

REVIEW

by Prof. Laura Ivanova Dimitrova, DSc

of a dissertation for obtaining the educational and scientific degree "Doctor",

Field of higher education 8. Art

Professional field 8.2. Fine Arts

Dissertation topic:

**Experimental techniques in the creation
of art objects in contemporary ceramic art**

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Violeta Zarankova graduated from the First Secondary School "Pencho Slaveykov", Sofia in 2007 from a class profiled in the field of fine arts.

She has a bachelor's and a master's degree from the New Bulgarian University, respectively: module "Ceramics and Glass", 2013 and "The Art of Glass and Ceramics in Architecture", 2016. Since 2017 she is a PhD student in the program "Visual and Plastic Arts" at the New Bulgarian University.

From February 2017 to October 2018 she was a part-time lecturer at the Department of Fine Arts at NBU, and from November 2018 she is a full-time guest lecturer at NBU, leading courses in ceramics, porcelain, 3D ceramic printing and Photoshop. She has taken part in conferences, seminars, internships, and projects related to contemporary art and art teaching.

Violeta Zarankova works in the field of contemporary art ceramics. She has taken part in an impressive number of exhibitions. She has been awarded two prizes for her work.

She is a member of the Union of Bulgarian Artists, Ceramics Section.

The dissertation includes an introduction, three chapters, conclusions and a list of references (over 70 sources are cited, of which 25 paper books, and over 45 digital books and electronic resources). There are two appendices to the dissertation. The first appendix contains the illustrative material to the text of the dissertation, and the second – information about the sources of the illustrative material.

The dissertation deals with current issues related to the multidisciplinary characteristic of the contemporary visual arts. The author of the dissertation considers the relevant issues in the context of the contemporary ceramic art, where traditional materials are combined with additional heterogeneous non-traditional materials and this often leads to “ignoring the established technological laws”.

The main research problem and the objects of research are precisely formulated. The hypothesis of the dissertation is developed. The main goals and objectives are outlined. The research methods used are consistent with the specifics of the dissertation.

In the first chapter of the dissertation entitled “Ceramics – History and Contemporaneity” the doctoral student traces the historical development of ceramic art from ancient times to the present day, paying special attention to the techniques and technologies in this field. The main technological inventions that have marked the technological progress of the ancient craft of ceramics, (such as

the first hand turning wheels, the first foot turning wheels), and the evolution of furnaces) are analyzed. Special attention is paid to the ceramics in the Bulgarian lands. Samples of ceramics on the territory of presentday's Bulgaria from the Neolithic era to the Bulgarian Renaissance are considered. Special attention is paid to: the Neolithic artifacts from Karanovo (Sliven region), Gradeshnitsa (Vratsa region), Azmashka and Dipsizka mounds (Stara Zagora region), etc.; the clay sculpture from the Chalcolithic (models of temples and homes and figures of women); the ceramic vessels from the Bronze Age; the Thracian ceramics from the Iron Age and from the time of the Hellenic colonization of Thracian settlements on the Black Sea coast; the typical for the First Bulgarian state painted ceramics of Preslav and its architectural, household and church art applications and the ceramics influenced by the Byzantine art; the ceramics from the time of the Second Bulgarian State – the appearance of the sgraffito technique and the improvement of the techniques for creating pottery, decorations and ceramic details used in the construction. A special place is given to the rise of Bulgarian ceramic centers during the Renaissance. The doctoral student outlines the peculiarities of ceramics in the twentieth century and the contribution in this field of a number of prominent world authors such as Rodin, Picasso, Miro, Fontana and others. The doctoral student follows the development of Bulgarian ceramics in the twentieth century and emphasizes the role of authors such as Stefan Dimitrov, Stoyan Raynov, Dimitar Bakardzhiev, Ivan Nenov, Georgi Kolarov, Vaska Emanouilova, Jova Raevska, Venko Kolev, Anna Grebenarova, Olya Kolcheva, Antonina Konzova, Prof. Krassimir Dzhidrov, Emilia Panayotova and others. She traces trends related to conceptuality in the contemporary art of ceramics. She analyzes the aesthetic changes in artistic and utilitarian ceramics that have occurred in the process of historical development and the technological progress in ceramic production. She examines the trends towards interdisciplinarity that affect the contemporary visual arts, including ceramics.

In the second chapter, entitled “Experimental techniques in the creation of art objects” are presented the possibilities for shaping through different molding technologies and the possibilities of different materials. Additional non-ceramic materials used in contemporary ceramic art are also presented; as well as: basic shaping techniques; the experiments; problem areas; the various techniques for modelling and the possibilities for applying materials with imported additives. A special place is given to non-traditional decorative techniques and alternative non-permanent decoration without heat treatment.

The third chapter, entitled “3D printing with ceramic materials”, briefly presents the history of 3D printing. Technologies and materials for 3D printing have been studied and eleven different methods have been presented, methods through which three-dimensional objects are created: Stereolithography (SLA), Masked Stereolithography (MSLA), Digital Light Processing (DLP), Fused Deposition Modeling (FDM), Selective Laser Sintering (SLS), Direct Metal Laser Sintering (DMLS), Selective Laser Melting (SLM), Electronic Beam Melting (EBM), Drop on Demand (DOD), Binder Jetting (BJ), Material Jetting (MJ). The advantages and disadvantages of each of the these methods are analyzed and its specific application as – the use of 3D printers and materials and their capabilities such as “the level of detail, strength and durability after printing”, the cost of the created works, the functionality, the ability to refine the printed prototype. The dynamics both in terms of technology and in terms of innovative materials in the field of 3D printing, its application in various fields of modernity is considered. The application of 3D printing in modern art ceramics is emphasized, and in particular, the results of the use of the 3D printer Delta WASP 2040, which the ceramic studios at NBU use, the advantages and the disadvantages of the respective method are taken into account. Contemporary authors in the field of ceramics who use 3D printing in their work are presented – Oliver van Herpt (b. 1989), Andrea Salvatori (p. 1975), Jade Crompton, Joana Schmitz, the artistic duo Bryan Czibesz and Shawn Spangler, etc., as well as some of the “artistic ceramic

and interdisciplinary studios that successfully apply 3D ceramic technologies in their projects and productions” – Kwambio (USA and Ukraine), Alterfact (Australia), Unfold (Belgium), Slip Rabbit Studio (USA), Polymorf (Sweden), OHMR (Belgium), Batit Studio (Israel) and others.

The author of the dissertation has also included a portfolio of her own artworks, which convincingly present her as an artist who is no stranger to the latest trends in the art of ceramics. Original, experimenting with the latest technical achievements and unusual combinations of materials, the works are at the same time conceptually definite, bold and provocative. They point out the connection between the present research and the practical realization of the author’s ideas in the field of art ceramics. Violeta Zarankova makes an in-depth study of experimental techniques in the creation of art objects in contemporary ceramic art and reaches several main conclusions:

- Every step in the historical development of ceramics as a craft and art has provoked significant changes;
- Contemporary art and the art of ceramics as part of it provoke a series of new changes;
- Stimulating the use and application of atypical for ceramic production treatments and materials leads ceramics to new artistic achievements;
- The author-viewer dialogue in contemporary ceramics is changing;
- The integration of 3D technologies in contemporary art ceramics modernizes ceramic art;
- Bulgarian contemporary ceramic art contains a huge potential, which can be revealed when the authors ignore the limitations of the “tradition”;

The doctoral student sets herself the ambitious task of doing research that would be “a basis for getting acquainted with contemporary ceramic art”. A research which provokes the “experiment with ceramic materials” and materials different from the traditional.

A research which may serve as a textbook for students studying ceramics at New Bulgarian University, as well as students and pupils from other schools and courses in the field of ceramic art.

For the contributions of this dissertation I consider:

- the chronological presentation of the development of ceramics around the world and in Bulgaria;
- the analysis of non-traditional concepts of contemporary ceramic art;
- tracking the development and applications of 3D printing technologies in ceramics;
- the research and analysis of 3D ceramic printing;
- defining the significant place of ceramics in contemporary art;
- documentary contribution – the collection of visual materials presenting works of classical and contemporary art ceramics, created in Bulgaria and around the world.

I would like to point out that the dissertation “Experimental Techniques in the Creation of Art Objects in Contemporary Ceramic Art” is one of the few studies of the last twenty years dedicated to the contemporary art of ceramics, which can serve as an aid in the education of students from secondary art schools and schools profiled in the field of fine arts, as well as in the education of university students and professionals in the field of art.

The presented illustrative materials accurately and convincingly complement the dissertation.

The abstract correctly reflects the content of the dissertation.

The dissertation deals with significant problems related to the contemporary art of ceramics.

The dissertation has contributions with mainly practical character.

The used literature sources are cited correctly.

The dissertation could serve as a basis for future theoretical and practical research in the same field or in other related fields.

My assessment of the dissertation and the abstract is positive.

I am convinced that Violeta Ilieva Zarankova should be awarded the PhD degree.

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