

## LETTER OF OPINION

By Assoc. Prof. Snezhina Bisserova, PhD

member of the Scientific Jury on the procedure for occupation of the academic position  
Professor

Higher Education Field 8. Art,

Professional Area 8.2. Fine Arts, (Sculpture and Art Constructions) Faculty of Educational  
Studies and the Arts, Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski"

The competition was announced in the State Gazette No. 63 / 30. 07. 2021

The competition procedure so far fully complies with the requirements of  
the state and university normative documents regarding the obtaining of  
academic positions.

At the first jury meeting the statutory requirements for attendance and  
absenteeism were observed and reviewers as well as jury members were selected to draw up  
opinions.

In the competition for the academic position "Professor" in the field of  
higher education 8. (Art), professional direction 8.2. Fine Arts (Sculpture and Art  
Constructions), only one candidate - Assoc. Prof. Anna Iltcheva Tzolovska, PhD, was  
presented. The competition was announced for the needs of the Department of Visual Arts of  
the Faculty of Educational Studies and the Arts, Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski".

Candidate information:

Anna Tzolovska graduates with a degree in "Graphics" from the National Academy of Arts  
in Sofia in 1992. In 2007 she defends her doctoral dissertation in the scientific specialty  
05.01.06 "Aesthetics", Philosophy on the topic "Artistic-interpretive model of aesthetic taste  
and the aesthetic image".

Since 2011 Anna Tzolovska has been an associate professor of Fine Arts 8.2 /Sculpture and Art  
Constructions/ "at the Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski", Faculty of Educational Studies  
and the Arts - Department of Visual Arts.

In the period 2010 - 2016 she has taught at the New Bulgarian University, Sofia (disciplines: "2D computer design", "Adobe Photoshop", "Adobe Illustrator", "CorelDRAW" and "Web Design Methodology")

Anna Tzolovska is an artist with a bright and versatile presence in the artistic life. In the period 2011 - 2021 she has realized 14 solo exhibitions in Bulgaria, Italy, France, Poland and Hungary and has taken part in over 90 exhibitions and art symposia in the country and abroad.

She has implemented 11 different projects with students and PhD students in Bulgaria, Austria (Wittgenstein House), Slovakia (BCI in Bratislava) and Hungary (Budapest), related to other projects under the NSF at Sofia University. In 2018 she has realized a two-month art residential stay in the studios of Cite des Arts, Paris, France, after winning a competition. In 2012 - residential stay in the 37-th THE FINE ART COLONY - Studenica, Serbia by special invitation, followed by an exhibition, and in 1998-1999 she had won an OEAD Scholarship for research in the field of "Philosophy of Modern Art" at the "Institute of Philosophy" to the University of Vienna.

Anna Tzolovska has repeatedly won awards and nominations from national exhibitions and competitions for her work, duly described in the competition documentation.

Anna Tzolovska is a member of the Union of Bulgarian Artists (UBA) and the Association Internationale des Arts Plastiques (AIAP), UNESCO.

2. General assessment of the habilitation thesis of the candidate and of the contributions in it.

In the current competition Anna Tzolovska presents the habilitation thesis "Foundations of creative reality. Wanderings. Balances. Meditation. The Garden. The included in it significant number of sculptures and accompanying graphic series (with accompanying text conceptions and technological and technique justifications) are structured in four main sections, bearing the names of three realized and one forthcoming art exhibitions that most accurately represent the author's creative pursuits in the period 2012 - 2021. Also included are: one section with additional sculptural compositions, environmentally situated; one section with digital graphic works based on original plastic forms and nanophotography, as well as a section of photographs, documenting the author's work with students in the sculpture atelier of the Sofia University. I find that the habilitation thesis corresponds completely on the thematic determinism of the competition.

Anna Tzolovska's habilitation thesis is thematically focused on the reflection on the basic foundations of the creative process, the end product of which is the artistic reality. Searching for yourself in the process of spiritual wanderings, capture, loss and rediscovering balance - the pure abstract form, Meditation - the highest manifestation of creative self-disclosure and finally - a walk in The Garden of Eden - the author's artistic universe. The four main sections of the work, corresponding to four solo exhibitions, each of which reveals a certain aspect of the topic of labor, contain in themselves as well the most the essential contributing moments. In this context, I would point out the achieved overall conceptual commitment as essential quality of the habilitation thesis. Adhering to the so uniquely identifiable by Tzolovska structural framework, I will formulate and consider the respective contributing aspects in her work.

### 1. Wanderings

The exhibition includes 4 plastic objects and 8 graphic sheets, generated through the digital transformation of photographs - all linked associatively into a common narrative.

Contribution: Placed in an original, philosophically-ironic discourse, the works are richly saturated with complex layers of meaning and detail, but they manage to remain outside the area of the illustrative-descriptive imagery. These are human or animal figures - embodied in the material archetypes, transformed through the layered meanings of Gestalt to elements of a new, ever-changing and an upgraded, post-modern reality - the result of the complex interaction of conscious and intuitive creative processes in response to the rapidly changing social and global environment.

2. In her habilitation work Anna Tzolovska offers a clear and in-depth analysis of the plastique compositions. I would pay particular attention to the contributing aspects of the "Balances" exhibition, including 9 experimental artistic constructions, exquisite in their fragility and self-sufficient, as derived spatial structures. Moreover, Tzolovska resumes the experiment with shape and space, including the kinetic functionality of said constructions and the ability to interact with the environment, creating their own graphic traces in it and giving additional levels of perception.

### 3. Meditation /Exhibition "Total Meditation"/

This section of the habilitation work includes 23 plastique compositions, 20 of which are made in the technique of hot blown glass, blown in ceramic molds. 1 work is a combination of steel and glass and 2 works - web with glass core. A particularly definite contribution here is the original, brought to author's technique, use of nature and visual-plastic characteristics of silicates in glass-ceramic sculptures - materialistically coded on a conceptual level symbolism. In support of what has been said, it is important to note that Anna Tzolovska always seeks in her plastic works the interaction between the radical materialities differing in their impact, with their inherent structural image, which in conceptual aspect represents the permanent clash and harmony between material and spiritual content such as manifestations of the creative act. Anna Tzolovska is an author with an exceptional flair and an understanding of the qualities and interactions of the materials applicable in modern sculpture and three-dimensional construction. The same statement no less applies to her graphic works.

#### 4. Garden

The collection "The Garden" includes 7 sculptural objects, from steel and cast iron, which are solved in the context of a predetermined by the author point of view, that distinguishes and fixates different levels of hierarchies in their perception. 3 round sculptures of the same metals are also included, with details also made of glass, but fastened and made motionless.

Here the contributions are contained in 2 aspects:

- technologically - a specific way of "soil casting" giving unique texture of the surfaces with integration of colored and white glass elements, made in the "fusing" technique.
- Artistic - the unique way of contrasting and the plastique interaction of the different materials with the distinctive structure and color, give rise to a certain rhythmic order and aesthetic impact on the viewer's senses.

It is important to note that the realizations of Anna Tzolovska are not based solely on artistic inspiration, but on in-depth self-analysis, which finds its philosophical and psychological foundations in the polyvalent artistic interpretation, the traditional knowledge and the contemporary scientific concepts in the context of dynamically changing modern environment. Leading is always the experiment, situated on the territory of postmodern aesthetics with its inherent eclecticism, often accompanied by a measured dose of intellectual play and irony. But this is an experiment, always deeply rooted in the plastique forms and

based on serious knowledge of the material's physical and chemical characteristics.

5. As a separate section in her habilitation thesis Anna Tzolovska also includes 50 digital graphic works, which I can also mark as contributing. Digital graphics, including photography of sculptural objects and nanophotography of their structures with the intervention of drawing, carry unique plastic characteristics. Here, as a significant contributory moment common for the series included in the habilitation work, but especially necessary, in my opinion, in a series of 6 graphic sheets (p. 99 of habilitation thesis) I can determine the original way in which Tzolovska integrates and interweaves various aspects of the form and structure (internal content) of the objects, that, through a personalized digital approach are being transformed into powerful and influential graphic compositions. Richly saturated with detail, they are perfectly balanced against the negative (white) space of the graphic sheet.

#### 6. Pedagogical activity

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Anna Tzolovska is a significant pedagogue for many years - experience that she constantly enriches with new original ideas and practices. Tzolovska develops, introduces and constantly upgrades her own methods and integrates extremely diverse and broad range of materials and technological means in the teaching process in the disciplines "Sculpture and Art constructions", managing to make the work process interesting and accessible to students, regardless of teaching conditions in person or online. Anna Tzolovska's methods are based on personal experiment and her rich experience with a variety of materials and techniques, adapted and brought to many, precisely created levels of the process of learning sculpture and art constructions. In this sense, it can be argued that it is about a purposeful built, comprehensive, emphatically personal methodology, reflected in the programs developed and updated by her in those disciplines in the Sofia University, Department of Visual Arts, Faculty of Educational Studies and the Arts. She certainly contributes significantly, the proof of which is her creative, productive and valuable work with her students.

The contributions formulated by the candidate - Assoc. Prof. Dr. Anna Tzolovska accurately enough prove hers and those of her habilitation thesis qualities presented for discussion, due to which I fully accept and express my agreement with them.

The creation and realization of recognizable, up-to-date artistic plastic forms and customized technological practices, brought to a complete, successfully functioning model of teaching in the field of the art education, I would emphasize is the most significant among them all.

A significant contribution that I would like to highlight is the invention of artistically recognizable author's language and the creation of experimental works, often crossing the boundaries of sculptural and graphic art - two sides of the rich creative nature of the author. In an original way the plastic and the aesthetic problematics correspond to each other in the sculptural and graphic works of Tzolovska. They interact as a consequence of the different levels of material and semantic, they develop in series and are upgraded, using a rich register of image transformations, provoking the viewer to ambiguous reading.

#### Conclusion:

Taking in account all that has been said about the candidate, her undisputed achievements in the field of the sculpture art and the high level of her pedagogical activity, I strongly recommend Anna Tzolovska to be elected to hold the academic position of "Professor" of Sculpture and Art Constructions in the field of Higher Education 8. Art, Professional field 8.2. Fine arts for the needs of Sofia University "St. Climent Ohridski".

November, 2021  
Sofia

Assoc. Prof. Snezhina Bisserova, PhD