

LETTER OF OPINION

by Prof. Anna Ilcheva Tsolovska, Ph.D.

member of the Scientific Jury on the procedure for occupation
of the academic position "Professor"
in Higher Education Field 8. Art,
Professional Area 8.2. Fine Arts (Graphics and Technologies)
Faculty of Educational Studies and the Arts
Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski"

The competition was announced in the State Gazette no. 65 28. 07. 2023

The competition procedure complies fully with the standards of state and university normative documents regarding the occupation of academic positions.

One candidate - Assoc. Prof. Snezhina Koleva Biserova Ph.D. - competes for the academic position of "professor" in the Field of Higher Education 8. Art, Professional field 8.2. Fine Arts (Graphics and Technologies).

The competition was announced for the Visual Arts Department, Faculty of Educational Studies and the Arts, Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski".

1. Candidate information

Snezhina Koleva Biserova received a master's degree in Graphics in 1988 from the Nikolay Pavlovich Higher Institute of Arts (now the National Academy of Arts) in Sofia.

In 2007, she successfully defended her PhD dissertation in "Art Studies and Fine Arts, Specialty Graphics" at the National Academy of Arts, receiving the Higher Attestation Commission diploma No 30957.

In 2017, she won a competition for "Senior Assistant Prof. in Graphics and Technology" at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski"- FESA, the Visual Arts Department, Sofia.

She has been an associate professor of "Graphics and Technologies and Graphic Design" at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski"- FESA, the Visual Arts Department, since 2020.

Biserova has been a part-time lecturer in graphics at the National Academy of Art in the specialty "Book, Illustration, Printed Graphics" since 2006 (and still is).

From 2006 to 2017, she worked as a part-time lecturer in graphics and technology at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski"- Faculty of Pre-school and Primary School Education, specialty "Fine Arts", Sofia.

Snezhina Biserova is an author with a prominent and established presence in Bulgarian artistic life, and she has performed numerous successful exhibitions abroad. She is an artist who defends her artistic morals through her art and creative behavior, which is reflected in her teaching activities in the most sublime and constructive way.

Her habilitation thesis presents us with the subjects and challenges of her artistic interests that have multi-layered and diverse dimensions in our art culture in a highly precise, responsible, and professional manner. Her research, along with the accompanying visual material and rich creative biography, illuminate in detail her enormous artistic and theoretical activity, as well as her compassionate work on the creation and realization of numerous art projects with the participation of students and artists from Bulgaria and abroad in the context of certain art trends related to experiments that change the idea of graphic space and its definition. Biserova's work convincingly demonstrates her enormous creative potential. This potential becomes concrete and evident in it, and it is governed by a strong and honest desire for artistic self-expression. The habilitation thesis "Transpositions /Metaphors of Transformed Reality/" proposed in the competition is an excellent result of a long and serious creative process in a very typical graphic arts area related to the successful application of oppositions used in harmonious or contrasting configurations. The works of art presented in Snezhina Biserova's habilitation thesis were created after receiving her position as Associate Professor and represent a very mature stage of her creative activity, which corresponds with her most clearly stated positions on space and art in recent years when she has been extremely active in Bulgaria's contemporary art scene.

The materials given in the competition fully meet the standards of the Law on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria.

Snezhina Biserova's creative performances are outstanding both in quantity and quality. As a result, only chosen solo exhibitions, participation in group exhibitions, forums, publications,

reports, and workshops from the last few years will be presented below, highlighting her achievements in the fields of graphics and artist's books, as well as her activities as a tutor, curator, and exhibition coordinator:

Monograph:

2023 Biserova, Snezhina. "Trans-positions". UI "St. Kliment Ohridski", ISBN 978-954-07-55694, Sofia, 2023.

Other publications – scientific editing and compilation:

2020 Biserova, Snezhina, Grancharov, Yavor. GRAPHIC TRANSFORMATIONS /Prints and Artist's Books from Bulgaria and the Netherlands/, Sofia: University Press "St. Kliment Ohridski", 2020. ISBN 978-954-07-5088-0. (funded by a project of the Scientific Research Fund of Sofia University)

2022 Biserova, Snezhina, Grancharov, Yavor. GRAPHIC IMAGERY – A NEW REALITY, Sofia: "Ars Millennium MMM" Foundation for Art and Culture, 2022, ISBN 978-954-2950-53-0. (funded by a project of the Scientific Research Fund of Sofia University)

Public lectures and reports:

Head of an international workshop and presentation on siligraphy with lecturers and students from Sofia University, FESA - the Visual Arts Department, and a lecturer from Silesian University - Katowice, Poland, held on June 15, 2023, in Graphic Atelier (229), FESA.

International exhibitions:

2023 International Print Biennial – Varna, Bulgaria. (participation in all editions of the biennial since 1999)

2023 Online solo exhibition-presentation of the winner of the main competition for 2022 - Snezhina Biserova. Vincitori "Primo Premio SENIOR Grafica Italiana, organized by Associazione Nazionale Incisori Italiani APS, Vygonza (Padova), Italy.

2023 Annual International Small Format Graphics Forum, Lessedra Annual Mini-Print - Lessedra Gallery, Sofia, Bulgaria. /Since 2002 - participation in all editions. Since 2011 - member of the international jury.

2022 Participation in the international curatorial exhibition "GRAPHICS' RE-CONCEPT", San Stefano Gallery, Sofia. It is held within the project "Graphic Imagery – a New Reality", funded by the NSF of Sofia University, managed, and curated by Assoc. Dr. Snezhina Biserova.

2021 Second International Triennial of Graphics – Czeszyn, 2021 – Poland.

Individual, national and group exhibitions:

2023 Individual exhibition TRANS-POSITIONS (digital graphics) Alma Mater Gallery - Sofia. (31 prints are exhibited).

2023 Individual exhibition "WIND, WATER, STONE" (graphics and art book), San Stefano Gallery, Sofia. (33 prints are exhibited).

2023 Online individual exhibition "TRANS-POSITIONS". The exhibition is part of the project "Graphic Imagery – a New Reality" of the Visual Arts Department, FESA, managed by Assoc. prof. Snezhina Biserova, Ph.D. funded by the Scientific Research Fund of Sofia University.

2023 "Vertical and Horizontal", group exhibition of the lecturers from the Department of Visual Arts, FESA, Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" (based on a curatorial project of Prof. Laura Dimitrova), January, Alma Mater Gallery, Sofia University. The exhibition is dedicated to the 135th anniversary of Sofia University. In March, the exhibition was presented at the New Stage Gallery, Poznan, Poland, and in May – in Nis, Serbia.

2022 Solo exhibition "STONES" – Etude Gallery, Sofia. The exhibition contains 21 digital prints inspired by the poetry of Boris Hristov.

2022 Exhibition "Vibrations of the Strings" (curatorial project of Assoc. Prof. Milena Blazhieva with the participation of lecturers from the Visual Arts Department of Sofia University and the National Academy of Arts). The exhibition is presented at the Science Festival in Katowice, Poland.

2022 "Selected from the International Ex libris Competition Varna", Epreuve d'Artiste Gallery, Antwerp, Belgium. Representative selection of the bookplate collection of Largo Gallery, Varna – organizer of the International Ex libris Biennial, Varna, Bulgaria.

2022 Participation in the group exhibition "PIECES OF MIRROR REALITY CGD – BEYOND TECHNOLOGY". Curatorial project by Ilian Urumov. Gallery-bookstore "Sofia Press", Sofia.

2022 X Forum "Small Graphic Forms 2022", organized by the "Graphics and Illustration" section of the Union of Bulgarian Artists, KO-OP Gallery, Sofia.

Scientific and artistic projects:

Internal scientific projects:

Participation in the project "Alma Mater Gallery" at FESA. "Artistic Works Honoring the 135th Anniversary of Sofia University." An art project with worldwide participation, supported by the Sofia University Scientific Research Fund. No. of the contract: No80-10-33/20.04.2023 Project manager: Senior Assoc. Prof. Dr. Krasimira Drenska; participants: Prof. Laura Dimitrova, DSc, FESA; Vanya Valkova, Ph.D. student, FESA.

International art projects;

2020 Participation in Reinhild Gerum's (Germany) project "CORONA Alphabeth" (for alphabetical art book).

Snezhina Bisserova's art has received numerous honors and nominations in national and international exhibitions and competitions:

Awards:

International award "Leonardo da Vinci – Uuniversal Artist" – for artistic achievements – from the EFFETTO ARTE Foundation, Italy.

First prize from "Primo Premio Arte Grafica Digitale EX LIBRIS 22" – Vygonza (Padova), Italy.

2022 First prize from "Primo Premio Arte Grafica Digitale LIBRO DARTISTA 22" – Vygonza (Padua), Italy.

2022 Fifth International Ex libris Competition – Istanbul, Turkey – Honorary Award.

2021 "Primo Premio SENIOR Grafica Italiana 21" – Special Mention – Vygonza (Padova), Italy.

2021 Honorary silver medal from the Second International Triennial Mini Print "Intalio 2021", Kiev, Ukraine.

2021 Special award for the development of world contemporary graphic art by the International Graphic Triennial, Bitola, Republic of North Macedonia.

2021 First prize in the Graphics section of the National Exhibition of Fine Arts – Sliven, Bulgaria.

Snezhina Biserova is a member of the Union of Bulgarian Artists (UBA), the Association Internationale des Arts Plastiques (AIAP), UNESCO and the National Association of Italian Engravers.

The full number of all the activities of Snezhina Biserova are duly described in the documentation of the competition.

2. Overall evaluation of the candidate's habilitation thesis

Snezhina Biserova enters this competition with her habilitation thesis "Transpositions /Metaphors of Transformed Reality/". I believe that is entirely consistent with the competition's subject. It offers a diverse portfolio of graphic series, including a great number of works that visually support her theoretical justifications; rather, her theoretical arguments are based on reflections on the graphic and technology solutions and discoveries that gave rise to these works. Her works demonstrate her approach to composition based on various visual materials, transformations, and the creation of new realities with their own structure, logic, order, state, and emotion. In other words, in a completely other world, but one that is both meaningful and reasonable. The most intriguing aspect is that this reasoning does not interfere with the image's artistic presence. Biserova was created entirely digitally, combining the author's photographs, drawing elements, and geometric shapes.

With the aid of software and the possibility of "multilayer blending," this complete "entourage" is altered to "beyond recognition." The ultimate result is unique metaphorical imagery in a specific graphic environment, as well as the development of an author's plastic language based on basic antinomies such as "light-dark", "negative-positive", and "dynamics-statics". Thus,

Biserova demonstrates the full extent to which "suggestion by playing with the pure principles of counterpoint" is conceivable by limiting the "visual repertoire" to the most basic "monochrome" contrast. And when it comes to Snezhina Biserova and her art, the possibilities are unlimited, both as a vision and as an emotion generated by her.

Because they can be discussed indefinitely, I will outline briefly the important topics that Biserova focuses on in her habilitation thesis, as well as the correlation between them and the author's vast graphic production. These topics are divided into four sections: The first section discusses "Digital Graphics" as her primary creative interest in light of current trends. Biserova displays her excellent series "NATURA SACRA" here, which includes 24 pieces composed digitally and realized using the digital printing process. This is magnificent graphic imagery that acts like music. Biserova explores in "Sacred Spaces peculiar dwellings of the spirit" and finds them, in my own way and for us who observe her work.

Another excellent cycle in this section is "DEHUMANIZED SPACES," which is described as "a world - metaphor of man's loneliness, isolation, and alienation"; likewise, the graphic series "STONES" which has been inspired by Boris Hristov's poetry. This series is created using the digital graphic technique and the technological possibilities of digital photoengraving.

In the second section, Snezhina Biserova discusses her own works, representing graphic series, accomplished in the technique of relief, intaglio, and surface printing, in which digital technologies are used for transferring the image to the printing plates. I'll mention the "CORA'S WINDOW" series, which includes seven works in the transfer aquatint technique.

The third section is devoted to two artist's books and one bibliophile edition. I will only mention the titles of the art books - "Corona Future," "East Meets West," and the bibliophile edition dedicated to "OCTAVIO PAZ /selected poems/" because Biserova has analyzed the history of their creation in great detail in her thesis, and the comments on such a text can be an occasion for further research.

The fourth section is specified from her work in the genre "Exlibris," which is very important to the author and for which she has received numerous international prizes and recognitions. In general, Assoc. Prof. Snezhina Biserova's work and theoretical arguments are significant achievements in the realm of art, and I value them greatly.

3. Teaching activities

Assoc. Prof. Snezhina Bisserova, Ph.D., is an experienced teacher. She is, in my opinion, the most generous teaching colleague I have ever met. Her knowledge is continually increased by her constant experiments and searches in the field of creative image or the way it can be expressed through unimaginable novel methods and technology, in addition to the immense erudition that underpins it. Anyone who has come into contact with her teaching understands how relentless and heartfelt her work with students is, and what expertise and intricacies in the subject matter she does not spare herself to teach. How her students, captivated by the inspiration for art that she cultivates in them, win prizes, and competitions, and are granted professional performances at national and international exhibitions and forums by tough juries. The knowledge and practices that its students gain as a result of her dedication enable them to become outstanding professionals in a very short period of time, marked by excellence in a competitive setting. Biserova creates, introduces, and continuously develops and upgrades her own methods, as well as incorporating an extremely diverse and wide range of materials and technological tools in her teaching activities in the disciplines "Graphics and Technologies" and "Graphic Design," making the work process interesting and accessible to students regardless of the circumstances. Snezhina Biserova's teaching approaches are based on personal experimentation and her extensive expertise with a wide range of materials and techniques, which are fitted to the learning process at various levels. Biserova has significant visual arts teaching experience at Sofia University (since 2017). She has classes in all bachelor's courses of the specialties "Fine Arts" and "Graphic Design" with compulsory and elective courses, as well as in Master's programs at the Department, after winning the competition for Associate Professor (in 2020) in Fine Arts (Graphics and Technologies and Graphic Design) at the Department of Visual Arts of FESA.

4. Contributions:

The contributions offered by candidate Assoc. Prof. Snezhina Bisserova, Ph.D. extremely accurately and argumentatively define the merits of the habilitation thesis presented for consideration. As a result, I accept and admire them completely. Here I will list a few of them, as I see innovation and their benefits:

- The realization of an author's recognizable, contemporary graphic works derived from original technological practices, derived to an authentic, successfully functioning graphic

language, allowing many opportunities for development and upgrade, without worrying about repetition and unification, is a significant achievement and contribution.

- Another significant contribution that I would like to discuss is the achievement of various degrees of graphic artistic transformation using digital graphic software to create multi-layer images of various natures and sources in complicated compositions and hierarchies.

- An extremely inventive application of an engraving effect to accentuate graphic expressiveness via the usage of an engraver software package.

- Building and developing personal methods and techniques in the use of digital software for the purposes of classical graphics.

- Contributions to known techniques and processes related to traditional printmaking technologies in completely unique and innovative manners in her author's work and education, with undeniable and amazing results. It relates to the use of the personal elements in aquatint techniques, as well as the properties of dry or dispersed copier toner for laser printers in manual transfer.

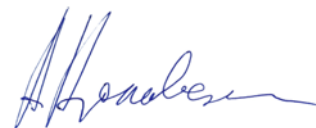
- Also is the introduction and usage of new, low-toxic printing technologies in the teaching of the discipline "Graphics and Technology".

- And, of course, Snezhina Biserova's enormous contribution to the development of the artist's book genre, where she is unquestionably one of the most prominent specialists in Bulgaria with her impressive way of visualizing the concept and conveying the message through "parallel partnership of graphic image and typography."

In conclusion:

Considering Snezhina Biserova's impressive accomplishments in graphic arts and her notable expertise in teaching, I highly recommend that the esteemed scientific jury appoint Snezhina Koleva Biserova as a "Professor" in the Higher Education Field 8. Art, Professional Area 8.2. Fine Arts (Graphics and Technologies), Faculty of Educational Studies and the Arts, Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski".

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Prof. Anna Tsolevska, Ph.D.