the world of Ivanka Dragostinova's paintings, and this is something that is worthwhile. All paintings are in the shade of blue which has been a purposeful choice. The color blue and its shades create an atmosphere of entering a deeper level, melancholy, even alienation. This sensation reflects very accurately the people's mood during the long months of isolation. The themes of Ivanka Dobрева-Dragostinova's paintings are taken from the inexhaustible source of the Bulgarian nature. But these are not the landscapes we often see in the works of various other authors. Here we see an unusual view on the traditional. Everything is summarized and reflected through the prism of personal feelings and emotions. These are rather memories of experiences awakened by the beauty of our nature. In the extended summary, she elaborates on the transformation and adaptation of the specific landscape and its transformation into a summary image - a symbol. The forms are decorative, flowing into each other in some places, and in others opposing each other. The concept of contrast is often used, which gives life to the compositions. The paintings of this series have been decided mainly in asymmetry. It's a conscious choice, the author is very well aware of the modern attitudes and interest in non-standard forms and as she has put it: "For the modern man and his dynamic lifestyle, filled with various and active stimuli to his perceptions, symmetrical compositions in art, design and architecture are often tedious and cause boredom."

The canvases have a square format, which balances very well the dynamics of the compositions. The paintings of this exhibition have a common theme and concept: they have different characteristics, but at the same time each of them is an organic part of an overall perception.

The paintings of the exhibition "21 IN BLUE" are not only a reflection of the author's personal experiences but they contain a message that impacts the viewer emotionally. The creation of these compositions is a challenge to the creative and scientific thinking. The author counts on the mixture of classic and extraordinary artistic solutions. Thus,

Ivanka Dobрева-Dragostinova achieves originality of the plastic expression of her author's presence.

The second exhibition "JOURNEY IN BLUE", presented in "Yuka" Gallery, Varna, is a continuation of the exhibition "21 IN BLUE". The picturesque canvases are a spiritual journey around Bulgaria. The paintings have a clear composition and a pedantic attention to detail. Ivanka Dobрева-Dragostinova uses various basic decorative elements: dots, lines, circle, that aid the final artistic visualization. The leading element again is the blue shade. The author skillfully uses the wealth of the cold blue colors to create an atmosphere of loneliness, melancholy, isolation, but it's an isolation that leads us to reflection and inner peace.

In the extended summary Ivanka Dobрева-Dragostinova explains all the processes and considerations accompanying the creation of the paintings of her two exhibitions. The text creates the impression of a consistent creative interest, focused on the artist's originality and personal choice, which is based on a set of constant-compositional parameters important for achieving a finished work. The author emphasizes the fact that an off-beat combination of color, shapes and composition can be very successful. This concept defines the artistic value of the paintings and shows the uniqueness of the artist's visual expression.

### **Evaluation of other creative performances, outside the monographic work:**

The creative experiments of Ivanka Dobрева-Dragostinova are manifested in other artistic pursuits as well. In the exhibitions "Rhodope Landscapes" and "Reminiscences" she presents a different creative approach. Here, the colors of the picturesque canvases are bright and cheerful. They sparkle and shine, overflowing into the compositions which are calm, balanced and the whole sensation is life-affirming. Probably because they were painted in nature, in the beautiful places of the Rhodope mountain, in the pre-pandemic years, both exhibitions radiate beauty and happiness.

Ivanka Dobрева-Dragostinova also works in the field of children's environment design. An interesting project of hers is a wooden building blocks construction toy for preschoolers. Here, the author has worked in the field of sustainable design. The wooden pieces are

made from waste wooden elements. The characteristics of the wood have been purposefully preserved, as well as the original shapes of the wooden pieces. This gives a fun, off-beat look to the construction toy. To reinforce this sensation, the pieces are painted in bright colors and graphic drawings. The whole construction set is an open system that allows various combinations to which new elements can be added.

Ivanka Dobрева-Dragostinova is also actively engaged in scientific research. She presents 28 articles, surveying various creative issues.

- **Citation by other authors:**

Chief Assistant Ivanka Dobрева-Dragostinova has a sufficient number of citations which is reflected in the NCID's reference.

### **III. Academic and teaching activity:**

Dr. Ivanka Dobрева-Dragostinova, Chief Assistant, has been a part-time teacher at "Interior Design" Bachelor's Program, "Spatial Design" Master's Program and "Interior Product Design" Master's Program of the "Design" Department of NBU since 2008. In 2011, she defended her Doctor's thesis and became a full-time teacher in the "Design" Department. During the next 12 years, she has been actively participating in the development and the updating of the Bachelor's Program "Interior Design" and the Master's Program "Spatial Design". She has participated in work groups on changes and improvement of the programs. Dr. Ivanka Dobрева-Dragostinova developed the courses: INTB025 Design Methodology – Part I; INTB026 Design Workshop – Part I; INTB027 Design Methodology – Part II; INTB028 Design Workshop – Part II; INTB509 Children's Residential Environment Design; INTB510 Children's Public Environment Design; ARTM674 Sustainable design; WEBM070 Fundamentals of Design.

She participated in the development of the "Interior Product Design" Master's Program, that was launched in the 2017/18 school year, and in the development of the courses: ARTM001 Design - Analysis and Research, ARTM003 Sustainable Product Design, ARTM004 Independent work "Sustainable Product Design", ARTM209 Children's Play

Equipment and Furniture Design, ARTM210 Independent work "Children's Play Equipment and Furniture Design".

She was the head of various student's creative projects.

#### **IV. Administrative and public activity:**

Dr. Ivanka Dobрева-Dragostinova, Chief Assistant, has been a member of the Department's Council of the "Design" Department since the 2011/2012 academic year. She has been a member of the Basic Training Department Faculty Council since the fall semester of the 2017/2018 academic year.

#### **V. Personal impressions of the applicant:**

I have known Ivanka Dobрева-Dragostinova since 2011. During these twelve years, I have witnessed the strenuous work and great effort, often outside the appointed hours, that Dragostinova puts into her work with the students. Her dedication and high professionalism in teaching and implementation of various students' projects has made her a respected teacher and colleague.

#### **Conclusion:**

With this analysis of Ivanka Dobрева-Dragostinova's creative work and teaching activity, with full confidence in the high quality and professionalism of the presented works, I propose to the respected members of the academic jury to appoint Dr. Ivanka Dobрева-Dragostinova, Chief Assistant, for the academic position of "Associate Professor (Docent)" according to 8.2. Fine Art.

July 03, 2023

Prof. Dr. Elena Todorova