

REVIEW

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Professional Direction 8.4. Theatre and film arts

On the scientific-research and artistic-creative production for participation in a competition for the occupation of the academic position of Associate Professor in professional field 8.4. Theatre and film arts (photography), School of undergraduate studies, Department of "Cinema, advertising and show business", as announced in SG no. 92/18.11.2022

with candidate Ch. Assistant Prof. Encho Naydenov Naydenov, PhD

I. Assessment of compliance with the minimum national requirements and the requirements of New Bulgarian University

The documents submitted by the candidate in the competition, Dr. Encho Naydenov, comply in full with the requirements of the procedure for occupying the academic position of Associate Professor. The acquired scientific and doctoral educational degree in 2013 is based on a successfully defended dissertation work on the topic of *The influence of digital photographic technologies on professional lighting*. In 2016, Dr. Naydenov was appointed to the academic position of Chief Assistant Prof.

The bibliographic description of the minimum requirements for the scientific, teaching and artistic-creative activities of the candidate provide a detailed list of the scientific and creative achievements of Dr. Naydenov. In each of the indicated groups of indicators, the candidate meets and even exceeds the requirements. The artistic and creative production and scientific interests of Dr. Encho Naydenov are presented through relevant evidentiary materials and details that outline the candidate's contributions and the significance of his activity. Materials are presented visually accompanied by factual information. Where necessary and applicable, external links and additional information on digital media are also provided.

As a reviewer I am convinced that candidate Dr. Encho Naydenov Naydenov meets the minimum national requirements and the requirements for scientific, teaching and artistic-creative activity to occupy the academic position of Associate Professor in professional direction 8.4. Theatre and film art, in accordance with the Act on Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, as well as the respective requirements of New Bulgarian University.

II. Research (creative) activity and results

1. Evaluation of the monographic work, creative performances or other publications corresponding in volume and completeness to a monographic work, including an evaluation of the scientific and scientific-applied contributions of the author.

Dr. Encho Naydenov has authored 3 products in the field of photographic art, with which he applied for the announced competition. In their entirety and volume, they correspond to a monographic work. Two of the performances are solo exhibitions, one is related to the author's photography. Each of the activities under indicator group B comprises of a series of photographs subordinated to the corresponding author's concept and following a specific style of realization.

It should be noted here that the displayed works clearly prove that Encho Naydenov is a photographer with a distinct style. Whether we are talking about commercial advertising photography or artistic portrait; a magazine cover or a photograph of an object, his style carries equally a spirit of realism. The presented projects successfully meet the audience's expectation of authenticity – something that is often lacking in the modern visual world, where the means of expression are easily retouched, filtered and even openly manipulated. The self-serving pursuit of imaginary worlds is masterfully overcome by the author. On the contrary, he actively seeks out the natural environment and context in which the subjects he photographs feel real and extraordinary precisely in their reality and lack of vanity. This is how real life shows its true meaning and its most important values. The characters and their stories are at the heart of the narrative presented to the user of this art.

In his photographic accomplishments, Encho Naydenov shows that the digitalizing all processes in photography is not what makes the photographs impactful. On the contrary, the

absence of many technical interventions leaves unnecessary and unimportant details hidden from the photographs, but preserves the most important thing - the emotion. I believe that this is where the greatest contribution of his work lies: both in his scientific works, but also in his work as a photographer. This line of "realism" was already felt in his dissertation work of 2013 and further developed in his scientific activity over the years to take on a vivid appearance in the realized solo exhibition *Latent Portraits* in 2022. The creative accomplishments of Dr. Naydenov vividly illustrate the ideas expressed in his scientific publications and in his work as a teacher. I believe that the presented creative performances show his expertise and specific creative style, as well as the scale of impact of his characteristic means of expression in a worthy and eloquent manner.

2. Evaluation of the contributions in the other attached publications (creative performances) made after the appointment of the academic position "chief assistant" or the academic position "associate professor" (for professor candidates). It also includes an assessment of the peer review requirement

The character of Dr. Naydenov's creative performances and scientific activities is strictly profiled, but applied in its essence. His exhibitions are always in search of provocation to the viewers, in search of an intersection between different ideas and approaches. For example - the exhibition *Wildlife of Sozopol* shows a variety of biological species that are found in the surroundings of Sozopol, but in a different way, with non-traditional photos of flora and fauna. Or the *9 Marys* project, which shows famous people from the field of arts with the name Mary. Such non-traditional reading is extremely important in the academic sphere. Firstly, this is a challenge to the author, but also to all professionals in the field, as well as to the viewers. A challenge that leads to polemic, upgrading, critical analysis and a field for debate and sharing of different points of view. Secondly, such an approach makes photographic art attractive for a wide range of people; it opens art to people who are tempted to become part of the provocation presented by Dr. Naydenov.

In parallel with his creative performances, Dr. Naydenov has managed to develop scientific work that deserves admiration. His articles and reports demonstrate a solid theoretical basis of modern photographic art. The articles are written in accessible language, but always look for challenging topics. The frequent focus on digital technologies is also impressive. As someone who is technically competent, Dr. Naydenov examines various phenomena and processes in contemporary photography, analyzing constructively the use of

digital technologies in the creation and manipulation of visual content. I think that such scientific publications are not only valuable for the professional direction, but they are also extremely necessary to provoke a conversation about the border between the digital and the real. What's more, they outline extremely skillfully the need for the availability of professional knowledge and skills and theoretical training for everyone who wants to do photography, a field in which almost every person dabbles equipped with a camera, be it and the lens of the smart phone.

Dr. Naydenov's publications have been published in the appropriate specialized and peer-reviewed publications.

3. Quoting from other authors.

Dr. Encho Naydenov has collected the required number of reviews for his author's products and creative performances. Reviews objectively reflect the applicant's achievements in the scientific field.

4. Evaluation of the results of participation in research and creative projects and application of the obtained results in practice.

Dr. Encho Naydenov has been involved in various research and creative projects. It makes a good impression that a serious part of his activities are in search of an intersection with other professional areas far from photography, such as: anthropology, biology, architecture, fashion, etc. I consider this particularly helpful, since in this way Dr. Naydenov not only shows interdisciplinarity as an important manifestation of modern science, but also establishes a bridge between a professional direction that handles screen means of communication and other sciences, making the results of their research and projects accessible to the general public.

III. Learning and teaching activity

1. Classwork, extracurricular or work in the MOODLE electronic training module, mentoring of student practices and internships, work with students and doctoral students.

Dr. Encho Naydenov develops courses for various programs: BP Photography, MP Photographic Art, BP Advertising, MP Advertising Management and Visual Branding, BP Graphic Design. For the last 7 years, Dr. Encho Naydenov has created more than 11 author's courses, as well as numerous extracurricular projects. His workload as a teacher exceeds the number of classes taught for the relevant category. It makes an excellent impression that Dr. Naydenov works particularly actively with his students, providing additional materials and making demonstrations of working with a technique within the framework of additional seminars and workshops. For example, the video tutorials that Dr. Naydenov prepared and implemented for students during the period of the Covid restrictions stand out. The search for new and modern forms of learning to support and develop lectures and practical classes is important and helpful. Further, Naydenov provides internships and practices for his students, incl. fieldwork with students; he organizes exhibitions, charity initiatives, and activities of general university importance. Dr. Naydenov is active in the "Student Practices" project, and in the period autumn 2014 - autumn 2021 he was the supervisor of 17 graduate students, participated in 58 committees, and was a reviewer for 7 graduate students. The above outlines his active role in the programmes in which he teaches, and this role is not reduced to the minimum requirements of his work as a teacher; on the contrary, he is an active driver for the development of educational activities, enhanced field work and student participation in various projects.

2. Work with Erasmus students.

Dr. Naydenov works with foreign students through Erasmus mobility and other international projects in which NBU participates. My overall impressions and feedback are entirely positive.

3. Student survey ratings.

The survey of student satisfaction with courses and teachers for Dr. Naydenov is excellent - 4.72 on a five-point scale.

IV. Administrative and public activity

1. Participation in collective management bodies of the NBU.

Dr. Encho Naydenov is the head of the Cinema, advertising and show business department at the NBU. In this capacity, he is responsible for the academic development of the department, the creation and development of programs, as well as for the research and creative activities of the department. Dr. Naydenov is a proactive, dialogic, solution-focused person. During the period of his election to this position, Dr. Naydenov initiated various changes related to the development of programs in the department, incl. of the Photography program.

2. Public activity.

Dr. Naydenov is a distinguished artist whose work is recognizable in professional circles. Not only is his research and creative projects outstanding but also his work as a commercial photographer is impressive. I would also highlight his work for various charitable initiatives, such as *Art Heals* in 2021 at NBU.

3. Attracting students to the programme.

Dr. Naydenov actively participates in candidate student initiatives, as well as in various NBU projects of importance not only for the department, but for the whole university. As a photographer, and as head of the Cinema, Advertising and Show business department, Dr. Naydenov supports various initiatives that successfully position NBU in the public space, and thus attract students.

V. Personal impressions of the candidate (if any)

I have known the candidate for the competition, Dr. Encho Naydenov, in more than one way.

First of all, in my capacity as Dean of the Undergraduate Faculty (2020-2022), Dr. Naydenov was a member of the Faculty Council. I have relied on his knowledgeable opinion and expertise on various issues related to arts programs. He has always been and continues to be a person with an active position, ready to debate and defend his theses, which I would say are always in the interest of the community and the development of the university, programs and students.

Over the last year, I got to know Dr. Naydenov also in his capacity as Head of Department. He has demonstrated enviable administrative and leadership skills. He knows

how to find the balance and the intersection between different interests, to instigate community activity, to listen attentively to each case and to assist in its resolution.

I have also known Dr. Encho Naydenov in his capacity as a prominent photographer in advertising circles. The reviews about him testify of a meticulous professional, with a focus on detail, striving for the modern, but also always looking for a way to implement an idea, regardless of limitations and circumstances. His reputation as someone who recreates detail and emotion in every shot is impeccable.

Last but not least, I have known Dr. Naydenov as a colleague at NBU for more than 15 years. All my meetings with him have been productive and I think he is a brilliant example of a practicing professional who skillfully brings the world of photography into an academic environment; he is a person who develops the theory of this art making it accessible to a wide range of young talents and future professionals. Encho Naydenov is dedicated to what he does, he knows no mediocrity or sloppiness; on the contrary, he cares about quality and precision, and this makes him an excellent professional and scientist who can contribute a lot to the development of NBU programs.

VI. Opinions, recommendations and notes on the activity and achievements of the candidate

I would encourage Dr. Encho Naydenov to publish more professional literature. I believe that in the last 15 years, the art of photography has increasingly become an amateur expression of every smart phone owner, and this undoubtedly poses new challenges for artists and professionals in this field.

Conclusion: I give a positive assessment of the scientific-research and artistic-creative production of Ch. Assistant Professor Encho Naydenov Naydenov, PhD - candidate for participation in a competition for the academic position of Associate Professor in professional field 8.4. Theatre and film arts (photography), School of Undergraduate studies, Department of *Cinema, advertising and show business*, announced in SG no. 92/18.11.2022. I propose that his candidacy be voted by the Academic Council and confirmed.

February 28, 2023

Assoc. Prof. Kristiyan Postadzhian