

O P I N I O N

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Ch. Asst. Prof. Chavdar Gyuzelev, PhD

Tutor with Academic Tenure with NBU, Cinema Advertisement and Showbusiness Department, undergoing the procedure for obtaining the academic degree Associate Professor in professional field 8.4 Theatre and Film Art (Graphic Design), organised by New Bulgarian University

The documentation submitted for the Associate Professor in Graphic Design Contest (in professional field 8.4 *Theatre and Film Art*), announced for the purposes of promoting the NBU faculty – School of Undergraduate Studies, *Cinema Advertisement and Showbusiness* Department, BA Graphic Design, announced in SG, issue 14/18.02.2022, is in full compliance with the requirements laid out in the *Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria Act* and the Implementing rules thereof in this specific Academic Institution. This opinion is drawn in compliance with Ruling No.3-PK-181/24.03.2022 of the Rector of NBU, Prof. Plamen Doynov, D.Litt.

There is only one candidate in the contest – Ch. Asst. Prof. Chavdar Gyuzelev, PhD. The reference for compliance with the minimum required by the national legislation shows that, that the applicant fully meets the necessary assessment criteria and even seriously exceeds them: the total number of points by groups and indicators (some mandatory for the NBU) being **815**. It is appropriate to emphasise at this point that, under the IRDASRB in NBU the required minimum is **620 points**. The evaluation provided in the Opinion hereby is based on a thorough analysis of all the materials submitted, of the copies of the necessary documents showing the different aspects of the applicant's artistic, creative, teaching and scientific activities.

The documentation provided by the candidate in this contest for awarding the academic degree *Associate Professor* is extraordinarily interesting, provocative and diverse. It sheds light on various creative and pedagogical qualities of the renown and award-winning stage designer Chavdar Nikolov Gyuzelev.

Chavdar Gyuzelev's latest encounters with stage design for theatre performances are related to the creation of the overall vision of the plays *Liv Stein*, by Nino Haratischwili, directed by Kris Sharkov, Little City Theatre – Off the Channel (2016) and *Waiting for Godot*, by Samuel Becket, director Deyan Donkov, Azaryan Theatre (2018). They reveal yet again the candidate's ability to transform and vitalize the stage space, transforming it from a simple space to house functional décor, placed in what seems to be a the hypostasis of the *nature morte*, into a character starring in the play, breathing with the dramaturgy and with the director's concepts and staging solutions, with light design which might be in synergy or in contradiction with the body and the presence/absence of the animate actor on the stage, adapted to the parameters of the open stage box and viewing space of the specific theatre building.

Chavdar Gyuzelev's peculiar memorable style in stage design, characterized by the purity and minimalism of the composition, particularly in relation to space, by the Freedom of lines and the specific, dynamic communication between the individual visual elements, is preserved in his other works, which do not belong to the theatrical means of expression.

However, as this competition is related to the BA *Graphic Design*, within the *Cinema Advertisement and Showbusiness* Department of the School of Undergraduate Studies, I would like to pay more attention to the other creative achievements of the candidate, with a focus on the aspects of the author's style. It is the artifacts listed below that are included in the portfolio of the contest for awarding the academic degree Associate Professor; not only that, but they have also been piloted in the public cultural space over the years, after the candidate has been invited to hold tenure as a chief assistant professor ant NBU. A number of reviews of the artistic and creative work of Chavdar Gyuzelev, PhD by leading artists and art critics serve as evidence of the latter. The texts attached to the documentation are also to be perceived as a list of references.

The following activities and materials are included in applicant's portfolio:

- Painting and graphics:

The anniversary exhibition *Heads in Free Flight (2021)*

- Photography:

Album of Photographs *Discovered Installations*, publisher: Black-Flamingo, 2018

- Graphic design and Typography:

- Redesigning of a newspaper that has turned into classics over the decades – *Kultura*;
- Designing a magazine with a specific profile and readership – *Christianity and Culture*

- Covers of books that are very different in terms of, stylistics (from fiction to academic literature) and readership:

- *A Treatise on Poetry*, Czesław Miłosz. Sofia, Riva, 2017, ISBN: 9789543205882;

- *The Film Script: Writing and Rewriting*, Svetla Hristova's. Sofia, NBU, 2020, ISBN: 9786192331139;

- *The Paradox of the Mirror*, Lyuben Dilov, Jr. Sofia, Enthusiast, 2021, ISBN: 9786191643912;

There is a point, shared among Chavdar Gyuzelev's works, typical for the expressive language of the author, and that is the building of a specific cinematographic aspect in the diverse kaleidoscope of visual arts: painting, typography, books and book-covers designs, photography. I take the freedom to use this term from the cinematic terminology, as what I find in the works of the candidate is a prominent narrativity influencing multiple senses. We can see the sound through the lines in his paintings and graphics – scraping in some places, elegantly flying as a whisper flowing over a white field; the polyphonic voices of the reality, frozen in the moment before the shot in the photographs: screaming, in the muted overtones of the existential, with the timbre of the city and the remnants of the human presence; shifting of image-text relations, symbols-letters relations, visual tropes and the search for semiotic dialogue between different segments. Besides – Chavdar Gyuzelev's images seem to be much more truly perceived in their multitude, in series. This paradox, resembling an image palimpsest, could be called “a communicative effect of delayed release” in the sensory perception of the viewer. The narrative does not stop within a single painting, it goes on living in the photography to wane into a typographic element. The (in)visible stylistic relations and the recognizability of the author; this is a particularly important point to emphasize on in the general impression of the application. Last but not least, not only are Gyuzelev's works, taken as a compendium, a narrative series, but they are also series of studies, observations, and visual experiments, focused on the challenging topic of controversial postmodern human nature.

Chavdar Gyuzelev's specific style is the result of artistic maturity, abundant artistic experience as well as an intellectual repository, consciously built up over the years. Because there are very few authors, who are not only able to work intuitively, but also to describe their own, personal even private “laboratory of creation”. The latter is very convincingly exposed in the extended resume of the theoretical and methodological framework of the process of realizing unique artistic projects and acknowledged artistic performances: *Visual Objectives and Specific Features of Graphics, Painting, Photography and Graphic Design* (42 pages, in

accordance with the requirements set by NBU). I am convinced that in addition to his gift for painting, Chavdar Gyuzelev also has a gift for writing, so my recommendation to the candidate is to boldly overcome the challenge of the empty sheet. I believe that this is an important quality related to applied art, ergo, his teaching, which, according to the submitted materials, constitutes all but an insignificant part of his professional realization in NBU: improving and expanding the academic subjects taught in BA *Graphic Design*, teaching a number of various courses, devised by the author, as well as a number of students who have successfully graduated due to his tuition.

CONCLUSION

The candidate, Ch. Asst. Prof. Chavdar Nikolov Gyuzelev, PhD, has submitted a convincing and comprehensive set of documents for the contest for awarding the academic degree Associate Professor, organized by NBU; these documents testify in favour of his teaching and tutoring skills, as well as for his qualities as an artist and researcher in the field of visual art. I am convinced of the high artistic value of his works, unambiguously revealing his polyvalent work with all aspects of Graphic Design. I believe that his experience is relevant for the development of the BA and his attractive courses will attract more students.

I resolutely vote YES for his application. With all due respect, I take the freedom to propose to the esteemed academic panel, as well as to the primary creative research unit that Ch. Asst. Prof. Chavdar Nikolov Gyuzelev, PhD be awarded the academic degree Associate Professor in the Cinema Advertisement and Showbusiness Department, NBU, in professional field 8.4. Theater and Film Art (Graphic Design).

Assoc. Prof. Andronika Martonova, PhD

20.06.2022, Sofia