

OPINION by Prof. Dr. Galina Lardeva, Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts, Plovdiv, on the academic production of Sen. Ass. Dr. Katerina Zdravkova Gadzheva in connection with her participation in the competition for acquiring the academic position Associate Professor in Art and Fine Arts, 8.1. Theory of Arts, for the needs of Department Fine Arts at the Institute of Art Studies, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences

I. Data on the competition

The competition for Associate Professor in professional direction 8.1., Theory of Arts, for the needs of Department Fine Arts of the Institute of Art Studies at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences was announced in the State Gazette, issue 27 of 05.04. 2022. Only Katerina Zdravkova Gadzheva, Senior Assistant at the Institute of Art Studies, has submitted documents for participation. Her candidature fully meets the requirements laid down in the Regulations on the conditions and procedure for the acquisition of scientific degrees and the filling of academic positions in the institution that announced the competition. The documents were submitted on time and there were no procedural irregularities.

II. Data on the candidate

Senior Assistant Katerina Gadzheva works at the Institute of Art Studies for over ten years – since 2012. At the same time, she is a lecturer at New Bulgarian University (since 2008). She has also taught at Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski. She graduated in History of Art at New Bulgarian University (BA and MA). In 2010 she defended her doctoral dissertation on "Between the Desired and the Real. Photography and "Visual Propaganda" in Bulgaria 1948-1956" with scientific supervisor Prof. DSc Chavdar Popov. She is the author of two scientific monographs and numerous scientific articles. Gadzheva is the compiler and co-publisher of several volumes of scholarly production, among which stand out the prestigious annual *Art History Readings* published by the Institute. Since this year, Dr. Gadzheva leads the project *Arts Platform*. She is also involved in various other projects, for example in the long-running series *Bulgarian Artists for Children*.

Dr. Katerina Gadzheva's research interests are spread over various fields of visual arts, such as photography, art of the People's Republic of Bulgaria and visual anthropology leading and organizing them.

III. Description of the academic works of the candidate

The new monograph with which Dr. Katerina Gadzheva participates is entitled "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). This is a thorough interdisciplinary paper that, as the author points out, brings together the many roles she has played: author, art historian, reader, parent, and former child.

Indeed, the aspects of this work are wide-ranging. It is not just an in-depth observation of illustration (first in the immediate context of the originals of Charles Perrault and the Brothers Grimm, and then in the 'translated' Bulgarian context), but also a work that observes the process of illustration itself as translation in general, as well as an exploration of reflection on the meditative nature of illustration itself. Alongside this, "From Text to Image" contains anthropological grounds that locate the social-psychological functions of fairy tales and their changes over time, or else situate them as a site of clash of civilizational paradigms and feminist (and divergent) attitudes. Another significant perspective extends to the problematics of the artistic context in Bulgaria after the mid-twentieth century: on this platform, a particularly strong receptive potential of the work develops: both in terms of the attitudes associated with the ideological doctrine of socialism, for example, and in relation to the organization of artistic life in the country, or else in the context of stereotypes inherited from the Bulgarian Revival.

The monograph has a very strong informative layer: it identifies plots and invariants, compares different versions, summarizes the differences in tables, draws parallels between oral and written tradition, and gives details about the authors of the different illustrations and the context in which they work. At the same time, however, the author also has a keen sense of the problems and interpretive knots: for example, the sub-thesis of a strong conservatism of the Bulgarian perceiver, which builds on the lack of tradition in book publishing, is present as a legitimate leitmotif, managed and multiplied by the parental receptive segment. The variety and completeness in the presentation of the issues sought is exemplified by the curious and precise analysis of Sarah Moon's photographic series, which decisively abandons the idea of the illustrative.

Another focus of attention in "From Text to Image" is the identification of the ways in which the iconographic image is formed. Gadzheva's text is sensitive to various borrowings and visual quotations, especially when tracing the actual logic along which the influences take place. Therefore, the researcher repeatedly points out that the imagery of fairy tales (and therefore the characters in them) are - like the bodies in "Little Red Riding Hood" - fragmented, and subsequently 'pasted' and 'stitched' together across time, 'translations', contexts, and traditions.

Together with the monograph, Dr. Katerina Gadzheva has presented ten key articles in her scientific career. Two of them are endorsed in relation to the monograph of 2022. The remaining articles present the candidate as one of the most knowledgeable art historians writing about photography in the country - an image that Katerina Gadzheva has defended since the time of her PhD thesis presentation. These texts outline the directions of development of the researcher of the last few years, in which the ongoing move towards a generalized view that perceives photography as a holistic symptomatology is clearly visible. These are the articles "The Street in Bulgarian Photography of the 1960s", "The Role of Photography in the Formation of

the Rational Socialist Consumer in Bulgaria in the 1960s", "Socialist Fashion and Photography. A Look at *Lada Magazine* in the 1960s", "Women in Bulgarian Photography in the 1970s", as well as the published in English "Between Tradition and Modernization. Representations of Women in Photographic Illustrations in Bulgarian and Soviet Popular Magazines (1948-1956)" and "Bulgaria Through the Eyes of Foreigners During the 1960s. Photographic Representations of the "Tourist Paradise". All of them, as well as the article "The Doll in the World of the Bulgarian Socialist Child", which connects Gadzheva's various interests and focuses on issues of visual anthropology, present an excellent connoisseur of the history of photography, but also a generally good observer who can relate visual details to their hidden symptomatology and to their image correlates in various situations and narratives.

IV. Scientific Contributions

Dr. Katerina Gadzheva has undoubtedly contributed to the analysis of several visual phenomena related to the art and media form of photography. In Bulgaria there are almost no art critics and historians that have specialized on studies of the photographic image.

- With her numerous publications on Bulgarian photography (with a particularly detailed look on the period of the 1960s and 1970s), she has created a significant landmark not only for the study of a significant body of artistic and documentary production, but also for the formulation and posing of significant problems concerning the complex nature of photographic practice and its relation to human existence.
- The deep penetration of an anthropological insight into each creative act represents another significant contribution to Dr. Gadzheva's work. Whether presenting the participation of Bulgarian photographers at the World Photo Biennial in Houston, or deploying archetypal models based on illustrations intended for a children's audience, the researcher does not lose sight of the inescapable human need to work with images, of the communication that takes place based on images. This setting makes Katerina Gadzheva's texts complex and multidimensional and distinguishes them, especially in the context of Bulgarian humanities.
- The interdisciplinary nature of each of Katerina Gadzheva's scientific papers is a direct consequence of her previous contributions. The potential for such interdisciplinarity is indeed enshrined in the main theoretical texts on twentieth-century photography (texts that the author knows well), but the practical achievement of internal homogeneity and mutual utility between different languages and discourses deserves to be pointed out as a contribution.
- The precise, carefully, and consistently accumulated and combined informativeness, is a contribution that resolutely goes beyond the mindset of the modern scientist who builds the false notion that he/she has every piece of information in the virtual pathways of his/her computer (or cranial box). In Katerina Gadzheva's work, information is carefully layered, and its arrangement forces the reader to search and

gain a sense of discovering, combining, thinking, and understanding along with their guide. This, I think, is a highly significant quality that is on the wane in scholarly circles.

Conclusion

I am fully convinced of the high scientific merits of the work of Dr. Katerina Zdravkova Gadzheva. Therefore, I vote in favor of the Scientific Jury to propose to the esteemed Scientific Council of the Institute of Art Studies to elect her to the academic position of *Associate Professor* in Art and Fine Arts, 8.1., (Fine Arts of the NRB Period).

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Prof. Dr. Galina Lardeva