

## OPINION

On the presented habilitation paper by senior assistant Dr. Katerina Gadzheva  
In connection with the competition for the academic position Associate Professor  
On Art Studies and Visual Arts (visual art from the period of People's Republic of  
Bulgaria), prof. dir. 8.1 Art Theory for the needs of Department Visual Arts, RG  
Modern Bulgarian Art at the Institute of Art Studies, BAS

By Professor Dr. Bisera Valeva, Sofia University

In connection with the announced competition for the academic position of Associate Professor in Art Studies and Fine Arts (fine arts during the period of the National Republic of Bulgaria), professional field 8.1. Theory of Arts for the needs of the Fine Arts Department, Research Group Modern Bulgarian Art at the Institute of Art Studies at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, with one candidate – Senior Assistant Dr. Katerina Gadzheva. The candidate has submitted for opinion a habilitation thesis, which consists of ten articles and a published monograph "FROM TEXT TO IMAGE. Cultural and Artistic Aspects of Four Fairy Tales by Charles Perrault and the Brothers Grimm in the Second Half of the Twentieth Century" (2022).

The candidate has ten years of experience at the Institute of Art Studies at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences (since 2012). It is worth pointing out her focused professional development reflected in the parts (materials) of her habilitation thesis. In the period 2009-2012. Katerina Gadzheva was a lecturer at the National Academy of Arts, Faculty of Fine Arts, (Department of Art Studies) in the master's program "Photography", with lectures on the history and theory of Bulgarian and world photography. From 2008 to 2016 she was a lecturer at the Faculty of Philosophy of Sofia University - Philosophy of Photography special course. Simultaneously with the beginning of her lectures at SU (2008), Katerina Gadzheva had a lecture course at the NBU, at the Faculty of Basic Education, Bachelor, and Master Faculty, on the history and theory of photography and the history of Bulgarian art in the second half of the twentieth century, which she has maintained until the present moment.

After taking the academic position of "Senior Assistant" in 2012 at the Institute of Art Studies of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Sen. Ass. Dr. Katerina Gadzheva has realized a serious creative biography. She is the author of two monographs and twenty-five articles and studies, six of them in foreign languages (French, English). Besides focusing on her research activity, Sen. Ass. Dr. Katerina Gadzheva is on the editorial board of *Art Studies Readings*, a scientific publication of the Institute of Art Studies, BAS, as editor-in-chief, as well as the eponymous scientific conference. She is the head of the project "PLATFORM FOR ARTS", IAS in 2022. She participates in the organization and realization of the long-term project "BULGARIAN ARTISTS FOR CHILDREN". Participated in the curatorial project "LIFE AS EXPERIMENT.

PHOTOGRAPHY AS LIFE" of the National Gallery of Art, realized in Sofia Arsenal - Museum of Contemporary Art, in 2022. In the period 2013 - 2019 Dr. Katerina Gadzheva participated in several projects related to artists who have dedicated a significant part of their work to children's illustration and the formation of professional artistic - visual thinking - Ivan Penkov, Binka Vazova, Stefan Badzhov, Alexander Bozhinov.

This creative activity is embodied in the proposed monograph "From Text to Image. Cultural and Artistic Aspects of Four Fairy Tales by Charles Perrault and the Brothers Grimm in the Second Half of the Twentieth Century" (2022), published by the Institute of Art Studies, Sofia, and her doctoral thesis is interpreted in the monograph "Between the Desired and the Real. Photographic Illustrations in Bulgarian Periodicals 1948-1956" (Sofia, 2012). The two publications summarize the author's research and define the direction of her creative interest.

The submitted habilitation thesis of Sen. Ass. Dr. Katerina Gadzheva consists of two equal interpretive lines. One is devoted to photography both as an alternative to the created works of fine art (painting, applied graphics, drawing, etc.) and as an integral part of the temporal segment in art and society. The other line of research interprets the text-image relation and in particular the problem of artistic illustration, its objectification, and its legibility by the viewer. In the monograph "From Text to Image. Cultural and Artistic Aspects of Four Fairy Tales by Charles Perrault and the Brothers Grimm in the Second Half of the Twentieth Century" the author presents a multidisciplinary perspective on four fairy tales by Charles Perrault and the Brothers Grimm. It is no coincidence that she focuses on Bulgarian illustrations-interpretations in the second half of the twentieth century, a period of extraordinary productivity on the part of artists working in the field of books and of excellence in the field of illustration. To realize her thesis, Dr. Katerina Gadzheva combines two research approaches - with a focus on the images (illustrations) and with an emphasis on their functions in relation to the text. I would refer to M. Shapiro ("Words and Pictures"), who mentions that the correspondence between text and pictures "is often problematic and can be surprisingly unclear", as the artist often translates the word according to his personal philosophy and visual preferences. Katerina Gadzheva traces in detail the development of imagery in the selected texts, passing through world authors including Ludwig Emil Grimm, George Cruikshank, Gustave Doré and others, and focuses on the development of illustration in Bulgaria from the very beginning of the introduction to the specific tales. Interesting are the examples retrieved and published with the works of St. Venev (1941) and G. Bogdanov (1945), as well as the development of the text with the analysis and vision of the works of Iv. Kyosev, P. Chuklev, B. Stoev, K. Mavrov, M. Trendafilova, etc. Impressive is her emphasis on the illustrations of the Brothers Grimm by R. Skorchev, whose chalk cartouches, in the style of engraving, are an achievement in the art of Bulgarian book and illustration. Here again I would refer to M. Shapiro on the meaning content of the

vision, "which can be enriched with meanings and symbolic values not described in the main text." Skorchev's works develop the text in a visual aspect, creating a kind of canvas of details/meanings distinguishable for children and readable for adults. A quality of the text is the author's presentation of a range of cultural, artistic, and social perspectives to allow the reader to create their own, personal ideas and generalizations.

In the context of the two parts of the habilitation thesis, I would note the articles focusing on photography as interesting. From 2015 these are "Between Tradition and Modernization. Representations of Women in Photographic Illustrations in Bulgarian and Soviet Popular Magazines (1948-1956)" (Köln); "The Role of Photography in the Process of the Formation of the Rational Socialist Consumer in Bulgaria in the 1960s" (Balkanistic Forum) from 2019; "The Street in Bulgarian Photography of the 1960s. The Socialist City in a European Context" (Sofia) from 2019, in which the author creates a personal interpretation in the context of a recently studied period in contemporary Bulgarian art - from the V Congress of the Bulgarian Communist Party to the period of change in the late 1980s. As a kind of link between her monograph and the articles under consideration is the 2020 text of the article "The Doll in the World of the Bulgarian Socialist Child. A Look at the Illustrated Books of the 1950s," which focuses on specific issues, both visual and cultural as well as social.

Because of her research and creative activity Sen. Ass. Dr. Gadzheva has been cited in academic publications referred and indexed in world famous data bases such as her article "Between Tradition and Modernization. Representations of Women in Photographic Illustrations in Bulgarian and Soviet Popular Magazines (1948-1956)" cited in 2021, 2019, 2017, and is also cited in monographs and peer-reviewed collective volumes.

I believe that the submitted habilitation thesis meets the requirements of the LDASRB, the Regulations for its Implementation and the Regulations for the Development of Academic Staff of the BAS, as well as the scientific metric requirements of the NACID. The candidate fulfils the minimum national requirements for the announced academic position (Associate Professor).

In conclusion, I propose to the esteemed members of the scientific jury to elect to the academic position of **Associate Professor** in Art Studies and Fine Arts (Fine Arts of the Period of the NRB), for the needs of the Fine Arts Department, RG Modern Bulgarian Art at the Institute of Art Studies at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Sen. Ass. Dr. Katerina Gadzeva.

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