

PEER REVIEW

by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Rusen Georgiev Doykov

regarding the submitted materials in connection with the announced competition by Prof. Asen Diamandiev Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts for occupation of the academic position of **“Professor”** under Scientific field 8. “Arts”, Professional field 8.2. “Fine Arts”, specialty “Mural Painting”

Basis for presenting the peer review – participation in the composition of the Scientific Jury, according to Order No РД-27-047 dated 14.03.2024 by the Rector of the Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts.

1. Data about the competition:

In the announced competition by Prof. Asen Diamandiev Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts for occupation of the academic position of **“Professor”** in Mural Painting under Professional field 8.2. “Fine Arts”, Higher education field 8. “Arts”, there is one candidate participating – Assoc. Prof. Dr. Elena Nikolaeva Kantareva-Decheva.

The announcement for the competition was published in State Gazette, Issue 5 dated 16.01.2024.

The procedure is in accordance with the requirements of the state and university normative documents regarding the occupation of academic positions.

2. Biographical data of the candidate:

Elena Nikolaeva Kantareva-Decheva was born in 1963. In 1989, she obtained a Master’s degree in “Conservation and Restoration” from the Nikolai Pavlovich National Academy of Arts in Sofia. In 2022, Elena Kantareva-Decheva successfully defended her doctoral dissertation entitled *“Floor Mosaics from the Bishop’s Basilica of Philippopolis – Technology and Technique, Condition, Problems, Restoration”* to obtain the educational and scientific degree of “Doctor”.

In 1997, Decheva specialized in the “Conservation and Restoration of Paintings and Art Objects” at the Williamstown Art Conservation Center in Massachusetts, USA, and in 2006, she further specialized in “Analytical Techniques in Conservation” there. From 2005 to 2008, she worked as a lecturer, and from 2008 to the present, she has been an Associate Professor at Prof. Asen Diamandiev Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts in Plovdiv. The candidate’s artistic achievements, as well as her participation in numerous collective projects, testify to her being an author with a developed artistic position and undeniable capacity.

3. Characteristics of the candidate’s activities:

The submitted materials for participation in the competition for occupation of the academic position of “Professor” cover the minimum national scientometric criteria and meet all the requirements outlined in the Act for the Development of the Academic Staff

in the Republic of Bulgaria, as well as the Regulations of Prof. Asen Diamandiev Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts.

As a fundamental part of the materials related to the artistic and creative activity of Elena Kantareva-Decheva, the following have been included:

- Design and execution of 386 square meters of murals for St. George the Victorious Church in Byala Cherkva Residential Complex, Pancharevo District, Sofia, from 2011 to 2012;
- Design and execution of murals for St. Nicholas the Wonderworker Church in the Sarafovo Region, Burgas, from 2018 to 2023;
- Design and execution of 24 icons for the iconostasis of St. George the Victorious Church in Byala Cherkva Residential Complex, Pancharevo District, Sofia, from 2008 to 2009.

The works presented above demonstrate a profound knowledge of the classical materials, techniques, methods, stylistic, and compositional solutions for mural and icon painting. In the author's icons, the presence of the author is delicate and in harmony with the style of the icon.

The leadership of creative projects for the conservation, restoration, and exhibition of the floor mosaics from the Bishop's Basilica of Philippopolis, the restoration of mosaics from the Small Basilica, the project involving students and professors in the Fifth Biennial of Church Arts, as well as the annual exhibition of professors and students from the Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts, all testify that the candidate is not only an expert in her field of study but also possesses the ability to impart this experience to colleagues and students, which is of an undeniable value.

As part of the habilitation materials related to the research activities of Elena Kantareva-Decheva, the book *"Floor Mosaics from the Bishop's Basilica of Philippopolis – Technology and Technique, Condition, Problems, Restoration"*, published based on a defended dissertation, has been proposed. From a scientific standpoint, the study is of interest given the perspective in which the problem of uncovering, researching, conserving, preserving, and exhibiting artifacts of such magnitude is approached, both archaeologically, historically, and artistically. The technical and technological investigation and documentation of the mosaic floors during their restoration provide important information about the sequence and method of their laying, the techniques used, the organization of work, and the type and properties of the materials used. The book serves as a document highlighting the role of the discipline of restoration and conservation in the preservation, study, understanding, and popularization of ancient artifacts.

The published articles and reports concerning the artifacts from the Bishop's Basilica, in both Bulgarian and foreign publications, also testify to the role and significance of the restoration and conservation specialty.

Additionally, a total of 14 citations in scientific publications, with and without scientific peer review, serve as evidence of the importance of the candidate's work and its usefulness to the scientific endeavors of other researchers. In this context, awards

such as the Plovdiv Award for the preservation of cultural heritage and the award from the Boris Hristov Foundation for the Development of Artistic Talents are fully deserved.

In conclusion, considering the presented materials, I believe that the candidate meets the national requirements for participation in the competition announced by Prof. Asen Diamandiev Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts. The qualities of both the author and proven educator give me grounds to recommend to the esteemed Scientific Jury to award Dr. Elena Nikolaeva Kantareva-Decheva the academic position of “Professor” under Scientific field “Arts”, Professional field 8.2 “Fine Arts”, specialty “Mural Painting”. I will vote “FOR” with confidence.

Plovdiv
May, 2024

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Rusen Doykov