

# OPINION

From

Prof. Dr. Boris Kirilov Serginov

For the dissertation of

**Nadezhda Yankova Dzhakova**

on the subject:

MODERN IDEAS AND TRENDS FOR WORKING WITH AUDIENCES IN ART  
MUSEUMS. AUDIENCE ORIENTATION IN BULGARIA

(THE EXAMPLE OF THE NATIONAL GALLERY)

For awarding the educational and academic degree "DOCTOR"

Academic field Art Studies and Fine Arts

In the Professional Direction 8.1, Theory of Arts,

INSTITUTE OF ART STUDIES, BAS

Academic advisor: Prof. Dr. Irina Genova

Sofia, 2019

Importance and academic relevance of the dissertation submitted for the Doctoral degree

The subject of the work specifies the problem of contemporary tendencies for work with the public in art museums, defining its geolocation scope, namely orientation towards the public in Bulgaria, and setting the National Gallery as an example.

Contemporary trends for working with audiences in art museums, in particular audiences in Bulgaria and the National Gallery, are the subject of research.

As Nadezhda Dzhakova herself writes: "Globally, there is a tendency to reduce the consumption of traditional forms of culture and art. This trend is clearly visible at European level, but especially visible in Bulgaria in recent years.

Studying, analyzing and overcoming this attitude is one of the key problems in many cultural and political debates. Shrinking public subsidies and targeting cultural institutions - in particular museums, towards the market requires particular attention

to the development of audiences and consumption. At the same time, the topic of audiences is increasingly emerging in political debates, both at national and European level. "

Nadezhda Dzhakova also clearly stated the aims and objectives of her dissertation. Aims and objectives of the thesis:

The dissertation examines the approaches for the development of audiences in the context of museum practice. In addition, visitor research is presented as part of a theoretical analysis, including empirical research as its tool. The aim is to draw recommendations for the successful development of a strategy for the development of audiences in art museums and its possible applications.

The concept of *Audience Orientation* was introduced in discussions about the museum in Germany in the late 1980s as an expression of growing interest in audiences.

The dissertation deals with the process of developing the museum in recent years through the focus of the "audience – museum".

Key concepts related to audience orientation such as "access," "engagement," etc. are discussed.

The focus is on the types of audience research undertaken within the institutions; described are the introduction of public research into the work of institutions; identified are the effects that audience surveys have on the work of museums; factors contributing to best practice in audience research and suggestions for improvements are described.

The dissertation examines methods and techniques that can be applied in art museums in Bulgaria to attract visitors and at the same time promote institutional goals. The fundamental application of audience research is the ability to give the visitor a voice and presence in museum work, to engage the viewer actively, becoming a participant rather than a passive consumer.

The dissertation systematizes the basic principles of organizing audiences by trying to strike a balance between audience research and the empirical one related to knowing and bringing many examples from museum work. The text is structured by way of comparisons, thematically, with occasional breaks in the strict sequence to allow to give priority to examples in the relevant fields. A comparative analysis was used between artistic manifestations - international experience and practices in Bulgaria.

In the dissertation, as Dzhakova notes, "methods and data from other fields: such as marketing, psychology, sociology is included. Another approach in research is conducting surveys, interviewing the general public, and interviewing directors and curators about the museum's public orientation policy.

The dissertation includes the following: Introduction, Five Chapters, Conclusion, Annexes with Tables, Surveys and Illustrations, Catalog of the Sofia Arsenal - Museum of Contemporary Art.

The proposed for my opinion dissertation focuses on the attempt to summarize as a model of research a situation which, to a great extent, could determine the nature of contemporary tendencies of working with audiences in art museums, its geo-location scope, namely orientation towards the public in Bulgaria and takes the National Gallery as an example. The contemporary flexibility and multiplicity of the topic chosen should be acknowledged, which makes a successful attempt to extend the boundaries of the study beyond the purely routine side of the issue under consideration. This turns the model and methodology used in the doctoral thesis into an interdisciplinary and directly related to sociology, history, psychology and other fields dissertation.

In this sense, the work on the thesis is based on an interdisciplinary view of the topic, combining, in my opinion, "art, cultural, sociological and other points of view" and research methods, as a comparative analysis and introducing and developing new concepts. In general, the text presented for the opinion is academically solid and in it the reader freely follows the logic of the exposition, gets the idea of a historiographical, semiotic and structuralism approach.

The work of the PhD student on the topic shows that the research approach is justified in researching the specific problem.

The topic elaborated specifies phenomena and concepts, namely:

1. The work clarifies both basic concepts and new ideas in the context of cultural management and cultural policy as important tools in audience research
2. The historical overview shows how interest in the topic has developed over the years
3. Examples of audience research in Bulgaria have been separately studied and analyzed - although the topic is still little researched in Bulgaria, there is growing interest - especially at scientific conferences and at individual museum programs
4. From the above definitions for audience development we can draw the conclusion that it is a planned, organizationally broad approach to broadening the scope and nature of relationships with the public, helping the cultural organization to achieve its mission, to balance social goals, financial sustainability and creative ambitions

## *Summary*

1. The abstract correctly reflects the content of the dissertation

2. The study as well as the research activity are a personal work of Nadezhda Dzhakova

3. With regard to the structure of the dissertation, I note that this is an example of an excellent structured study with clearly defined goals and objectives, a clearly presented methodology, conclusions and contributions and can serve as an example of excellent work and dissertation

4. The hypothesis of the thesis and the formulated goals are strongly supported

5. The above listed contributions of the dissertation are also apparent

### *Conclusion*

I appreciate the academic qualities and contributions of the dissertation, its public, social, academic and creative importance, the personal contribution of the researcher and the practical usefulness and relevance of the researched problem, I suggest to the honorary members of the academic jury to give their consent and award the degree "Doctor" to NADEZKA YANKOVA DZHAKOVA, prof. dir. 8.1. THEORY OF ARTS

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Sofia

Opinion .....

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