

OPINION

by Prof Martina Marinova Karaivanova-Avramova
VTU, Faculty of Fine Arts
regarding the procedure for occupying the academic position "Associate Professor"

General information about the announced competition:

Field of Higher Education: **8. Arts**

Professional field: **8.2. Fine Arts**

Scientific specialty: **Art studies and visual arts - Mural painting**

Faculty: **Fine Arts, AMDFA "Prof Asen Diamandiev", Plovdiv**

Department: **Fine Arts**

The competition was announced in: **SG no. 63 of 25.07.2023**

1. Information about the competition: The competition for the academic position "Associate Professor" (Mural Painting) has been announced for the needs of the Department of Fine Arts, AMDFA "Prof Asen Diamandiev", Plovdiv. Only one candidate has submitted documents – **Stefka Ilieva Popova, PhD**. Rector's order No RD-27-121 of 21.09.2023 allows her admission to participate in the competition; by Rector's order, a scientific jury has also been appointed (first meeting on 05.10.2023), in which I was designated as its external member. The documentation regarding the competition presented to me for OPINION is complete and meets the relevant requirements, Popova also covers the requirements for the normative scientometric data necessary for NACID.

2. Information about the candidate: Stefka Ilieva Popova was born on 4 July 1984 in the city of Plovdiv. Education: secondary education at St. St. Cyril and Methodius School - Plovdiv, higher education at AMDFA "Prof Asen Diamandiev" - Plovdiv, Master's degree in Church Painting. In 2020, she defended her doctoral dissertation on the topic *Creation of Creative Models for Decoration of a Modern Temple in the Education of Students*.

3. Artistic-creative contributions: The artistic-creative and scientific work of the candidate includes solo exhibitions, participation in creative teams of students and teachers – designing and painting murals, icon exhibitions and publications related to church painting, old icon painting techniques, new artistic practices etc. Here is the place to emphasize a very important element of modern teaching, which I consider Popova's contribution – the active involvement of students studying in the specialty Church Painting through the creation of various creative models, adequately applicable to such specific training. Popova is aware that the design and the realization of murals in newly built Orthodox churches are the result of a group conceptual project. Thus, through research, analysis, observation, she "protects" her contribution, namely: the need for change in iconography education is theoretically justified. The creative model, created on the basis of new teaching methods and on the basis of real architectural objects, works successfully.

Fully following the declared direction of creative and scientific interests (mural painting, teaching methodology, modern trends in monumental art, iconography), the candidate logically presents

another important contribution, in which she brings out the characteristic features of traditional church architecture, of modern innovations in the temple and analyzes problems of modern mural decoration against the background of Byzantine wall painting.

Another important contribution of Stefka Popova's is the application of the results of her scientific research in the creation of curricula, leading lectures and exercises, which strengthens her role in the training of young professionals through the continuity so necessary for the specialty. But it is by no means limited to the lecture courses. Her activity is diverse and successfully includes the two main directions in which she works – teaching methodology (teaching, creation of author's materials, participation in scientific forums, workshops, etc.) and professional iconographic training (preparation of projects and murals, design and painting of icons, research and recovery of icons, individual events and team work). In the dynamics of our time, Popova aptly analyzes that training should be structured in a way that introduces the students to the theory on the one hand, and provokes them on the other. And more – integrated training with other related disciplines is the way to implement a complete learning process, producing a practical effect. The created pedagogical model provides better opportunities and conditions for its implementation in a real architectural environment. Thus the interest is stimulated, students' attention and participation are activated, and a favorable environment for creativity is created.

4. Teaching work

In the period 2010 - 2016, she worked as the secretary of the Department of Applied Arts, and later held the academic position "Assistant" in the Department of Fine Arts, where she still teaches the disciplines Icon Painting, Iconography, Wall Painting, Composition, Drawing, as she prepares and updates their programs. She has participated with reports in various scientific conferences and has published articles in scientific collections.

5. Conclusion:

The presented habilitation work and the materials to it speak of precision and detailed decoding of the processes in the creative team and, together with their practical application, shape its contributing nature and are the subject of its relevance.

Considering everything that has been said so far, I **propose to the honorable scientific jury that assistant Dr Stefka Ilieva Popova, PhD be awarded the academic position of "Associate Professor"**.

06.11.2023

Veliko Tarnovo

Prof Martina Karaivanova-Avramova, PhD