

## OPINION

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"

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From Assoc. Prof. Dr. Natalia Hristova

Department Arts Studies and History of Culture, NBU

The topic chosen for the dissertation is undoubtedly relevant and of great practical value. The choice does not surprise us, given the professional experience of Nadezhda Dzhakova, who has worked as a curator for years at the National Gallery and head of the Sofia Arsenal - Museum of Contemporary Art (SAMCA). It is natural that she is tempted to explore in depth the world's innovative museum practices, part of which is working with audiences.

The focus of the dissertation is centered mainly on *audience orientation*, which has not been the subject of independent research in our country so far. Reading the text, it becomes clear that the author is well versed in theoretical research on the subject, a number of the best European and world projects, together with the results of their realization and, of course, the state of the Bulgarian art museums, which have quite modest experience in this direction. Benchmarking provides information about the status of the problem (because audience research remains a problem, as noted in the paper) and is an opportunity to borrow specific ideas and practices.

The dissertation is structured according to the main goals and tasks set out in it. It consists of an introduction, five chapters, a conclusion, 203 bibliography titles, 65 of which are in Cyrillic and 138 in Latin and appendices: 63 pages with surveys, 13 tables and 49 illustrations, with a total volume of 253 p.

The museum-public relations have been developed in several directions:

The first transformation of major museums in Europe and the US into open public institutes has been traced, then the author logically goes over the history of the study of museum audiences from the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the present. The

historical retrospection also includes statistics on the number of visitors to Bulgarian museums since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century;

Changes in museum practices regarding audiences in the years of digital technology dominance are presented;

Through personal interviews, the experience of the National Gallery for developing its own brand has been revealed;

Serious work has been done on the search and selection of good practices from Europe and the US over the last ten years, which may be experimented with in our country;

The relationship between museum architecture, exhibition solutions and the public is well represented;

A critical analysis of Bulgarian laws and programs has been made, such as: The Law on Cultural Heritage, Protection and Development of Culture Act, Law on School and Pre-School Education, Government Development Program 2016-2018, Strategy for Bulgarian Culture 2019-2029 and data from the National Statistical Institute;

In analyzing the situation in the National Gallery, two existing sociological surveys concerning the number and nature of the visitors were searched and analyzed;

Nadezhda Dzhakova has conducted on her own two surveys: one during The Night of the Museums at the National Gallery in 2016 and the other at SAMCA. Their analysis shows the specific expectations of different audiences for exhibitions and activities in each of the gallery's individual spaces;

Particularly useful about the final conclusions related to audience orientation are the curatorial exhibitions described at SAMCA within the framework of her author's "Space-Audience" project;

The developed tables for the attendance of leading museums in Germany, the USA and Bulgaria well illustrate the results and trends in the museum-public relations over the years;

The conclusion also comments on the proposal to change the definition of "museum" of the international organization ICOM. According to Nadezhda Dzhakova, it will not only make a significant contribution to the work with the public, but also, despite the critical opinions expressed, will turn the activity of *audience orientation* into a major one.

The author, based on the whole study, also gives her specific recommendations to the Bulgarian art museums: *The practical directions given by this research can be applied in the museum work in Bulgaria when planning and organizing a permanent exhibition; temporary exhibitions; branding of the museum; digital and communication strategy; educational activity according to the profile of the museum visitor.* (p. 32 of the Abstract)

The Abstract is made in according to the requirements of the law.

The contributions are correctly formulated.

Attached is a list of 4 articles on the subject, two of which are under print.

Given the serious research work done by Nadezhda Dzhakova and the academic contributions made, I will confidently vote for awarding her a Doctorate degree.

March 24<sup>th</sup> 2020

Natalia Hristova