

REVIEW

By Prof. Dr. architect Stela Tasheva

On the presented materials for a competition for the academic 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)

In the competition for the academic position of *Associate professor* announced in the State Gazette, issue 41/20.05.2025, and on the website of the Institute of Art Studies, the candidate is Senior Assistant Professor Dr. Maria Miteva from the Research Group New Bulgarian Art, Fine Arts Department, at the Institute of Art Studies, BAS.

1. Brief biographical data

Senior Assistant Professor Dr. Maria Miteva graduated in 2002 as a bachelor, and in 2004 as MA in Art Studies from New Bulgarian University (NBU), Sofia. Her doctoral dissertation was on the topic "Decorative Art in Bulgaria at the Beginning of the Modern Era – Implementing the European Experience / Late 19th - Early 20th Century /" and was defended in 2009 (diploma No. 33539, VAK / 18.08.2009). After winning a competition, in 2010, Dr. Maria Miteva began scientific work as a senior assistant at the Institute of Art Studies, BAS, where she has worked to date. Since 2018, she has also been the curator of the Ceramics Fund at the National Gallery in Sofia.

Currently, senior assistant Professor Dr. Maria Miteva is the head of Modern Bulgarian Art research group, Fine Arts department, at the Institute of Art Studies, BAS.

2. General description of the submitted materials and assessment of compliance with the minimum national requirements

Dr. Maria Miteva participated in the competition with:

Defended dissertation for acquiring the educational and scientific degree of doctor - 1.

Monograph (main habilitation thesis) – 1:

Art and Commission. Through the Artistic Practice in Bulgaria in the 1930s and the Beginning of the 1940s (Decorative Art, Applied Art, Architecture) S. Institute Art Studies, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, 2025, ISBN 978-619-7619-53-9

□ Published book based on the defended dissertation for the award of the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" – 1:

Stefan Badzhov. Biography of a Decorator S., Institute of Art Studies, BAS, 2014, ISBN 978-954-8594-49-3

□ Publications in an edition indexed in Web of Science - 3:

Miteva, M. Regulation of artistic practice in the period between the two world wars - models and identities. The role of the Union of Artists' Societies in Bulgaria. – In: Art History Readings 2018. Art in Europe - models and identities. S., Institute of Art Studies, BAS, 2019, 125-136.

Miteva, M. The Specialized (Business) Travels and Its Reflections in the Periodicals between the Two World Wars: A Transfer of Artistic Ideas and Pragmatic Experience. Notes from the 3rd International Congress of Architects in 1935 – In: Art Readings 2020. Module New Art. Travels. S., Institute of Art Studies, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, 2021, 410-416.

Miteva, M. Possible Transformations – Artistic Practice in Bulgaria in the First Decade after 09.09.1944 – In: Art Readings 2023. Metamorphoses. New Art Module, Institute of Art Studies, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, 2024, 162-170.

□ Publications in peer-reviewed journals - 6.

□ Participation in scientific projects with external funding for the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences - 3, project management - 1

□ Citations - 22,

□ Supervision of a successfully defended doctoral student - 1

The publications submitted for the competition are in Bulgarian language. All texts are peer-reviewed before publication.

When checking the required points in the scientometric indicators in accordance with the minimum national requirements for PF 8.1. Theory of Arts, it is evident that Dr. Maria Miteva convincingly exceeds (almost one and a half times) their mandatory amount.

The submitted documents and data also show full coverage of the requirements in Appendix 2 of the Regulations on the conditions and procedure for acquiring a scientific degree and for occupying an academic position at the Institute of Art Studies, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences.

It can be concluded that the attached references, materials and evidence fully meet the requirements for acquiring the academic title of "associate professor".

3. General characteristics of the candidate's activities

3.1. Scientific and applied scientific activities

The publications submitted for the competition clearly outline the scientific profile of Dr. Maria Miteva. Her in-depth research interests in Bulgarian art from the first half of the 20th century are evident: greater part of her texts are dedicated to this period, along with her habilitation work *Art and Commission. Through the Artistic Practice in Bulgaria in the 1930s and the Beginning of the 1940s (Decorative Art, Applied Art, Architecture)* 2025. For me, the value of her research spreads evenly over the correct, careful development of selected archival sources, the detailed tracing of the sociological and cultural context of phenomena and processes in our country and around the world, along with the exquisite art historical determination of authorial characteristics, influences and contributions in the historical period under consideration and in the presented works of art and the environment.

I believe that in her publications, Senior Assistant Professor Dr. Maria Miteva demonstrates in-depth knowledge in the chosen field - history of art and architecture of the 20th century, while also displaying high analytical qualities, combined with research objectivity, in terms of the presentation and assessment of the Bulgarian artistic heritage of the period.

3.2. Educational and pedagogical activity

Dr. Maria Miteva declares the supervision of a full-time doctoral student in the Department of Arts 8.1. Theory of Arts, Institute of Art Studies, who successfully defended his thesis in 2017. As far as I am aware, this is rare in competitions at such a stage and should be especially positively emphasized.

3.3. Project activity

During the period 2009-2012, Dr. Maria Miteva participated in three scientific projects with external funding for the Institute of Art Studies, BAS, namely:

"Bulgarian Art Archives, Resources and Technologies of Research (BAARTI -3), (Scientific Research Fund), contract DO 02-46/09.12.2008), a project of the specialty "Carving", National Academy of Arts, on the occasion of 110 years since its establishment, (agreement № 5555-8-2703 of 18.XI.2009; agreement № 6165-8-3214 of 10.XI.2010), as well as *80 Years Since the Establishment of the Society of New Artists*, , 2011-2012", Institute of Art Studies, BAS, (SP "Culture 2011", number from the register of SP "Culture": 734/22.03.2011)

In 2013, she was the head of the project *Alexander Bozhinov - an academician for children*, Audiences program of the *Culture* National Foundation, Sofia City Council, contract No. 85-19/ 24.06.2013

The projects mentioned have been successfully completed and reported.

3.4. Contributions (scientific and applied science)

The contributions of the research of Senior Assistant Professor Dr. Maria Miteva are obvious, significant and in line with her scientific interests.

I see high value in the main habilitation work declared for the competition – namely the study *Art and Commission. Through the Artistic Practice in Bulgaria in the 1930s and the Beginning of the 1940s (Decorative Art, Applied Art, Architecture)*, (2025). It carefully and impartially traces the social (and to some extent ideological) dialectics of the processes between authors and commissioners/users of products of applied art and solutions for the environment. I find such research to be relevant and particularly challenging today, in connection with the active entry of artificial intelligence into the artistic and decorative production of our time and the subsequent inevitable, strong change in the dynamics between commissioner and performer.

The study contains an exposition of 241 standard pages (without bibliography), 121 illustrations and lists of used literature and sources including more than 300 titles in Cyrillic, 15 in Latin, 18 archival sources (personal and institutional funds) and 40 electronic sources and databases. The text is organized into an introduction, four parts and a conclusion, and the aspects considered in them reveal original forms and unexpected characteristics of the phenomena accompanying the work on an artistic or social assignment. The first part presents an overview of the development of the relationship between the patron and the artist, as well as the significance of the latter's role in society; culturological and philosophical concepts and research are summarized and systematized. The second part reveals the impact of the institutionalization of artistic life in Bulgaria on the considered topic of "market"

relations, by tracing the work of major educational organizations (the State Academy of Arts and the first School of Applied Arts) and some professional associations. The third offers an overview of the commissions carried out in significant projects for mainly public and administrative architecture. The fourth offers a reflection on the commissions through texts in the press of the period. The analysis in the monograph is accompanied by detailed references to historical and documentary sources and supported by a rich set of citations of academic studies.

Particularly impressive and valuable are the rare images and illustrations of competition and commissioned works, selected products, graphics and projects presented throughout the exhibition. They represent a vivid visual syllable, with the help of which the considered era in Bulgarian history is as if revived before the reader. In this aspect, special attention deserves the images from the Bulgarian participation in the World Exhibition in Paris in 1937, as well as the photographs and facts in connection with the building of the State Art Gallery from the research of Senior Assistant Professor Dr. Maria Miteva.

Several of the narratives touched upon in her monograph have also found their detailed development or natural continuation in the articles submitted for the competition.

After all the above, I accept the presented monograph and the declared articles and publications for the competition as contributing, relevant and very significant for the chosen research field.

I also highly appreciate the participation of Senior Assistant Professor Dr. Miteva in national scientific projects and their production.

4. Assessment of the candidate's personal contribution

The materials submitted for the competition demonstrate high knowledge of the topics considered and reveal the accomplishment of comprehensive, convincing research.

I consider the personal contribution of Dr. Maria Miteva in the described publications and works to be undoubted and completely sufficient in terms of the requirements of the competition.

5. Reflection of the candidate's scientific publications in the literature (known citations and reviews)

The documents submitted to me present data for a total of 22 citations: from Bulgarian and foreign authors. Three of the citations are in scientific publications in English.

For me, the publications of Dr. Maria Miteva are well known and highly valued by the scientific community in the country and have a clear potential for continued citation.

6. Critical notes and recommendations

Here I once again confirm my assessment of the in-depth knowledge and successful analytical approach of Senior Assistant Professor Dr. Maria Miteva in the areas she has researched.

Insofar as the chosen topic cannot be completely exhausted to date, in future studies by Dr. Maria Miteva it is possible to expand the time scope, reveal more regional, ideological and artistic parallels, expand research connections with other areas of the arts, as well as further enrichment with ethnographic and culturological analyses. Such a possibility in the future, however, in no way affects my high assessment of the materials presented in the competition to date.

Therefore, given the obvious quality of her research and its significant Bulgarian character, my main recommendation to Dr. Maria Miteva is to develop her scientific output, especially by including more articles in English and/or other European languages, as well as actively promoting her materials, results and conclusions in the public domain.

7. Personal impressions

I know Dr. Maria Miteva as an extremely principled, in-depth researcher at the Institute of Art Studies, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. She is both a methodical researcher of complexly described archival and non-trivial scientific data, and a detective-minded, objective seeker of the truth about phenomena and processes. At the same time, she possesses a rich vocabulary, high historical culture and subtle, detailed knowledge of the specifics of the period she has chosen – the 20th century. Her studies are extremely enriching, both in terms of the Bulgarian scholarly field and in current art history directions globally.

Along with all the above, Dr. Maria Miteva is a beloved and respected colleague in her department. In addition, she is also very well-known and accepted in the scientific community outside the institute.

8. Conclusion:

I find the information provided to me for the candidate in the competition to be sufficient and in accordance with the scientometric requirements, the regulations and the rules of the Institute of Art Studies.

Considering the above, I propose that Dr. Maria Miteva be elected as an "associate professor" in the specialty *Art History and Fine Arts (Decorative and Applied Arts in the 20th Century in Bulgaria)*, professional field 8.1. Theory of Arts for the needs of the Modern Bulgarian Art Research Group, Fine Arts Department, at the Institute of Art Studies at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences.

16.10.2025

Reviewer:

Prof. Dr. Arch. Stella Tasheva.