OPINION

Based on works and materials submitted for participation in a procedure announced by the Institute of Art Studies, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences (Director's Order No. 388-RD/June 26, 2026)

For acquiring

the academic degree "Doctor of Science." Scientific field: 8. Arts. Professional direction: 8.4. Film Studies, Film Art, and Television

Candidate: Prof. Dr. Andronika Martonova, Institute of Art Studies, BAS, "Screen Arts" Department

Reviewer: Prof. DSc. Ventsislav Dimov Dimov, Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski"; Institute of Art Studies at BAS

Biographical Data on the Candidate – Personal Impressions

I have known Andronika Martonova since 2006, when she began working at the Institute of Art Studies at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences (then the Institute of Art History). I have observed her active work—in research, applied research, and organizational activities—in the field of art studies (primarily film art, including its history and theory, cinema in Bulgaria and Asia, visual and performing arts of Asia, cultural policies and cultural heritage, audiovisual and film archives, ethnography and cinema, intercultural communication, and more). As a researcher, university professor, author of scholarly publications, critic, and jury member at competitions and festivals, she has demonstrated steady growth as an expert in the fields of cinema, visual arts, and theater. Academic and scientific degrees and positions held—Ph.D. (2006), associate professor (2012), professor (2023); significant scholarly output (three monographs; dozens of scholarly studies and articles, a large portion of which are cited and indexed in world-renowned databases; hundreds of publications and media appearances; participation in scientific and applied research projects, etc.); previous and current leadership positions held at the research institution (Head of the

“Screen Arts” Department, member of the Scientific Council, Deputy Director of the Institute of Art Studies); recognition within international scientific networks (memberships in organizations and festival committees, dozens of participations in international scientific conferences, and publications in several languages) are merely quantitative indicators of her high academic qualities.

Characteristics of Scientific and Applied Research Output

Prof. Martonova presents individual scientometric indicators, which demonstrate their compliance with the minimum national requirements for the scientific field (8. Arts; professional field: 8.4. Film Studies, Film Art, and Television). The candidate’s achievements meet or exceed the required minimum number of points according to Table 1 of the Regulations for the Implementation of the Law on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (PPRASRB): a total of 837 points, with a minimum requirement of 260, distributed as follows: Indicator A – 50 points (with a minimum of 50), Indicator B – 100 points (with a minimum of 100), Indicator C – 345 points (with a minimum of 60), and Indicator D – 342 points (with a minimum of 50). All publications and citations (selection) included in the portfolio were produced after assuming the academic position of “professor” or were not submitted and did not participate in the competition for the academic position of “professor” in 2022.

Dissertation for the Degree of “Doctor of Science”

The candidate is participating in the competition with a dissertation for the degree of “Doctor of Science” on the topic: “Wondrous Luminous Images: Bulgarian Film Culture—Beyond the Canon and the Familiar.” In her research, Andronika Martonova continues a fruitful line of scholarly inquiry—the history of Bulgarian cinema—by uncovering “unlit” spaces of cultural memory and biographical trajectories that have remained outside the “national cinematic-historical canon” and on the periphery of scholarly attention.

The dissertation comprises 320 standard pages (240 pages of scholarly text, with the remainder consisting of sources and appendices). It is structured into an introduction, three chapters, a conclusion, a bibliography, and appendices (tables and archival photographic material).

The introduction, titled “Infinite Archives: What is Hidden in Cinema’s Attic?”, presents the subject of the research, the author’s personal motivation, the methodological foundations, and the research objectives— “to situate Bulgarian film culture during the period 1918–1939 within the broader context of European modernity, cultural transfers, and the processes of forming a national film public.” Martonova emphasizes the place of women in film culture, the tensions between the canon and the periphery, between institutionalized memory and archival gaps, and the

ambitions for a new interpretation of film culture as intermedial interactions and a role in intercultural exchange.

The first chapter, “The Woman on the Screen—Distant and Belonging to No One,” explores, within the broad field of the performing and screen arts—from theater to film culture—the mechanisms of women’s historical integration and marginalization in the early Bulgarian artistic milieu during the first half of the 20th century.

The second chapter, titled “Zhana and the Ghosts of Oblivion,” brings out of silence and oblivion both the previously overlooked creative figure of Zhana Gendova and the relationships between cinema, theater, literature, the public sphere, power, memory, and suppression over a long period of time.

The third chapter, “Lyuba and Nikola Kutinchevi: An Unfinished Story,” examines a pair of documentary filmmakers and travelers previously unknown in the history of Bulgarian cinema and film theory. Through their comparatively reconstructed portraits—drawing on their biographical histories, creative projects, and media and archival traces—the study analyzes transnational cultural interactions, issues of identity, and the cultural translation of the East in Bulgaria.

The conclusion, metaphorically titled “The Breath of Celluloid Memory,” summarizes the analyses and findings of the study as an analytical narrative about cinema and memory through the storylines of Zhana Gendova and Lyuba Kutincheva.

The appendices, organized into sections containing archival photographs, facsimiles of printed publications, and tables, provide visual and conceptual illustrations of the information and arguments presented in the text. Preceding them, as a bibliography, is an impressive list of references (276 entries in total).

The abstract (64 pages) corresponds to the study and accurately reflects the content of the dissertation. It provides a comprehensive presentation of: the object and subject of the study, its purpose and objectives, the empirical basis, the theoretical framework and research methods, the research theses and challenges, as well as the content of the thesis. It highlights the thesis’s contributions and lists the author’s publications on the topic (24 studies and articles from 2011 to 2026), participation in academic conferences with presentations on the topic (28 between 2015 and 2025), participation in projects (7), and citations of publications on the topic (21 across 11 titles).

Main contributions of the dissertation

In summary, the author outlines the contributions of her research in 15 points. For me, several areas of significance and pioneering work stand out: 1). The role of

women in early Bulgarian cinema is examined through the figures of Gendova and Kutintcheva as independent subjects of comprehensive film studies, as well as that of the forgotten actress Bistra Fol; 2). It identifies, describes, and analyzes previously unexplored or little-known documents from Bulgarian, European, and Asian archives, periodicals, files, and other sources; 3). It employs interdisciplinary approaches: film history and film analysis, historical archival research, primary and secondary sources, media and cultural interpretations of texts and images, etc., to reconstruct specific figures, facts, and creative processes, as well as to situate early Bulgarian cinema more broadly within local and global cultural-historical contexts; 4). The figures studied and their activities—as travelers, filmmakers, and lecturers—shed new light on cultural mediation between Bulgaria, the Far and Near East, and Europe, as well as on previously unexplored aspects of the cultural and creative resources of intellectual activities and spiritual traditions; 5). New concepts and methodological tools are fruitfully applied (historical—e.g., "crossed history"/Histoire croisée; approaches to archives and archival documents in terms of their social, political, and cultural functions; the interdisciplinary academic discipline of "gender studies") to present the history of Bulgarian cinema and culture in a new light.

To these contributions, I would add and summarize: this work is pioneering both in its introduction of new empirical data and in its interpretation of a "hybrid" subject—the Gendov and Kutinchev couples—and in its revelation of the "shadowy" female half of these pairs as case studies, biographical trajectories of cultural forces and processes that revitalize cultural memory and revise the "national cinematic-historical canon." And last but not least, she does so artistically, with a vivid style and language.

Conclusion

Andronika Martonova's dissertation, "Wondrous Luminous Images: Bulgarian Film Culture—Beyond the Canon and the Familiar," demonstrates a sustained and in-depth scholarly interest and showcases the outcomes of many years of research. It is a fundamental and in-depth scholarly study with a rich empirical foundation, theoretical value, and innovation. The author's publications on the topic and their citations confirm the conclusions regarding a large-scale and in-depth research effort. The dissertation and the candidate's other cited scientific activities exceed the minimum national requirements for the scientific field and professional area and comply with the Law on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (ZRASRB) and the Regulations for the Application of the Law on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (PPZRASRB). My assessment of the dissertation and the candidate's research activities presented in the competition is entirely positive. I propose that the distinguished academic jury vote to award Prof. Dr. Andronika Martonova the academic degree of "Doctor of Science" in

the following field: 8. Arts. Professional field: 8.4. Film Studies, Film Art, and Television.

Date

September 22, 2026 Reviewer: Prof. Ventsislav Dimov, DSc