

PEER REVIEW

in connection with a competition for occupation of the academic position “Associate Professor” under Professional field 8.2. “Fine Arts”, specialty “Sculpture”, for the needs of the Fine Arts Department, Faculty of Fine Arts at Prof. Asen Diamandiev Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts – Plovdiv

I. Data of the competition

The competition for the needs of the of Fine Arts Department at the Faculty of Fine Arts of Prof. Asen Diamandiev Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts – Plovdiv, was announced in State Gazette on 05.07.2022. A scientific jury was appointed to conduct the competition by Order No ПД-27-066/05.09.2022 of the Rector of the Academy, as well as on the basis of the decision of the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Fine Arts from the attached Protocol No 1 dated 05.09.2022. Documents for participation in the competition were submitted by only one candidate: Dr. Rusen Doykov. The submitted documents correspond to the requirements and regulations of the Act for the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, as well as of the internal rules of the Academy. All terms and regulations of the procedure have been observed, and no violations have been identified.

II. Data of the candidate

Dr. Rusen Doykov graduated in Sculpture at the National Academy of Arts – Sofia in 2003. He has been a long-time teacher of Sculpture at Tsanko Lavrenov National Art High School in Plovdiv, as well as a part-time lecturer at Prof. Asen Diamandiev Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts. In 2011, he defended his doctorate on the topic “*Some Aspects of the Perception of Time in Sculpture*”.

Rusen Doykov is an author and participant in a number of art exhibitions, among which stand out his solo participations in A Cube Contemporary Gallery in Sofia (2019), and his exhibition in Kris Gallery in Asenovgrad (2022). Among the collective appearances of the author, it is worth noting his participation in the Shared Space Project – Plovdiv National Autumn Exhibitions 2022, as well as in the biennial for contemporary Bulgarian art Friends of the Sea in Burgas (2020 and 2022).

III. Description of the scientific and creative activity of the candidate

III. 1. The candidate’s scientific work is centered around his doctoral dissertation on time perceptions in sculpture and the subsequent book (2021) created on the basis of the dissertation. For the purposes of presentation, it is necessary to clarify that this in-depth interdisciplinary work is about searching for the dimensions of time in the immediate experience of the viewer when observing sculptural works. At its core, the main position of the book revolves around the observation that “*the impression of*

movement is due to the increased perceptual time required to superimpose the individual "frames" in the viewer's mind, where complex cognitive processes take place, carried out with the help of memory representations from past visual experience, and not of the newly formed as a result of the compilation form in itself" (p. 10). In order to develop and defend this basic position, Dr. Doykov goes through different concepts of time, belonging to different scientific systems and validated in different scientific and popular science discourses. At the same time, the author of the work looks for traces of a gradually developing history of art, which at every moment imposes a new and accordingly different understanding of time.

Some notes, suggestions for corrections, and additions could be made to the book such as that John McTaggart does not speak of "A- and B-theories of time", but of A-, B- and C-rows or series, which when combining selected viewpoints, make up different premises, i.e. represent only possible logical approaches on the basis of which assumptions can be made. It is also possible to indicate scientific works with a higher degree of relevance to the sculptural medium. It is paradoxical, for example, that in the search for the problems of time, Rusen Doykov goes to black holes, but refuses to go through Lessing's old but so significant work "Laocoon: An Essay on the Limits of Painting and Poetry" – a work that in the middle of the 18th century marked foundational medial dimensions of the spatiotemporal continuum and their aesthetic functions: relationships between objects side by side in space versus actions one after the other in time.

Nevertheless, in the third and fourth chapters (titled respectively "Plastic Solutions for Conveying Time and Movement in Sculpture" and "Interpretation of Time in Hypersculpture"), the author shows a good sense of the essence of the sculptural medium and brings out suitable interpretations, by connecting them with appropriate secondary literature. A significant part of the sample analyzes and references in these sections create a significant contribution, which at the same time appropriately links the candidate's scientific pursuits with his artistic creativity and teaching practice.

III. 2. In his creative performances, Rusen Doykov testifies in a particularly interesting way his scientific search for temporal perceptions in sculpture. At first glance, his works from the exhibitions claimed in the scientometric table in his application develop a classical approach to the three-dimensional. The rejection of stylization of the distinct geometric shapes, emphasized in their bright and uniform coloring, carry a suggestion of classicist rigor. At the same time, their possible appearance in an urban environment recalls the problems of time perception discussed in the second half of the book "*Time and Sculpture – Aspects of Perception*": the works obtain their dynamic and multiple meanings through the immediate impact of time on their surrounding, passing, approaching, etc. These spatial platforms and truncated planes are curious in their minimalist elegance and in their detailed attention to every single refraction, gathering or curvature of a plane or surface. But they also seem to be designed for the purpose of a virtually inexhaustible superimposition of different images of refraction, of the joining and splitting of planes, and of the transformation of angles and perspectives. This is the

meaning and potential of the shaping of different spaces: an artistic gesture of sheltering the gaze, but also of its delicate direction, preparation, and remaking.

For his participation in exhibitions, Rusen Doykov has received positive reviews in the specialized media (one of them – the art critic Natasha Noeva’s article in the Bulletin of the Union of Bulgarian Artists – was included in the scientometric table).

Teaching work effectively and closely connects the areas of professional interest of the candidate. Particularly characteristic examples in this regard are two workshop-appearances, which are indicative even by their titles: “Geometry as a Form-Forming Principle in Sculpture” (in March of this year at the Blue School with Prof. Asen Diamandiev Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts – Plovdiv) and “Abstract Sculpture” (in April of this year at Paisii Hilendarski Plovdiv University).

The recognition of Dr. Doykov in the creative guild is evident from the award of Allianz-Bulgaria (Plovdiv City Art Gallery and the Society of Plovdiv Artists), awarded in the Sculpture section for the work “Variations Cube”. In 2020, the candidate was nominated in the Sculpture category at the biennial for contemporary Bulgarian art “Friends of the Sea” in the City of Burgas.

IV. Scientific and creative contributions to the candidate’s activity

– The main part of Rusen Doykov’s scientific contributions relate to the development of his concept of space-time continuum in the sensory perceptions of modern sculpture and especially through examples of minimalism. Contributing to the Bulgarian perceptual context is the introduction of relevant concepts such as “hypersculpture” and especially “hypervision” (Nathaniel A. Friedman).

– The creative performances of Rusen Doykov as a sculptor are a contributing phenomenon in contemporary Bulgarian art because of the thoroughly thought-out geometric reduction of form and the combining complementarity between abstraction and utilitarianism. Along with this, significant and contributing in his author’s approach is the experimentation with temporal structures in relation to immediate viewer perception.

– Rusen Doykov’s exhibition concepts are distinguished by the paradoxical combination between the minimalism of the form and a deep reflection thereon. In this way, they unfold the possibilities of a spatial semiosis and create a contribution to the possibilities of presenting sculpture in the Bulgarian artistic life

– An essential contribution in the teaching work of Dr. Doykov is the prompting of students to reflect on the medium of sculpture. This impulse extends both beyond strict aesthetic models and established theoretical constructs. By including the individual reflection of each perceiver (and especially the artist as a perceiver) in the meanings and scope of the work of art, Rusen Doykov creates such an attitude towards the creative process, which is far from inherent in art education in our country. And this approach is even more beneficial in the field of sculpture.

Conclusion. Based on the high achievements of Dr. Rusen Georgiev Doykov – on his scientific, creative and teaching potential, as well as on the basis of his undoubted contributions to contemporary Bulgarian sculpture, I propose to the respected Scientific Jury to award him the academic position of “Associate Professor” under Professional field 8.2. “Fine Arts” and I strongly vote “FOR”.

25.10.2022

Prof. Dr. Galina Lardeva