

PEER REVIEW

by Prof. Dr. Atanas Dimitrov Totlyakov, Doctor of Sciences
on the occasion of competition for the academic position "Associate Professor"
Higher Education field 8. "Arts"
Professional field 8.2. "Fine Arts"
Specialty: "Sculpture"
Fine Arts Department
Faculty of Fine Arts
Prof. Asen Diamandiev Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts – Plovdiv

Data of the competition

Only one candidate – Dr. Rusen Doykov – participates in the announced competition for the academic position "Associate Professor" under Professional field 8.2. "Fine Arts", Higher Education field 8. "Arts", specialty "Sculpture". The competition was announced for the needs of the Fine Arts Department at the Faculty of Fine Arts with Prof. Asen Diamandiev Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts – Plovdiv. The competition announcement was published in State Gazette, Issue 52/05.07.2022, published on the website of Prof. Asen Diamandiev Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts – Plovdiv on 05.07.2022.

The first meeting of the Scientific Jury was held on 16.09.2022. The normative prescriptions for present and absent participation in the meeting were observed. The Chairman, reviewers and members of the jury were selected. According to the current regulations, the date for the final meeting was set. No violations were committed during the procedure.

The candidate meets the minimum national requirements for the acquisition of the academic position "Associate Professor" by submitting the relevant supporting materials.

Data of the candidate

Rusen Doykov was born on 14.03.1974 in the City of Asenovgrad. He graduated in Sculpture at the National Academy of Arts in Sofia in 2005 with a Master's degree in the studio of Prof. Krum Damyanov. In 2009, he defended his doctoral dissertation on the topic: "*Some Aspects of the Perception of Time in Sculpture*", with supervisor Assoc. Prof. Hristo Dobarov.

The candidate has extensive teaching experience. He worked as a sculpture teacher at the Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts, at Paisii Hilendarski Plovdiv University, and at Tsanko Lavrenov National Art High School in Plovdiv.

Rusen Doykov is an active contemporary artist. His works have been awarded prizes at prestigious national exhibitions, including the prize for contemporary sculpture in the Allianz – Bulgaria Regional Competition in 2016, held in the City of Plovdiv. His last solo exhibition, realized within the Plovdiv National Autumn Exhibitions 2022, with curator Prof. Dr. Galina Lardeva, made a strong impression. The works were

exhibited in the courtyard of the Mexican Art Permanent Exhibition at the Plovdiv City Art Gallery.

Rusen Doykov developed his talent in other fields of knowledge and arts. In 2021, Doykov published a book based on a defended dissertation for the award of the educational and scientific degree “Doctor”: *“Time and Sculpture – Aspects of Perception”*, Plovdiv 2021, Studio 18 Publishing House, ISBN 978-6197249-76-7. This publication convincingly placed the candidate among the leading scholars of contemporary aspects of sculpture discussed in terms of the concept of time. Another manifestation of Rusen Doykov’s creative invention takes place in poetry. Therein, we can find metaphors borrowed from the material nature of the sculpture. In *“Philosophy is the Dissected Frog of Life”* Doykov says:

“The pinched nerve between the surgical steel of reason and the zinc plate of reality...”

(Doykov, R., *“Philosophy is the Dissected Frog of Life”*, Enough Nostalgia, Torch, 2022)

The poetic expression gives us a synthesized formulation of the candidate’s intention. The “pinched nerve” is the sensory tension that refers to the interpretation of the characteristic material for the construction of Doykov’s sculptural works. The steel, the plate, the moves of the mind calculating geometric forms, and the physical and mechanical effort of intervention, are accumulated by the powerful creative intuition in order to manifest in reality as concrete minimalist sculptures. All this boils down to a clear philosophical thought, clearing out the unnecessary in a “surgical” way.

The given examples reveal the candidate as a rich creative person, deployed in various directions, but able to keep the unity of his individual creative energy.

Description of scientific works and contributions

The candidate presents two solo exhibitions, as artistic performances equivalent to a habilitation work.

1. Solo sculpture exhibition, A Cube Contemporary Gallery, Sofia, 9 Lyuben Karavelov, 18.06.2019/17.07.2019;

2. Solo sculpture exhibition, Kris Gallery, Asenovgrad, 5 Saedinenie St., 16.03.2022/31.03.2022.

The works of Rusen Doykov can be defined as sculptural poetics. A clear geometry is laid down therein, brought out in an original way, through juxtapositions between meticulously processed smooth surfaces. Shapes, arcs, and angles unfold in a three-dimensional space, as if the material for the creation of the work was a sheet of colored paper, not steel. This treatment of solid matter activates the deeply encoded memories of childhood in the viewer’s memory. Memories of a casual and sincere game of association involving simple tools and junk papers. Perhaps, these are the primal levels of connecting with the world through powerful imagination and unlimited fantasy, generated by the individual’s consciousness, without the need for further narrative or concrete imagery. A second look at Doykov’s works refers us to the industrial forms of our current everyday life. Association for “pure sound” of material things leading to

“complete loss of all meaning”. In the works of Rusen Doykov, a suppressed emotion shines through, guided by the author’s mind and the analytical rules that he imposes on the processing of the steel sheets. Doykov creates three-dimensional structures that invite the viewer’s gaze to penetrate into an inner space separated by the work. The viewer is captivated by the desire to look at the precision of the lines connecting the individual segments. To change the viewing angle in order to reveal a new associative moment, a new play of light, and a new harmonious relationship between the parts of the observed object. The use of color further increases the degree of impact.

The processing of the details is particularly impressive. It is there that a new plan of the works is revealed – sensuously corporeal. I can define Rusen Doykov’s sculptures as a definite physical phenomenon that does not rely on imitation or the search for likeness. In order to clarify what has been said, I refer to Aristotle’s poetics: “If, however, one does not know from what was previously depicted, the pleasure comes not from the resemblance, but from the workmanship, the color, or some other similar reason”. We can categorically say that the works of Doykov are sensuously appealing with their precise craftsmanship and richness of the color value embodied in the shape. Without any doubt, the recipient of these works takes pleasure in coming into contact with them. But I would like to draw the attention of the members of the honorable Scientific Jury to another, more subtle reason, which appears to be fundamental from the point of view of my analysis. The spatial dimensions of Doykov’s sculptures are harmonized with the biological body scheme of a person. They can be perceived by touch, even without the involvement of sight. This possible interpretation is enhanced by direct contact with the works. If, instead of sight, we take the touch of the hand to the smooth edges of the metal plates as the starting point of perception, we get a new aspect of the perception of Doykov’s works. Tracing the lateral edges of the sculptures with the tips of the fingers immerses the recipient of the said works in a new sensory-aesthetic plane. At the same time, the analogy with the touch of everyday design works, for example details of a car, leads to a familiar aesthetic feeling that is transformed in a new, unusual way. Planes, arcs and angles, folds, sharp and rounded edges, become key means of expression. A kind of choreographic recording of a dance through which the hands of the individual perceiving the work can merge with the actions and the thought of Rusen Doykov. Purity of sight and purity of touch, these are, it seems to me, the most essential characteristics of the candidate’s works. Purity of the sculptural language, through which Doykov reminds us of Herder’s views, and that the eye itself becomes a hand, and the hand a visual organ.

It can be summarized that the works of Rusen Doykov are a solid contribution to contemporary Bulgarian culture and art. They contribute to the establishment of a meaningful support for individual, intra-world, and artistic actions, opposed to the sensory noise that encompasses the present. In a unique way, the oldest and deeply embedded in the culture creative codes are reactivated – poetry of the 21st century. The tendency to counteract the ocean of aggressive images, shapes, sounds, and light effects, which through the minimalist work of Rusen Doykov, lose their primary position and are transformed into a background, is convincingly developed. It is on this “second plan”

that the significant sculptures of the candidate stand out and become visible, becoming the center of the aesthetic attention of the modern art connoisseur.

CONCLUSION

I offer to the members of the honorable Scientific Jury my affirmative assessment of the candidacy of Dr. Rusen Doykov in the competition for occupation of the academic position "Associate Professor" under Higher education field 8. "Arts", Professional field 8.2. "Fine Arts", specialty: "Sculpture", Fine Arts Department, Faculty of Fine Arts at Prof. Asen Diamandiev Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts – Plovdiv.

25.10.2022

Assoc. Prof. Atanas Totlyakov, Doctor of Sciences