

REVIEW

By Prof. Svetoslav Angelov Kosev PhD,
"St. Cyril and St. Methodius" University of Veliko Tarnovo
of the materials submitted for participation in the competition
for the academic position "associate professor"
at "Paisii Hilendarski" University of Plovdiv
in: field of higher education 8. Arts
professional field 8.2. Fine Arts Graphic – Design and Photography

In the competition for "associate professor", announced in the State Gazette, issue 31 of 11.04.2025 and on the website of "Paisii Hilendarski" University of Plovdiv for the needs of the Department of "Aesthetic Education" Faculty of Pedagogy – Nikolay Dobrev Radulov PhD, participated as a single candidate

1. General presentation of the materials received

Subject:

By Order No. PD-22-1330 of 10 June 2025 of the Rector of "Paisii Hilendarski" University of Plovdiv, I have been appointed as a member of the scientific jury for the competition for the academic position of "associate professor" at University of Plovdiv in the field of higher education 8. Arts, professional direction 8.2. Fine Arts – Graphic Design and Photography, announced for the needs of the Department of Aesthetic Education at the Faculty of Education.

Only one candidate has submitted documents for participation in the announced competition:

Dr. Nikolay Dobrev Radulov, honorary lecturer at the Department of Aesthetic Education at "Paisii Hilendarski" University of Plovdiv.

The set of materials submitted by Nikolay Dobrev Radulov PhD on paper is in accordance with the Regulations for the Development of Academic Staff at Plovdiv University and includes the following documents:

APPLICATION form to the Rector for admission to the competition;

AUTOBIOGRAPHY in European format;

A diploma of higher education with a Master's degree with an annex (original and copy) or a notarised copy;

DIPLOMA for the degree of Doctor of Education and Science (original and copy) or a notarial certified copy;

LIST of scientific works;

RESEARCH PAPERS (copies of publications);

LIST of citations;

STATEMENT of compliance with minimum national and additional faculty requirements (if any);

ANNOTATIONS of the materials according to Article 65. of the PRASPU (in Bulgarian and foreign language) with an extended academic progression reference if no monograph is submitted;

self-assessment of contributions;

DECLARATION of originality and authenticity of the attached documents;

CERTIFICATE of work experience;

DOCUMENTS of academic work;

DOCUMENTS of research work;

DOCUMENTS relating to artistic activity;

DOCUMENTS according to the additional requirements of the faculty concerned;

OTHER documents;

PAPER DOCUMENTS KIT from item 1 to item 17 - 2 pcs;

SET from item 1 to item 17 - 2 pcs.

According to Appendix 6, List of Scientific Works, candidate Nikolay Dobrev Radulov PhD has submitted a total of 9 scientific works, 2 monographs, 1 dissertation, and 6 articles and reports. In Appendix 8, Compliance with Minimum National and Additional Faculty Requirements, Section B, a list of 3 major artistic achievements has been added, which I find a little confusing, but I will assume that the documents submitted for review are those described in Appendix 6, as the annotations are on them. Three scientific papers outside the dissertation are accepted for review and are taken into account in the final assessment: two monographs and one article, each in Bulgarian. The

dissertation and five scientific papers outside the scope of the competition are not reviewed. The distribution of scientific papers by relevant categories, in the country and abroad, is as follows: three publications in the country.

2. Short biographical data (of the candidate)

Nikolay Dobrev Radulov was born on March 30, 1978. He completed his bachelor's degree (2008) and master's degree (2010) in the specialty "Pedagogy of Fine Arts Education" at the Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts in Plovdiv, where he also obtained a PhD in Fine Arts Education Methodology in 2015.

His professional experience includes activities in the field of pre-press preparation, graphic design, video, and photography. Since 2018, he has been the manager of Vreme 2001 Ltd. and a video editing specialist at Oborishte Ltd. Academically, he was an honorary lecturer at the Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts – Plovdiv in the period 2015-2016, and since 2022 he has been teaching at the Department of Aesthetic Education at the Faculty of Education at "Paisii Hilendarski" University of Plovdiv again as an honorary lecturer.

He is the author of a significant number of independent and group art projects, exhibitions, and art initiatives, realized both in Bulgaria and internationally. He is actively involved in painting, sculpture, graphic design, photography, and video.

Nikolay Radulov actively participates in national scientific and educational projects and has scientific publications in academic collections and yearbooks. Among his awards are the "Creator of the Year" award from the Municipality of Panagyurishte (2013) and first prize for best video production at the International Music Competition "Voice of Aphrodite," Cyprus (2022).

He speaks English, Russian, and Spanish, has excellent computer and technical skills, and works with a number of professional software products. Nikolay Radulov has significant experience in organizing and conducting art forums, demonstrating organizational and communication skills.

3. General description of the applicant's activities

Nikolay Dobrev Radulov has been an honorary lecturer at the Faculty of Education and the Faculty of Mathematics and Informatics at "Paisii Hilendarski" University of Plovdiv since 2022. He teaches courses such as "Methods of Teaching Fine Arts," "Composition," "Plastic Anatomy," "Periodical Design," "Artistic Photography," and "Computer Applications

in Graphic Design." He has developed a curriculum for the course "Artistic Photography" and has introduced new approaches, including the use of original educational videos based on the concept of mixed reality. Radulov organizes artistic and creative initiatives and exhibitions with students, thereby actively supporting their professional development and creative growth.

I have no serious comments regarding the materials submitted by Nikolay Dobrev Radulov PhD in this competition and consider them to be original and authentic! Since I do not have access to the candidate's dissertation, which is on the topic of "Watercolor Technique and the Professional Training of Students in the Specialty of Pedagogy of Fine Arts Education," and I cannot make a comparison with the monograph "Watercolor Technique. New Approaches to Teaching Fine Arts at the University," I assume that they differ sufficiently. This statement is based on the fact that in Appendix 8, this work is listed in Section D, Column 7. Published book based on a defended dissertation for the award of an educational and scientific degree "doctor" or for the award of a scientific degree "doctor of science."

Once again, I would like to make a recommendation to the management of the Faculty of Education at Plovdiv University regarding the conduct of competitions in professional field 8.2. Fine Arts, namely to pay greater attention to the practical artistic work of the candidates!

Nikolay Dobrev Radulov's monograph "The Portrait: From Painting to Photography" offers an in-depth and detailed analysis of the relationship and mutual influence between the painted and photographic portrait, tracing the development of the genre from prehistoric cave paintings to contemporary art photography. The study focuses on the process of transformation in the aesthetic, stylistic, and psychological approaches to the human image, demonstrating a rich understanding of the complex evolution of the genre in a historical and cultural context.

It takes a deep dive into the historical continuity and changes in portrait art, tracing the connections between classical painting traditions and modern trends in art photography. The author highlights the significant influences of the classical painting approach, especially in the areas of composition, light, colour, and the psychological construction of images, which find new life and application in contemporary photography thanks to digital technologies.

The study is particularly relevant and significant with its original examination of the digital environment as a key factor facilitating the transfer of classical pictorial principles from painting to photography. Radulov thoroughly explores the possibilities offered by specialized image processing software, analysing how contemporary technical means influence the aesthetic and conceptual aspects of portraiture, which is a poorly developed topic in the Bulgarian academic context.

Particularly valuable is the practical side of the work, which includes an analysis of the author's own experience in creating artistic photographic portraits based on painting techniques. Radulov clearly illustrates how these classical approaches can be integrated into contemporary photographic practice, successfully presenting both the technical and conceptual aspects of the process.

The monograph also includes a detailed comparative analysis of individual works and styles representing different historical and cultural periods. This allows the common and specific features of portraiture as a genre in the visual arts and artistic photography to be clearly highlighted, significantly enriching the scientific and practical contribution of the work.

Here I would disagree with the characterization of primitive people as artists, since, in my opinion, the artist's aspiration is to create art for art's sake, which manifests itself at a much later stage of evolution.

In summary, this work represents a significant academic contribution to the theory and practice of portrait art and would be of great benefit to specialists in the field of visual arts, as well as to teachers, students, and a wide range of people interested in the history and development of artistic practices.

The second work submitted for review, "The Technique of Watercolour Painting: New Approaches to Teaching Fine Arts at the University," is an in-depth and detailed study devoted to watercolour painting as a technique and teaching method in the contemporary university environment. Radulov presents a comprehensive historical overview of watercolour painting from prehistory to the present day, examining the evolution of materials, techniques, and stylistic approaches throughout different cultural and historical periods.

A major contribution of the work is the clarification of the specific characteristics of the watercolour technique and the need to modernize teaching methods, especially through the integration of modern digital technologies. The author presents in detail the concept of

mixed reality (MR) as an innovative approach that can significantly enrich and improve the learning process in a university environment. This approach involves the use of original educational videos that combine real and virtual information, allowing students to perceive the learning content in a more interactive and engaging way.

Radulov proposes a methodological scheme built around the idea of mixed reality, emphasizing its application in the study of watercolour technique. This methodology integrates specially created video materials, structured according to the specifics of watercolour technique training, with clearly defined duration, visual presentation of techniques, and practical guidelines. The author has developed a methodological resource base that includes educational videos on the three most common types of watercolour painting: "wet on dry," "wet on wet," and "watercolour pencil painting." These resources aim to provide visually clear and concise information that increases motivation and the assimilation of the teaching material.

Particularly valuable are the practical and theoretical results presented from the application of the methodological scheme in various university specialties such as "Pedagogy of Fine Arts Education," "Preschool and Primary School Pedagogy," and "Graphic Design with Advertising." Radulov successfully demonstrates how the use of mixed reality leads to an improvement in student interest and engagement, as well as the development of their professional competencies and skills.

As a critical note, it should be noted that there is a need for more detailed documentation of empirical results and a broader presentation of feedback from students and teachers. The inclusion of experiments conducted with students in the illustrative section would have been interesting to me. As a minor remark, I would also add that there are some repetitions in the text. On page 114, for example, the word "clips" is repeated five times in the first three sentences of the paragraph!

In summary, the work represents a significant and timely contribution to the methodology and practice of teaching in the field of visual arts, with a particularly important emphasis on the integration of mixed reality. The monograph is a useful and necessary resource for teachers, students, and researchers interested in innovative and digitally supported educational approaches.

Nikolay Dobrev Radulov's publication "New Approaches to Teaching Watercolour Techniques to Students in Pedagogical and Creative Specialties" overlaps to some extent with

the monograph "Watercolour Technique. New Approaches to Teaching Fine Arts at the University" and offers an innovative perspective on educational practices in the university environment, with a particular emphasis on the use of modern technologies.

The article observes an improvement in the results of using mixed reality (MR) as an innovative approach that can significantly enrich and improve the learning process in a university environment. As a result of empirical research among students, the author presents statistical data confirming the positive attitude and increased receptivity to the learning material presented through the MR approach. 92% of students note that videos significantly facilitate the assimilation of the material, and 76% categorically like this new teaching method.

In conclusion, I can say that the scientific works of Dr. Nikolay Dobrev Radulov demonstrate clearly defined and significant contributions to the development of theory and practice in the field of visual arts and art education. His research focuses on the relationship between painting and photography, as well as innovative methods for teaching watercolour techniques. In this sense, Dr. Radulov's scientific developments are valuable both theoretically and practically, offering innovative approaches and teaching methods in a university environment and significantly enriching pedagogical practice in the field of fine arts.

Proof of the resonance and applicability of Nikolay Radulov's contributions can be found in the reviews and feedback on his authorial products and creative endeavours, published in specialist and media publications in the field of arts. These publications actively reflect his presence and recognition in both a regional and national context, which testifies to the broad social and cultural impact of his work. The above confirms the significance of Dr. Radulov's contributions and their positive impact on the development of the visual arts and pedagogical practice.

4. Evaluation of the personal contribution of the candidate

Nikolay Dobrev Radulov's personal contribution to the presented publications and works is clearly expressed. Each of the reviewed studies demonstrates an independent and original definition of scientific and practical problems, which testifies to his independent research and creative activity.

The contributions related to the study of the interrelations between painting and photographic portraiture, as well as the methods for teaching watercolour technique with the help of modern digi-

tal technologies, are the result of his own ideas and efforts. Radulov demonstrates the ability to integrate theoretical concepts with practical applications, supported by empirical data collected and processed by him personally.

The significance and originality of his scientific developments are also confirmed by a number of positive reviews of his authorial products and creative performances.

As a reviewer, I believe that the contributions and results of Radulov's work are largely his own achievement and are the fruit of his individual research and creative potential. This testifies to the high quality and authority of the presented works, justifying his candidacy for the academic position of "associate professor."

5. Critical comments and recommendations

The recommendation I can make to Nikolay Dobrev Radulov PhD in order to improve the impact of his work is to expand international cooperation and activity to increase the visibility of scientific results at the international level.

Here, I would like to reiterate my recommendation to the management of the Faculty of Education at Plovdiv University regarding the conduct of competitions in professional field 8.2. Fine Arts, namely, to pay greater attention to the practical artistic work of the candidates!

6. Personal impressions

I do not have the honour of personally knowing the candidate for the academic position of "associate professor" Nikolay Dobrev Radulov PhD, so I will refrain from expressing my personal impressions.

CONCLUSION

The documents and materials submitted by Dr. Nikolay Dobrev Radulov meet all the requirements of the Law on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (ZRASRB), the Regulations for the Implementation of ZRASRB, and the relevant Regulations of "Paisii Hilendarski" University of Plovdiv.

The candidate in the competition has submitted a sufficient number of scientific papers published after the materials used in the defence of the doctoral degree. The candidate's works contain original artistic, scientific, and applied contributions, which have received mainly national and re-

gional recognition. His theoretical developments have practical applicability, with a large part of them being directly oriented towards teaching. The scientific and teaching qualifications of Dr. Nikolay Dobrev Radulov are unquestionable, although in his teaching work to date, the candidate has only been an honorary lecturer. His achievements in teaching, artistic creation, and scientific research fully meet the minimum national requirements.

After reviewing the materials and scientific works submitted in the competition, analysing their significance and the scientific, artistic, scientific-applied, and applied contributions they contain, I find it reasonable to give my positive assessment and recommend that the Scientific Jury prepare a report proposal to the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Education for the appointment of Nikolay Dobrev Radulov to the academic position of "associate professor" at "Paisii Hilendarski" University of Plovdiv in the field of higher education 8. Arts, professional direction 8.2. Fine Arts – Graphic Design and Photography.

30.07.2025 г.

Reviewer:

(signature)

Prof. Svetoslav Kosev PhD