

REVIEW

By Prof. Svetla Yordanova Hristova PhD,

Cinema, Advertising and Showbusiness Department, NBU, professional field 8.4. Theatre and Film Art, of the artistic and creative production for participation in a competition for the academic title Associate Professor in professional field 8.4. Theatre and Film Art, announced by the New Bulgarian University in the State Gazette, issue 1/2014. 14 of 18.02.2022, with candidate Chief Assistant Professor Chavdar Nikolov Gyuzelev, PhD.

The set of materials and documents presented for participation in the competition are in compliance with the requirements of the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria Act and the NBU Staff Development Regulation (Art. 58, (1) and (2)). It is well-known that in the scientific fields related to arts, the artistic or creative achievements of an applicant for the academic position of an Associate Professor can be assessed instead of the candidate's scientific research. In this specific case, a plethora of materials and information has been presented, including references, evidence of assessment and self-assessment, solo exhibitions, participations in joint exhibitions, in Bulgaria, as well as ones abroad, quite impressive with the multifaceted proliferation and the artistic innovativeness of Chavdar Nikolov Guyzelev, PhD.

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

From the reference provided to me, it is clear that Ch. Asst. Prof. Chavdar Gyuzelev, PhD, fully meets the minimum national requirements, as well as those of NBU; there are even much more than the required number of points in the groups of indicators defined by law for the being awarded the academic title Associate Professor in professional field 8.4. *Theatre and film art.*

II. Research (creative) activities and results

The set designer work of Ch. Asst. Prof. Chavdar Gyuzelev, PhD, although it is not included in the extended Habilitation Reference (as, in his words, it has been the focus of his doctoral dissertation) cannot but be mentioned. It will always be part of his creative presence. Scenography is the visual translation of the dramaturgical text, suggested by the director's idea, the stylistic concept of the

performance, as well as the technical and the material resources of the respective theatre. In a nutshell, the set designer fits into the complex artistic organism of the play and it is up to their creative imagination, their taste and erudition, as well as their resourcefulness that the visual impact of the performance depends on.

In the last 22 years, Chavdar Gyuzelev's set designs and costumes have contributed to the success of a number of theatre plays, nominated for the *Ikar Award* (in 2011 and 2015) and the *Askeer Award*. Performances with his set designs have been Bulgaria's representatives in Avignon, Moscow, Jerusalem, Zurich, Budapest, etc.

Since 2017, when he was awarded his Ch. Asst. Professor's title, Chavdar Gyuzelev has created the stage design for four performances: *Liv Stein* (director: Chris Sharkov), *Waiting for Godot* (director: Deyan Donkov), *When the Rain Stopped* (director: Zornitsa-Sofia), and *Zachary the Painter* (director: Zornitsa-Sofia).

During the same period, he has also had a solo exhibition, participated in three joint exhibitions in Bulgaria and three joint exhibitions abroad, he has made three book covers, as well as the graphic design for *Kutura Magazine* and *Christianity and Culture* magazine. The respective publications in refereed academic journals are attached to the application for the Associate Professor academic title competition.

Chavdar Gyuzelev is a prominent artist on the scene of contemporary fine art in Bulgaria. He is famous for the multifaceted manifestations of his talent; he is always ready to offer an original concept stemming from the philosophical nature of his artistic reflection.

In the Habilitation Reference presented for the competition, entitled *Visual Purposes and Features of Graphics, Painting, Photography and Graphic Design*, acquaints us with the theoretical reflections and illustrations underlying some of Chavdar Gyuzelev's artistic creative works, that he has united on the basis not only of his scientific and creative interests, his artistic practice and his teaching experience in NBU, but also with his conviction that "arts are like communicating vessels: you take from the one and pour into the other you can draw inspiration from one field and transform it into another."

Having had extensive experience in different fields of visual art, in his Habilitation Reference, Chavdar Gyuzelev shares his aesthetic credo about the universal laws of composition, applicable in various manifestations of the artistic talent in contemporary visual arts.

The Habilitation Reference encompasses several artistic fields in which the applicant has worked: painting and drawing, photography, and graphic design. Apart from being related to the development of his talent as a visual artist through the years, these art forms are also united through his unquestionable ability for providing theoretical grounds for his creative interests.

What he draws our attention to are three of his realized projects: the anniversary exhibition of paintings entitled *Heads in Free Flight*, 2021, in *Rakursi* art gallery, the photo book *Installations Discovered*, 2018, *Black Flamingo* publishing house, the graphic design of *Kultura* magazine (10 issues per year, 80 pages each), as well as the graphic design of *Christianity and Culture* magazine (10 issues per year 120-130 pages each).

This artistic work is rather impressive not only due to its volume but also due to its multifaceted artistry and creativity, as well as with its high professional level. The habitation reference paper itself is written with profound knowledge about the essence of contemporary visual art and the challenges it faces. The paper is also valuable in terms of its theoretical and pedagogical qualities, which render it worthy of publication as a separate issue.

The interdisciplinary approach, used by Chavdar Gyuzelev, in his Habilitation Reference allows him to combine different points of view of world-famous visual art representatives with analyses and reviews of his own exhibitions (of both fine art and photography), written by prominent Bulgarian contemporary art critics as well as to acquaint us with his own views about the artist and about visual art in the modern digital times.

Chavdar Guyzelev's understanding about the communicative capacity of visual images is combined with his extraordinarily accurate flair for their unique message. Photography, with its technological capacity which offers an unexpected aspect of self-expression, is originally rediscovered by Chavdar Gyuzelev as an opportunity to combine the second plane of the street with a random, spontaneous appearance of a person or an object, rendering an unexpected, yet significant message. What one needs in order to turn photography into a document creating a work of art (as Suzan Sontag puts it), is taste, reflection, knowledge, and ethics. But at the same time, it is exactly the kind photography one needs in order to make a statement about their social values in a unique way. And this is exactly what Chavdar Gyuzelev has achieved through photography.

The belief he shares, namely that creativity in graphic design is a matter of hermeneutics and semantics, as well as his perception of graphic design being a narrative process, connecting the story with the meaning behind visual images, are fundamental from the theoretical point of view. Graphic design and

typography provide opportunity for creativity within predefined parameters, in line with their informational, aesthetic and pragmatic aims. The work on the designs of *Kultura* magazine and *Christianity and Culture*, as described above, introduces us to the specific justification, concerning not only creativity, but also the respect and adherence to the existing aesthetic tradition, the conceptual guidelines of the client, the readers' expectations, etc.

III. Studying and teaching

Ch. Asst. Prof. Chavdar Guyzelev, PhD views his work as a tutor as his duty to teach and train students sharing his professional skills and knowledge which have been subjected to critical reflection and justified in practice.

As a chief assistant professor, Chavdar Guyzelev, PhD, takes active participation in Creating and developing study courses for the Graphic Design bachelor's degree program. He has met the requirements for the respective period, about the number of study classes according to the NBU Regulation on the Workload of Faculty Members and he uses original materials in his teaching (uploaded in the electronic study platform MOODLE). The grade awarded by students for the level of satisfaction with his courses is above 4.00.

IV. Administrative and social activity

From 2017 to 2021, chief assistant professor Chavdar Guyzelev, PhD tutored thirty students, who have successfully defended their diploma theses; he has written forty reviews and he has participated in the panel hearing diploma paper defenses of NBU Graphic Design students.

The Habilitation Reference and the additional materials attached to it are a proof of the creative talent and its various manifestations, convincing us that the candidate applies and exhibits in practice what he teaches in theory in his courses at NBU.

Based on the review of the Habilitation Reference, presented by Chief Assistant Professor Chavdar Guyzelev, PhD, for the purposes of this competition, I can draw the conclusion that the requirements of the Law on awarding the academic title Associate Professor, have been met. It is my contention that the qualities of this artist are unquestionable. I highly appreciate his ability to teach and academically reflect on the contemporary opportunities and the artistic manifestation of the visual image. Therefore, I do give my approval for awarding

Ch. Asst. Prof. Chavdar Guyzelev, PhD, the academic title Associate Professor and I will definitely vote in favor of that at the meeting of the panel.

Date: June 2022

Signature: professor Svetla Hristova, PhD