

STATEMENT

from

Assoc. Prof. Ivo Nikolaev Popov, PhD,

for awarding of educational and scientific degree "PhD",

scientific field 8. Arts,

professional field 8.2. Fine Arts

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

1. Signific-applied of the research problem in scientific and applied terms.

The dissertation submitted by Ivaylo Saraliyski is 498 pages long, 247 of them - main text.

The structure of the content is divided into introduction, three chapters, conclusion. The main text of the dissertation is supplemented by a bibliography of sources used with theoretical literature (104 in English, 8 in Bulgarian, 6 in Italian, 6 in French).

The text of the dissertation is accompanied by a separate appendix - an album of illustrations of the specimens analyzed in the presentation - 132 pages with a total of 653 images supporting the theoretical study.

The sources used in the course of the research cover the theoretical developments necessary for the set objectives, which include: books, collections and articles in periodicals by established authors in the relevant scientific field, as well as contemporary studies and publications on the topic of the dissertation.

Footnotes (68 in number) throughout the dissertation clarify specific terms and provide additional clarification to make the information presented more complete or precise.

2. Justification of the aims and task of the dissertation.

The aims and tasks of the research are clearly formulated as their essence determines the very content structure of the dissertation. The overall aim of the study is to contribute to the formation of a comprehensive cultural history of the Tarot, to explore the visual changes the deck has undergone over the centuries and to trace the symbolism in its images.

The specific aim of the work is to compare key decks in the development of Tarot and to create an original deck inspired by the rich toolbox of the 21st century.

3. Correspondence between the chosen methodology and research methodology and the set aim and tasks of the dissertation.

The research methodology is through methods analysis and requires a multidisciplinary approach. The analysis pays attention to the psychological, social, historical and art historical aspects of Tarot cards.

In this dissertation, four significant periods in the history of the Tarot are examined and analyzed in detail.

The first chapter of the study discusses the original meaning of symbolism in the Tarot and the need to establish the true origin of the deck. It is divided into seven sub-points. The study's detailed period-by-period survey from the 13th century to the early 19th century has a very important introductory historical-theoretical character. This first part of the dissertation is distinguished by its clear structure and content, which is built on an extensive and adequate Bulgarian and foreign literature on the subject. The examples and sources used are correctly presented and show a thorough and erudite knowledge of the issues analysed.

The second chapter of the dissertation is devoted to an analysis of the meaning, symbolism, semiotics and iconography of the Tarot. An important research point in this part of the dissertation is the analysis of the influence of iconography and transformation of Tarot cards. These are discussed in two sub-sections, 'Iconography and Transformation of Major Arcana' and 'Iconography and Transformation of Minor Arcana'. In this chapter, the graduate student examines the communicative and cognitive potential of the Tarot; the specific semiotic

environment it creates; and its iconography, which, while excluded from so-called high art forms, is enduringly and deeply connected to the most significant examples of classical art. In-depth tracing of the maps' multiple-meaning images, open to interpretation and placed in a broad context, leads to multidisciplinary conclusions. The graduate student also examines the origins of the symbols of the suits in the Tarot and the relationships between them. The analyses are supported by a considerable amount of examples from different periods and countries.

The generalizations and systematization of the researched and analyzed information on the topic have an undeniable scientific and theoretical contribution.

The third chapter of the dissertation is devoted to Tarot and Artificial Intelligence (AI) generated art. Current trends in using AI to create and generate Tarot symbolism and iconography using guiding sentences and phrases are examined and analysed. However, the concept, of this thesis, is about symbiosis and it is not about literal generation of images by AI, but about selection of images and concept to correspond to some extent to the meanings and semiotics of Tarot.

The analyses of the transformations and evolution of the Tarot cards represent a special and important value of the thesis. These are not caused by the physical, but by the cultural and social environment shaped by the consequences of various events: wars, religions, epidemics, the results of the Enlightenment, the spread of exotic cultures, etc.

4. Assessment of the publications on the dissertation: number, nature of the publications in which they have been published.

The graduate shall include a list of four publications in refereed and peer-reviewed scientific journals. They are thematically related to the present dissertation and show his in-depth research.

5. Contributions of the dissertation

This work is the first study in Bulgaria on the evolution of Tarot cards and their transformation into contemporary art.

The basic thesis is proven: the inextricable link between Tarot and art through the ages. The thesis of the evolution of Tarot as a series of transformations and adaptations following the development of the socio-cultural environment is substantiated. Within the framework of this thesis, a comparison of the different decks appearing over the centuries is proposed for the first time in Bulgarian literature.

A multidisciplinary approach, drawing on historical, cultural, sociological and other sciences, as well as on relevant elements of Carl Jung's psychoanalysis, is justified and used.

An original contribution is the creation of an author's deck of Tarot cards, inspired by the rich artistic and technical tools of the 21st century. An author's cycle LET THERE BE was created, containing three Tarot decks: LET THERE BE LIGHT; LET THERE BE COLOR and LET THERE BE FORM. These are the first decks in Bulgaria created in collaboration with artificial intelligence. Thus, this thesis proves for the first time the possibility of developing Tarot with the help of artificial intelligence. On this basis, future scientific and applied developments can be expected.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, I consider that the scientific value of the proposed dissertation is indisputable and meets the requirements for the acquisition of the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" and I propose to the distinguished members of the scientific jury to give their consent for the award of the scientific and educational degree "Doctor" to Ivaylo Emil Saraliiski in the professional field 8.2 Fine Arts.

04. 10. 2023

Sofia

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/Assoc. Prof. Ivo Popov, PhD/