

OPINION

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On the dissertation of Angela Angelou Gotsis for acquiring the educational and academic degree Doctor in professional direction 8.4 Theater and Film Art, Screen Arts Department, Institute of Art Studies – BAS on the subject:

***CONTEMPORARY EXPERIMENTAL CINEMA –
THE DEVELOPMENT OF VISUAL-ARTISTIC PRACTICES***

Academic advisor: Prof. Dr Radostina Neykova

This opinion is prepared in accordance with the order № 535-PД of 7 October 2022 and the decision of the Scientific Council of the Institute of Art Studies, BAS (minutes № 8, item 5 / 30.09.2022). All the formal requirements of the procedure for obtaining the PhD degree under the ADAS and the Regulations for its implementation of the Institute of Art Studies - BAS have been met. As a member of the scientific jury, I have not found any evidence of plagiarism, nor have any such signals reached me. The accompanying abstract fully meets the requirements. The PhD student has been granted the right to defense, having passed all the examinations in the process of study at the Institute of Art Studies - Screen Arts Department in due time and has all the required credits.

Perhaps this is also the place, in my capacity as a long-standing head of the Department, to express my impressions of Angela Gotsis: I strongly believe that she is one of our excellent PhD students who was very actively involved in the work of the research unit, even at the time of the Kovid-19 pandemic. In the department's gatherings, discussions, doctoral seminars, etc., she has shown her thorough training, erudition and research potential, qualities also acquired in her bachelor's degree in *Non-Formal Education* (St. Kliment Ohridski University, Faculty of Pedagogy) and, above all, her master's degree in *Visual Anthropology* at New Bulgarian University. From the very beginning of her training process at the IAS, she clearly marked the perimeter of her interests without losing the specificity of focus and the specificity of the different point of view. This becomes clear in her dissertation, which is situated at the heart of avant-garde and experimental cinema, an area not generally approached by other emerging scholars and researchers. It takes courage, analytical boldness, and an awareness of accumulated knowledge to "dive" into the heterogeneous aspects of this so different kind of cinema, the hybridity of techniques in its creation, the wide swath of messages, the aesthetic weaves, the authorial handwriting, the aims, and formats of the visual experiments. Finally, an analysis of the delicate topic of communication and audiences in the contemporary audiovisual situation, saturated by

all kinds of images (moving and static), through all kinds of channels for sharing video content. In this line of thought, congratulations to her, but also to her supervisor - Prof. Dr. Radostina Neykova.

From all that has been said so far, it is only natural to me that PhD student Angela Gotsis presents to the scientific jury a decidedly impressive dissertation. The text is precisely structured. Its length is 221 pages, that includes an introduction, five chapters (with subchapters), a conclusion. The scientific apparatus has been refined. The bibliography numbers 120 sources in different languages (monographs, articles, studies, Internet sites related to the topic of the dissertation). Footnotes number 311 and the filmography has 181 titles (although the abstract says 189!).

I must emphasize that Angela Gotsis exceeds the minimum required for publications on the dissertation topic. She submits to the documentation of the defense her texts that have become an integral part of the dissertation in reputable and peer-reviewed academic journals - first, the Institute of Art Studies ("Art Studies Quarterly", refereed in ERIH +; the collections "Art Studies Readings" indexed in WoS); then - in the new journal of the University of Sofia - "Visual Arts and Music", included in the refereed list of NCID.

The text of the dissertation has many merits and requires a solid interdisciplinary approach and comparative methodology - a challenge that Angela Gotsis has met. *Contemporary Experimental Cinema - The Development of Visual-Artistic Practices* provokes with its theses, analyses, and the opening of fields of discussion. Angela Gotsis has tried to flexibly define and distinguish the concepts she uses and to illuminate each of them through the prism of the history of screen art.

Advantageously, she eschews clichéd theses already expressed in previous studies and tries to bring a new, own perspective to the subject. This is very much the case in the context of audiovisual experimentation, which she discusses as a particular kind of artistic practice, bearing its own voice - that of the authorial origin, but also that of the medium of technology. An important point in the work is the analysis of the influence of various movements - Kammerspiele, avant-garde, surrealism, etc. on the aesthetic expression in the so-called big feature cinema. As I may have already mentioned in the opinion above, writing this work requires an excellent knowledge of film and art history - this is particularly evident in the statements related to the typology of the vast palette of techniques (including from animation cinema) for realizing the image in the film experiment, and generating a metamorphosing aesthetic that swings in the liminal spaces of both the analogue and the digital.

In the fourth chapter, their experimental worlds are further analyzed through the prism of the films of Jonas Mekas, Steven Woloshen, Susan Pitt, Paul Wickler and Gunvor Nelson. Here I have a question for you: on what principle did you choose these authors and by what criteria are they sufficiently representative of the contexts of contemporary experimental cinema?

Particularly contributory and interesting for me is the chapter (Five) that exposes the different virtual sites of contact with contemporary experimental cinema. Bulgarian examples are not omitted in this last part of the thesis.

In fact - and here is my only remark to Angela Gotsis - a little more emphasis in the other chapters seems like it could have been given to the theme of experiment and the avant-garde in Bulgarian cinema. I am clearly aware that this is quite rare in Bulgaria, and only certain aspects of it are dealt with by Dr. Josif Astrukov. I would like to ask you one more question - why is the situation with experimental cinema in our country so sporadic and does not find its ardent followers in the present?

In summary: The dissertation is distinguished by clearly formulated goals, objectives, methodology, analyses. I would recommend that it be published as a monograph after clearing typographical errors and after stylistic editing - for example, to see how it is customary to spell certain names in the Bulgarian film studies. The text is very enjoyable to read, I think that in places the subject requires precisely a slightly daring escape from the strictly academic style, and that is why I like the elegant, emotionally shaped expression. After a successful defense, I propose to the esteemed Scientific Jury to award the educational and academic degree of Doctor to Angela Angelou Gotsis in the professional field 8.4. Theatre and Film Art.

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