

**Evaluation Response for PhD Dissertation of Nadirbekov Ikram as “Poetics of Visual Image in the Sculpture” on the specialty 6D041600 – Art Studies  
Kazakh National Academy of Arts named T.Zhurgenov**

Based on a thorough analysis of the abstract provided by PhD candidate Ikram Oiykbayevich Nadirbekov, the reviewer has concluded that this doctoral dissertation makes a substantial contribution to scientific and scholarly knowledge of the poetics of the visual image as it pertains to the plastic arts, and more specifically to the modern sculpture of Kazakhstan. As a scientific and humanistic discipline, art history lacks a careful, systematic analysis of the principles of poetics as they apply to the plastic arts and this research lays an important historical and methodological foundation from which to consider the visual poetics of sculptural form in the theory and practice of modern Kazakhstani sculpture. The content and intent of the dissertation are both timely and topical: poetics as a critical tool has been applied successfully to other forms of creative expression, as evidenced by the wide-ranging success of Gaston Bachelard’s *Poetics of Space*, which has reached the status of a canonical work in architecture studies. This dissertation introduces to scholars of the sculptural medium a comparable opportunity for sensitive yet rigorous analysis of the plastic arts.

The candidate’s synthesis of aesthetic criteria with transcendent notions of the sacred create an appropriate vantage point from which to consider the distinctive role of poetry and the poetic within the nomadic cultural traditions of the Kazakh peoples—and the particular ways in which those roles can inform understanding of sculpture in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. By applying the critical mechanism identified as “imaginative language” to a chronologically and stylistically broad sampling of Kazakhstani sculpture, Mr.

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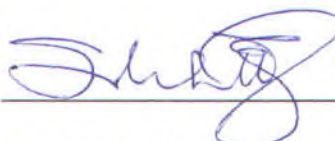
Nadirbekov undertakes the important task of extracting, identifying and examining the non-textual vocabularies of Kazakhstan's modern sculptural forms.

The scholarly rigor of Mr. Nadirbekov's project is reflected in the well-crafted bibliography for the dissertation literature review. The texts provide a comprehensive theoretical, critical, psychological and interpretative framework upon which to build the careful analysis. In future, scholars outside the specialization in sculpture may find the dissertation literature review a useful tool for the analysis of the poetics and other types of "imaginative language" that appear in the non-textual vocabularies of other, non-sculptural visual art forms.

The candidate presents a successful assessment of the genealogical significance of primordial and ancient sculptural traditions as they apply to the sacred, the spatial, the corporeal and sensual (in Western traditions). Moving from the general to the specific and subdividing sculptural practice into two temporal frameworks, the dissertation convincingly summarizes the comparisons and contrasts to be drawn through evaluations of the symbol as both problem and solution in the production and interpretation of Kazakhstani sculpture in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. As an analytical framework, Mr. Nadirbekov provides a set of linguistic cognates (i.e., mythopoesis, syntax, semantics, semiotics) with which to divulge the visual language specific to the plastic arts while at the same time revealing the permeability of the boundaries between sculpture and other art forms. The analysis is particularly successful in exploring the connections and tensions between ideation, thingness and materiality as they manifest in sculptural form—and in the singular ways in which Kazakhstani sculpture of the post-Soviet era exploits those

connections and resolves those tensions. The methodologies, tools and conclusions presented in this dissertation have important implications for the visual-cultural identities of the peoples of Kazakhstan and for non-Kazakh scholars as well.

The scientific rigor and scholarly breadth of the dissertation, specifically as it relates to the sacral-aesthetic and culturological functions and meanings of poetics in the visual-cultural expression of modern Kazakhstani sculpture, is sufficient to qualify the candidate for advancement to the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. I predict that the theoretical and critical apparatus formulated for this thesis will provide an important framework for the evaluation of other forms of Kazakhstani visual cultures while offering scholars from outside Kazakhstan an opportunity to more fully understand and engage with these forms through the familiar and useful mechanism of poetics.

 CAFFEY  
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Stephen Caffey, PhD

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