

OPINION

On the competition for acquiring the academic position Associate Professor
Acc. To p. 8.1 Theory of Arts, announced by the Institute of Art Studies, BAS,
published in State Gazette issue 27 from 5th April

with candidate Senior Assistant Katerina Zdravkova Gadzheva PhD

by Professor Dr Irina Genova, New Bulgarian University and Institute of Art Studies,
specialty 8.1 Theory of Arts

The Candidate

Candidate for the competition senior ass. Dr. Katerina Zdravkova Gadzheva graduated as Bachelor and MA in History and Theory Art at New Bulgarian University (2004) and successfully defended her PhD at the same university in 2008. The same dissertation for the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" was defended at the National Academy of Arts in 2009 (Higher Attestation Commission).

Since 2012, Dr. Gadzheva has been a senior assistant at the Institute of Art Studies, BAS, Fine Arts Department, Research Group Modern Bulgarian Art. Alongside her research activities, she teaches on a free-lance basis at New Bulgarian University, the National Academy of Arts and Sofia University and has been developing her skills in this field. At the Institute of Art Studies over the years she has taken on several organizational and editorial duties, gaining experience and competence.

For the competition, Dr. Gadzheva presented her 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" (as a habilitation thesis), as well as 27 articles, studies and articles in journals and collections published in Bulgarian, English and French, in Bulgarian and foreign scientific publications. These publications were realized after the defense of her dissertation "Between the Desired and the Real. Photography and "Visual Propaganda" in Bulgaria 1948-1956" (2008 and 2009). The overall volume and quality of this scientific production generally correspond to the criteria for a habilitated lecturer, as is also evident from the reference provided by the candidate according to the NCID criteria.

Habilitation Paper

The habilitation paper submitted for the competition is 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", under print. The subject of this study is quite different from the topic of Gadzheva's doctoral dissertation and is undoubtedly relevant in the field of visual research and art studies.

The book is the result of a two-year planned project by Gadzheva at the Institute of Art Studies. It is in-depth research in the field of children's fairy tales, focusing on subjects and images from fairy tales by Charles Perrault and the Brothers Grimm. These tales have been published many times around the world and in Bulgaria. The author explores in parallel literary images (in multiple versions, examined comparatively) and their artistic interpretations. The author states that she is not looking for comprehensiveness in relation to Bulgarian illustrations: "(...) the main question to be dealt with is how Bulgarian artists "translate" well-known texts into images, what they emphasize, what they conceal, and how (or whether) they manage to convey the universal narratives in such a way that from the global they acquire local meaning, to "speak" in the language of our readers." (pp. 28-29).

In discussing this artistic experience from a broad perspective, transcending the borders of Bulgaria and the research field of art studies, the author draws on publications from various research fields - cultural studies, book history, semiotics, pedagogy, psychology, which she presents in an extensive introduction. In the overall study, one is impressed by the wealth of foreign sources (including those translated into Bulgarian), which Gadzheva knows well. In today's times of an abundance of heterogeneous information on the Internet, it makes a very good impression that the candidate for the competition is very precise in how and where to find "her" library.

With linguistic ease, the author guides readers through literary and visual metamorphoses of supposedly familiar fairy tale plots to manifest and articulate issues of upbringing, social perceptions, psychology, the social construction of male and female roles, the formation of a national idea, etc., and the way they change over time and environment. The conclusion is adequate to the interdisciplinary nature of the study. It summarizes the present-day nature and status of the classic fairy tale. Research of this kind has not been undertaken in this country and will undoubtedly spark interest in in different circles.

Along with the undoubted merits of this habilitation thesis, I will also mention some critical remarks that reading it provoked in me. First, although this is a matter of author's choice, the book devotes relatively little space to the question identified as the main one, namely "(...) how Bulgarian artists 'translate' well-known texts into images (...)". The period 'in the second half of the twentieth century', announced in the title, is as much a subject of interest as the preceding times from the 19th to the first half of the twentieth century. Finally, many publications referred to by the author in footnotes are not listed in the bibliography at the end of the book.

Academic Publications

The scientific articles and studies submitted to the competition (27 in total, in Bulgarian and foreign publications) show that Gadzheva is already an established researcher with academic competence in a dynamically developing research field.

The publications devoted to photography undoubtedly outline the most significant research contributions of Gadzheva. They are also in the list of citations presented by the candidate. Among them are all the texts published in foreign languages. The main topics of research interest in relation to photography relate to the time of socialism in Bulgaria: images of women, images of the street, fashion according to photographs in the press, the formation of the socialist consumer, and the role of women in photography under socialism. Gadzheva formed her research approach in the field of cultural anthropology and visual studies. The articles and studies demonstrate a very good knowledge of the basic and current literature by Bulgarian and foreign authors.

Along with a consistent interest in the history, theory and visual studies of photography, the competition candidate has shown a deep interest in another current research field of recent years: artists' participation in children's art and children's books. Her publications on this subject include *The First Illustrations to the Fairy Tale Little Red Riding Hood*. – *Art Studies*, 2019, № 2; *The Doll in the World of the Bulgarian Socialist Child. A look at Illustrated Books from the 1950s*. - In: *The Doll - Artistic and Educational Aspects*, IAS, 2020; "One day he will find me and save me". *The Dream of the Prince Known from the Fairy Tales of Charles Perrault and the Brothers Grimm and the Accompanying Illustrations*. - *Balkanistik Forum*, 2021, No. 4 and *Bulgarian illustrations to the fairy tale "Little Red Riding Hood" - a look at the twentieth century*. – In *Art Studies Readings 2021. Module Modern Art. Personalia.*, Sofia, 2022. They prove that Gadzheva is a competent researcher both in the field of photography and more broadly - in the field of visual studies in their intersections with the traditions of art studies.

Teaching activity

Dr. Gadzheva has been teaching successfully at the NBU, National Academy of Fine Arts and Sofia University for more than a decade. My personal impressions from her teaching activity at New Bulgarian University are that in general courses on the history and theory of photography, as well as in specialized courses with art students, she is already an experienced teacher, has authority among her colleagues and is positively evaluated by students.

In conclusion, I would like to note that the candidature of Dr. Katerina Zdravkova Gadzheva for the academic position of Associate Professor in 8.1. Theory of Arts is fully defended by the submitted habilitation thesis, by the list of publications and by her overall research, teaching, and organizational activities.

Irina Genova