

# OPINION

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For the dissertation "**PAPER IN ARCHITECTURE. TENDENCIES AND INNOVATIONS**"

by Veselina Ljubomirova Mireva

for awarding the Doctoral Degree in Professional Studies

**5.7 "Theory and History of Architecture";**

**Institute of Art Studies, BAS**

**Subject of the Dissertation:**

***PAPER IN ARCHITECTURE. TENDENCIES AND INNOVATIONS***

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The procedural requirements for the dissertation are met. The doctoral student Veselina Ljubomirova Mireva has presented the necessary pack of documents, according to ZRABBG and the Regulations of BAS and IAS for its implementation. The abstract summarizes the main points and contributions to the dissertation. The dissertation publications are an impressive 7 (seven) in number, in Bulgarian and English in scientific peer-reviewed publications. And the presentations in connection with the PhD thesis submitted by the doctoral candidate are 6 (six), in national and international forums, both in Bulgaria and in Spain. I allow myself the liberty to start the so called gender of opinions with these facts, because the required publications are much less in number. However, candidate Mireva made every effort to approve her research work, presenting aspects of her research in a scientific presentation. I would also like to emphasize here her wish to present herself honorably in a reputable international forum, such as the "*International Conference Arquitectonics Network: Mind, Land and Society*", in Barcelona, Catalonia Polytechnic University.

The dissertation "*Paper in Architecture. Tendencies and Innovations*" has a total of 154 pages (text, well-prepared bibliography) plus 79 pages as an application – quite an impressive illustration material, very accurately illustrate aspects of the work by chapter, with captions below the photographs in Bulgarian and English, and the source of the visual object). The footnotes mentioned in the actual text are 225. The text provided for achieving the educational and scientific degree "doctor" in the professional field 5.7. *Architecture Construction and Geodesy*, scientific specialty *Theory and History of Architecture*, contains an introduction (statement of the study), three large chapters divided into sub-chapters, conclusion.

In her dissertation, "*Paper in Architecture. Tendencies and Innovations*" Veselina Mireva presents us with an extremely interesting but up-to-date topic, against the

background of increasing global disasters marked by climate change, endangered natural environment and requiring new, radical, environmental (Earth Friendly) solutions. Her work is centered on the work of the Japanese architect Shigeru Ban (and his studio), which for over 30 years has been actively exploring and putting into practice the exterior and interior potentialities of paper as material. In fact, Mireva is going deep into the study of this author, and of his constructive and artistic tools in architectural creativity. She analyzes the innovative solutions that paper provides in temporary buildings in different cases (whether in the context of dramatic disasters or the far more enjoyable festival experiences of the so-called temporary architecture). A decisive contribution of the doctoral student in the selection of the topic and its realization is precisely the fact that nobody in Bulgaria has so far dealt with this subject and topic of research. Otherwise, paper itself as a material in architecture has been the subject of a number of researches, conceptual developments and realizations, which Mireva honestly follows in her text.

We can safely say that the work of Veselina Mireva has a high intensity of interdisciplinarity in places, because the problems of the so-called "Paper architecture" (if we use the concepts of Shigeru Ban) is unthinkable without knowledge of the East. As a specialist in East Asian visual culture, I cannot but appreciate the contribution to the philosophical, semantic and multifunctional conception of paper in traditional Chinese cultures (as zoning mother culture according to Braginsky-Sementsov) for the region, including Korea, and hence Japan. An expert on Eastern studies and in particular on Japanese could not possibly deal with such a topic of a dissertation because this requires a different type of knowledge. Just like an architect-practitioner, without knowledge in art studies. The theory and history of architecture is a specialized field that focuses and subordinates the East Asian tonality of the development of the study in the context of architectural science.

Veselina Mireva has several goals and objectives:

- to systematize architectural forms related to paper material in the area of contemporary architecture and construction;
- to distinguish and analyze the efficiency, specificity and transformation of paper as a building material;
- to analyze the trends in architecture in terms of aesthetics and functionality associated with tradition and innovation in the use of such non-standard and even extravagant material as paper;
- to connect in a sustainable triad, similar to the ancient Chinese philosophy of I Ching: architecture - man - nature, where it is the paper itself as a natural link that does not violate the laws of harmony;
- to move away from the local problems of tradition in the context of paper and the East, to go through cultural studies (knowing and referring to colossi such as Eliade, Niedam, etc.) to enter the global field of architectural research with a wide scope relevance and understanding of the topic;

- to focus on environmental aspects in the analyzes of Shigeru Ban and his creativity. (Particularly interesting to me here was the part with the paper church and, in general, the social commitment of the architect in trying to combine, not - to subordinate the material in favor of the spiritual).

- to trace the vast diversity of festival forums and the visibility, aesthetics and ideal applicability of Ban's paper-architectural visions. (In this aspect, Bulgaria is not omitted either.)

- to analyze and explain the technological capabilities of paper (such as body, material, assembly, folding, modularity, three-dimensional printing, constructiveness and elements, contamination and dialogue with other (non) natural materials.)

I am convinced that in the course of the dissertation, Mireva was absolutely successful in finding a solution and answering the questions and tasks posed. Therefore, I fully agree with the contributions of the thesis. The main point, however, is to point out: the dissertation is a pioneer in the sphere of Bulgarian architectural and oriental studies!

The only remarks I could make are the following: 1) In the Bulgarian language, the term Daoism rather than Taoism, as written by the doctoral student, is much more actively used. 2) It would be a good idea to consult an expert in Chinese so that some of the words in Latin (not the official pinyin, but it's unclear what system) of Chinese terms, such as *shu phing* - calligraphic screen, should probably be *shu pin*, and *hua phing* - a colorful screen, respectively *hua pin*) to be properly transmitted, transcribed in Cyrillic. The same applies to Japanese concepts and terms - such as *shooji / shōji* - where cyrillicization is given in places but not in others or inaccurately (for example *komai kobe*, not *kobi*, *mawatashi dake* is written only in Latin, etc.) 3) The paper and China, as part of the dissertation, have been well developed, in a measure, without weighing and tarnishing the balance, but given that the object of the study is a Japanese architect (Shigeru Ban) it would be good to have a separate space for the cultural and art (ergo architectural) exposition and the conception of the paper in the tradition of Japan at the beginning of the dissertation (unfolding in Chapter Three will sound much more logical). However, there is a characteristic specificity here as well. 4) Perhaps personally, I miss a little in Chapter Three the traditional conception of material tools, buildings and landscapes, through the prism of the philosophical view of Daoism and the *chan / zen* direction of Buddhism. This emphasis on the environment and architecture would be discreet and important. 5) It seems to me that it would be more appropriate for parts of Chapters 2 and 3 to be rearranged, restructured.

All these little remarks do not, of course, take away the merits of work. Rather, I pay attention to a future stage, as I am pleased to recommend that the work be published as a monograph.

**IN SUMMARY:** The thesis "**Paper in Architecture. Tendencies and Innovations**" based on Shigeru Ban's creative work is innovative, original, interesting and highly rewarding. Designed diligently, competently, at a high academic level with the

necessary depth and knowledge. (Congratulations to the PhD student and her supervisor!). The language style is light, readable, and at the same time follows the conventions of required academism. The text is distinguished by a very well balanced interdisciplinary approach, placed within the broad frameworks of cultural studies, oriental studies, architectural studies (theory and practice) and art studies. Veselina Ljubomirova Mireva deserves praise for her conscientiously completed work. Therefore, I propose that the distinguished Academic jury award her the educational and scientific degree of "doctor" in the professional field 5.7. Architecture, Construction and Geodesy, scientific specialty Theory and History of Architecture.

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