

OPINION

of Prof Daniela Todorova Markova, Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski"
member of the scientific jury for awarding the educational and scientific degree "**Doctor**" of
Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts "Prof Asen Diamandiev", Plovdiv,
Faculty of Fine Arts, Department of Fine Arts

In field of higher education 8. Arts

Professional field: 8.2. Art

Doctoral program: Applied, Fine Arts and Design

Topic of the dissertation: **Floor mosaics from the Bishop's Basilica of Philippopolis – technology and technique, condition, problems, restoration**

author of the dissertation: **Assoc. Prof Elena Nikolaeva Kantareva-Decheva**

Academic supervisor **Prof Galina Lardeva-Minkova**

1. General presentation of the procedure

By Order № RD – 27–089 of 01.12.2021, pursuant to Art. 31, para. 1 of the regulations for the implementation of the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria Act (DASRBA) and Resolution of the Faculty Council at the Faculty of Fine Arts (Minutes № 11/26.11.2021), I have been appointed as an external member of the scientific jury for the defense of the dissertation of Assoc. Prof Elena Kantareva-Decheva. The presented materials on electronic media contain a dissertation, an author's abstract, a list of publications, as well as the publications themselves, biographical data and artistic career.

The dissertation works meets the requirements for DASRBA and the Regulations to it. The presented materials correspond to the scientometric indicators according to art. 2b, para. 2 and 3 of DASRBA and respectively under Art. 24, para. 1 of the Regulations for its application (for the educational and scientific degree "Doctor") and exceed them.

2. Presentation and evaluation of the dissertation, abstract and publications

The artistic career of Assoc. Prof E. Kantareva is impressive. A university lecturer in technology and technique of painting; icon painting, mural painting, composition, color study, conservation and restoration, at the same time an active artist in the field of church arts, author and restorer of murals, icons, mosaics. She has worked on numerous conservation and restoration projects; the creation of icons and murals is combined with participation in exhibitions, scientific conferences and symposiums, publications.

The contribution of E. Kantareva-Decheva to the preservation of the cultural heritage in the city is undisputed. She is the head of the restoration of the Bishop's Basilica of Philippopolis, whose research and restoration became a significant part of her professional career and a cause – the Basilica

is the subject of her graduation thesis as a student restorer, years later she leads the restoration team which unites the efforts of various specialists – architects, restorers, archaeologists and builders. The experience gained over the years finds logical expression in the dissertation. This experience allows her to examine the floor mosaics in depth as a dedicated scientist - every aspect of the problem is highlighted - technology and technique of creation and construction, stylistic features and parallels, condition, problems, restoration. One of the qualities of the work is that the problem is discussed in its entirety, as the study is conducted during the design, conservation and restoration of the floor mosaics over a long period of time, as work on a large-scale project.

In addition to practical experience and theoretical knowledge that allow the doctoral candidate to create a meaningful text, without anything superfluous in it, the dissertation is developed in compliance with all the requirements for this type of research.

The dissertation, consisting of 176 pages of text, is well structured in an introduction, five-chapter presentation, conclusion, contributions, list of publications and bibliography. The text is supported by illustrative materials – 130 color and black and white illustrations. The bibliography consists of 83 titles, in Bulgarian and foreign languages.

The methods of scientific research are effectively used, logically following the object and the subject of research - analysis of written sources, stratigraphic and technical-technological research, historical method, comparative, stylistic and iconographic analysis; experimental-analytical method. The research tools fully meet the objectives of the dissertation. It demonstrates skills for analytical study of the problem, for analysis of empirical data and reasoned derivation of the respective conclusions.

The structure of the dissertation is well designed, the parameters of the study are well defined, accurate and clear. The text itself is readable, written with erudition, but also "with heart". We witness the construction of the mosaics by the ancient masters, their condition after years of poor preservation and their restoration – “stone by stone”.

The publications presented in connection with the dissertation are in line with the discussed problems.

The abstract is consistent with the requirements and the purpose of this type of research and reflects fully and accurately the content of the dissertation.

3. Scientific contributions

The dissertation is a study of the technology and technique of construction of the mosaics and the methods for their restoration, used in Bulgaria over the past 50 years. While there are number of publications with analyzes of styles, schools and compositional patterns in the laying of mosaic, the dissertation focuses on the study of the technology and technique of mosaic construction, which is a relevant and insufficiently discussed problem.

I accept the noted scientific contributions. The work has significant contribution in the application of modern analytical techniques and methodology for restoration – laboratory analysis of the used materials, analysis using high-tech equipment (x-ray diffraction analysis, scanning electron microscope, x-ray spectroscopy, polarization microscopy, etc.). The analysis of the results of the study allow more accurate dating and periodization of the mosaics, as well as to determine the appropriate methodology for their conservation, restoration and exhibition. The modern high-tech analyzes contribute to the objectivity of the data, a basic requirement for any scientific work.

The contribution of the dissertation is also significant with regard to the discussed problems related to the cultural and historical heritage and the outdated practices and methods for restoration and conservation. The work will undoubtedly benefit the better understanding of effective technologies, reviewed and improved by the global international professional community, so as to avoid wrong and damaging treatment, dismantling, separation from the site or museum preservation of the mosaic art. In this way, professional standards in restoration and conservation will be established.

Conclusion

Considering the qualities of the dissertation with its theoretical and practical contributions, the demonstrated skills for scientific research, erudition and professional achievements in the field of conservation and restoration of **Assoc. Prof Elena Nikolaeva Kantareva-Decheva, I confidently give my positive assessment and propose that she be awarded the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in the field of higher education 8. Arts, professional field 8.2. Fine Arts, Doctoral Program Applied, Fine Arts and Design.**

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Prof. Daniela Markova, PhD

04.01.2022