

## STATEMENT

from

Prof. Christina Borissova Ilieva, PhD  
National Academy of Art, Sofia

for awarding of educational and scientific degree "PhD",  
scientific field 8. Arts,  
professional field 8.2. Fine Arts

to **Ivaylo Emil Saraliyski**

PhD student in the self-preparation doctoral program "Visual and Plastic Arts" at the  
Department of Fine Arts, NBU,

with dissertation on the topic:

"SYMBOLS IN TAROT CARDS AND THEIR  
TRANSFORMATION IN CONTEMPORARY ART"

Scientific supervisor: assoc. prof. Kalina Hristova, PhD

The submitted dissertation contains 229 pages of main text, 11 pages of bibliography, a 132-page appendix with illustrations, as well as a list of publications on the topic, a list of figures and an abstract.

First of all, I would like to note the complexity of the topic – the "TAROT" phenomenon, which itself contains a large number of possible points of view and aspects from which it could be analysed.

Outlined in three main chapters that are logically consistent, preceded by an introduction and a conclusion, the structure of the thesis enables the author to ensure the full development of the topic.

In the **introduction**, the PhD student lays the foundations of his research, clearly outlining the set tasks, which concern the graphic possibilities of image transformation in symbiosis with the sacred symbolism embedded in them. The aims, the object and the subject of the research are defined, as well as the methods for the realization of the main thesis of the

work. **Chapter One** is devoted to the emergence and historical development of the object of study, which is crucial for the further development of the topic. It traces the genesis, evolution and transformation of the cards both in terms of function and purpose, and even further in terms of graphic form and its relationship with changes in the symbolism inherent in each card. Within the predefined temporal and geographical boundaries, the author examines the multilayered variability of the images and analyzes the reasons for this using many and varied sources. The impressive amount of materials gathered forms the basis for further development in **chapter two**, where the PhD student moves on to a detailed analytical analysis of each specific vision from the Major and Minor Arcana. I believe that this chapter is crucial for the construction of a kind of a "system", or, in other words, meaningfully arranged, synthesized characteristics of individual images, viewed from different perspectives - emotional, iconographic, sacral, semiotic, etc. The conclusions made by the PhD student are also his grounds for a subsequent authorial interpretation of the topic he has examined. The **third chapter** of the dissertation contains, in my opinion, his main contribution, carried out with the help of his own interpretation of the Tarot cards, in which all the conclusions of the extensive study of the subject in the previous chapters are embodied. I find the decision of the PhD student to turn to artificial intelligence, which is entering our modern existence more and more, to be provocative. The analysis of the proposed keywords-based forms is undoubtedly extremely interesting, especially when in combination with the author's idea of maximum stylization and the essence of the meaning load of the cards. The end result is a self-contained work of art full of deep meaning and philosophical intensity. A synthesis of the scientific research conducted, together with a number of conclusions made on its basis and which confirm the theses of the doctoral student, are drawn in the **conclusion** of the dissertation. As an undoubted contribution, I can also point to the separate appendix containing a large volume of carefully researched and systematized illustrative materials, which in itself is invaluable information for the interested reader.

The **abstract of the dissertation** follows all the rules and contains all the necessary information in all of its sections. The scientific **publications on the topic** are also in the required volume and comply with the requirements for this type of publications.

As a recommendation, I express my opinion that the dissertation could have paid more attention to parallel projects of authors from the XXI century who offer their own

interpretations of the Tarot cards - both in terms of vision, motivation and aspects. This would contribute to a deeper understanding of Ivaylo Saraliyski's authorial project by the reader.

On the basis of all that has been said so far, I can define my evaluation of the presented dissertation as positive and I propose the scientific jury to award Ivaylo Emil Saralyski the scientific and educational degree "PhD".

Sofia, 01.11.2023.

Prof. Dr. Christina Borissova, PhD