

REVIEW

by Prof. Anna Iltcheva Tzolovska, PhD,

member of Scientific Jury on the procedure for occupation of the academic position “**associate professor**” in the Higher Education Field 8. Art, Professional Area 8.2. Fine Arts (Graphic Design), Faculty of Educational Studies and the Arts, Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”

The competition procedure is in full compliance with the requirements of the state and university normative documents regarding the occupation of academic positions. In the competition for the academic position "associate professor" in the Higher Education Field 8. Art, Professional Area 8.2. Fine Arts (Graphic Design) one candidate participates – Chief assistant professor Yavor Spasov Grancharov, PhD.

The competition was announced for the needs of the Department of Visual Arts, Faculty of Educational Studies and the Arts (FESA), Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”.

Candidate data

In 2007, Yavor Spasov Grancharov graduated from higher art education – Master's degree in Fine Art, in the Master's program “Pedagogy and Semiotics of Fine Art”, Faculty of Primary and Pre-school Education, Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski", Sofia.

In the period 2012 - 2017 teaches as a part-time assistant at SU “St. Kliment Ohridski” to the specialty “Fine Arts”, Sofia.

In 2017, he won a competition for an assistantship in “Graphic Design” and “Graphic Design Software” in the Department of “Visual Arts” at the University of “St. Kliment Ohridski” – FESA, Department of “Visual Arts”, Sofia.

In 2019, he defended his doctoral dissertation at the University of “St. Kliment Ohridski”, FESA, Department of “Visual Arts” on the topic: “Modern trends in graphic design and its application in creating textbooks, teaching aids and advertising materials”.

Since 2020, he is the main assistant in “Graphic Design”, “Graphic Design and Visual Communication” and "Graphic Design Software" in the Department of “Visual Arts”, at SU “St. Kliment Ohridski” – FESA, Department of “Visual Arts”, Sofia.

From 2002 to the present, he has been working as a freelancer in the field of graphic design and advertising for various companies and institutions.

Overall assessment of the candidate's habilitation thesis:

In the current competition, Yavor Grancharov presents his habilitation thesis “Graphic design – contemporary trends, aesthetics, functionality”, providing a rich portfolio with visual material supporting the contribution nature of the work. I believe that the work fully corresponds to the theme of the competition.

The full number of all activities of Yavor Grancharov are duly described in the competition documentation. The materials submitted for the competition fully meet the requirements of the LAW ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ACADEMIC STAFF IN THE REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA.

The habilitation work offers a comprehensive presentation of the multifaceted activity of Yavor Grancharov as a graphic designer, artist and teacher in the field of graphic and 3D design. Focused on the works developed during Grancharov's teaching activity as a senior assistant in the Department of Visual Arts at FESA, the text looks at a creative journey spanning the period from 2020 to the present day. A commendable aspect of this work is the precise selection of the works, in accordance with the specific criteria of the competition for the position of Associate professor in "Graphic Design". Strategically grouping the author's works based on artistic characteristics and goals provides a structured presentation that not only demonstrates his skills, but also aligns with the expectations of the academic position. The organization of the works serves the dual purpose of providing a detailed overview of the author's contributions to the field of graphic design and illustrating the development of his skills and competencies over the past four years.

The inclusion of exhibition works and project designs highlights a commitment to both teaching and artistic initiatives, demonstrating a continuous ambition to evolve within the dynamic landscape of graphic design. Already in the title of the habilitation work "Graphic design - modern trends, aesthetics, functionality" the strength of the thesis stands out, which is in the author's explicit articulation of creative and scientific achievements. Using specialized software and adhering to current design trends, he demonstrates a clear awareness of the ever-evolving nature of the field. The integration of different modes of creative expression reflects the constant exploration of the possible paths of graphic design, emphasizing the meaning of being innovative. The emphasis on graphic design as a core element in each work is particularly

noteworthy. The author's skillful application of visual elements and textures not only enriches the visualization, but also improves the functionality, making the author's ideas more accessible and perceptible. This approach aims to highlight specific aspects that might otherwise be overlooked, evidences a thoughtful and purposeful use of graphic design principles as a means of communication and emphasis in the sense of focus.

The work is presented in three parts – “Activities and implementations in the field of graphic design”, “Creative performances” and “Teaching activity”. In the section dealing with graphic design, the inclusion of designs related to the Department of Visual Arts and FESA projects further reinforces the practical application of the author's skills. This connection to real-world projects not only provides tangible evidence of the author's contribution, but also aligns with academic and professional contexts, demonstrating the relevance of his work beyond the boundaries of theoretical discourse. In summary, the thesis effectively combines a correct selection of works, a clear articulation of creative and scientific achievements and a conscious application of the principles of graphic design. This is a testament to the author's contributions to the advancement of graphic design through a dynamic interplay of teaching, artistic expression, and engagement with contemporary trends and technologies.

Yavor Grancharov's creative performances in the field of design are impressive both in terms of quantity and quality. Therefore, only some of them will be mentioned here, as well as participations in general exhibitions, forums, publications, reports and workshops of the recent years, which present his achievements as a designer, artist and lecturer.

Publications:

Yavor Grancharov. Semiotics in graphic design and visual communication. FESA Arts Yearbook, issue 116, St. Kliment Ohridski University Press, 2023, pp. 267-285, ISSN (print):2738-7062.

Graphic design:

2023 – “Graphic design - modern trends, aesthetics, functionality” - author's album with artistic activity, St. Kliment Ohridski University Press, Sofia, 2023. ISBN 978-954-07-5879-4.

2023 – Graphic design of the book body of a Yearbook of Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”, FSEA, book of arts, volume 116, ISSN 2738-7062. https://fnoi.uni-sofia.bg/?page_id=5600 [accessed 22 December 2023].

2022 – Catalog “A/SYMMETRY”, Author: Laura Dimitrova St. Kliment Ohridski University Press, Sofia, 2022. ISBN 978-954-07-5515-1.

2022 – Proceedings of the Third Scientific and Practical Conference “Education and the Arts: Traditions and Perspectives”, ISSN 2738-8999. https://fnoi.uni-sofia.bg/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Sbornik_Obrazovanie_Izkustva_2022_web_Optimized.pdf [accessed 22 December 2023].

2022 – Graphic design of the book body of a Yearbook of Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”, FESA, book of arts, volume 115, ISSN 2738-7062. https://fnoi.uni-sofia.bg/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Godishnik_Kniga_Izkustva_FNOI_Volume115_2022_Knijno_Tialo_Fin_Optimized.pdf [accessed 22 December 2023].

2022 – Complete graphic design of the catalog “GRAPHIC IMAGERY - A NEW REALITY”, implemented under the “Graphic Imagery - New Reality” project, Sofia: “Ars Millennium MMM” Foundation for Art and Culture, 2022, ISBN 978-954-2950-53-0. (financed by a project of the National Institute of Scientific Research of SU). SU “St. Kliment Ohridski”, Contract number: №80-10-190or27.05.2022. <https://fnoi.uni-sofia.bg/artprojects/wp-content/uploads/VisualArts/Projects/Project_Graphic_Imagery_a_New_Reality/A_New_Reality_Body_Web_2022_Graphic_Imagery.pdf [accessed 22 December 2023].

2022 – Complete graphic design of “ECO-art 2022 / ECO-art 2022” catalog. St. Kliment Ohridski University Press, Sofia, 2022. ISBN 978-954-07-5486-4. The publication was financed by the “Scientific Research” Fund of SU within the framework of a project “ECO-art 2022/ECO-art”, Contract number: 80-10-83 / 11.05.2022 <https://www.facebook.com/ecoart2022> [accessed 22 December 2023]

2022 – Graphic design of the PEDAGOGICAL AND SOCIAL RESEARCH publications (Volume 4, ISSN 2738-8298). https://fnoi.uni-sofia.bg/magazine/index.php/educational_social_studies/issue/view/28 [accessed 22 December 2023].

The publication was realized with the financial support of the Scientific Research Fund of SU “St. Kliment Ohridski” (project "Electronic scientific publications - 2022 challenges and opportunities in the contemporary context", contract number: 80-10-194/ 27.05.2022). <https://fnoi.uni-sofia.bg/magazine> [accessed 22 December 2023].

2022 – Graphic design of the publication “PEDAGOGICAL AND SOCIAL RESEARCHES” (Volume 3, ISSN 2738-8298). <https://fnoi.uni->

sofia.bg/magazine/index.php/educational_social_studies/issue/view/25 [accessed 22 December 2023]. The publication was realized with the financial support of the Scientific Research Fund of SU "St. Kliment Ohridski" (project "Electronic scientific publications - challenges and opportunities in the modern context", contract number: 80-10-19 / 27.05.2022). <https://fnoi.uni-sofia.bg/magazine> [accessed 22 December 2023].

2022 – Graphic design of the issue "SPECIAL PEDAGOGICS AND LOGOPEDY" (Volume 5, ISSN 2683-1384). https://fnoi.uni-sofia.bg/magazine/index.php/special-edu_language-therapy/issue/view/27 [accessed 22 December 2023]. The publication was realized with the financial support of the Scientific Research Fund of SU "St. Kliment Ohridski" (project "Electronic scientific publications - challenges and opportunities in the modern context", contract number: 80-10-194 / 27.05.2022). <https://fnoi.uni-sofia.bg/magazine> [accessed 22 December 2023].

2021 – Graphic design of e-magazine "VISUAL ARTS AND MUSIC" (Volume 3, ISSN 2683-1392). The publication was realized with the financial support of the Scientific Research Fund of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" (project "New opportunities and perspectives for scientific online publications", contract number: 3594/2021) (https://fnoi.unisofia.bg/magazine/index.php/visual_arts_and_music/issue/view/22) [accessed 22 December 2023].

Graphic design of electronic magazine "PEDAGOGICAL AND SOCIAL RESEARCHES" (Volume 1, ISSN 2738-8298) The publication was realized with the financial support of the Scientific Research Fund of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" (project "New opportunities and perspectives for scientific online publications", contract number: 3594/2021).

https://fnoi.unisofia.bg/magazine/index.php/educational_social_studies/issue/view/20 [reviewed 22 December 2023] Graphic design of electronic magazine "SPECIAL PEDAGOGICS AND LOGOPEDY" (Volume 3, ISSN 2683-1384). The publication was realized with the financial support of the Scientific Research Fund of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" (project "New opportunities and perspectives for scientific online publications", contract number: 3594 / 2021). (https://fnoi.uni-sofia.bg/magazine/index.php/special-edu_language-therapy/issue/view/21 [accessed 22 December 2023].

2021 – Graphic design of the book body of a Yearbook of SU "St. Kliment Ohridski", FESA, book of arts, volume 114, ISSN 2738-7062. https://fnoi.uni-sofia.bg/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Godishnik_Kniga_Izkustva_FNOI_2021_Knijno_Tialo_for_Print-

1.pdf 2021 - Graphic design of calendar 2022 - April 2023 for the Department of Visual Arts at FESA, SU "St. Kliment Ohridski".

Artistic performances:

2024 – National curatorial exhibition “Spirit and matter – inspirations”, 2024 gallery “Alma Mater”, SU “St. Kliment Ohridski”, Bulgaria (the exhibition is by lecturers and students from the Department of “Visual Arts” (SU, FESA), National Academy of Art and University of Veliko Tarnovo and it is part of the "Spirit and Matter - Inspirations" project of the Scientific Research Fund at SU)

2023 – International 9th International Triennial of Graphics, Sofia, 2023, gallery of SBH “Shipka 6”, Sofia (juried exhibition). <https://sbh.bg/bg/izlojben-kalendar-izlojbi-sbh/9-mejdunaradno-trienale-na-grafikata-sofija-2023/8/1364> [accessed 22 December 2023].

2023 – National curatorial exhibition “Vertical and Horizontal” – of the professors of the “Visual Arts” department of SU, FESA, 2023 “Alma Mater” Gallery, SU “St. Kliment Ohridski”, Bulgaria / Poznan, Poland / Niš, Serbia / Lodz, Poland. Participation in an exhibition of the lecturers from the Department of Visual Arts FESA, SU “St. Kliment Ohridski”. The exhibition is dedicated to the 135th anniversary of the Sofia University and is being carried out with the assistance of FESA.

2023 – National curatorial exhibition “GranichNO” 2023, city art gallery “Hristo Tsokev” - Gabrovo, (the exhibition is by idea of the association “Art in action”, with curator – Orlin Dvoryanov. Funded by a program of the National Fund “Culture”)

2023 – International graphic curatorial exhibition “VIBRATIONS OF STRINGS” 2023 BKI Warsaw, Poland, curatorial project of Assoc. prof. Milena Blazhieva, with Polish and Bulgarian artists.

2023 – International solo exhibition “Graphic Design – Visualization of Ideas” Hall 12 of the University of Niš, Serbia, 2023. The exhibition is realized at the invitation of the Dean of the Faculty of Arts of the University of Niš Prof. Milena Injac. https://www.uni-sofia.bg/index.php/bul/novini/novini_i_s_bitiya/izlozhba_i_lekciya_na_gl_as_d_r_yavor_gr_ncharov_v_nishkiya_universitet [accessed 22 December 2023]. [accessed 03/14/2022]).

2023 – National Solo Exhibition “Integration in Algorithms”, 2023 Gallery “Alma Mater”, SU, Sofia, Bulgaria (Solo exhibition of Yavor Grancharov) https://www.uni-sofia.bg/index.php/novini/novini_i_s_bitiya/integraciya_v_algoritmi_samostoyatelna_izlozhba_

nasofia.bg/index.php/novini/novini_i_s_bitiya/integraciya_v_algoritmi_samostoyatelna_izlozhba_na_yavor_gr_ncharov [accessed 22 December 2023].

2022 – National Exhibition “EKO 2022”, “Alma Mater” Gallery, SU, Sofia, 2022

2022 – International exhibition “ART-eco 2022”, Kiten, Bulgaria International Symposium, 2022. Kiten, Bulgaria. Participation in an international art symposium on an ecological theme (September 10-16, 2022). https://www.uni-sofia.bg/index.php/bul/novini/novini_i_s_bitiya/mezhdunaroden_simpozium_art_eko_2022 [accessed 22 December 2023].

2022 – International exhibition “Bolestraszyce 2022”. Piotr Mihailowski Gallery, Arboretum, Bolestraszyce, Poland. Post plein air international exhibition “Bolestraszyce 2022”. Participation in an international exhibition (August 8 – 14, 2022). https://www.uni-sofia.bg/index.php/novini/novini_i_s_bitiya/na_plenera_bolestrashice_2022_byaha_izlozheni_tv_o_rbi_na_prepodavateli_ot_katedra_vizualni_izkustva [accessed 22 December 2023].

2021 – International exhibition “KOOOPERATYWA 2” in Bulgarian Cultural Institute. The exhibition “KOOOPERATYWA 2” (seventeenth collection), curated by Prof. Marek Sak from the Academy of Arts “VI. Stesheminki”, Lodz, Poland, was presented at the Bulgarian Cultural Institute in Warsaw on September 17, 2021. The exhibition includes authors from Poland, Bulgaria, Lithuania and Slovakia. https://www.uni-sofia.bg/index.php/novini/novini_i_s_bitiya/prepodavateli_ot_katedra_vizualni_izkustva_uchast_v_at_v_mezhdunarodna_izlozhba_v_b_lgarskiya_kulturen_institut_v_v_varshava [accessed 22 December 2023].

Membership in professional organizations:

From 2022 to the present, he is a member of the Union of the Bulgarian Artists.

Contributions:

The author plays a key role in updating the curricula of the Educational - Qualification Degree (EQD) "Bachelor" disciplines, in particular “Graphic Design Part 1”, “Graphic Design Part 2” and “Graphic Design Part 3”. In addition, he contributes to the editing of the study programs in “Graphic Design and Visual Communication” in the specialties “Graphic Design” and “Fine Art”. Develops the modules “Corporate Design” and “Advertising Design”, as well as “Fundamentals of Prepress Preparation Part I”. In addition, Grancharov created an elective

course “Web design” in the specialty “Graphic design”. This contribution is of prime importance as it recognizes the dynamic nature of the graphic design area, responding to rapid technological changes, innovations and trends within it. By updating the curricula, the author guarantees, that students receive an education aligned with the latest trends, arming them with the skills necessary to operate in the rapidly changing area of graphic design.

Yavor Grancharov actively contributes to the creation and use of visual materials intended specifically for graphic design training. These materials, in the form of detailed and structured presentations, serve as valuable resources for teaching various disciplines. The focus is on transmitting of knowledge for specialized software and prepress, creating advertising and corporate design and applying basic elements and principles of graphic design in accordance with modern understandings. The impact of these visual materials extends beyond conventional learning methods. They not only stimulate interest and attention among students, but also serve as effective tools to prepare students for their professional endeavors in the field of design. It should be noted that the author has adapted some visual materials for online learning, demonstrating flexibility in response to the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic in Bulgaria. In essence, Grancharov's contribution to updating the curriculum and creating visual materials not only enhances the educational experience for students, but also reflects the need to keep up with technological advances and ensure the relevance of graphic design education in a rapidly changing world.

The author actively promotes the activity of the Faculty of Educational Studies and the Art, and in particular the Department of Visual Arts, through a public lecture on “Graphic design software and its use in creating visual images and messages”. This lecture, given to both Bulgarian and foreign students and professors from the University of Niš in Serbia, focuses on the creative process of creating digital works according to current trends in graphic design. Paying attention to the central role of digital technologies and modern software, the lecture emphasizes the techniques, tools and individual creative approach in the creation of digital works. The author also emphasized the importance of blending traditional and digital art, choosing appropriate software and graphic file formats, and ensuring proper printing methods for successful results. Grancharov's initiative for cultural exchange between our and foreign higher schools further contributes to the wider dialogue in this area.

With over two decades of experience in graphic, advertising design and prepress, the author has made significant contributions to the graphic design of book and online publications.

The designs presented in the materials are in close accordance with the professional commitment of the author to the Department of Visual Arts and Faculty of FESA.

It should be noted that the use of Bulgarian Cyrillic fonts in the publications demonstrates a typographical contribution that adheres to the standards of “reading hygiene”. Graphic designs include both traditional print and digital publications, demonstrating a range of versatile skills to adapt to different media. In addition, the author actively participates in the preparation of advertising materials, souvenirs and visual materials for FESA. This strategic approach plays a vital role in attracting attention, fostering connections within the educational community. Creating visually appealing promotional materials not only captures the interest of potential students, but also serves as a powerful tool for promoting the overall image and endeavors of the Faculty.

Remarkable contribution of Chief assistant professor Yavor Grancharov is the redesign of the official website of the FESA. The author's clear graphic vision significantly improves communication and interaction within the boundaries of the educational community, increasing students' awareness of educational processes within the Faculty. The update of the content management system template adheres to modern standards, ensuring a responsive design, improved efficiency and continuous updating of educational information. The site's optimized structure and navigation facilitate quick and easy access to its content, which contributes to a more efficient presentation of the information. This redesign strengthens the connections between students and Faculty, playing a key role in the successful presentation of the activities and functioning of the FESA in the online space and digital media. In addition, the creation of the "Artprojects" website, dedicated to artistic projects, exhibitions and similar initiatives, further highlights the author's contribution with a specially designed template that takes care of the unique nature of the content.

The author organized a significant event by conducting a workshop on graphic poster design, providing an invaluable opportunity for both Bulgarian and foreign students. This workshop takes place within the framework of the project “Transformations for Europe”. The works from the workshop become an integral part of the exhibition “The pulse of time: 135 years of Sofia University”, presented in the “Alma Mater” Gallery, “St. Kliment Ohridski” in 2023. The final stage of the workshop includes the printing of posters showing the creativity of the students. This initiative not only enriches the educational experience of the participants, but also

contributes to the artistic and cultural representation of Sofia University by encouraging creativity and collaboration among students.

An intriguing contribution by the author is the creation of a series of 18 digital prints for the solo exhibition entitled “Integration in Algorithms”. This exhibition examines contemporary topics related to the development of artificial intelligence (AI) and its implications for the modern society. The author, using specialized design software and free 3D programs, along with specially developed textures, tests various creative ways of expression and visualization methods. The digital artworks offer a thought-provoking artistic perspective on human-machine integration without directly „referring to transhumanism”. By engaging viewers in a philosophical and aesthetic exploration of technological trends, the collection asks questions about uncertainty, inequality and ethics in the context of AI. This contribution goes beyond simple artistic expression, enriching the public discourse on the societal impact of technological advances. Another notable moment is Grancharov's latest work – “Contemporary 5”, which marks the transition from two-dimensional to three-dimensional printing. This evolution opens up new horizons for artistic expression, allowing the creation of three-dimensional forms and structures using different materials. The work is not only a key moment in the author's work as an artist, but also as a lecturer. The implementation of 3D programs demonstrates Grancharov's commitment to expanding creative boundaries and realizing new projects and thought-provoking perspectives on the intersection of art and artificial intelligence. These contributions not only enrich the artistic landscape, but also stimulate important conversations about the implications of technological progress on the society.

Another contribution of the author is in the comprehensive study “Semiotics in Graphic Design and Visual Communication” carefully prepared and presented for publication. This scientific text is presented in the Yearbook of the Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”, FESA. The research goes into various aspects, thoroughly analyzing the essence, place, role and meaning of the semiotics as a science of signs. Additionally, it explores the practical application of semiotics in the field of graphic design, highlighting the complex relationship between semiotics and visual communication. The study sheds light on the subsequent role of the graphic designer as a visual artist making connections in a relevant semiotic system.

Conclusion:

Bearing in mind everything presented so far about Yavor Grancharov, his undeniable achievements and merits in the area of graphic design, his very high productivity and precise professionalism in the same area, as well as the no less significant high level of his teaching activity, I confidently offer to the respected Scientific Jury to choose Chief assistant professor Yavor Spasov Grancharov, PhD at the academic position “Associate professor” in the Higher Education Field 8. Art, Professional Area 8.2. Fine Arts (Graphic Design), for the needs of the Department of Visual Arts, Faculty of Educational Studies and the Arts, SU “St. Kliment Ohridski”.

03.03.2024

Prepared the review:.....

Prof. Anna Tzolovska, PhD