

STANDPOINT

from

Prof. Dr. Boris Serginov

on

Habilitation thesis: "Seven creative projects and extended summary"

of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Monika Popova (NBU)

for the acquisition of the academic position "Professor" in the scientific specialty:

"Art History and Fine Arts"

scientific field: 8. Arts

professional direction:

8.2. Fine Arts

New Bulgarian University

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Monika Popova was born in Sofia and she is a graduate of the National Academy of Arts at all levels of higher education, a Doctor at NBU and a longtime lecturer at the University.

In the extended summary presented to the works which are the real habilitation work of Popova, my colleague Assoc. Prof. Dr. Popova writes: "The exhibition "Vacuum" from 2019 is my largest project so far and most definitely represents me in the creative genesis. In the exhibition I display over 150 works: large-scale paintings, drawings and ceramic sculptures created over the past 25 years.

In the project I show works from different cycles, which have their retrospective character."

Popova continues: me from the exhibitions:

"Maximum degree of pain" and "Top layer points", both projects are a manifestation of a very strong and compressed emotion, where the detail is ignored in favor of the simplified symbol. Just as the genesis of the sign in communication reaches the hieroglyphics, so the genesis of my maturity in the image initiated by the pain led me to visions similar to pictograms.

In both projects, the pain is alleviated, through radical intervention of visual elements, such as colored spots, dots, dualistic symbols, to all sorts of visual sign behaviors, but on the basis of self-irony.

- The project - "Maximum degree of pain" - Gallery "Industrial" - town. Sofia, 2015
The exhibition is dedicated to my Mother, or more precisely a visualization of those painful 4 months in which I parted with my Mother.

"This is a project, a symbol of the horror of separation. Symbol reduced to an image - a constant. An image associating with a border. Overcoming the border or the horizon is painful. It is painful, perhaps especially for the witnesses. I witnessed my Mother crossing the horizon.

This transition created images, situations, and states that I summarized into characters like a letter, line, spot, or a dot. The difference between "before" and "after" is that art filters out the pain and leaves a trace or line of maximum pain. "

The paintings are large format and deeply emotionally saturated. The images carry the feeling of hieroglyphics. The largest painting is 8 meters long.

Several symbols are intertwined in the images, such as: a grave, a mummy, a tomb, a body, a box, a cocoon, or the cell from which the soul cannot be freed.

Along with the paintings, large-scale ceramic sculptures are shown, made on the principle of rotation and engraved with the ceramic technique "sgraffito". Each with a height of 210 cm.

For myself, I appreciate the exhibition at the "Industrial" Gallery as one of my greatest creative achievements.

- The project "SIEVE" in the Gallery "Rayko Alexiev", Sofia, 2016.

The project presented everything created during my stay in the studios of the GEDOK Women's Foundation in Munich, Germany. It is a continuation of the idea for the embroidered paintings, which I transferred to metal sieves.

The sieves with which I covered the floor of Raiko Alexiev Gallery numbered 500 pieces, 30 of them were embroidered.

The idea of covering the hall in the form of an installation with metal sieves (symbol of the wife, housewife, woman, "witch", home comfort...) is for the viewer passing between the sieves / which at first glance and on this scale look like air balloons, glass globes or engagement rings / to reveal surprisingly embroidered sieves. The idea of the sieve and the sifted thing as a ritual of life is a basic human behavior in search of the most valuable. This is also the meaning of my life: my daily life; my art, my behavior as a wife and mother; my sense of value. What remains and survives after the blows of sifting is in most cases beautiful, like love, but sometimes it may look like a woman with a machine gun, or a murdered Prometheus. The experience remains on the sieve!

We live in the age of the World Sieve; on which we hope to remain the most valuable - human life!

The exhibition featured about 30 large-scale color drawings, which I created during my stay at GEDOK and presented at the exhibition "SIEVE". To them I added an installation with large-scale ceramic plastic created in the brickyard of the company "TERRA" in the town of Cherven Bryag.

My husband Metodi Popov also took part in the exhibition with 40 drawings, which were also realized on the territory of GEDOK

The exhibition was opened as a vernissage.

- Project- "Skinned and sewn" -Gallery "Art Alley" -town. Sofia, 2016

The exhibition "Skinned and Sewn" is a creative joint project of me and my husband - Metodi Popov in the Sofia gallery "Art Alley", dedicated to a favorite topic for both of us - "Heads". I "embroidered" the ceramic heads, and Metodi was "skinning" them trying to find shapes and structures, surprising even himself.

At the exhibition I presented 16 sewn ceramic heads expressing different states, and Metodi 6 porcelain -skinned heads based on the functional shape of the household, such as the toilet bowl.

The interesting thing in the project is the combination of diametrically different means of expression, such as ceramics with embroidery, as well as household items transformed into art.

From completely simple volumes, various emotional states were created on the basis of symbols, metaphors, visualizations through technical approach.

- Project - "1 + 1 = 1 + 1" - Gallery of Contemporary Art at the Union of Bulgarian Artists - 6 Shipka Street, 2017.

"The exhibition" $1 + 1 = 1 + 1$ "is a project that is the result of communication between two authors from different creative zones, but with respect for the other and equality between them.

2 years ago Ivan Kulekov offered Monika Popova to make a joint exhibition.

Two years later, Monika Popova decided to make a non-independent exhibition and invited Ivan Kulekov to ruin her independence.

Thus, everyone begins to do what he wants and as he wants, almost without the knowledge of the other.

They both seem to be doing what they know best, but:

- She's a lot of color,
- He with a lot of desire.

And so in the exhibition, what will be on the left will be on the right, but She with more color, and He with great desire.

Monika Popova is a lecturer at NBU, an Egyptologist and an artist with an attitude to the various means of expression in art, and her accents with sewing on things are always a provocation:

- Sews when it starts to become beautiful
- Sews when it starts to get easy
- Sews when, others have not sewn it
- Sews when you need to bring order

"She sews when something is torn."

"She sews when she turns her eyes."

- Sews when you need to be forgiven

"She sews when she's afraid to start."

- Sews when she has to finish...

Ivan Kulekov is a chemist, philosopher, journalist and writer: "What did he learn from people, and what did he learn from dreams."

The exhibition is the result of many years of communication between me and my friend Ivan Kulekov.

Ivan is a man with great energy and attitude to things and people outside the standard.

Her interdisciplinarity is what captivated me and provoked me to invite him to my project, where drawing, text and three-dimensional image are the main means of expression. The plastics in the form of wombs have tattooed texts by Kulekov, which, like the images on them, look like compressed messages, such as:

1 BABIES ARE BORN, CHILDREN DIE.

2 GOD CREATED MAN, TO CREATE GOD.

3 THE EARTH TURNS AROUND THE SUN IN ITSELF.

4 UNWANTED CHILD (shaped on the abdomen as a seal).

5 THE QUESTION IS NOT IN "WHY", BUT IN "BECAUSE".

6 TO LOOK FOR THE PERSON WHO CAN FIND YOU.

7 $1 + 1 = 1 + 1$

8 THE WORLD IS ONE AND LONELY.

9 TIME IS NOT WAITING FOR YOU. THE PATH IS WAITING FOR YOU.

10 WHEN YOU LEAVE, YOU WILL SAY "YOU DESERVED THE HEAVEN BECAUSE OF (THE MUSIC). (THE MUSIC is crossed out)

11. YOU WILL KEEP THE BALANCE IN YOUR LIFE ON YOUR BROKEN UMBILICAL CORD

12. next to them - a BUCKET WITH BROKEN STOMACHS

In addition to sculptures, the gallery was filled with alternating paintings of both in different colors, formats and concepts of balance between two diametrically different authors, at least visually. “

-The project - "Drawings before bedtime" - gallery "Art Alley" - Sofia, 2019.

"The exhibition presents drawings that I have created:

- in the hours before I fall asleep;
- in moments when the fatigue was so great that I could not feel my body;
- at times when instead of a pill I decided to take a fine pen;
- in moments when I could not transform happiness or pain in any other way;
- in moments when I wanted to dissolve into nothingness...!
- All nearly 80 drawings are written on my grandfather's paper and that's why they are yellow!

They should have had a petrographic diagrams on them and chemical formulas, but I filled them with pictograms of my life!

These paper sheets saved not only me but also the students. They distributed them to each other as something valuable and brought them back to life as gratitude!

That's what I did!"

/ the text is an annotation to the exhibition - author Monika Popova /

- 2019 "Upper layer points" -gallery "Red Dot" -town. Sofia

"The exhibition presents paintings on a scale that is difficult to pass through the door.

They are painted on the ground due to the inability to stand up.

They are painted as pictograms with a bottom layer of pain and love and with a top layer of points that neutralize pain and strengthen love.

/ the text is an annotation to the exhibition - author Monika Popova /

The exhibition presents six large-scale paintings, which are made in two layers:

- One is based on the pictogram writing on the principle of hieroglyphics, which shows figures or ideograms drawn in one breath, without prior marking, similar to calligraphic writing. They depict human states and images resembling huge hieroglyphic characters. Each image is displayed in a short time interval, as a first signal image is marked.

The pictograms are painted on the ground, similar to large-scale Japanese calligraphy, but influenced by my emotion towards ancient Egyptian hieroglyphics.

- The second or upper layer of points / as the exhibition itself is called / is diametrically different from the lower and is a punctuation of different colored points that are the same size and shape. Unlike the first layer, the upper occurs slowly and in the long run. This difference in technological and symbolic aspect is one of the expressions in placing the idea of dualistic principles.

Archetypal compaction, through this bipolar provocation, is the main idea in the whole project.

If in the lower layer we have the drama characteristic of my work, the upper layer obscures it, as should be the role of art. Despite the painful personal expression, art in its entirety should provoke a positive. So looking at the exhibition, the observer indicates happiness, harmony and ephemerality. All these nuances of feeling should

be part of the commitment of women's art. This positivity, albeit based on anxiety and worry, should be reassuring in the end.

That is why the points create another reality, parallel and mirrored of the life one. This second reality is a beautiful projection of our soul, which is painted from the heart and purifies the pain.

- 2019 "Embroidered in Black" - Gallery "Arosita" - Sofia

"EMBROIDERED IN BLACK " are CUBOIDS - a symbol of spirituality and knowledge. In Ancient Egypt were owned only by people who are engaged in art.

My cuboids are mothers, black but also white, embroidered with silk.

"Why are they Black Madonnas?"

According to the American Ella Rosette, a researcher of the Black Madonna: "This is "an official title that ordinary people, and only then the church, give to the dark Madonna, usually a miracle worker.

And once the community has given this privilege of divinity, the church cannot change that. If a fire or other disaster destroys the statue, the community replaces it with another, gives the same name, attributes the same miraculous power to it. And if they happen to bleach it, people continue to call it Black and to honor her."

The Mother of God in all its varieties is the heir of the many-faced ancient goddesses with the status of mother goddesses. They are a symbol of disease and health, love and hate, creation and destruction, girl and old woman, womb and grave, life and death... Different faces of the same goddess.

The African beginning of the human race for some is an explanation for the existence of the Black Mary. A great part of the icons of the Virgin Mary from early Christianity are depicted in dark color. The technique of construction is unique and

has no analogue in contemporary art. So far, such stylistics have not happened and it is my personal creative achievement, which is a product of my professional commitment as a ceramicist and Egyptologist, but also because of my life role as a mother. My daughter Christina participates as well in the exhibition and she also presents her concept of motherhood through sculptures and drawings, which often are my wonderful inspiration.

- "THE SWIMMER", INTRO Gallery Sofia, 2019

In "The Swimmer" exhibition, I present large-format paintings, ceramic sculptures and drawings that I have created in the last year.

My topic has been provoked since the summer of 2019, and for many years the summer for me is the period between the end of August and September. This is the time when I spend my vacation in Sozopol and more precisely on "Apollonia". These are the most beautiful days of the year for me; in my favorite place with my loved ones. During this period, the beach becomes my workplace and everything that happens and I see in this magical place becomes a subject of my art.

The swimmer was part of this summer, but also a symbol of the male presence in my life. It also became the subject of a painting with extraordinary color, atypical for my work. It was an emotional experiment because of the huge mix of colors.

I covered the creation process on the Internet, where my friends even tried to bring order to the color explosion.

However, I reached the end or maybe to the extreme... and I liked it!"

In the exhibition for the first time I show a combination of large-format drawing and ceramic sculpture, which is a precedent in my work.”

At the end, I confirm the mentioned contributions of the extended summary, the work of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Popova and the practical and teaching work, namely:

- I have been a lecturer at NBU since 1999 /20 years of work experience at NBU /

- For 20 years of work experience at NBU I have taught over 7,000 people; Every year I work with about 300 people per semester;

- I have a major role in the creation of ceramics workshops in 2001, which developed a module "Alternative Ceramics and Glass", later Ceramics and Porcelain”. “Digital Forms” in the bachelor program “Visual Arts”, as well as the master program “Ceramics and Porcelain”. “Contemporary digital forms” of NBU;

- At the moment I am the only full-time lecturer in Ceramics at NBU.

- In the face of a staff assistant, Violeta Sarankova, I have prepared the next generation of ceramics teacher of the NBU. I am the scientific director of her Bachelor's, Master's and Doctoral degrees in Ceramics. She has been a head teacher for two years and for the past two school years she has had the status of a staff guest in the NBU's ceramics programs! I am proud to have mentored and witnessed her growth as a person, professional and I hope a future full-time lecturer who will continue the ideas and directions set in the specialty Ceramics at NBU!

- In the last 7 years, the ceramics programs of NBU created by professionals who showed the level and behavior of contemporary authors and this was definitely proven at the Ceramics Festival in Sofia in the last 6 editions / with 6 awards for young authors /.

- My significant contribution in the field of development of ceramics programs at NBU and in general in the innovative behavior of the University is the creation of a 3D ceramic laboratory, of which I am one of the main sponsor, where the main presence is the 3D scanner for digital and plastic processing, as well as the 3D ceramic printer, which is the only one in Bulgaria and in the Balkans in general.

- My most important contribution as a teacher is the fact that in addition to the development of programs, courses in ceramics and facilities. I worked in the direction of its interdisciplinary professional orientation, which gave me the opportunity to teach in several areas:

- ceramics
- plastic
- drawing
- painting
- symbolism of the signs
- symbolism of the letters
- Egyptology
- the art and symbolism of Antiquity
- performance
- image stylization
- calligraphy
- collage

- In the last 7 years Ceramics NBU has become the best place for training in ceramics in Bulgaria. The students of Ceramics at NBU changed the face of

Bulgarian ceramics and turned it into modern and worthy of presentation at various festivals and biennials and on the world stage in general.

- My contribution as an artist is again interdisciplinary. I have the self-confidence of one of the leading names in the Bulgarian Artistic Guild in the field of drawing, painting and ceramics. "

Finally, the extended summary with the presented creative projects is an indisputable example of authorial professionalism as well as quality. I evaluate as excellent the scientific and creative qualities and contributions of the extended summary and the presented creative projects for habilitation work, its public, social, scientific and creative significance, the personal contribution of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Popova and the practical usefulness and relevance of the presented work.

I propose to the Honorable members of the scientific jury to give their consent for awarding and acquiring an academic position "Professor" to Assoc. Prof. Dr. Monica Popova under Code 8.2 "Fine Arts"

November 2, 2021

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Prof. Dr. Boris Serginov