

OPINION

Competition for ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR professional direction

8.4 Theater and Film Art and academic specialty

Film Studies, Film Art and Television (History and Theory of Film Industry)

for the Department of Screen Arts for the Institute of Art Studies at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences - published in State Gazette issue 97, 10.12.2019

Candidate: Dr. Alexander Donev Angelov

Member of the Academic Jury: Prof. DSc Bozhidar Stefanov Manov

I accept to review the materials presented by the sole candidate for the competition Dr. Alexander Donev Angelov. The applicant fulfills the conditions laid down in Chapter III, Section III, Art. 53 of the RILDASRB, as well as the additional requirements set out in Appendix 2 to the Rules on the Terms and Conditions for Acquiring Academic Degrees and Occupation of Academic Positions at the Institute of Art Studies, BAS. Evidence for this is provided by the applicant: Certificate under Appendix 2 and Certificate for the minimum requirements of NACID, which shows that with the required number of 360 points (for Associate Professor), the candidate Alexander Donev Angelov has over 550 points.

The candidate provided a habilitation work *Independents in Cinema. From Edison to Netflix* (FunThesi Publishing, 2019, ISBN: 978-619-91267-0-7, 306 pages) and 7 different academic publications, other than the ones provided for the doctoral degree. He has also pointed out his participation in 6 international academic conferences (in the period 2016 -2019) and 7 citations of his works in publications by Bulgarian authors.

It is worth noting that in recent years the research interests of the candidate Dr. Alexander Donev Angelov have focused mainly in the field of real social realization of films, namely their public presentations. Such a marked focus had his previous book, *Help from the Audience. Bulgarian Feature Films from the Beginning of the 21st Century and their Audience* (2018). I note this because it is precisely where the peculiarities of the social life of films at different 'embryonic' stages - with or without institutional funding - are covered. I.e. the interest in this research topic about the "independent cinema" is not surprising, but follows the logic of the interests of the author in "filmmaking - financing - viewers" axis and the reverse effect of the market.

Indeed, this monograph habilitation work is the first comprehensive study in our academic literature devoted to independent cinema as an autonomous and very specific phenomenon in the general field of film culture in the last 110 years (which will be the period after the first "teenage" years of cinema). For the 125-year history

of cinema, 110 years is too significant a period, and its historical comprehension, even in the selected section for independent cinema, is not easy at all. The author, however, does it convincingly and comprehensively (to a reasonable degree), starting logically and justifiably with the US cinema review of its unintentional "godfather", Thomas Edison, whose patent trust is opposed by the new "independents".

Further, based on the abundant material of cinema history, presented in a logically, the monograph looks at the basic aesthetic, technological, sociological and cultural backgrounds of alternative filmmaking, which over the years has been increasingly recognized by the name "independent". It is, as such, that it has been discovering and developing, over the decades, its strategies for communicating with the public, subordinated to fundamentally different economic and (non) market approaches. It should be noted that the study does not overlook another very important factor in the difficult life and even more complex communication of independent cinema with the corporate film business, which has all the structurally important units (film production, distribution, screening plus PR and marketing tools), but precisely the technological factor in the development of cinema as the most widely used audiovisual medium, at least until the advent of television. And then the picture is diversified, without changing fundamentally until the present digital reality. Because it is with it, and with its virtually inexhaustible technological and communication capabilities, that the picture changes dramatically, even to the dramatic mass production of independent filmmaking as production, but especially as opportunities for promotion and distribution.

These extremely important processes in the most recent period of the development of screen audiovisual media have been examined with an adequate depth in the habilitation work and are thought over with strong arguments and convincing analyzes. Thus, the analysis logically reaches the powerful tsunami of today's streaming platforms, for now as a "terminal station" with a Netflix sign, elegantly framed and titled "*From Edison to Netflix*".

(To put it in parentheses: a possible continuation of the study may develop under the name "Independents in the cinema before and after the coronavirus." It is a joke, of course, but with the obvious and restrictive measures of "social exclusion" the independents will surely look for an open door through which to slip through. The cultural sector usually responds quickly and skillfully to situations like this.

Contribution reference is too long (12 pages) and too descriptive. But there are several basic considerations to be drawn from it:

- The habilitation work is the first comprehensive study in the Bulgarian academic literature of independent cinema as a specific phenomenon and an integral part of film culture;
- Its non-institutional character is emphasized;

- Emphasis on the importance of digitalization;
- Application in the analysis of the sociological theory of Pierre Bourdieu;
- Clarification of the model by which the mega company Netflix functions as an actual global phenomenon;
- The developed thesis about the relationship between the film industry, the structure of the film industry and the problem the audience problem;

There is a more particular nuance in the contribution to "Defining for the first time in the Bulgarian academic literature the concept of the movie market", insofar as the author did almost the same in his previous work *"Help from the audience. Bulgarian Feature Films from the Beginning of the 21st century and the Audience"* (2018). I clarify: his contribution and authorship are indisputable, with the addition that he already did it a year earlier and is now expanding from the national to the global film market (with an emphasis on the US).

In conclusion, I note: mentioning the above qualities of the basic habilitation work *"Independents in Cinema. From Edison to Netflix"* and considering the other supporting publications and research activities of the candidate Dr. Alexander Donev Angelov, I believe that he meets the requirements and fulfills the criteria for acquiring the academic position of "Associate Professor" and I vote YES.

March 31, 2020

Prof. DSc. Bozhidar Manov