

OPINON

By

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On the dissertation work on the subject:

ARTISTIC AND LIFE EXPERIENCE OF CAROL RAMA AND LIKA YANKO -
TWO CASES OF FEMALE ARTISTS OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY IN
EUROPE

by

Eva-Maria Ivanova

For awarding the education and academic degree doctor

Professional direction 8.1 *Arts Theory*

Scientific supervisor: Prof. Irina Genova

1. General characteristics and structure of the dissertation:

The dissertation "Artistic and Life Experience of Carol Rama and Lika Yanko - Two Cases of Female Artists of the Twentieth Century in Europe" consists of 338 pages, a preface, six chapters and 103 titles of bibliography in Cyrillic and 127 titles in Latin.

The structure of the dissertation consists of two parts with three chapters and separate thematically distinct subchapters. Each of the two parts is devoted to an in-depth study of the work and biographies of the two artists who are the subject of the research.

The general characteristics of the dissertation reveal a high literary awareness of the subject and a respectable theoretical background, which find confirmation in the thorough approach to the development of the author's theses. An impressive number of publications are cited, as well as numerous articles from recent years that prove the relevance of the research.

2. Significance and credibility of the obtained results, interpretations, and conclusions

The work of Lika Yanko and that of Carol Rama are examined in parallel through a detailed insight into their personal life experiences, the formation of their unusual and distinctive pictorial world, and simultaneously in the context of major trends in twentieth-century art history. The relationship between the work of Rama and Yanko is also interpreted in terms of the female artist and the alternative subculture of artistic marginality, as well as the existing theoretical interest in this artistic marginality in the art world in the second half of the twentieth century.

The dissertation offers many interesting parallels and successful comparisons with the work of other artists, which represent original analyses of artistic trends and works. Significant twentieth-century artists such as Louise Bourgeois, George O'Keeffe, Yayoi Kusama, Niki de Saint Phalle, Eva Hesse, Paul Klee, Jean Dubuffet, Asger Jorn, Cy Twombly, Bernard Schulze, and others are included in a comparative mode and formal-aesthetic analysis.

The methodology has a comparative-typological character with reference to concepts and approaches that lead to a generalized cultural paradigm that avoids more radical socio-political interpretations, and the full introduction of approaches close to psychoanalytic aesthetics and hermeneutic phenomenology.

In my view, a particularly significant achievement of the dissertation is the delineation of the problems that art history in the second half of the twentieth century has in describing, periodizing, and interpreting artistic phenomena combining elements of neo-imagism and late modernism, which after World War II unfolded simultaneously with an increased interest in artistic eccentricity, psychopathological creativity, the psychology of aesthetic categories, and the conceptualization of the art of the outsider .

The choice to make an extended comparative study between the work of Carol Rama and Lika Yanko is very apt because it offers a highly interesting and polemical focus on art as a "life form" against the background of such groundbreaking cultural phenomena of the mid-twentieth century as the beginning of second-wave feminism, the neo-avant-garde attack on art institutions, anti-psychiatry, etc.

According to Eva-Maria Ivanova, the legitimation and inclusion of artists such as Carol Rama and Lika Yanko in the official history of art becomes possible only through the peculiar strategy of exclusion, namely as "exception". Ultimately, the institutional legitimation of this "significant" marginality regarding Carol Rama occurred during the 50th edition of the Venice Biennale, when she received the

Golden Lion Award for Lifetime Achievement. Regarding Lika Yanko nationally, in recent years we have also seen retrospective exhibitions with an increased mythologizing emphasis, precisely as an overvaluation of the artist's specific "exclusion" from official art culture.

I find the thesis convincingly advanced and defended, aiming to expand the boundaries of interpretation in art history in terms of absent patterns and missing elements to include borderline or read as indicative of peculiarly repressive aesthetic phenomena and artistic practices.

The dissertation clearly points to possible ways of overcoming the understanding of the marginal, its possible fetishization, and the consequences of stigmatizing its historical insignificance in grand canonical narratives or accepting it as a voiceless and easily manipulated signifier.

3. Scientific contributions of the dissertation

I fully agree with the formulated scientific contributions.

A particularly important contribution of the dissertation is the inclusion of new sources on the life and work of Lika Yanko, clarifying unknown facts of the artist's biography, such as the fact that Lika Yanko's relationships with the musicians Stoyka Milanova, Dora Milanova and Vasil Kazandjiev have been explored for the first time.

Another indisputable contribution is the study of the artist's collaboration with the film director Binka Zhelyazkova, which has not been the subject of research before, and the reconstruction of this relationship is indicative of the artist's positioning in the artistic life of Bulgaria in the historical situation under consideration.

Among the important merits of the dissertation are the original interpretations of theoretical issues and social phenomena, as well as the methodology of the research, which includes the collection of materials from various sources and cultural spheres.

Publications reflecting the ideas of the thesis

Many relevant and significant publications related to the thesis topic are presented.

Abstract

The abstract meets the necessary requirements in terms of length and content.

Critical comments and recommendations

I have no critical remarks and recommendations for the submitted thesis. However, in the form of a question to the doctoral student, it remains puzzling to me why she declares and essentially refuses to include the psychoanalytic paradigm when, during

her research, she notes its place and importance in the art historical literature in relation to the success and legitimation of Carol Rama and especially Louise Bourgeois. Here, questions naturally arise about the place and extent of the influence of psychoanalytic culture on the reception of the artistic phenomena under consideration.

Conclusion

The presented dissertation meets the requirements of the Law for the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, the Regulations for its Implementation, and the Regulations for the Conditions for the Acquisition of Scientific Degrees.

I give a positive assessment of the dissertation and recommend the esteemed scientific jury to award the degree of Doctor to Eva-Maria Ivanova.

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