

REVIEW

By Prof. Dr. Oleg Gochev
Faculty of Fine Arts
National Academy of Arts

For the submitted work
Of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Rostislava Georgieva Todorova-Encheva
Regarding the competition for the occupation of the academic position of
Professor
At the Konstantin Preslavsky University of Shumen

Field of higher education: **8. Arts**

Professional field: **8.2. Fine arts (Theoretical aspects of fine arts)**

Faculty and department where the competition is announced: **Faculty of Education, Department of Visual Arts, Theory and Methodology**

Number and date of the issue of the State Gazette in which the announcement is published: **SG no. 98/17.11.2020**

1. **Contest details:**

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Rostislava Georgieva Todorova-Encheva is the only candidate in the announced competition. No violations of its procedure have been committed. The applicant has fulfilled the minimum national requirements under Art. 2b, para. 2 and 3 of the Act for the Development of the Academic Staff of the Republic of Bulgaria (ADASRB), as well as the rules for the collection, updating and use of scientometrics data in SHU.

2. **Applicant details:**

Rostislava Georgieva Todorova-Encheva was born in Shumen. She graduated in Theology and Pedagogy of Fine Arts (with specialization in Graphics) at the Konstantin Preslavsky University of Shumen, in both

bachelor's and master's degrees, respectively in 1998 and 2003. She continued her educational and scientific development as a full-time doctoral student at the same university, acquiring a PhD degree in 2008 after a successful public defense of a dissertation on "The inverted perspective as a canonical method for constructing the iconic space". The candidate's teaching career began in 2004 as a part-time, and until 2013 passed through the positions of full-time and senior assistant professor. Since the same 2013, Rostislava Todorova-Encheva has been an associate professor at the Konstantin Preslavsky University of Shumen. She has numerous scientific publications and researches, works hard in the field of fine arts (drawing, painting and icon painting), has participated in over 80 national and international exhibitions and has won several awards.

3. Description of scientific works:

The habilitation work "Symbol and Meaning: The Concept of God's Glory in Late Byzantine Iconography" (the full nomenclature of the published work is: **Todorova, R.** *Symbol and Meaning: The Concept of God's Glory in Late Byzantine Iconography*. Shumen: UI "Episkop Konstantin Preslavski", 2020, 204 pp., 29 ill.; ISBN 978-619-201-418-6), presented by the candidate, has a volume of 168 pp. It is structured in an introduction and three chapters, the second of which has three paragraphs and the third - three paragraphs and five subparagraphs; the monograph ends with a conclusion, a summary and a bibliography including 236 titles. The study is accompanied by 29 illustrations and their corresponding list.

The habilitation work is supported by six articles and scientific reports published in specialized journals in the field of arts, two studies published in specialized volumes in the field of arts, three participations in national scientific, educational or artistic projects, one leadership of a national scientific project. What is more, the candidate is the author of 29 publications - studies, articles and scientific reports published in specialized scientific journals and read at scientific conferences, seminars and congresses - carried out in the years after the acquisition of the academic position of "Associate Professor". They give a proof of the exceptional activity of the candidate in the field of scientific forums and research projects.

4. Scientific contributions

I know the scientific work of Rostislava Todorova-Encheva from her book “The Iconic Perspective”, which was highly recommended to me some time ago by a colleague. Even then, I was very impressed by her writing style - complex and difficult to analyze and clarify theological and dogmatic topics were presented in an accessible and even fascinating way. Therefore, I approached her new book with a great interest, not only for the reason mentioned above, but also for the fact that I have worked in the field of Orthodox murals and the topic of the meaning and development of the symbol of God’s glory has always interested me. I will not hide the pleasure of reading this new work of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Rostislava Todorova, which carefully, precisely and accurately discusses the very delicate topic of one of the most important of artistic and theological point of view visual symbols - that of God’s uncreated light. It is the complexity of the topic and the study of the origin, genesis, semantics and development of the new type of mandorla in late Byzantine art - increasingly sensitive, debatable and unprovable with irrefutable historical facts theoretical and religious spaces – that require the researcher’s incredible efforts, objectivity, insight into the smallest details and their possible meanings, fine methodology, approaches and tools, similar only to the surgical one and more precisely to those of the ophthalmology surgery.

From the very beginning of the work, the object, the subject and the goals of the research are clearly stated. The tasks and methods for achieving these goals are outlined, as well as the expected results. The chronological scope of the research is focused on the period of Byzantine Hesychasm, when disputes were developed over the nature of God’s uncreated light, which influenced the mandorla symbol and complicated its form. Examples of subject and scenes from sacred objects in the territory of the Byzantine Empire at that time are analyzed. These patterns visualize complex theological theses about the basic iconographic symbol of the vision of God’s theophany or appearance, as well as the new type of its content and meaning. Important notions about the roots of the new type of the symbol are presented, based on numerous pieces of evidence. Of course, their author, in the very spirit of her serious professional scientific style, modestly calls them “hypotheses” about “the origin and semantics of the new type of mandorla and the potential influence of Hesychasm on them”. Despite its delicate style, the study draws very unequivocal conclusions, such as that the new type of “hesychastic mandorla” originated in the capital Constantinople, or that the earliest example of the new type of mandorla could be seen in the Church of Jesus Christ the Savior at the Chora monastery, or last but not least, it

is the conclusion that the word affects the image and transforms it into a visible exegesis of theological thought, which gives a chance to mark the complicated version of the symbol with the formula “hesychastic type” to note the changes in its structure - a combination of geometric diamond shapes with concave sides and a rectangle laid on an ellipse or a circle, with or without rays of light. This complex star shape is interpreted Trinitarian in the context of the iconographic subject of Transfiguration, but also depicts the explosive brilliance of the *lux increate* of God’s glory and energies, as well as the space that God inhabits. The color is also subjected to the concept of the blinding radiance of God’s symbol.

Here I would like to make a small comment on the repeated use of the term “monochrome” and its derivative definitions in relation to the holy characters who entered some of the mandorlas (celestial army such as *angels, archangels, seraphim, cherubim*, etc.) (e.g., p. 132, 133, 134, 136, 138, 139, 140, 165, etc.). It is clear that these characters take on the color of the mandorla, and if it is more or less bluish, the term is quite logically and naturally used correctly. Following the principles and rules of the color science - the only science that deals with the problems and laws of colors and their combination, there is *monochrome* when we talk about the presence of one color and its tonal development when mixed with black and white or gray derivatives. But there are mandorlas that are grayish and then we can’t talk about “monochrome” (e.g. Fig. 24 *Assumption of the Virgin* (detail), mosaic, ca. 1315-1321, nave, monastery of Chora, Constantinople; and Fig. 25 *Assumption of the Virgin*, fresco, 14th century, St. Peter the Great Church, Berende, Sofia region). In these specific examples in the monograph, it may be more appropriate to be used the term “achromaticity”, which marks the complete absence of color, since black and white are not colors, again according to the principles of the color science. Of course, the achromatic mandorlas in question may in fact be slightly colored - the laws of painting do apply in the mural painting and very rarely do the artists really work in absolutely pure achromaticity. Personally, I make my comment only on the basis of my visit to only one of the quoted beautiful sacred sites - the Chora Monastery in Istanbul. In 2010 I had the opportunity to look long and carefully with binoculars at the mosaic with the *Assumption* scene, in which the mandorla is perfectly achromatic, i.e. - gray. I also have some high quality and detailed photos.

In conclusion, I would like to state the following - the habilitation work of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Rostislava Georgieva Todorova-Encheva is a serious scientific study with a future application in both theoretical and practical (artistic) field.

The style and language of the author, as I noted above, is rich and complex, but at the same time not difficult to perceive the ideas and conclusions set out in the study. There is an ideal balance of scientific terminology and clearly formulated theses that complement and enrich each other.

The habilitation thesis is an original research based on the author's numerous years of work, built on a large number of scientific publications by other researchers.

Scientific work draws several remarkable conclusions that will be useful in many ways.

The main contributions in the habilitation work, indisputable in my opinion, are:

- The issues related to the symbol of God's glory in the late Byzantine iconography are examined in a **separate scientific work** for the first time;
- The work proves that the model of the complicated type of mandorla **originated in Constantinople** at the end of the 13th and the beginning of the 14th century, and after that it spread in the Orthodox murals and miniatures throughout Byzantium and its periphery, as well as in the neighboring countries;
- The study proves the significance of this monolithic as meaning and symbolism, form and color mandorla, called "**hesychastic type**" **mandorla** and its subsequent widespread use in Byzantine art.

The following citations of the author are also presented in the documents:

- A citation in a scientific publication, referenced and indexed in world-famous databases of scientific information – **Jackson, C.** "*The Illuminations of Mukhlis ibn 'Abdallah al-Hindi: Identifying Manuscripts from Late Medieval Konya*", ***Muqarnas Online***, 36, Issue 1, 2019, pp. 41–60, pp. 50-52 Indexed in: (Web of Science)

- Six citations in monographs and collective volumes with scientific review – **Stefanov, S.** „Perspective as a means of expression in the fine arts. Symbolic Significance of the Perspective”, *Annual of the Konstantin Preslavsky University of Shumen*, Volume XXIII D, Shumen: UI “Episkop Konstantin Preslavsky”, 2019, pp. 877-884, p. 878; **Petrova, R.** „The Ideas of the New Age: From Giotto to Leonardo“, *Annual of the Konstantin Preslavsky University of Shumen*, Volume XXIII D, Shumen: UI “Episkop Konstantin Preslavsky”, 2019, pp. 836-846, p. 839, 840, 841, 842; **Stoilova, R.** „The Price of Art: A Blood-Red Mirror for \$ 1.1 Million“, *Annual of the Konstantin Preslavsky University of Shumen*, Volume XXIII D, Shumen: UI “Episkop Konstantin Preslavsky”, 2019, pp. 856-863, p. 857; **Stefanova, L.** „Iconographic features in the images of the holy co-apostles Cyril and Methodius and their disciples.” In: **Ivanov, I.** (ed.) *Annunciation and Mission: Missionary and Enlightenment Work of the Holy*

Brothers Cyril and Methodius and St. Clement of Ohrid. Sofia: UI “St. Kliment Ohridski”, 2018, pp. 173-193, pp. 174, 185; **Georgiev, D.** *Paremiological genre forms in the medieval paratexts*. Marginalia, Book 3. Shumen: UI “Bishop Konstantin Preslavsky”, 2017, 211 pp., p. 20; **Teneva, D.** “The iconography of the Feast of the Transfiguration: historical and artistic aspects”, *Annual of the Konstantin Preslavsky University of Shumen*, Volume XIX D, Shumen: UI “Episkop Konstantin Preslavsky”, 2015, pp. 242-248, p. 244)

- Three citations or reviews in unreferred journals with scientific review - **Makarova N. I.** “Rainbow motif in Christian art”, *Ideas and Ideals*, 2019, Vol. 11, № 2, Part 2, pp. 410-419. DOI: 10.17212/2075-0862-2019-11.2.2-410-419, pp. 413; **Grunova, Z., Holesova, M.** “Ellipse and Oval in Baroque Sacral Architecture in Slovakia”, *Civil and Environmental Engineering*, Vol. 13, no. 1, 2017, pp. 30-41, p. 32; **Cvetković, B.** ON THE PROBLEM OF NIMBI ON MINIATURES IN THE MANUSCRIPT OF PARISINUS GRAECUS 1242. In: *PROCEEDINGS OF THE NEW SERIES, Museum of the Application of Art*, Belgrade, 2014, 10, pp. 7-16; p. 7)

5. Teaching work

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Rostislava Todorova-Encheva is extremely active in her teaching activities. She has written **four textbooks** (*Perspective*. Shumen: CDO of SHU “Bishop Konstantin Preslavski”, 2013, 86 pp., 8 ill.; *Art criticism*. Shumen: CDO of SHU “Bishop Konstantin Preslavski”, 2013, 64 pp., 14 ill.; *Fundamentals of the theory of artistic creativity*. Shumen: CDO of SHU “Bishop Konstantin Preslavski”, 2013, 96 pp., 33 ill.; *Stereochemistry of organic reactions*. V. Tarnovo: Faber, 2011, 219 pp., ISBN: 978-954-400-489-7 Section: “Methods for depicting spatial objects” (co-authored with Enchev, D.), **a teaching aid** (*Perspective*. Part I. V. Tarnovo: Faber, 2011, 144 pp., 71 ill.; ISBN: 978-954-775-477-4) and **four studies** (“The Myth of Christ in a Rocket: The Transfiguration Mandorla in Balkan Post-Byzantine Art”, *Annual of Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”, Faculty of Science, Education and Arts, Book of Arts*, Volume 113, Year I, 2020, ISSN 2738-7062, pp. 431-454; “The second Tsarevgrad between IX and XIX c.: The Revival iconography of Veliki Preslav”. In: *Preslav Literary School*, vol. XVIII, Shumen: UI “Episkop Konstantin Preslavski”, 2018, pp. 356-375, ISSN 2603-4522. Indexed in: Central and Eastern European Online Library (CEOOL); “From Lozengrad to Russia: Anastas Krakklisiski and the Shumen painters *Annual of the Konstantin Preslavsky University of Shumen*, Volume XXI D, Shumen: UI “Episkop

Konstantin Preslavsky”, 2017, pp. 589-609, ISSN 1314-6769; “The Aureole and the Mandorla: Aspects of the Symbol of the Sacral from Ancient Cultures to Christianity”, *Studia Academica Sumenensia*, 3, 2016, pp. 199-223, ISSN 2367-5446. Indexed in: ERIH PLUS - European Reference Index for the Humanities). She has **lectured** and taught seven subjects at the bachelor’s degree (Art Theory, Art Theory, Art Criticism, Perspective, Plastic Anatomy, Christian Art and Icon Painting) and four at the master’s degree (Art Theory, History of Visual Arts, Art Drawing and Icon Painting). In 2019 she gave a lecture course on Perspective at the Faculty of Fine Arts, Trakia University, Edirne, Turkey - teaching mobility under the Erasmus + program.

She has been a **scientific supervisor** of one master’s and two bachelor’s thesis, a scientific supervisor of six student publications; a scientific supervisor of presentations of scientific reports to four students abroad and six in Bulgaria; she has participated in nine research projects of the Department of Visual Arts, Theory and Methodology, funded by Konstantin Preslavsky University of Shumen, which includes a joint work with students. She has supervised one doctoral student, as well as on his publications and scientific reports, and has written reviews for five doctoral students. She has organized a number of student participations in master classes, art workshops and exhibitions of the student’s iconographic studio, founded by her.

6. Conclusion

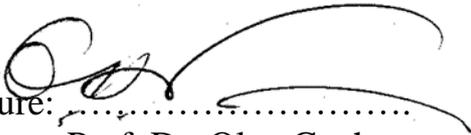
Given that the habilitation thesis deals with a current and socially significant topic, it is written with erudition and knowledge of the issue and in general its contribution is outlined simultaneously in two planes: theoretical and practical, I believe that it will help lecturers, students and doctoral students working, researching and studying in the field of Orthodox art.

After getting acquainted with the presented habilitation work, with the publications, the artistic, scientific and teaching activity of the candidate and the analysis of their significance and the scientific contributions contained in them, I give my **positive assessment**.

I believe that the work **fully meets the requirements** of the Act for the Development of the Academic Staff of the Republic of Bulgaria (ADASRB) and of the Regulations for the Application of the ADASRB, and the Higher Education Act (HEA).

Having in mind the described merits and contributions of the habilitation work and the presented data on the scientific and artistic activity of the candidate, I would like to recommend the esteemed scientific jury to **vote positively** and to submit a report-proposal to the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Education for **the election** of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Rostislava Georgieva Todorova-Encheva for the academic position of Professor in: field of higher education 8. Arts, Professional field 8.2. Fine Arts (Theoretical aspects of Fine Arts) at the Konstantin Preslavsky University of Shumen.

25.02.2021

Signature: 
Prof. Dr. Oleg Gochev