

OPINION

By Assoc. Prof. Dr. arch. Stela Tasheva, Institute of Art Studies, BAS

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

To Nadezhda Yankova Dzhakova

Dissertation on the subject:

**MODERN IDEAS AND TRENDS FOR WORKING WITH AUDIENCES IN
ART MUSEUMS. AUDIENCE ORIENTATION IN BULGARIA
(THE EXAMPLE OF THE NATIONAL GALLERY)**

Dissertation advisor: Prof. Irina Genova, PhD, IAS-BAS

My impression of Nadezhda Yankova Dzhakova, is of a dynamic and competent art historian and scholar, PhD student at the research group "Modern Bulgarian Art" in the Fine Arts Department of the Institute of Art Studies at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. To date, she is also the head of the Sofia Arsenal - Museum of Contemporary Art.

Nadezhda Yankova Dzhakova submitted a dissertation of a 253 pages together with an abstract, which fully and correctly reflects the content, as well as the necessary set of documents (according to ZRABG and according to the Regulations for its implementation at the Institute of Art Studies at BAS). All procedural requirements regarding the submission of the dissertation are met. Four publications on the topic of the dissertation have been declared, in journals with academic review.

The work of the doctoral student is organized with an introduction, five chapters and a conclusion. The introductory part deals with the relevance of the issue; the framework of the study is set; well-known researchers have been discussed; declared clearly is the aim of the thesis: namely, to draw up "recommendations for the successful development of a strategy for the development of audiences in art museums and its possible applications." The research methodology adheres to a comparative and multidisciplinary approach. I find the goal particularly relevant with regard to both contemporary public relations and forms of contact, as well as in the areas of the evaluation and preservation of cultural values in a regional and global aspect. The research methods used, as well as the views derived from the fields of

marketing, psychology and sociology, are in harmony with the purpose and context of the study.

The thesis is convincingly structured into five chapters covering key aspects of the subject. Chapter one sets out the basic terms as well as those connected with the history and methodology of museum audience research. The second chapter examines the impact of modern electronic and digital technologies on the access, presentation and management of museum collections. Chapter three focuses on a number of institutional European practices, with particular attention to museum work and audience development in Germany. Chapter four summarizes trends and concepts from museums in North America. In turn, chapter five looks at the state of the issue in Bulgaria, with the text focusing on the National Gallery and its affiliates, and their orientation to audiences. The conclusions and contributions are summarized in the conclusion. The annexes provide a comprehensive bibliography of 203 titles, significant statistics in tabular form, summarized results of two doctoral student surveys, as well as illustrative material.

The thesis carefully and thoroughly analyzes the specifics of concepts such as "museum audience", "access", "audience development", "audience orientation" and the observer's "engagement". The choice of the territorial scope of the key examples in the presentation - Europe and North America, proves to be justified by their comparatively longest and active presence in the public space; their role in the historical development of the museum industry; as well as their high popularity today. The dynamics of evolution in the relationship between museum institutions with their visitors, as well as with the public at large, have been closely monitored. It is the processes related to "audience development" that remain the leading thread in the practices of the 20th and 21st centuries.

The work discusses basic concepts related to the socialization of the museum space and the forms of exhibiting from a museum, art and architectural point of view. The statistics from the cultural sector in Bulgaria, as well as the analysis of the surveys conducted (for several years) by the doctoral student, make a strong impression. Systematic regulations, strategies and priorities highlight the current situation of art museums in Bulgaria. The tracked projects to develop and engage the audiences of the National Gallery and its affiliates also form the basis for future art studies. These include, for example: "Interactive Contemporary Techniques and Interdisciplinary Approaches at the Sofia Arsenal - Museum of Contemporary Art" and "Space - Public" from 2015, "Touch the Gallery" with paintings for the blind, beginning in 2016, and more.

The readable, moderate style of the author and well-formed academic apparatus are excellent merits of the work. Scientific contributions follow, and to some extent go beyond the achievement of the stated objective. The lessons provided from her work on museum actions in art museums were achieved as a result of thinking about and

refining basic terms and situations, the dependencies derived from good practices and the conducted surveys.

Due to the high quality, importance and completeness of the work, the main recommendation for the doctoral student is to publish her thesis in full and to promote her results in the academic field in other languages. However, for a future monographic publication, I consider it a good practice to translate in Bulgarian and to write in Cyrillic all of the statistics in the annexes. Another suggestion I would like to make is to underline the graphic presentation in the future publication of the author's recommendations for museum activity in Bulgaria (for the convenience of readers in the fields of administration and education). These are two notes that in no case can be considered critical or reduce the value of dissertation work.

In view of the above, **I give my positive assessment** of the research and suggest to the Honorable Academic Jury to award Nadezhda Yankova Dzhakova an educational and academic degree Doctor in Art Studies and Fine Arts, professional field 8.1. Theory of Arts.