

## OPINION

by Assoc. Prof Boyka Spasova Donevska, National Academy of Arts

on awarding the scientific degree “Doctor of Science”,

scientific field 8. Arts,

professional field 8.2. Fine Arts,

scientific specialty 05.08.04. Art History and Fine Arts

Dissertation on the topic: *Beyond the Borderline: Spaces and Areas of Contemporary Art*

by Prof Galina Lardeva-Minkova, PhD

AMDFA “Prof Asen Diamandiev”, Plovdiv, Department of Fine Arts

Galina Lardeva-Minkova has chosen as the topic of her dissertation an extremely relevant topic for the contemporary art world – a kind of attempt to stratify the artistic processes, placed simultaneously in the optics of theoretical discourse, of the general artistic pragmatics and the personal curatorial practice. The significance of this choice is a result of the reflexivity of the active discussion maintained in the worldwide critical literature after the 1990s and its orientation towards the specifics of the Bulgarian artistic space, where it has been commented on rather incidentally. From this point of view, the development of the problem into a separate topic of study helps to specify some of the parameters of the innovative artistic processes in recent decades and to deepen the idea of their artistic and meaningful nature. The fact that Galina Lardeva - Minkova is a long-time curator of the National Autumn Exhibitions in Plovdiv, who successfully combines her professional skills with theoretical interests, additionally sets a high research horizon for her scientific work.

With a total volume of 216 pages, the dissertation is structured in three main chapters, bibliography (81 bibliographic units) and an index. The text is supported by an album that includes 13 catalogues of the National Autumn Exhibitions held in the period 2008, 2013-2024.

A fundamental question of any generalizing reflection is, of course, the methodology of its tracking. It is obvious that the model of the linear historical review applied to such a specific study is not justified due to the very nature of the problem. The body text of the dissertation work consists of three thematically and methodologically heterogeneous, but semantically interconnected, parts. The titles of the individual chapters: “Contemporary Art – Zones of Theoretical Hesitation”, “In Search of the Intervals Between Images: Historical and Contemporary Readings” and “Contemporary Bulgarian Art through the Prism of the National Autumn Exhibitions”, clarify the logic of the changing “observation camera” of the researcher to the phenomena being tracked.

The first chapter aims to bring out some general statements in the theoretical field and in comparison, with the professional vocabulary of the Bulgarian art studies of recent decades. Galina Lardeva-Minkova constitutes three sections of "Notes", which gradually trace the construction, confrontation and contact points of key theoretical models for understanding the paradigms of contemporary art. The free handling of various cultural theses, which describe what the author defines as "crisis" changes occurring in the reception of the essence of contemporary art and the socio-cultural phenomena of the 21st century, is impressive. In its analytical context, the first part of the study is based on Werckmeister's theses on the "citadel culture", on Heidegger's views on the origin of the work of art and on "aesthetic distinction/ non-distinction", commented on by Gadamer, the second section discusses Arthur Danto's view on the end of art history in the light of its possible readings, and the third focuses on the idea of the final emancipation of the work, as a fundamental factor for the self-awareness and self-identification of contemporary art. In the individual parts of the chapter, a number of theoretical problems related to the changed existence in search of the meaning of art in the new communication environment after the second half of the twentieth century are posed and brought out.

A particularly interesting point in the author's argumentation is the reference to the Bulgarian critical thought – a topic that is relatively rarely raised in our specialized literature. The parallel comparison of points of view and sometimes contradictory arguments reflects the entire complexity of our own artistic culture, both in terms of general ideological concepts and the personal position of those writing about art.

The second chapter brings together six articles with a relatively broad and diverse problematic and historical framework, which shift the focus from theoretical discussion to specific topics in the humanities (receptive aesthetics, the *iconic* of Max Imdahl, the sciences of the image) and to the work of individual authors (Boris Mihaylov, Georgi Bozhilov – Slona, Andrey Daniel).

Chapter three raises a new set of questions, as it directly presents the art-historical practice of Galina Lardeva, as curator of the National Autumn Exhibitions in Plovdiv. The chronological tracking of the editions of this prestigious forum through her personal concept demonstrates the author's specific vision of the essential trends in Bulgarian art.

In an attempt to provide a general assessment of the study, I must note that Galina Lardeva-Minkova demonstrates remarkable erudition in handling popular cultural models and easily uses the possibilities of a diverse methodological toolkit. Moreover, the dissertation argues and defends a number of her own qualified opinions, which impress with the breadth of the research overview.

The use of interdisciplinary approaches gives the study an original character and is the basis of its undoubted contribution to the relevant field. A positive assessment, despite the lack of a direct continuum in examining the issue, deserves the complex method in the analysis of the factors that had a formative impact on both the artistic ideas of the time and the social, philosophical and cultural understandings of it.

The problem is projected simultaneously in the field of the global and specifically the Bulgarian artistic practice, which allows for a more marked delineation of the specifics and definitely has a contributing character for outlining the parameters of the local situation.

It is the high level of a dissertation that, as a rule, sets higher evaluation criteria. The study misses some basic points of the text structure, such as defining the historiographic perimeter of the problem in the Introduction and the lack of a Conclusion to clearly formulate the conclusions of the serious research work. Of course, these omissions do not spoil the general impression of the merits of the text, but would contribute to a more prominent delineation of its contribution to the scientific field.

In conclusion, I believe that the presented dissertation is a valuable theoretical and critical study, which will also have its applied effect, since it is based on the curatorial and teaching experience of the author and highlights the possibilities for new relationships in artistic practice and in the learning process. For this reason, I strongly recommend that the esteemed Scientific Jury award Galina Lardeva-Minkova the scientific degree of "Doctor of Sciences" in the professional field 8.2. Fine Arts.

Assoc. Prof Boyka Donevska