

REVIEW

by Prof. Dr. Velichka Georgieva Minkova
National Academy of Arts,
field of University education 8. Arts, 8.2 Fine art,
on the artistic-creative production
for participation in a competition for the academic position "docent"
in professional field 8. Arts, 8.2. Fine art (visual composition, shape and color in design),
announced in SG No. 15/14.02.2023.
with candidate Dr. Ivanka Dobreva - Dragostinova, Chief Assistant

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

The competition for the academic position "docent", in professional field 8.2. Fine art (visual composition, shape and color in design) for the needs of the "Design" department at the NBU, has been announced in compliance with all legal requirements. The candidate Dr. Ivanka Dobreva - Dragostinova, Chief Assistant, presents the necessary documentation, in accordance with the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and the Regulations for the Application of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria. The submitted documents also meet the criteria of the additional requirements of the New Bulgarian University, according to the Ordinance on the Development of the Academic Staff at the NBU and according to the Table of Indicators for Opening a Procedure for Announcing a Competition for "docent" in Professional Field 8.2. Fine art (visual composition, form and color in design).

II. Research (creative) activity and results

The candidate Dr. Ivanka Dobreva - Dragostinova, Chief Assistant, presents summary of the habilitation work consisting of 61 pages - 47 of them text pages and 12 pages of illustrative part. The bibliography covers 22 titles, 4 websites and additional literature from 8 sources.

The focus of the study is the author's artistic and creative production presented in two solo exhibitions "21 in Blue", (Music Center "Boris Hristov", Sofia in 2021) and "Journey in Blue", (Gallery "Yuka" in Varna, 2021). The creative cycles materialize both the artistic and the scientific searches of the candidate in artistic compositions expressed by the means of the visual arts and design. In the process of creative research, 33 pencil sketches, 30 color and 41 graphic compositions were born. The works presented are not only the result of artistic activity based on the emotional impulse of the artist and the need for self-expression, but they could rather be defined as the culmination of a research process on the issues of visual composition. The field of study is very specific and dynamically changing over the years, because it concerns two areas of art that have common but also quite different features as well. Each new study contributes to the development of the research practices and the expansion of the set of approaches used to achieve scientific results. In this regard, Ivanka Dobreva refers to an in-

depth empirical study that aims at reconsideration of the laws of visual composition. The goals require conducting a number of experiments applying different means of expression, which can be defined as intrinsic of other areas of visual arts, but are also basic for design education.

In the course of her research Chief Assistant Dobreva analyzes the impact of forms on perceptions, as well as the interactions between different categories of forms in the whole of the composition. In her theoretical conclusions she points out that the composition in design and in visual arts is marked by a complexity based on the interaction of visual stimuli and tensions. According to her, the research that is based on the creative experiment is beneficial not only for perfecting the author as a creator, but also for his professional lore as a teacher.

The methodological apparatus has been carefully specified in order to achieve the formulated goals, as well as to expand the field of their theoretical and practical application. In her experimental research Chief Assistant Dobreva chooses an approach based on lateral thinking, which leads her to artistic experiments with combinations of forms with atypical characteristics. Her theoretical pursuits are based on the study of the principles of form formation, theory of visual composition and the science of color. Last but not least, she refers to the analytical approach, where the theoretical results related to the visual composition are enriched through the analyzes of the results achieved in the experimental research.

Ivanka Dobreva defines the theoretical framework of the realized creative project as outlined by the research, which purpose is to reconsider the laws of composition in a complex parallel between visual arts and design. The process and the final result are based on two aspects - the theory of composition, form formation and science of color, as well as the method of lateral thinking. Dobreva refers to Edward de Bono's definition of lateral thinking - a type of logical activity that is defined as creative thinking engaged in changing ideas, perceptions and concepts. This is the basis of Dobreva's comparisons between the works of design and the visual arts. No matter the difference in the functioning of the two artistic products, their uniqueness requires leaping over logic and moving to a level of lateral thinking.

Theoretical notes on the matters of composition include presentation of the compositional elements (categories of forms), their organization, basic principles (symmetry and asymmetry, meter and rhythm, dominant), means of harmonization, color aspects.

The creative process, presented in the candidate's habilitation thesis, is marked by a thorough empirical research aimed at reconsideration of the laws and qualities of visual composition. This requires the use of stylization that's conditioned by natural patterns and structures in order to create conditional form characteristics. The approach is traditional to art, but in the presented works reflect the author's uniqueness, aimed at preserving the connection with nature and make it visible. The limited color is not an obstacle to sense the nature, because the author skillfully uses the categories of forms in interpretation of natural structures.

Adhering to a color construction in blue tonality is a creative challenge. The emotional prompt springing from rethinking of the personal isolation during the epidemiological measures of 2021 is just the beginning of an artistic experiment. In the modern world, the color blue is being more and more used and, accordingly, it causes a wider range of associative reactions, which Ivanka Dobreva seeks to provoke. Her compositions show her ability to stimulate and manage compositional impact. Regardless of the predominance of blue hues in the color construction, the works are harmonious and lively.

The graphic compositions, enclosed in the illustrative part of the work can be defined as a visual study of the interaction of the non-oriented form with the other categories of elements. It is symbolically related to the sun in its directionlessness, the source of light, energy and life. The series of pencil graphics are visual interpretations of the mountain curves and the richness of contrasting juxtapositions of form features. The compositions do not have a name because, according to Dobрева, this would limit the boundaries of the impact.

The contribution of the habilitation work of Chief Assistant Dobрева is based on the in-depth study of individual states of the forms, their interaction and the choice of creative approaches that stimulate a certain psychological impact. In her thesis Dobрева views the possibilities of artistic expression, which is based on lateral thinking, equally relevant for visual artists and designers. Her position, presented in the theoretical part of the work, will serve as a starting point for new research in the field of visual composition and psychology of creativity.

In my opinion, a significant contribution to the work is the reference to the theoretical works of well-established theorists and professors of composition at universities, such as Prof. Serafim Serafimov, Prof. Rumen Raichev, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Dimitar Dobrevski, Assoc. Prof. Lyubomir Gurinov, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Dobrina Zheleva – Martins Viana and others. It creates continuity between generations, as each new work contributes to bringing the theoretical rationale of composition in design to a higher professional level.

- **Evaluation of publications and other creative performances:**

Dr. Ivanka Dobрева, Chief Assistant, is also the author of a number of publications in the field of design and the specifics of children's environment design. Her interests are focused on sustainable design, ecological materials and their application in the modern environment.

She is the author of design projects that showcase her qualities as a designer such as "A Series of Recyclable Furniture for Children "Phoenix" (2017), Light Fixture "Origami" (2016), Eco-friendly Spice Packaging Project "Bouquet for beans" (2015), design of a series of cardboard furniture "Origami Classic" (2015) etc. Her professional potential is also visible in the co-authorship with Chief Assistant Nezabravka Nedyalkova in the design "Manipulative modular constructor for children" ("Design" Department, "Technofurniture and the world of furniture" exhibition, 2019), Series of lighting fixtures and furniture for active sitting "Spheres", presented at the "Bulgarian Design 2017" Forum, Union of the Bulgarian Artists.

- **Citation by other authors**

Chief Assistant Ivanka Dobрева has the required number of citations in professional publications, which is evident from the NCID's reference.

III. Academic and teaching activity

Dr. Ivanka Dobрева, Chief Assistant, has been teaching at BP "Interior Design", MP "Spatial Design" and MP "Interior Product Design" since 2011.

Over the years, she has organized exhibitions, seminars and workshops. She has also been a leader or a number of workshops aimed at experimentation with materials and ideas in order to achieve non-traditional and innovative solutions regarding the formation of objects in the environment. Dobрева has her own author's works uploaded to "Moodle NBU" such as: ARTM003 Sustainable product design; ARTM209 Design of Play Equipment and Furniture for Children; INTB025 Design Methodology – Part I; INTB027 Design Methodology – Part II; INTB509 Residential Design for Children; INTB510 Design for Public Environment for Children; ARTB679 “Art Shop” Seminar; ARTM674 Sustainable design; ARTM003 Sustainable Product Design; ARTM209 Design of play equipment and furniture for children.

Dobрева is an active participant as a trainee in the Training program for the NBU teaching and administrative staff.

- **Student's rating**

The average score from the students' satisfaction surveys is 4.76, which shows the high level of teaching qualities of the candidate under the announced competition

IV. Administrative and public activity

Ivanka Dobрева has been a member of the FBO Faculty Council since the fall semester of the 2017/2018 academic year. She is a co-founder and member of the "Art Circle Impulsi" Association, a member of the Color Group "Bulgaria", a co-founder and member of the Chamber of the Bulgarian Designers, a member of the STU for Textiles, Clothing and Leather.

V. Personal impressions from the candidate

I have had the pleasure of knowing Ivanka Dobрева since 2007, when she was a full-time PhD student in the Children's Environment Design Department at the National Academy of Arts. Our talks regarding professional design have always been valuable to me because she is a colleague with high competence and solid personal perspective. I have been a witness of her creative and theoretical works at a number of design forums where she has demonstrated her in-depth studies, experimental practices and last but not least, her professional responsibility as a designer in the field of Children's Environment Design.

VI. Opinions and recommendations on the activity and achievements of the candidate

In conclusion, after I analyzed the habilitation thesis submitted for review, I would like to state my positive assessment. It has undeniable qualities and will be essential for further theoretical and practical research. My recommendation to Chief Assistant Ivanka Dobрева is to find a way, which would not contradict her ideas, to label or number the works presented in the

habilitation thesis. The lack of a title of a specific work will make it difficult for authors of theoretical treatises to refer to them in the future. This recommendation does not at all diminish the qualities of the work presented, on the contrary, it should be considered as supplementing the completeness of the study and would be of help to the future researchers of design composition.

Conclusion

Having in mind the above-mentioned review and being fully convinced in the undeniable qualities of the presented work, I propose that the honorable jury vote positively for Dr. Ivanka Dobрева - Dragostinova, Chief Assistant, to occupy the academic position of "docent" in professional field 8.2. Fine art.

Prof. Dr. Velichka Minkova

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