

OPINION

By Prof. Dr. of Art Studies Blagovesta Ivanova regarding the competition for the position of *Associate Professor in Art Studies and Visual Arts* (Decorative and Applied Arts in Bulgaria during the 20th Century), professional field 8.1. Theory of Arts, for the needs of the “Visual Arts” sector, *Institute for New Bulgarian Art*, at the Institute for Art Research, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences (BAS), published in the State Gazette No. 41 of 20 May 2025.

In the competition announced in the State Gazette, there is one candidate – Maria Koleva Miteva.

1. BIOGRAPHICAL DATA AND PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE OF THE CANDIDATE

In 2004, Maria Miteva graduated with distinction from the Master’s programme in Art Studies at New Bulgarian University, specialising in *Modern and Contemporary Art*. She defended her educational and scientific dissertation for the degree of *PhD* at the Institute of Art Studies in 2009. Over fifteen years and nearly six months of work at the same institute, combined with practical experience in the Applied Arts Department at the National Gallery, the candidate has accumulated substantial professional experience. This is evident from her Curriculum vitae and the materials submitted for the competition. She has established and enduring interests in the field of decorative and applied arts and currently serves as the head of the research group on *New Bulgarian Art* at the Institute of Art Studies.

2. GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE PRESENTED MATERIALS AND ASSESSMENT OF COMPLIANCE WITH MINIMUM NATIONAL REQUIREMENTS.

This opinion has been prepared in a comparative perspective using three tables: **Table 1** contains the requirements according to the Annex to the Law on the Development of Academic Staff (ZRAS), where the points required for an associate professorship are 360; **Table 2** lists the requirements of the Institute of Art Studies, where the points are 500; and **Table 3** shows the results presented by the candidate, amounting to 720 points.

According to **Table 2** (Academic Position, Scientific Degree, Name, Surname; Indicators after awarding the scientific degree *Senior Research Fellow II Degree/Associate Professor*), which corresponds to the minimum point requirements by groups of indicators for different scientific

degrees and academic positions as specified in the Regulations on the Conditions and Procedure for Acquiring Scientific Degrees and Holding Academic Positions at Institute of Art Studies, BAS, indicated in Annex No. 2 with additional requirements, in addition to the habilitation thesis for candidates for associate professor, beyond the minimum scientometric requirements, at least five publications in scholarly journals are required (falling under categories G-8 and G-9). The candidate has submitted a total of nine articles.

Furthermore, according to the Regulations of Institute of Art Studies, BAS, at least five participations in scientific forums are required. As far as it is possible to trace the forums, since in Table 8.1 of the ZRAS annex, scientific forums are not explicitly listed, in my view the published results from participation in scientific forums correspond to parts G-8 and G-9. In *G-8. Articles and reports published in peer-reviewed journals indexed in internationally recognised scientific databases*, the candidate presents three articles, each awarded 30 points; in *G-9. Articles and reports published in specialised art publications*, five articles and one study are presented. According to the Institute of Art Studies, BAS Regulations, the five forum participations must be distinct from the publications used for acquiring the scientific degree of *PhD*. The candidate defended her doctorate in 2009, and the publications in question are from the period after 2018; the materials submitted for review in parts G-8 and G-9 meet this requirement.

According to the Regulations of Institute of Art Studies, at least five citations in scientific publications are also required (falling under D-16 and D-17). Miteva presents a total of 19 citations, distributed across two groups, in accordance with the minimum requirements. I note that the works submitted by the candidate comply with the normative requirements.

Compliance with indicators. The materials submitted by Maria Miteva are indicated in Table 3, “*Minimum Required Points by Groups of Indicators*”. From the complete list of publications, it is evident that she is entering the competition with her habilitation thesis and nine articles (three articles under G-8 and six articles under G-9).

Citations under D-16 (“*Citations or reviews in peer-reviewed journals indexed in internationally recognised scientific databases or in monographs and collective volumes*”) amount to three; Citations under D-17 (“*Citations in monographs and peer-reviewed collective volumes*”) amount to sixteen.

The materials submitted by the candidate will be examined by groups in accordance with the requirements for Professional Field 8.1. Theory of Arts and Tables 1 and 2, “Minimum Required Points by Groups of Indicators for Different Scientific Degrees and Academic Positions”.

A-1 – Doctoral Dissertation and G-7 – Monograph Based on the Dissertation will not be reviewed. Citations and participations in scientific projects constitute a significant portion of the points required in Table 2 and cannot be independently reviewed. The citations reflect the substantive impact and engagement of Maria Miteva’s research within the scholarly community, also indicating their relevance. The candidate is a member of the research team of three projects and has served as project leader for one. Work on these projects is associated with institutions such as the National Academy of Arts, the Institute of Art Studies, and the Fund for Scientific Research. In this opinion, the following materials submitted for the competition are considered according to the relevant indicators:

B-3. Habilitation Thesis – Art and Commission: From Artistic Practice in Bulgaria during the 1930s and Early 1940s (Decorative Arts, Applied Arts, Architecture). Sofia, Institute for Art Research, BAS, 2025, comprises 298 pages and 121 illustrations and represents an innovative study. For the first time, it analyses issues concerning architecture and visual art from the perspective of work commissioned through formal commissions. By this distinctive approach, it contributes significantly to Bulgarian scholarship. The study addresses questions regarding commissioning, design, the synthesis between architecture and art, the relationships between patrons and creators in various aspects, the role of individual creative decisions, as well as the socialisation of art and architecture.

The research also relates to issues in the history of design. The selection of material is at the author’s discretion. My observation is that additional buildings could have been included, but the examples presented sufficiently illuminate the subject and clarify the context of the analysed normative acts and periodicals of the time, thus contributing to the objective perspective of the author. A particular strength of the habilitation thesis is its structuring, which combines a chronological approach with a parallel problem-focused framework. Their combination outline its theoretical significance, as evident in the development of the model of art project commissioning over time: Part I „Art and Commission – Between Art Sociology and Social Psychology: Conceptual and Historical Context“, and Part IV „Commissioning and Artistic Realisations as Reflected in the Press during the 1930s and Early 1940s“. Notably, the title of the work uses the

term commission, while individual part titles employ patronage; the first term, in my view, is more precise in meaning.

G-8 – For the competition, three articles based on conference papers presented at the Art Studies Readings and published in the Web of Science-indexed journal Art Studies Readings are included. These three articles present Maria Miteva's research in the discovery and interpretation of cultural facts that are commented on for the first time, complement existing knowledge, or focus on art and cultural relations in Bulgaria during the 1930s and 1940s. They trace: leading cultural models, with emphasis on the Union of Artists' Societies in Bulgaria during the 1930s–40s and the authoritarian type of governance; archival and periodical data concerning architects' travels and official assignments, which reveal previously unpublished information about their work; and the manifestations of individual creative personalities and modes of practice in the first decade after 1944, considered as a type of metamorphosis – raising questions that are rightly brought to the analytical agenda. The articles are not included in the competition materials but are addressed in this opinion due to their public accessibility on the Institute of Art Studies website.

The articles presented under G-9 correspond to research projects in which Maria Miteva participates, one of which is „Bulgarian Artists for the Children“. Similarly, the research on the little-known Mincho Nikiforov – author of the illustrations for children's books and periodicals – falls within this framework. More broadly, literature for the children and the relationship between text and its accompanying illustration, as well as the significance of the latter, has been a long-standing research interest of Miteva. These studies, products of the candidate's individual scientific projects carried out within her personal research plan at Institute of Art Studies, like the articles listed under G-8, also relate to changes in the cultural sphere after 1948.

The research is contributory in the sense that it observes and analyses scientific facts previously considered negligible.

Regarding the clarification of facts connected to decorative and artistic solutions, both in terms of design exemplars and small-scale forms related to applied arts, Miteva's research on Ivan Penkov and the Artistic Craft Exhibition at the State Art Gallery should be noted. This topic is also thoroughly developed in her published habilitation thesis. The submitted articles address both specific and overview issues. Another significant focus is the extraction of information and analysis of major exhibitions in the field of applied arts during the 1930s and 1960s.

3. CONTRIBUTIONS: I accept the contributions outlined by the candidate, recognise their significance for the development of Bulgarian art studies, and consider that Maria Miteva, through her personal qualities, has the potential to contribute to the development of the *New Bulgarian Art* sector.

4. CONCLUSION: In light of all the arguments presented in this opinion, I recommend that Assistant Professor Maria Koleva Miteva be appointed as *Associate Professor in Art Studies and Visual Arts* (Decorative and Applied Arts in Bulgaria during the 20th Century), professional field 8.1. Theory of Arts, for the needs of the “Visual Arts” sector.

10 September 2025

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