

OPINION

by Prof. Dr Irina Ivanova Genova

for a competition for the position of *Associate Professor in Art Studies and Fine Arts* (decorative and applied arts in 20th century Bulgaria), professional field 8.1. Theory of Arts, for the needs of the Fine Arts Department, RG Modern Bulgarian Art, Institute of Art Studies at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, announced in the State Gazette (No. 41 of 20.05.2025) with a single candidate, Senior Assistant Professor Dr. Maria Koleva Miteva.

1. Information about the competition

The competition is announced for the needs of the Fine Arts Department, research group Modern Bulgarian Art at the Institute of Art Studies. I participate in the scientific jury of the competition according to order No. 445PД / 02.07.2025 of the Director of the Institute of Art Studies.

2. Information about the candidates in the competition

The only candidate in the competition is **Senior Asst. Prof. Dr. Maria Koleva Miteva.**

Senior Asst. Prof. Dr. Maria Miteva received a bachelor's degree in program 8.1. Theory of Arts at the New Bulgarian University (2002) and a master's degree in 8.1. Theory of Arts at the NBU (2004). After full-time doctoral studies at the Institute of Art Studies, BAS (2005-2009) she defended her dissertation on the *Decorative Art in Bulgaria at the Beginning of the Modern Era – Assimilation of European Experience (Late 19th – Early 20th Century)* in the scientific specialty 8.1. Theory of Arts. Based on the defended dissertation as "Doctor" Miteva published the monograph - *Stefan Badzhov. Biography of a Decorator S.*, Institute of Art Studies, BAS, 2014, ISBN 978-954-8594-49-3.

Dr. Maria Miteva has held the academic position of Senior Assistant Professor at the Institute of Art Studies since 2012. Since 2018, Senior Assistant Professor Dr. Maria Miteva has also worked part-time as the curator of the Ceramics Fund at the National Gallery in Sofia. This sphere of activity undoubtedly expands the opportunities for her research in the field of decorative and applied arts.

At the Institute of Art Studies, she has been elected head of the Research Group "Modern Bulgarian Art" for four terms, which undoubtedly confirms her organizational skills and competencies in a professional environment.

3. Fulfillment of the requirements for holding the academic position

The submitted documentation allows us to conclude that the candidate for the competition, senior Asst. prof. Dr. Maria Miteva, fully fulfills the requirements of the ADASRB and its regulations, as well as those of BAS and the Institute of Art Studies for the competitions for acquiring the academic position of associate professor.

The candidate for the competition has successfully defended a doctoral dissertation in 8.1. Theory of Arts (registered in NACID) and has published as a habilitation work the monograph *Decorative Art in Bulgaria at the Beginning of the Modern Era – Assimilation of European Experience (Late 19th – Early 20th Century)*. S., Institute of Art Studies, BAS, 2025, ISBN 978-619-761953-9.

In the remaining indicators for acquiring the academic position of "associate professor", Senior Assoc. Prof. Dr. Maria Miteva exceeds the quantitative requirements. In the indicator (D) for published monographs (outside the habilitation work), chapters in collective books, studies and articles in peer-reviewed and other publications, according to the submitted documents, she exceeds the requirements – nearly 200%, and in the indicator for citations (E) – 550%.

Miteva has participated in research projects funded by the National Culture Fund and the Scientific Research Fund and was the head of one of these projects and fulfills the requirements for this indicator (E) as well.

Regarding the qualitative requirements for holding the academic position of "associate professor", they can be confirmed by her publications in renowned publishing houses such as that of the Institute of Art Studies, BAS, Publishing House of the New Bulgarian University, Academic Publishing House "Prof. Marin Drinov", BAS, as well as by the large number of citations in publications in refereed, indexed and reviewed editions.

4. General characteristics of the submitted scientific works/publications

For the competition the candidate has presented a list of 25 titles: 2 monographs (one of which was written based on a defended dissertation for acquiring the Educational and Academic Degree "Doctor") and 23 articles and studies in academic publications, published after the defense of the doctoral dissertation. The topics of the publications outline as the main research activity of Senior Asst. Prof. Dr. Maria Miteva to be applied arts in Bulgaria. The subjects of studies are educational art institutions, professional art associations, prominent personalities and creative tandems. The places for comprehensive expression in the field of applied arts, such as world, international and national exhibitions; artistic design of architecture of state and public institutions, of residential buildings and interiors; as well as the discussions and the echo of specific issues in the periodicals of the time are at the center of numerous of her publications. I will also add her activities with illustration and

design of children's literature, as well as with the doll as an artifact. The subject of Miteva's research is the contextual connection of artistic professional practices in this field with other phenomena in a cultural and social context through the phenomenon of commission and sponsorship. Based on specific case studies, she comments on complex relationships, differences and similarities of views, organizational contradictions, and the impacts of different types of conjunctures, in her attempt to achieve an understanding of nature and merits of artistic realizations.

Here I will focus mainly on Miteva's book *Decorative Art in Bulgaria at the Beginning of the Modern Era – Assimilation of European Experience (Late 19th – Early 20th Century)* published by the Institute of Art Studies, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, 2025, presented as a habilitation thesis in the competition.

In the introduction to the book, the author states: “*My interest was focused on the social role, on the one hand, as a codifier of national identity, and on the other – as a bearer of assimilated models of modernity from Europe and the world. Sponsorship as an instrument of this function of art is marked by the leading ideas of the development of society, and the organization and practices that accompany it are part of the general state and institutional mechanism*” (p.7). From the very beginning, we understand how complex this research endeavor is, requiring competence both in the usual fields of the broad field of art history, and in the spheres of sociology, economic history, and political relations. The research combined in the published habilitation thesis is the fruit of many years of study. Miteva explains that she worked on it within the framework of three consecutive individual projects within the scientific plan of the Institute of Art Studies. Thus, she managed to study numerous archives (institutional and personal), huge volumes of the press during the period under review, a large volume of art history literature and, finally, authoritative research from the fields of cultural studies, sociology and history (political, diplomatic, economic, technological). As a result of these laborious activities, undoubtedly driven by her scientific interest, Miteva manages to connect in a single narrative specific phenomena and artistic realizations with the “big plans” of public attitudes and historical events. This is one of the achievements of her work. I will mention only one of the cases studied, so that this emphasis in the opinion does not remain too general. In the case of the presentation of Bulgaria at the World Exhibition in Paris in 1937 (pp. 126-151), intriguing details about the commissioning, competitions and realization of numerous artifacts and important characteristics of the world forum at this tense political moment are intertwined.

Regarding the problem of commissioned work, which the author highlights as the focus of her research, she understands that this share of the artifacts created in the era of modernity deserves research equivalent to those on the so-called “Free creativity”. In this perspective, a study of the contradictory contextual uses in the Bulgarian environment of concepts such as "modern art", "individualism", etc.,

would be good in the future to focus on the ideologies of forming attitudes and prejudices regarding guaranty in the twentieth century, in our country and elsewhere.

Summarizing: with the position taken towards the field of applied and decorative arts with a specific function (in other languages sometimes named “functional arts”), Miteva outlines a terrain in the history of artistic practices, poorly understood and studied so far in Bulgaria. Her habilitation work expands knowledge, raises important questions and is a valuable basis for further research in the academic community.

5. Assessment of scientific and applied scientific contributions

Generalizations are inevitably also a simplification of what has been achieved in research texts. The corpus of publications for a period of 14 years presents generally related, but diverse according to the specifics of the cases studied, issues. The studies presented in the competition are useful for the academic community, formulate an original author's position and, finally, open opportunities for continuation for other researchers, including future doctoral students, not only in the field of art studies.

6. Conclusion

Based on the submitted documentation for the announced competition and the assessment of the scientific qualities of the published research, I declare with conviction that Senior Assistant Professor Dr. Maria Miteva fully meets the requirements for holding the academic position of "Associate Professor" in 8.1. Theory of Arts. I believe that the Institute of Art Studies has every reason to accept her as part of its habilitated staff.

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/Irina Genova/