

OPINION

By Prof. Dr. Andronika MARTONOVA, Screen Arts Department, Institute of Art Studies – BAS on the academic works and creative activity of Josif Astrukov for participation in the competition for the position of associate professor in *Film Studies, Film Art and Television (Digital Technologies and Screen Images)*, professional direction 8.4 Theater and Film Art, for the needs of the Screen Arts Department of the Institute of Art Studies – BAS, published in State Gazette, issue 52/18.06. 2024

The materials submitted by the candidate senior assistant Dr. Josif Emilov Astrukov for the announced competition for the academic position of Associate Professor for the needs of the Screen Arts Department fully meet the requirements. The LADASRB as well as the Regulations of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences and the Additional Conditions of the Institute of Art Studies have been complied with. No evidence of plagiarism was found in the publications cited for the competition. The candidate's performance under the minimum requirements of the National Center for Documentation and Information (NCID) substantially exceeds the point threshold - Dr. Astrukov's total is 860 points. Moreover, the candidate shows significant output in several areas: academic, applied and practical. And this is exactly in line with the characteristics of the competition for the academic post of associate professor. Even if I must be completely honest - I will say categorically that this candidate some years ago had enough production to be habilitated with dignity. He also possesses all the necessary qualities to hold an associate professor position.

I have known Josif Astrukov since his student years at NATFA "Krastio Sarafov" and his participation in the short film international festival "*In the Palace*" Balchik. Upon his entry as a Ph. D student in the Screen Arts Department of the Institute of Art Studies, and later as a senior assistant, Dr. Astrukov always stood out for his distinction in choosing and thinking about an unusual topic, in the fields of untouched aspects of film studies. All this certainly foreshadowed his subsequent path of development in the humanities, art studies and artistic expression. Experimental cinema, hybrid forms, screen dance performance, the synergy between the scenic - visual - cinematic are among his leading interests of research, but also of authorial expression.

It is noteworthy that the candidate submitted two monographs for this competition, one of which is a major habilitation thesis:

Photography as... Monograph, Second supplemented edition, 212 pp, Sofia, 2023, ISBN 978-619-91370-4-8 ISBN 978-619-91370-5-5, ISBN 978-619-91370-3-1 (main work)

Screen and Stage. New Multimedia Performances. Monograph, 135 p., Sofia, 2023, ISBN 978-619-188-165-9, ISBN 978-619-188-166-6

In "***Photography as...***" the object of study is the transformation of heterogeneous photographic images in the age of digitalization, for which purpose many examples from practice are analyzed and applied in the ambiguous, provocative and discursive contexts of the analogue-digital transition. The methodological framework is based on an in-depth theoretical analysis related both to the hybrid interactions and mutual influences between the static photographic image and moving pictures (ergo cinema). In addition to the aesthetic view, which is to some extent predetermined by technical constellations, Astrukov also applies a sociological insight into photographic hermeneutics. Finally, he discusses the ever so topical issue of the role and manipulation of artificial intelligence.

The second monograph, ***Screen and Stage. New Multimedia Performances*** is also contributory because for the first time in our country it systematizes the contamination between screen and stage arts in the broad aspect and ever-expanding field of multimedia performances. Astrukov introduces, analyzes and discusses in an academic manner various concepts from this art field: such as cyber performance, and digital performance, avatar performance, interactive illusion, virtual performance, etc. Perhaps here is the place to say that Josif Astrukov was also part of the team of the project Building and Development of Centre of Excellence Heritage BG, BG05M2OP001-1.001-00, 2021-23. As part of the working group, he was included in „*Performing and Screen Arts in Bulgaria - Research, Historical Compendium and Laboratory*”.

In the rest of his **articles and studies** senior asst. Dr. Josif Astrukov continues the theme of the relationship between dance and cinema:

Contemporary Bulgarian Experimental Cinema. Sketches to the New Bulgarian Cinema, S., IAS, 2021, pp. 102-153, ISBN 978-619-7619-18-8), which is part of the large and very successful completed project “Post-totalitarian Bulgarian Cinema - Models and Identities, DN 20/4, 2017-2021 of the Screen Arts Department of the IAS. Among his other works, the author's broadening scientific horizon and interests are clearly visible. As a precise and, at the same time, I would say charmingly extravagant scholar, boldly asserting his own unadulterated visions, Dr. Astrukov (it is a quality - to hold your difference to a high level!) is also interested in other issues of the visual and its reception in the contemporary dynamic cultural situation. Very interesting are his texts related to psychology, psychoanalysis and the screen, the individual viewer and the mass audience in the pandemic period, but also the functioning of the viewer in an environment of interpersonal relations through / by /

beyond the screen (wide-screen-TV-computer, etc.), the effects of TV series on video-sharing platforms and social networks. And this is undoubtedly in the oscillating current trend of audiovisual culture consumption in a global world of moving images.

The candidate's articles and studies have been published in refereed and indexed journals and have undergone double blind peer review.

To summarize - Josif Astrukov demonstrates a thorough interdisciplinary approach to his objects of research and the specific handwriting of a scholar, gravitating skillfully between the theoretician and the practitioner. Definitely a very rare quality that speaks of a good potential. The candidate possesses a unique sense of the problems of the scientific field, which is unparalleled among other authors in the College. This is unequivocally proven by his numerous conference contributions and citations in national and international journals with a diverse range of topics. His First Prize in the Competition for Young Researchers - *100 Years of Bulgarian Cinema - Facts, Practices, Reflections*, IAS-BAS, 2015 is also significant.

In the period 2005 - 2022, as a practitioner, Josif Astrukov also developed a very active artistic and creative activity, which is also part of the 8.4. direction according to the scientific systematization in our country: his six own author photo exhibitions are magnificent, as well as the individual three published boutique photo albums (some of them were funded after winning a grant from national cultural institutions). In addition to his extensive experience as a photographer, Josif Astrukov has an excellent background in film production. Both as part of major film productions and as a director of short films.

Here I would like to focus on his film work "*Elusive*", created under the Nu Boyana program in 2019 and presented at the national film festival "Golden Rose" in Varna. If up to now I have presented the achievements of the scientist Astrukov, let me focus for a moment on the artist Astrukov. There is, of course, an intersection between these "*two avatars*" - and it lies in Josif's particular sensibility and screen thinking. Minimalist and micro neo-avant-garde - that's how I would define him. And here Dr. Astrukov is without parallel in our cinematic existence and perhaps as a phenomenon ahead of his time in our country.

It is not by chance that I emphasize and highlight the practical along with the theoretical contribution. They are also very important in the training process. Since 2014 Josif Astrukov is a lecturer in various disciplines at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski", a lecturer at the Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication, master's program "Production and Creative Industries"; and at the NBU: at the departments "Design", "Media and Communication", "Photography", master's and bachelor's programs, a total of seven courses to date. One of them is "Audiovisual Creativity"!

My personal impressions in summary: a talented and distinctive colleague, both in film studies and in the practical aspects of professional development. At the same time, subtle, good-natured, hard-working, inquisitive, with a sharpened aesthetic sensitivity and a wide range of interests is Josif Astrukov.

The colorful kaleidoscope of his production and the high quality of his work give me the right to recommend to the esteemed scientific jury to propose to the Scientific Council of the Institute of Art Studies to elect him to the academic position of Associate Professor.

I vote “YES / FOR”!

10.11.2024

Beijing, China

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