

# OPINION

by Prof Marina Teofilova Teofilova, PhD

Veliko Tarnovo University "St. St. Cyril and Methodius"

of a dissertation for awarding the educational and scientific degree "doctor"

Professional field 1.3 Teaching Pedagogy on....

Doctoral program: Methodology of Fine Arts Education

with author: Vanya Milkova Godzhelova,

title: **DEPICTING EMOTIONAL CHARACTERISTICS IN PORTRAIT PAINTING BY STUDENTS IN ART SCHOOLS**

Academic supervisor: Prof Daniela Todorova Markova, PhD

## **1. General presentation of the procedure and the materials received for review**

By order of the Rector of AMDFA "Prof Asen Diamandiev" No RD-27-165 of 04.12.2023 the members of a scientific jury have been appointed to conduct a procedure for the defense of dissertation work authored by Vanya Milkova Godzhelova on the topic *Depicting emotional characteristics in portrait painting by students in art schools*. The procedure is for the acquisition of an educational and scientific degree "doctor" in the field of higher education 1. Pedagogical sciences, professional field 1.3. Pedagogy of Fine Arts Education. The author of the dissertation is Vanya Godzhelova - a full-time doctoral student in the doctoral program Methodology of Fine Art Education, at the Department of Fine Arts, Faculty of Fine Arts, AMDFA "Prof Asen Diamandiev". The candidate Vanya Godzhelova has submitted the necessary documents related to the procedure for the defense of the dissertation work, which comply with the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria Act and the Regulations of the relevant educational institution. The procedure has been followed, I have no objections to the presented documents and materials.

## **2. Brief biographical information about the candidate**

In 2015 Vanya Godzhelova acquires Bachelor's degree in Pedagogy of Fine Art Education – Painting, at AMDFA "Prof Asen Diamandiev", Plovdiv. In 2017, she receives a Master's degree in the same specialty. As a natural continuation of her development in the field, in 2019 she continues her studies in doctoral program Methodology of Fine Art Education at AMDFA "Prof Asen Diamandiev", Plovdiv.

The creative biography of the doctoral candidate testifies to her lasting interest in the field of modern forms in art and painting. Here I must emphasize the fact that Vanya Godzhelova is an author with diverse and contemporary interests, who organically combines the creation of art and theoretical reflection, the creative impulses of her artistic nature and the searches of the researcher, so valuable for the modern artist, especially when tempted by the teaching of art. This unity is evidenced by the numerous participations of Vanya Godzhelova in exhibitions and research forums related to the nature

of her research.

Solo exhibitions: *Colour*, Orchid Art Centre, Karlovo (2013); *Coexistence*, Kosmos Cinema, Plovdiv (2014); *Placebo*, National Autumn Exhibitions Plovdiv (2017), Balabanova House, Plovdiv; Painting exhibition, Aspect Gallery, Plovdiv (2018); Painting exhibition, Aspect Gallery, Plovdiv (2020).

Participation in the XVIII International Scientific Conference *The Power of Knowledge*, Agia Triada, Thessaloniki, Republic of Greece, (2018); participation in the Spring Scientific Readings of the Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts "Prof Asen Diamandiev", Plovdiv (2020 and 2021); participation in a competition of BG Science for her article *Fine Art - a key to developing emotional intelligence in students*, published in the journal Bulgarian Science (2023), etc.

Numerous participations in national projects and other.

The candidate's professional experience includes teaching at primary school "St. St. Cyril and Methodius" - Streltsi village, primary school "St. St. Cyril and Methodius" - Voyvodinovo village, secondary school "St. St. Cyril and Methodius" - Plovdiv, National Art School "Tsanko Lavrenov", Plovdiv and currently at the Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts "Prof Asen Diamandiev", Plovdiv.

Vanya Godzhelova is the recipient of prestigious awards, among which: second prize in category Fine Art at the National Competition "The Soul of a Spring", dedicated to the artist Georges Papazov and the aesthete Kiril Krastev, Yambol, (2014); Honourable Mention at the contest for a young author, Aspect Gallery, Plovdiv (2015); Young Author Award of the Society of Plovdiv Artists, SPA Hall, Plovdiv, (2018); Certificate for participation in a competition of BG Science for her article *Fine Art - a key to developing emotional intelligence in students*, published in Bulgarian Science (2023).

### **3. Relevance of the topic**

Here I would like to congratulate Vanya Godzhelova for her choice of topic. For me, the nature of the researched problem has an extraordinary resonance to my own reflections and observations in this direction, dictated by my personal teaching practice. It is more than clear that art education cannot remain unchanged in relation to its most important object - the person, and this concerns not only the teaching of art in secondary schools and high schools, but also in the higher art schools. Here I am not referring to the painful break with traditions in art education, but the search for a modern educational environment that will provide a safe and working forum for dialogue and interaction with the future generation. Quite recently, I attended a dispute in the academic community of the Faculty of Fine Arts at VTU, which ended with the introduction of an entrance exam for all majors in the faculty, consisting of a mandatory first part: drawing a head from life with black material (pencil, charcoal, chalk). The amplitude between the "literate" and the "studied" studying in the form of a sketch of a human head when drawing a model from life and the portrayal of the multi-layered emotions, experiences and nuances in a particular person is as great as the amplitude in the artistic and

aesthetic values of art a century ago and today. This dynamic in the understanding of the nature of art and the invasion of the digital technologies as a medium, an intermediary, and recently as a generator of art itself, progressively, I would say, avalanche-like, increase the need for a timely study of these processes and the search for those forms and approaches that lead to visible results, hence the indisputable relevance of the researched problem.

#### **4. Expediency of the research methods used to achieve the set goals**

To explain the need to research the problem, the candidate formulated the goal of the research as "acquiring knowledge by the students on reading and understanding emotions in a person, while at the same time they develop their artistic skills to build a portrait" (p. 85), which is a good starting point for carrying out experimental research. As a working hypothesis, the author brings out the assumption that when passing through the stages of the experimental program "Portrait" specially developed for this purpose, in which "...through in-depth refinement of familiar tasks and methods, accompanied by experimental ones, the students will reach deeper and analytical results in the recognition and depiction of emotions" (p.86), an assumption that the doctoral student convincingly proves in the course of the research itself.

The selection of contingent for the research – 11-grade students from the "Painting" specialty at National Art School "Tsanko Lavrenov" – Plovdiv, is an extremely brave and difficult task, considering that the students in the last stage of secondary education, are exactly that part of the trainees who have largely already formed their moral, cultural and aesthetic values, and their attention is strongly dominated by the new media, in which human relationships are predetermined by the mediation of technologies and are often carried out at a distance. That is why I find the conducted research to be extremely relevant, thoughtful and expedient, especially in the indicated age group, which is a very fertile ground for entering the complex semantics and content of art, which is a world of expressive possibilities for sharing ideas, experiences, ideas and feelings that portraiture as a process of entering the personal, inviolable world of emotions, aspirations and inner characteristics of the "other", of the "stranger" provides.

#### **5. Evaluation of the dissertation work – knowledge of the problem, content and structure according to the established norms, credibility, analytical approach, derived results**

The dissertation consists of 238 pages, of which 167 pages are the main text and 71 pages are appendices, presenting questionnaires, interviews with pedagogical specialists, student works and interpreted works of art, included as methodological tools, tabular collected and processed data from the conducted experimental research etc.

The content of the dissertation includes three thematically separated chapters, an introduction, insights and a conclusion. 122 sources were used, of which 92 in Cyrillic, 11 in Latin and 22 Internet sources. The dissertation impresses with a logically built structure, a concise exposition and above all with the clear and readable scientific language used by the author. The text is written with a precise use of the terminology, there is a precise citation of the indicated bibliographic and other sources.

The theoretical and experimental research is logically systematized in three interconnected chapters, which correspond to the main stages of its implementation: First chapter - theoretical study of literary and other sources. The focus is placed on the portrait, which is considered as a genre with its own characteristics, its development and its place in fine art are traced. The author analyses the degree of inclusion of topics and tasks related to portraiture as a genre and problematic in the teaching of fine art in the art schools and the methods by which it is taught to students.

The second chapter examines the parameters of the experiment: It defines the object, subject, goal, tasks and thesis of the research. An experimental training program was developed and implemented based on learning tasks related to the portrait genre as an opportunity to develop the creative capabilities, but also the emotional intelligence of the studied students. The instrumentation, methodology and stages of implementation of the experimental research are described.

The final third chapter presents a qualitative, quantitative and comparative analysis of the research results. On the basis of the processed data and their analytical analysis, the candidate formulates insights, contributions and conclusion of the conducted experiment.

The three publications presented by the doctoral candidate are directly related to the topic of the dissertation and concern the problematic of the portrait genre in painting and photography and its development in the period of the 19th - 21st centuries.

## **6. Contributions and significance of the thesis and the relevant publications**

Vanya Godzhelova's dissertation work is an original scientific work that represents a contribution to the research and theorization of the relevant topic of the possibilities and the importance of the portrait genre and the emotional characteristics of the subject in the educational and creative process of fine art. This aspect has a really great practical potential in its pedagogical projection in the educational process of arts, not only in the secondary and high schools, but as I said earlier, in higher schools as well.

That is why I fully agree with the main contributions to the dissertation work, listed by the author, which really reflect her theoretical, scientific and practical results:

- The author convincingly manages to prove the effectiveness of the teaching model she has developed - the "Portrait" program, consisting of ninety interconnected study units, which contains a variety of artistic tasks and lectures, enriching the knowledge of students in various disciplines, which have a lasting impact on them.

Through the experimental research, the effectiveness of the model has been proven, and based on clearly formulated evaluation criteria and indicators, a system has been developed that reliably reports the results of the conducted experimental training.

The dissertation contains an overview of the development of the portrait art tradition during the various historical periods, which chronologically traces its development over the centuries and the influence it has on contemporary art.

The created curriculum can be used in the teaching process as part of various interest clubs to

develop additional knowledge and skills among students. Individual tasks, lectures or methods from it can be applied in the compulsory training at school and could be shaped as a guide for educators.

### **7. Critical remarks and recommendations**

I want to emphasize that I do not have a single critical remarks to the reviewed work! The dissertation is written in a literate, understandable language that fully meets all the requirements for a academic work, but is also literary beautiful, a fact that deserves to be emphasized! I strongly recommend the publication of the work in the form of a monograph or educational aid, which will be useful for teachers, but also for all those who are tempted by art.

### **8. Abstract**

The abstract is prepared correctly and corresponds to the structure and content of the dissertation.

### **9. Conclusion**

Having reviewed the dissertation work *Depicting emotional characteristics in portrait painting by students in art schools*, I am very impressed by the high quality of its content, that is why I strongly recommend to the esteemed members of the scientific jury to award Vanya Milkova Godzhelova educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in professional field 1.3. Teaching Pedagogy on... (doctoral program Methodology of Fine Art Education).

Marina Teofilova  
15. 02. 2024.