

## OPINION

from **professor, Doctor of Science Petia Alexandrova, New Bulgarian University**

for obtaining the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" (PhD) in professional field 3.5. Social Communications and Information Sciences.

with a dissertation on the topic: "THE CREATIVE COMMUNICATIONS AND NEW MEDIA FORMATS IN THE CONTEXT OF EXTRAORDINARY VIRTUALITY: The New Media Art",

presented by **Atanas Atanasov Lozanov**, doctoral student in the Department Communication and Audiovisual Production of the Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication

with supervisor: dozent Ph. D. Simeon Vasilev.

Atanas Lozanov's dissertation work follows the trend among doctoral students of the Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication to research the alternative fields of the media environment which creates an opportunity to specific thesis, such as his. The dissertation contains 146 pages of main text, including a preface, three chapters and a conclusion.

The introduction outlines the parameters of the topic: the need for a balanced, in-depth and interdisciplinary survey in the field of the latest manifestations of digital determinism, from the recognition of the achievements of new media art and the discovery of common markers with the previous forms of video art and experimental cinema. The main thesis states that "qualitatively, quantitatively and speedily, new media art is being improved with the help of intelligent algorithms, which, in addition to the nature of art and creative communications, are also changing the nature, thinking and behavior of users, with the most affected being the "digital natives". Atanas Lozanov considers new media art as a spiral process that absorbs and adapts techniques and technologies to its advantage and structures a multi-layered puzzle of cultural and social layers. The new media art uses an arsenal of myths, utopian, but also realistic perspectives in building its identity and reshapes cultural heritage. It is presented to us in the form of a hybrid between the communication channel, medium and means of expression to provoke an evolution of consciousness and to question conventional forms.

However, the author points out that the research area is limited to the field of social sciences, in particular communication and information sciences, despite interdisciplinary approaches. Respectfully, he does not deal with the aesthetic parameters of this art, but explores all art forms that are computer-mediated or in which cybernetics is an integral part of the idea: visual projects, music, poetry, dance, sculpture, animation, experiments with devices and others.

**The qualities** of the Ph.D. thesis are in several directions:

1. Atanas Lozanov introduces and conscientiously explains definitions and terms used in the present work: new media art: remix culture, digital natives, computational creativity, artificial agents, infoxication, cryptomnesia, extraordinary virtuality, narrow, general and super AI.

2. He makes a link to familiar avant-garde practices of the 20th century. I personally do not always agree with his formulations (for example, defies cubism as a "prototypical concept of three-dimensional virtual reality").

3. Lozanov argues that experimental artists are gradually converging with the commercial sector, the boom in consumerism is turning the young generation of artists into market leaders of mass culture who embrace the rise and profit from the valorization of popular lifestyle.

4. He goes beyond the traditional division of individual arts, as well as of fixed currents – fluidity is traced in the practices, and not in the definitions that the creators themselves assign them.

5. Lozanov notes that artworks are increasingly difficult to distinguish, which creates risks. But he sees authors in computational creativity who are aware of the passage of time and should have the responsibility of being the guardians of knowledge.

6. He considers video art as inherently subversive - alternative, rebellious, critical, reflective, marginal, constituting at least 50% of the essence of new media art.

7. Lozanov was inspired by the ideas of "Fluxus" and the legacy of Dadaism not by scandal, but by a sense of humor. Furthermore, he applies it to memes or Image macros.

8. He sees the obvious problem in copyright: the best current models are built on vast amounts of copyrighted material that probably shouldn't be used, especially if it's for commercial purposes.

9. Lozanov proves all three of his hypotheses: that new media art is an independent and powerful phenomenon that defines and reflects situational reactivity and global time; that

it achieves effective social and cultural transformation; that there are new algorithms of consciousness in the "digital natives" generations.

### **Notes and recommendations**

I would like to draw attention to the fact that a number of representatives of the avant-garde from the 1920s are French or German, and accordingly their names in Bulgarian are not transcribed correctly in the text.

As a professional film critic, I was particularly interested in the link with avant-garde cinema. I like the definition here, which is "typically to place the viewer in a more active, deeper, even psychotic relationship with the film, to be immersed and brought to life in worlds of dreams and fears through associative decoding, reading, and recognition of one's own inner ones, present or imagined." I admire the skilful consideration of avant-garde different periods, uses of different in terminology – ready-made, synthetic language, invented shots, structural film. Here I would like to make a remark to the author - I understand that, given his subject, he emphasizes in the avant-garde film only those elements that contain technical innovation. However, he excludes all others that are rebellious and experimental on an ideological level, although traditionally filmed. A classic example of such is the "Andalusian Dog" by Luis Buñuel and Salvador Dali. They are in sync with what he refers to the works of Nam Paik and Vostel as "the most radical artistic practice, since it was these artists who 'shocked the bourgeois public' with their highly provocative actions."

Among the theses that I would discuss with Atanas Lozanov is the one about the uncritical acceptance of new media art. In his text new media art "is not subject to direct subordination, it is not limited to forms, because it modifies the existing according to the authors' sense of attribution, mimicry and suggestion of human attributes, changes the environment and even contradicts itself with the time outside, bows before breaking the space and casting the shadow of the new moon in a distorted grimace. New media art has a variable definition, it has the power to shape public opinion, to select gatekeepers, but also to be the flagship of the transhumanist avant-garde..." It sounds like a futuristic-style manifesto from a century ago, and it makes thesis controversial.

That is why I have **two questions** for Atanas Lozanov:

- You see the "fundamental mission of this new age of human-intelligent machine cooperation as the antidote to the denomination of natural intelligence." To what extent in your PhD work do you (the Human) cooperate with artificial intelligence (the intelligent machine)?
- I am impressed by the specific language in which the text is written - both "calculating" and poetic in its own way, somewhat stylistically heterogeneous, slightly pathetic in the spirit of

the manifestos. Language itself is creativity. In this text, how much is it a product of Computational Creativity as "the ability of human and AI to co-exist and create, taking advantage of each other's strengths"?

### **Conclusion**

Atanas Lozanov covers the minimum obligatory national requirements for publications of scientific texts. However, I draw your attention to the fact that all five mentioned publications on the subject are publications of the Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication of the Sofia University. In this sense, I recommend the author to be more active outside his university.

I consider the dissertation with its conclusions, theses, examples and analysis taken in your totality to be a meaningful, provocative and interesting text. Therefore, I propose to the members of the scientific jury for **Atanas Lozanov to be awarded the educational-scientific degree "Doctor"** in professional field 3.5. Social Communications and Information Sciences.

Sofia, 25.07.2023

Jury member:  
Prof. D.Sc. Petia Alexandrova