

STATEMENT

by Prof. D.Sc Laura Ivanova Dimitrova

for awarding the educational and scientific degree PhD on
professional direction: 1.3. Pedagogy of education in...
(Methodology of Fine Art Education)

Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski"
Faculty of Education Sciences and Arts
Department of Visual Arts

Dissertation on:

**“PLAYING FORMS IN THE STUDIES OF VISUAL ARTS
IN NON-FORMAL EDUCATION”**

Author:

Marina Lachezarova Aleksandrova

Research supervisor: Prof. Stefan Kirilov Altakov PhD

Marina Alexandrova is a graduate of St. Kliment Ohridski", where she graduated with Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Fine Arts (2014) and Advertising Design (2015), respectively.

She is an artist in the field of contemporary visual arts and has participated in numerous group, national and international exhibitions and projects.

In the academic year 2022/23 she is a visiting assistant professor, and in the autumn of 2023, after a competition, she was appointed to the academic position of assistant professor of painting and colour studies at the Department of Visual Arts of the Faculty of Education and Arts of Sofia University. She was appointed a candidate of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences of the University of Sofia.

A regular Ph.D. student in the same department, she completed work on her dissertation within the time limit and was granted a right to defend.

The dissertation presented by the doctoral student on "Play Forms in Visual Arts Education in Non-Formal Education" is 187 pages long and includes an introduction, three chapters, conclusions and an appendix of 33 pages which contains 12 figures, 8 tables, 4 field protocols, 21 photographs taken during the work process, 12 photographs from a narrative interview, 2 lists.

This dissertation examines the application of a system of educational games in the process of visual arts education in non-formal education. Marina Alexandrova emphasizes the need for education to be accessible and oriented to the new communicative culture, with the validation of game techniques. By "new communicative culture" the doctoral student means the so-called "change of sensory modality", which has been observed in recent years in adolescents and is expressed in a predominantly "visual perception of information". The dissertation devotes a special place to play forms as a means of developing skills and knowledge of "sensory perceptions", which, according to the author of the dissertation, would gradually lead to the development of visual literacy.

The object of her research is "play forms in visual arts education in non-formal education".

The object of the research is "the application of a workable game model that is relevant to current issues and produces qualitative results that relate to or enhance visual knowledge of contemporary visual art forms." The main aim of the research is focused on the creation of a game module to be implemented in an experimental workshop. It also aims to establish "the advantage of play methods as an educational approach that produces higher and qualitative results in visual arts education", with a focus on "contemporary expressive forms in the visual arts".

In the first chapter of the dissertation, entitled "Play - the process from organic activity to gamification", the PhD student explores the commonality in the essence of play and the essence of artistic creation. It presents play in the context of the work of art. Gives a special place to gamification - "the use of play

elements and techniques in non-play situations". Explores the basic connections, similarities and relationships between play, art and gamification.

In Chapter Two, "Play in an Educational Context. Play and Art. Play forms in non-formal visual arts education. Deriving an educational module" Marina Alexandrova highlights the possibilities provided by the workshop as a methodological system where play forms are applied and on this basis derives an educational module.

In chapter three, "Implementing the developed game model. Analysis of the qualitative data obtained in the course of the research and the implementation of the experimental game model/system" the dissertation presents the results of the approbation of the developed module, which includes a system of didactic games in the form of a workshop.

As a result of the overall research, the PhD student came to the conclusion that the pedagogical experiment conducted by her had a positive effect on the attitude, the level of theoretical knowledge and practical skills of the participants, and the application of a specific system of classes based on game approaches and methods in non-formal education in visual arts led to qualitative results, expressed in improvement of the artistic skills, experience and interest of the students in the field of contemporary forms of visual arts.

The dissertation is a thorough, original and innovative work that can serve as a basis for future research in the field of visual arts and non-formal education. It would undoubtedly find its adequate application and would be of considerable use in pedagogical and educational practice.

I consider the main contributions of the dissertation to be:

- innovativeness - no other research work on the topic has been presented in Bulgaria;
- the selection, translation, analysis and systematization of materials close to the dissertation topic in the foreign scientific literature;

- the derivation of an experimental model that stimulates the application of play forms as a learning tool in non-formal education;
- the theoretical overview, uncovering the structure of the game and applying this knowledge to workshop design;
- the interdisciplinary approach in the arts, where both the humanities and contemporary forms in the visual arts are addressed;
- the transformation of the respective educational module, where the workshop is applied "flexibly" as a learning tool during the experimental work with children;
- creating a connection between the environment, natural materials, working with them and modern digital tools;
- The development of a model that achieves measurable outcomes and objective assessment of knowledge of contemporary forms in the visual arts.

The doctoral candidate has made the following publications related to the topic of her dissertation. Art in the Games of Imagination. Philosophical Alternatives, 2021, vol. 2, 12-17. DOI: 10.24958/2519-5436.2021.2.4062; Water as a conceptual and representational material in contemporary visual arts. Visual Studies, University of Veliko Tarnovo "Sv. Art and Art History, University of Visual Arts, Plovdiv. Cyril and Methodius, 1, 32-42; Visual Arts in a Decentralized Trust Environment. 2021 г. In:, Proceedings of the VII Youth Scientific Conference "ART AND CONTEXT 2021" (pp. 71-82). Sofia, Bulgaria: Institute for Art Research BAS. She has participated in two international scientific conferences: at the Institute for Arts Research - BAS, Seventh Youth Scientific Conference ART AND CONTEXT, 2021; and at the University of Veliko Tarnovo "St. The conference was held at the University of Veliko Tarnovo, University of Veliko Tarnovo. Cyril and Methodius, International Scientific Conference "Visual Studies", 2021.

The illustrative materials presented in the appendix convincingly complement the thesis and have documentary value in their own right.

I believe that the dissertation and the abstract meet the requirements of the Academic Staff Development Act in the Republic of Bulgaria and the regulations of Sofia University.

Taking into account all that has been said so far, I give an overall positive evaluation of the dissertation "Game Forms in Visual Arts Education in Non-Formal Education" and I confidently propose that Marina Lachezarova Alexandrova be awarded a PhD in the field of higher education 1. Pedagogy, professional field 1. 3. Pedagogy of Education in (Methodology of Teaching Fine Arts).

12. 10. 2023 г.

Prof. Dr. Laura Dimitrova