

STATEMENT

from

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to Ivaylo Emil Saraliyski:

with dissertation on the topic: "SYMBOLS IN TAROT CARDS AND THEIR
TRANSFORMATION IN CONTEMPORARY ART"

Scientific supervisor: assoc. prof. Kalina Hristova, PhD

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The study thoroughly traces the different stages of the development of Tarot cards. The transformative processes in the evolution of the deck of cards in iconographic and symbolic aspects are analyzed. A parallel is drawn between the historical processes associated with the spread of Tarot cards in Europe from the early fifteenth century to the present day and the manifestations of the deck in contemporary industries and innovative visual media. This dissertation addresses for the first time in this country the relationship between Tarot cards and artificial intelligence. It presents a creative product that, on the one hand, is the result of research on different decks and symbolic manifestations of Tarot cards, and on the other hand, is generated through the use of modern digital technology capabilities.

The dissertation is well written and structured. It consists of a total of 498 pages, of which 271 pages are devoted to the main text, divided into the following parts: introduction, three chapters and conclusion. The scientific work is correctly supplemented with bibliographic sources and a richly illustrated appendix consisting of a total of 653 images.

In terms of content, the main issues that are traced in the different parts of the study are as follows.

In the **introductory** part important generalizations are made related to the clarification of the subject,

the aims, objectives, and temporal and iconographic boundaries of the study. It is specified that in terms of periodization the scientific text explores four significant periods in the development of Tarot cards. The author emphasizes the need to pay attention to the psychological, social, historical and art historical aspects of their manifestation when studying Tarot cards.

1. **Chapter One** focuses on the emergence of playing cards and the development of the Tarot deck over the centuries. It is divided into seven subparts. The first examines the emergence of playing cards (both the so-called ordinary deck and the Tarot deck) in Europe. Subsequent subparts trace the development of the Tarot in Italy, France, and England, as well as the influence of various cultures and esoteric teachings, including the New Age movement of the second half of the twentieth century.

I recommend that in the future, if the dissertation is published as a book, which I strongly support, this part of the study be supplemented with information on the development of the printing revolution in Europe and the impact that Gutenberg's discovery had on the development of communication during the Renaissance and Enlightenment. Despite the well-known fact that the first playing cards on the Old Continent were hand-drawn, their popularisation was probably also linked to the technological discoveries of printing. Such a perspective could strengthen the meaningful connections between the different parts of the study, especially with chapter three, where the theme of the parallel between technology and image-making is strongly present.

2. **Chapter Two** focuses on an analysis of the meaning, symbolism and iconography of the Tarot. Divided into two parts. The first part thoroughly examines the trump cards in the so-called Major Arcana and the transformative iconographic processes in their development. The second part is devoted to the Minor Arcana and examines the origins and symbolism of the suits in the Tarot.

Of value to note is the connection the author makes between the symbolism of the Tarot cards and their relationship to the products of the collective psyche - the archetypes. According to Marie-Louise von Franz, a close associate of Carl Gustav Jung, **has not only typical motifs, but also a typical sequence of archetypal events.** Psychic foreknowledge is based on precisely this temporal archetypal order. In this sense I find it important, from the point of view of precisely *Jungian analysis*, the principles of *synchronicity* when using divination techniques with cards. Illuminating this issue will help in the future to look even more comprehensively into the symbolic essence of the Tarot card deck, and also to highlight the relationship between the material and psychic worlds, between archetypes and their manifestation during a game or divination session.

3. In the **third chapter** of the study, which I find interesting and valuable, but not sufficiently equivalent in scope and elaboration to the preceding ones, a bold parallel is drawn between the historical development of Tarot cards and the deck's manifestations in contemporary industries and innovative visual media. Important to note is Saraliisky's contribution to presenting an original artistic product generated through the possibilities of contemporary digital technologies, namely the *LET THERE BE FORM* Tarot deck, part of the *LET THERE BE* cycle consisting of the *LET THERE BE LIGHT*; *LET THERE BE COLOR* and *LET THERE BE FORM* decks. An important highlight of this part of the thesis is the author's attempt to generate an artistic product (*LET THERE BE FORM*) through the use of artificial intelligence based on a combination of colour (*LET THERE BE COLOR*) and light (*LET THERE BE LIGHT*).

In the concluding part of the dissertation, Saralyski synthesizes in the course of the study conclusions and summarizes the achieved objectives. It highlights the contributions of the study and points out research perspectives for building on the issues addressed in the text. It also draws the important conclusion that, thanks to contemporary technologies, the digital age is revealing different ways of creating and generating art.

Conclusion: Having familiarized myself with the dissertation of Ivaylo Emil Saralyski, I believe that the research is significant and contributes not only to the study of the historical development of Tarot cards over the centuries, but

also to the use of innovative practices in the creation of Tarot decks related to the integration of new technologies and artificial intelligence (AI), as well as non-standard solutions from the artistic field of design and contemporary fine art.

I give a **positive evaluation** and recommend the Scientific Jury to award the degree of Doctor of Education and Science to Ivaylo Emil Saraliiski.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a stylized, cursive 'A' followed by a horizontal line and a small flourish.

31 October 2023

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