

OPINION

by **Assoc. Prof. Rusen Doykov, PhD**

on the dissertation work
of

Prof Galina Lardeva-Minkova, PhD

Titled:

BEYOND THE BORDERLINE: SPACES AND AREAS OF CONTEMPORARY ART

for the award of:
the scientific degree **Doctor of Science**
field of higher education: 8. Arts
professional field: 8.2 Fine Art

Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts "Prof Asen Diamandiev" Plovdiv
Faculty of Fine Arts
Department of Fine Arts

In connection with the dissertation work presented by Prof Galina Lardeva-Minkova on the topic *Beyond the Borderline: Spaces and Areas of Contemporary Art* for the award of the scientific degree "Doctor of Science" by order No RD 27-001 of 10.01.2025 of the Rector of AMDFA, a Scientific Jury has been appointed. The first meeting of the jury took place in compliance with the regulatory requirements for in-person and absentee participation, a chairman and reviewers were elected, and the date of the final meeting was also determined. The competition procedure fully complies with the state and the Academy's regulatory documents and requirements, as well as the required scientometric indicators.

The work was discussed at a meeting of the Department of Fine Arts, held on 16.12.2024.

The study contains a 216-page exposition, arranged in three main sections, and in addition to them it also includes a bibliography and a name index. As an illustrative part, 13 catalogs of National Autumn Exhibitions (for the years 2008 and 2013-2024) are attached.

The bibliography includes 81 titles, of which twenty-two are in German, two in English and two in Russian. The index at the end of the work contains 200 names, among which are the names of humanitarians, art critics, philosophers, painters and visual artists.

The first part contains four texts:

Notes on the Characteristics of a New Crisis

Capturing the Relationship between Revolution and Evolution in the Historical Study of Art,

Max Imdahl's Contribution to a Comprehensive Archaeology of Vision

Roles and Languages in Contemporary Bulgarian Art Studies

They focus on theoretical problems of contemporary art – from issues of classical aesthetics and receptive theory to a specific attempt to draw a model portrait of the different professional languages in

Bulgarian art history practice in recent years. For a long time in science, methodological and theoretical fluctuations have been thought of as the most characteristic research tool. This first section outlines the conditions of acute crisis of theoretical knowledge and raises relevant questions that are included in the construction of the meanings of each contemporary work.

The second section presents a set of six scientific articles on specific topics:

The exhibition Degenerative Art – problems from a historical and contemporary perspective

Baudrillard and Photography

Documentary and Realistic in Boris Mihaylov's Photography

On the Presence of Georgi Bozhilov-Slona in Bulgarian Visual Culture

The Sentimentalist Constructivist Between Epochs. The Painting of Andrey Daniel

True Dramaturgy is Contained in Painting. An Experiment in the Explicit *Poetics of Andrey Daniel*

They continue to develop some of the questions outlined in the theoretical texts: about the boundaries of the aesthetic and the approaches to the extra-aesthetic, about the different methodological approaches that are involved in the formation of meanings, about the balance between explicit and implicit poetics, about the possibilities for institutionalizing contemporary art and about the places where ideology can impose its suggestions. In their specifics, the scientific articles are dedicated to different relevant topics in the art history or in the field of humanities in general (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).

The third part is directly related to a specific practice in art history. Materials written for the catalogues of the National Autumn Exhibitions in the period 2008 and 2013-2024 have been collected, describing the process of preparing and organizing the event, the presentation of the authors and the concepts to various media, etc. The collection is both a conceptual outline of the individual editions and a search for a specific point of view on the different expressions of the contemporary Bulgarian phenomena. These texts unfold in an essayistic key one by one (year by year) the title focuses of the forum, smoothly redirecting them to characteristic problems in the works of the participants.

The following are listed as contributions of the dissertation:

- The successful combination of the in-depth development of significant theoretical problems, the study of specific art historical problems and specific observations and analyses of works of contemporary art.
- The combination of the author's role as a researcher - theorist and art critic, curator and teacher, who discovers and brings out educational priorities and projects and directs them towards the artistic practice.
- The theoretical rethinking of the place and role of aesthetics as a scientific discipline and its relation to the works of visual arts.

- The emphasis on the historical location of the phenomena and – in connection with it – the complex inclusion of the achievements of the receptive aesthetics in the work – something that the Bulgarian art history has not done until now.

The thematic choice of the individual texts (second section) is original and consistently considered. It illuminates issues that have not been addressed in Bulgarian art studies so far (i.e. the articles focusing on Max Imdahl, Jean Baudrillard, Boris Mihaylov), while at the same time being directed at the general conceptual messages of the dissertation.

A contribution to the contemporary Bulgarian art scene is also the complex portrait of the forum National Autumn Exhibitions, covering its editions for more than a decade.

In view of the above, we can say that the appearance of this study in its synthetic form, combining a completely theoretical field of study, clarifying and redefining philosophical and aesthetic concepts, in its first part, with the art historical practices described in the second and the third part, is quite appropriate, meaningful and necessary. The research interest of Prof Lardeva-Minkova directed at contemporary art gives results by contributing to the revision and clarification of the concepts and the vocabulary when talking about contemporary art. Contemporary art is essentially a territory of turbulence, instability and a claim to carrier of the *new*, to experience the established, each practice and author introduces their own concepts. This territory is extremely well known to Prof Lardeva-Minkova, as is clear from her extremely rich creative biography, for several decades this has been the field of her theoretical research and practice as an active and working art critic and curator. It should be noted that she belongs to the few authors who write about contemporary art in Bulgaria. Therefore, discussing the theoretical basis and the lexical apparatus is a necessary condition for conducting a meaningful conversation and adequate assessment of the phenomena in a large-scale and historically continuous context. Of essential importance for the value of the dissertation is also the extremely large in volume and valuable in its essence work presented in the third part on curating the editions of the National Autumn Exhibitions described therein. I had the honor and the pleasure to be one of the participants in the 2022 edition - Shared Spaces, and to witness the exceptional professionalism with which this forum was created from conceptual level to the final product. Thus, practically the theoretical statements from the previous parts of the work acquire "flesh" and prove to varying degrees their right to exist.

The curator's idea takes shape in the texts for the exhibitions, followed by the practical work of organizing the authors and everything else necessary for their realization. Finally, but not least, publishing a catalogue, which is the memory of the event.

As a member of the academic staff of AMDFA, I also have the honor of working with Prof Lardeva-Minkova, who is a professional with an exceptional level of competence and a responsible attitude towards ensuring that knowledge and the academic spirit are passed on to the students in a correct and dignified manner.

Having said the above, I confidently declare my positive assessment of the dissertation work and recommend to the esteemed jury to award Prof Galina Lardeva-Minkova, PhD the scientific degree "Doctor of Science" in the field of Art 8.2.

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Assoc. Prof Rusen Doykov, PhD