

REVIEW

on the research, artistic and academic work of

Dr Dinka Zhorova Yakimova-Kasabova

for the competition announced by the

Academy of Music Dance and Fine Arts,

For the academic position

Associate Professor

8.2. Fine Arts,

by Prof Dr Emiliya Konstantinova

In the competition for academic position Associate Professor in Clothing Design, announced by AMDFA, in professional field 8.2 Fine Arts, there is one participant – Dr Dinka Zhorova Yakimova-Kasabova. The competition is for the needs of the Department of Applied Arts at the Faculty of Fine Arts and was announced in State Gazette No 59 of 26.07.2019.

The submitted documentation, with which Assistant Professor Dinka Yakimova-Kasabova applied for the announced competition, complies with the state and academic normative documents for occupying an academic position of **Associate Professor**. The verification for meeting the national minimum requirements exceeds the minimum and contains the necessary supporting material.

The applicant has included author's reference for her individual artistic, creative, pedagogical and research activity of, as well as a list of collective and supporting participation in significant cultural events and exhibitions, workshops and open lectures.

Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Dinka Yakimova-Kasabova has passed through all educational levels – from her secondary education at the National High School of Stage and Film Design, Plovdiv, to a Bachelor and Master's degree in Textile at the National Academy of Art, to a scientific degree “Doctor”, acquired in 2018 with defense doctoral thesis titled *The garment under the influence of space*, at New Bulgarian University.

From 2004 until 2006 she is a teacher at the Professional High School of Applied Arts “Dechko Uzunov”, Kazanlak, and in 2009 she started teaching at Academy of Music Dance and Fine Arts “Prof Asen Diamandiev”, Plovdiv. She has proven long-time experience as teacher. She uses new modern teaching methods that address the individual

needs of each student. And this is an extremely correct approach given that each student has different artistic talent. The insight of upgrading the knowledge and skills is essential to the development of young talents, and she uses it to include seminars and workshops with different topics in the learning process. As an example, I would mention the workshops “Continuity and Contemporary”, I and II, in which she introduced the ancient techniques of Katazome and Block Printing. To ensure full and effective completion of the training, Dr Dinka Kasabova organized appropriate public exhibition of the textile accessories designed by the participating students, using the gallery space of the PLOVEDIV Gallery (22.03.2019). At the same time she creates a bridge between the students and real manufacturers, I refer to VIO MODA – Bulgarian-Austrian company producing sportswear with new technologies, where the students work in practice with fashion designers and participate in a competition.

The traditional participation of her students in projects of the Culture Directorate of Plovdiv Municipality, organized by the Discover and Develop Foundation, is also an opportunity for gaining experience and realization for undergraduate students. As a dedicated teacher, Dr. Dinka Kasabova trains them in the preliminary preparation, the creation of projects and their implementation into garments, which they can present in fashion shows and photo sessions with leading Bulgarian fashion designers.

The use of these innovative approaches in the teaching of the student draws them into the real world of building contemporary values of art – creativity and realization. Because today, more than ever, it is important the artistic product to be properly marketed and valued.

With the developing the fashion world, creating competitive artists is an important element of the training. Therefore, the constant updating of the curricula is a priority for Assistant Professor Dinka Kasabova. In the past year, she has prepared programs for two new disciplines in the majors Clothing Design and Costume and Fashion – Material Studies and History of Accessories. She also updates the programs of Clothing Design, Textile Decoration, Designing and Modelling.

I would add to the evidence of her teaching effectiveness the fact that her graduates build professional career, and last year one of her students won award for best project in Clothing Design.

Her career stands out with for her remarkable artistic involvement and commitment to textile and fashion design.

In 2006 she is co-founder of the group and fashion brand CHOCOLATE, and later on becomes of a part of the Conceptual Design Platform of Ivan Asen 22 Foundation – Sofia, and Stoyna Krastanova Foundation – Plovdiv, through which she participates and actively works in the field of fashion design.

Following the defense of her dissertation thesis, for almost a year her artistic and creative activity is extremely intensive, with a number of solo and group participation, proving her as a significant author and professional fashion and textile designer. An extraordinary combination that is difficult to achieve today.

In her work, Dr. Dinka Kasabova is a researcher-artist. Her studies are in the field of the Slow Fashion, whose philosophy is related to the whole creative process, from the conception and processing to the use of forgotten unique techniques. In creating each of her collections and exhibitions, she uses a research approach that builds on national traditions in different cultures (Bulgarian, African, Japanese), and helps her discover new symbolic meanings. Her individual methods create new products in the field of textiles and fashion. This puts her in the group of the experimenters and innovators in Bulgarian fashion and textile design. Her clothes have a new history that revives timeless values – breathable fabrics, natural dyes, hand-worked fabrics. Part of her philosophy is also the use of natural materials and dyes, as opposed to the synthetics flooding the market.

Last but not least, Dinka Kasabova has creative insight of an artist with individual style. Her skills in using modern technologies help her create her own technique, incorporating digital effects with author's drawings.

The blending of cultural traditions in the design is evident in almost all her works.

Dr Kasabova's research and knowledge of the African textile art and the Bulgarian embroidery, are expressed in the creation of twelve designs, presented in the joint project FUSION FASHION, together with the fashion designer and curator Nelly Miteva. The fashion show was successfully presented at the COLIBANTAN African Art Gallery – Barcelona.

Her study of the combination of different cultures continues with her participation in the project of conceptual design platform Ivan Asen 22. Here they are related to the creation of other designs with textile elements of the Bulgarian folklore, and drawings inspired by the Japanese kimono. (The exhibition was presented at the SKLAD Gallery in Plovdiv on 01.09.2019).

Her individual work, with significant contribution to the development of the Bulgarian costume design, includes the creation of 12 stage costumes for 12 characters for the theatrical production of the director Nadia Asenova *Masters*, based on the play of the same name by Racho Stoyanov, presented at Drama Theatre "Nevena Kokanova", Dupnitsa, which is noticed by the vastly respected ethnologist Assoc. Prof Krasimira Krastanova. She comments that “the excellent knowledge of the traditional clothing and its talented recreation for the purposes of the performance through texture, colour and ornamentation reveal the unique Bulgarian code” (Krastanova, Kr. *The recreation of the Bulgarian spirit in the costume design of Dr. Dinka Kasabova*, specialized Online Magazine for Textiles, Clothing, Leather and Technology, Issue 7/2019, ISSN 2535-0447), and I would add that she does that with a completely new approach – keeping the aesthetics of the folk costume to enhance the set design, and to emphasize the specifics in the image of each dramatic role.

Another important contribution is her solo exhibition *Immersion* presented in Plovdiv on 09.09.2019 within the Night of Museums and Galleries. The result is the fruit of many years of curiosity and research of the water, which began back in 2004. After a series of experiments with different techniques and materials, Dr Dynka Kasabova strives to find the right way to express, as she says “touching of the water”, to arrive at an unexpectedly aesthetically beautiful perspective of the conceptual exhibition the *Immersion*.

The textile installation of objects that recreate garments immersed in water, is an exceptional creative look at familiar outlines of clothing refracted through the vision of the "water mirror". The use of modern technology – photography, author's drawings with digital intervention – is the author's excellent success in recreating her multilayer philosophy about the synergistic relationship between the garment and the water.

The water is a fluid matter, a liquid universe, a form of life with memory, a communicator, a hospitable and infinite cosmos, it offers shelter and protection, it brings change and creation. And when the fabric of the garment (the mirror of the soul) is immersed into the other matter - the water, the viewer is drawn into a “series of situations”. The transformation and the remodelling of the shape and the colour of the garment provokes visual communication, and the viewer can detect connections, emotions, “sentiments addressing the soul”. The exhibition is a successful experiment that has achieved its goals of presenting the author's point of view on a topic that goes beyond a regular exhibition. Considering the fact that textile exhibitions are rarely presented, this exhibition has made a major contribution to the development of the experimental arts. As a complete work of art, it

has enormous potential for unfolding, especially with the messages it sends not only to the individual viewer but also to the world, especially in terms of the timeless values.

The candidate's research activity is evident not only in her exhibitions, costumes and participation in fashion design shows, but also in the realized scientific work after her doctoral degree.

The book *The garment under the influence of space*, has a number of contributions to the field of fashion and art. As a result of extensive research, Dr Dinka Kasabova offers a new perspective on the clothing in relation to the impact of the spatial environment, changing the philosophy behind its creation. She looks for the roots of the designers' innovative and abstract inspirations and solutions, which are a prerequisite for revision of the classification of the different styles. The 80 illustrations described and collected, as well as the presented latest fashion trends in clothing, are a source of information for future studies not only for students, fashion designers, but also for researchers.

For the current competition for Associate Professor in the specialty Clothing Design, Dr Dinka Kasabova also presents three articles published in specialized editions, as follows:

1. *Fashion, Textiles and Technology* published in "Online Magazine for Textiles, Clothing, Leather and Technology" pg. 3-8, issue-2/2019, ISSN2535-0447;
2. *Sustainable Fashion*, AMDFA Yearbook 2019, ISSN 1313-6526;
3. *Ancient Textile Techniques – Shibori*, AMDFA Yearbook 2019 ISSN 1313-6526.

The articles discuss current issues of the contemporary fashion world, such as ecology, sustainability, development, as well as social differences and continuity, textile and fashion industry. They reflect and draw attention to pressing problems and outline some good practices in the modern world that can help solve them. In this regard, Dr Dinka Kasabova has made a scientific contribution, not only because of the research of these problems, but also for the presented solutions, which could be applied in the Bulgarian fashion industry, especially for the smaller and medium-sized enterprises.

Another major contribution is the exploration and the use of the ancient Japanese textile printing techniques Shibori in the creation of contemporary textile design. Their revival is a bridge between tradition and modernity, which returns sustainable values on the one hand to improve creative practices and, on the other, to change the way we live.

Considering all of the above and the submitted complete documentation, meeting the minimum scientific requirements, and my personal impressions from the applicant's overall activity, I give my positive assessment for her research and teaching work, as well as her

creative achievements, and I confidently propose to the esteemed scientific jury to approve Dr Dinka Kasabova for Assistant Professor.

Signature:

Prof Dr Emiliya Konstantinova