

O P I N I O N

By Assoc. Prof. Dr. Andronika Martonova, Institute of Art Studies, BAS

For the competition for Associate Professor in professional direction 8.4 Theater and Film Art, and the academic specialty Film Studies, Film Art and Television (history and theory of the film industry) for the needs of the Screen Arts Department at the Institute of Art Studies at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, published in State Gazette issue 97/10.12.2019

Competition candidate: Dr. Alexander Donev

After getting acquainted with the documentation provided and attached by the candidate for participation in the above competition, it was established that it fully meets the requirements of the new LDASRB, which has entered into force. The only candidate in the competition for ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR for the needs of the Screen Arts Department - Dr. Alexander Donev Angelov¹ - meets the regulatory requirements set out in Chapter III, Section III, Art. 53 of PPZRASRB, as well as the additional requirements specified in Annex 2 of the Regulations on the terms and conditions for obtaining academic degrees and for holding academic positions at the Institute of Art Studies, BAS. Proof of this are the minimum requirements for NCID submitted by the applicant Reference under Annex 2 and Reference. In general, the required points for an associate professor are 360, and the candidate has over 550 points, which clearly shows exceeding the required minimum according to the various criteria in the NCID card.

Alexander Donev Angelov's publications fully correspond to the academic specification of the competition and are distinguished by in-depth knowledge not only in the field of Film Studies, but also in the cultural, philosophical and sociological disciplines. Dr. Alexander Donev successfully applies the tools of film studies to expand his research in the broad field of screen and visual culture, with a strong interest in the film process, modern mechanisms of functioning of the film industries, communication and audiences, Bulgarian cinema and its place in the wider framework of European and world cinema issues, institutional models of film production through the aspects of history.

From the attached general list of publishing activities, this whole compendium of interests, developments and defended academic theses is quite clear. In the chronological areal from 1992 to 2019 Alexander Donev has published in Bulgarian and English numerous articles, studies and reports in specialized publications on

¹ In the professional community as well as in all of his academic and journalistic publications the candidate uses the name Alexander Donev

cinema, culture and arts. Among them are the journal *Kino (Cinema)* organ of the Union of Bulgarian Filmmakers, *Moveast - International Film Quarterly* of the Hungarian Film Institute, *Media World* magazine, *Flame* magazine, *Art Studies Quarterly* and *Art Readings* collections - both editions are published by the Institute of Art Studies, *ARTizinin* magazine and many other thematic conference proceedings.

Two of the candidate's publications have a high academic index, as they fall into the prestigious category of "*referenced and indexed in world-famous databases of scientific information*" - in this case - Web of Science:

1) Donev, A. Bulgarian socialist film industry as an organizational and business model: towards a research framework. In: *Art Studies Readings 2017. Crossing borders in arts: beyond modern & postmodern*. Sofia, Institute of Art Studies - BAS, 2018, ISSN: 1313-2342, 217-223

2) Donev, A. Aspects of Westernization in two contemporary German films. In: *Art Studies Readings 2018 - New Art. Art in Europe: models and identities*. Sofia, IAS - BAS, 2019, ISSN 1313-2342, 464 - 472

Alexander Donev is also the author of a monographic work, published on the basis of a defended dissertation for ONS doctor, at the Screen Arts Department of the Institute of Art Studies, BAS: Donev, A. *Help from the audience. Bulgarian feature films from the beginning of the 21st century and their viewers in cinemas*. Sofia, FunTezi, 2018, ISBN 978-619-90339-6-8, 295 p.

The general list of citations of the candidate in the competition for Associate Professor includes 17 references in Bulgarian and international publications. It is especially impressive that Alexander Donev's texts find their academic convertibility, significance and weight in renowned editions, such as the periodical academic journal of film art *Studies in Eastern European Cinema* (Routledge, London) and the collection *Remembering Communism: Private and Public Recollections of Lived Experience in Southeast Europe* of the Central European University. All this beyond doubt proves the need to write about Bulgarian cinema and these publications to be used by the world academic community, because they provide an authentic inside look at our film industry and the problems in filmmaking.

For the current competition for Associate Professor, the only candidate Alexander Donev Angelov presents a new, **published monograph - habilitation work**: "*Independent Cinema. From Edison to Netflix*" (Sofia, FunTezi, 2019, ISBN: 978-619-91267-0-7, with a volume of 306 pages). Before that, however, I would like to pay attention to the package of short publications - **7 articles and studies**, definitely different from the publications for the acquisition of EAR Doctor. They show the wide academic interest of the candidate and his ability to discuss various aspects of visual culture in a meaningful and competent way:

- 1) *"Bulgarian socialist film industry as an organizational and business model: towards a research framework"* (Art Readings 2017. Crossing borders in arts: beyond modern & postmodern, Institute of Art Studies - BAS, Sofia, 2018, ISSN: 1313-2342) .
- 2) *"Digital Transformations and Bulgarian Independent Cinema"* "The Society of Knowledge and Humanism of the 21st Century - Proceedings of the XVII National Academic Conference with International Participation", UNIBIT, AI "On Letters - About Writing", 2019, ISSN 2683 -0094 / pdf, electronic edition /).
- 3) *"On the Typology of Self-Financed Feature Films after 1990"* (Post-Totalitarian Cinema in the Eastern European Countries - Models and Identities. Institute of Art Studies, 2019. ISBN 978-954-8594-79-0).
- 4) *"Lesson" in the context of Bulgarian independent cinema from the beginning of the 21st century"*. (Art Studies Quarterly, 4 (2018), IAS - BAS, Sofia, 2018, ISSN: 0032-9371)
- 5) *"Aspects of Westernization in Two Contemporary German Films"* (Art Studies Readings 2018. Art in Europe: Models and Identities, IAS - BAS, Sofia, 2019, ISSN 1313-2342)
- 6) *"The Performative Aesthetics of Christo and Jean-Claude"* (in the journal Philosophical Alternatives, 4 (2017) - a special issue dedicated to aesthetic issues, Institute for the Study of Societies and Knowledge - BAS, Sofia, 2017, ISSN: 0861-7899)

The main text for the competition is the habilitation thesis: "Independent Cinema. From Edison to Netflix" (Sofia, FunTezi, 2019, ISBN: 978-619-91267-0-7, with a volume of 306 pages).

The work is especially significant because for the first time in the field of Bulgarian film studies such an in-depth analysis of the specifics, characteristics and historical development of the phenomenon of "independent cinema" is made. By the way, a very interesting, ambiguous term, very originally and diversely examined by Alexander Donev. The topic is especially relevant in the context of the unprecedented "Oscar" 2020 of the Korean film "Parasite" by Bong Joon-ho - an author whose previous works are linked to Netflix and discourses about the independence of cinema. It is very interesting to emphasize that Alexander Donev approaches the articulation of independent cinema not from the perspective of aesthetics and film language, but from the point of view of the film industries, sociology, cultural anthropology, market mechanisms and presentation. Undoubtedly, this is an original and different method that does not dominate the tradition of film studies and requires a different type of research sensibility and analytical talent. A serious focus in the

work is centered around the problem of digitalization and the birth, functioning and enforcement of streaming platforms for sharing audiovisual content. The analyzes in this segment also cover the discourse of communication and transformation of the functioning of the big, prestigious, class "A" film festivals - such as the one in Cannes. Last but not least, the problem of independent cinema in Bulgaria is partially addressed in the habilitation work, a topic that will be covered in the future works of the author.

In all of Alexander Donev's publications we can distinguish the following merits: clearly formulated theses, extraordinary analyzes, excellent handling of the academic apparatus, quality selection of appropriate examples, adequacy, well-defended author's position and augmented conclusions. And last but not least - Alexander Donev presents to a wide range of readers - not only the serious academic community, but also all who are more or less interested in the aspects of the screen - a readable, logical, accessible and categorically erudite texts.

The only remark I want to make when looking at the package of documents is about the design of the list of contributions, which, however, does not take away from the overall positive impression.

CONCLUSION:

To the overall presentation of the candidate Alexander Donev we must add his vast volume of film criticism, teaching, production and administrative experience in the field of screen arts. As the head of the Screen Arts Department, I would also like to add the active involvement of the candidate since his doctoral years in the meetings, discussions and activities of the unit. Alexander Donev has always shown very serious readiness and responsibility in the discussions of the Department and has more than once demonstrated his competent and important professional opinion on various topics and texts discussed at our meetings. I definitely think that he is a valuable staff member for the overall development of the academic unit, distinguished by his excellent achievements, depth and experience in the selected research and teaching activities.

Dr. Alexander Donev's candidacy fully meets the requirements for holding the academic position of ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR, formulated in ZRASRB, in the Regulations for its implementation (PPZRASRB) and respectively in the Regulations for the terms and conditions for acquiring academic degrees and holding academic positions in BAS and IAS.

I am pleased and quite convinced to recommend, in my capacity as a member of the Academic Jury of the competition, to the respected members of the

Academic Council of the Institute of Art Studies to propose Dr. Alexander Donev Angelov for the academic position of ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR in professional field 8.4. "Theater and Film Art" and the academic specialty "Film Studies, Film Art and Television (history and theory of the film industry)" for the needs of the "Screen Arts Department".

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