

OPINION

by Assoc. Prof Nikola Lautliev, PhD on dissertation thesis
Time and Transformation in Photography
by Mariana Kamburova
for obtaining educational and scientific degree Doctor
Scientific adviser: Assoc. Prof Boris Minkov, PhD

Considering the requirements for this opinion, not to exceed 3 pages, it cannot evaluate and analyze the whole dissertation. The focus is on the innovative and essential in terms of contribution parts of the text.

The candidate synthesizes the scientific scope and the problem that will be studied in the dissertation. This is very important because it fixes the boundaries of the study, namely "This dissertation is aimed entirely at exploring the notions of time in photography and the transformation of objects in space that are subject to time through the means of expression of photography."

In order to show that she has in-depth knowledge of important theoretical and practical artistic issues, she complements and ranks them in order of importance (p. 7). "The subject of this dissertation are the concepts of time as a mathematical quantity for the exposure of the photographic image and its impact on the image as a prerequisite for the emergence of artistic photographic images". And prudently, to distinguish the two completely independent theoretical and philosophical aspects of the subject, she adds, "The study will also organize and systematize photographic theories that examine and analyze time, space, memory, and related photographic transformations of the image". Here, two more concepts appear unprovoked - space and memory, which will further expand the subsequent analyzes.

The text is structured around the two genetically set and eternal questions, as long as the history of the invention is long enough - Craft or Art¹ and Document or Imagination.

In order to facilitate the following of the logic of the text, in summary the abovementioned is as follows:

1. **History** in Chapter one "Science in the Capture of Photographic Time"
2. **Theory** in Chapter two "Photographic Theories" and
3. **Artistic practices** in Chapter three "Photographic Interpretations of Time"

At the very beginning of the text, on line 8, the author presents her first example, a reproduction of a photograph of Daguerre, which she claims presents the significance of the problem as "an essential

¹ The book *Introduction to Bulgarian Contemporary Art (1982-2015)* was published in 2018. It is based on a series of lectures given by Vessela Nozharova in Plovdiv and Sofia within the educational platform of the same name. presented the history and peculiarities of Bulgarian contemporary art, the most important participants, artists, institutions and galleries. The book shows a complete picture of the art scene in Bulgaria. /In this book of 300 pages photography is not present as a visual art, except as reproductions of works and actions. <https://m.helikon.bg/213618-Въведение-в-българския-съвременен-изкуство-1982-2015.html>

focus of research on the nature of the photographic image”. Daguerre photographed the Boulevard du Temple from his studio with exposure time between 10 and 15 minutes. Kamburova writes, “In it, the long exposure time was crucial to the content of the photograph, as the multitude of people is missing”. The validity of this example is very well chosen for her thesis. In early 1838, daguerreotype was not possible at faster speed, and the viewers were hardly surprised by the absence of people and transportation. The significance that the author claims is relative to the aesthetic essence of the new invention. It was declared a mirror image and a literal fixation of reality, but it turned out, from the very beginning, that this was not true. Photography changes and transforms reality because of its technological imperfections in the pioneering years and because of its super intelligence and manipulateness in the 21st century. And that is why in the last decades of the 21st century, the crisis of the document occurred due to the change in the nature of the medium.

The literary review on the topic begins in the chapter “Spheres and state of previous researches” where the books of world-famous historians Rosenblum, Newhall, Friso are discussed. She emphasizes the contribution to the history and modernity of photography of names such as Paul Strand, Alfred Stieglitz, Edward Weston, Sander, etc., to reach the historically the 20-century artists such as Arbus, Sherman, Fontcuberta, etc., in both theoretical and artistic aspect.

The main critical source on the topic of the dissertation is the collection of essays *Time and Photography*. This collection is a good choice, because as a relatively new – 2008 university edition it is in line with the topic. Kamburova focuses on the texts of Joanna Lowry, who views "modern times" in the context of a series of photographs. Quite aptly in the following chapters she uses the conclusions that photography can be considered as a technology that is able to create an image with certain characteristics, as this characteristic appearance of the image is born from the camera shutter and time.

An interesting point of view about time is the view of Susana Martin, who is working on a long-term project related to the release of a tourist photo album, uniting the past and present of Portugal. She offers quite successfully a scheme of different time levels of photographic narrative in the book. Later, in Chapter 3.1 "Transforming Time in Photographs - Place and Role of Temporal Transformations in “found photography”, Kamburova thoroughly explores the problems of working with found photography and photo album, using Martin's categories and conclusions, with which she offers a modern look to these popular in the last decade forms of photographic interpretation.

The doctoral candidate skillfully uses the statements and the authorial examples of the relationship between photography and time as diverse: that time can be directly represented in

the image, it can be its theme and philosophical horizon, but it can also be the global framework in which photographic practices develop and change over time.

Her ambition is to bring together the findings on the various aspects of time in photography, as well as time in photography and to illustrate them with examples ranging from the first photographic images to the latest cross-media uses of photography in and outside art.

An overview of books and articles can be found in Chapter 2.3 "Theoretical ideas about time in photography", which lists publications and articles by Pondopulo, Delluc, Bazin, Benjamin and others. They are not a bibliographic listing, but present an analytical view of the problem, which is presented briefly and clearly. The literature review shows key research recognized as artistic in the studied field. The candidate's attention to this essential part of the dissertation deserves to be noted as positive.

I would suggest to the author in the next editions of the text to supplement the critical sources with Bulgarian authors, of which I would point out the articles of Dr. Katerina Gadzheva, BAS, dissertations of Assoc. Prof Antoan Bozhinov Sofia University "Subjective Documentary in Bulgarian Photography 1970 - 1991", Dr. Ivan Kyuranov National Academy of Arts The Role of Photography in the Formation of Innovative Trends in Contemporary Bulgarian Art (1989-2010), the monograph of Prof Galina Lardeva "The Art of Transition: The Problem of Unconventional Art in Bulgaria", as well as Assoc. Prof. Lilyana Karadjova, NBU "Psychological Concepts of Imagination in Art and Photography in the XX and XXI Century".

In the section "Science in the capture of photographic time", in 47 pages the author reviews the historical knowledge and facts related to the development of technology and technical devices. This was done in great detail for a long period of time 1838 - 1936. Interesting moments are the highlights of Daguerre's work as a partner of Niepce and an artist in the Diaporama (slideshow). A prerequisite for this is not only his photographic research, but the nature of the performances in the Diorama, in which the effect was to resemble the seasons and natural conditions. Here Kamburova pays more attention, which is useful from the point of view of the insufficiently known function of the diorama and the challenges of Daguerre to mechanize the processes for making the sets.

The other interesting section developed by Kamburova is what she calls "Ghost Photography". It reassembles in a new factual order known and unknown historical facts necessary for photography, obtain as a result of coincidences, most often temporal discrepancies of idea and realization of the photos. As well as experimental trials and achievements of authors such as Opalka, Nixon, Wang and others. Again after the example with "Faces of Plovdiv", she aptly cites part of the work of Sonya Stankova as an example from the Bulgarian practice with

the exhibition "Mothers and Daughters". Here it can be noted that the Bulgarian authors are not sufficiently present in the evidence, names such as Anton Chemishanov, Bogdanov - Misirkov, Nadezhda Oleg Lyahova, Takor Kurdyan, Milan Hristev, Iglena Ruseva and others.

Mariana Kamburova's academic commitment as a lecturer in the History of Photography for more than ten years has influenced the structuring of the dissertation and a certain overexposure of historical facts.

The text is easy to read, it is clear, there is a logical and meaningful connection between the parts. The volume of the dissertation is in accordance with the accepted for the respective field - over 130 pages for the educational and scientific degree "Doctor".

It is not clear why the problems of time and transformation in digital photography, electronic processing and storage of photography, social communication networks such as Facebook, Instagram and social media as an expression of modernity, are not discussed in sufficient detail, probably due to methodological and coordination issues.

All the above gives me reason to believe that the presented dissertation work, fully complies, in both form and content, with the professional requirements, the criteria of Law on the Development of the Academic Staff, the rules for its application and the rules of AMDFA.

Based on this, I strongly recommend to the esteemed Scientific Jury to award the doctoral candidate Mariana Kamburova the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in the professional field 8.2. Fine Arts, "Applied, Fine Arts and Design".

At the meeting of the scientific jury, I will vote "In favor".

Assoc. Prof Nikola Lautliev

Plovdiv, 4 January 2022