

**Film and TV School of the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague**  
**Department of Photography**

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**Assessment of the Master's Thesis**

Author of thesis: Tian Yang

Title of thesis: Large format photography in the digital era

Assessment of the primary advisor

Assessment of the opponent

Author of the assessment (first name, last name, workplace):

Mgr. Josef Ledvina

Evaluation of the content and final form of the thesis (A/excellent – B/very good – C/good – D/good with objections – E/satisfactory – F/unsatisfactory – not recommended for defence)

Suitability of the selected objective and work approach.....E.....  
Relative completeness of the literature used for the selected topic.....C.....  
Ability to critically evaluate and use professional literature.....D.....  
Logicity of the thesis structure, connection of its chapters.....E.....  
Language and stylistic level of the thesis.....B.....  
Compliance with citation norms (should the text repeatedly contain adopted passages without citing the source, the work cannot be recommended for defence).....B.....  
Sufficient extent of image attachments, justifiability and suitability of attachments, graphic layout.....C.....  
Originality of the thesis, contribution to the development of the field of study.....D.....  
  
Overall evaluation of the thesis.....D.....

Verbal evaluation of the thesis including questions that the diplomate must address in his/her thesis defence:

Position of large format analogue photography in the age of dominance of digital imaging is the topic of Tian Yang's thesis. Yang's approach to his topic can be characterised as overtly defensive. There is nothing to object to this general „program“. A thought through defence of the relevance of the traditional analogue techniques in the age of the digital would be and should be welcome. Unfortunately there is very little of it in the text. This counts especially in case of the chapters trying to defend practitioners and aficionados of large format from the „accusations“ of nostalgia and fetishism. Here Yang constructs his argument in general terms, first quoting some classic definitions of the concepts of nostalgia and fetishism and than trying to „prove“ why it can not be that large format practice is nostalgic/fetishistic. I would argue that this approach is doomed to fail. There most definitely is plenty of large format photography created from the longing for the old good analogue times. There is a fetishistic valorisation of the technical skills needed for the skills itself and regardless of the use value of the result. Again, nothing wrong about it in principle, it can be source of meaningful poetics and politics. I also very much admit that there can be non-nostalgic large format practice. But I would at the same time argue that it

can not be proven in principle, it should be demonstrated through analysis and comparison of particular practices, works, set of works and oeuvres. Besides thus generally formulated criticism, I see a fundamental problem in a text dedicated to the defence of contemporary artistic merits of large format that avoids any discussion of particular artworks and artists.

As a whole Tian Yang's thesis is scarce on relevant informations. Some passages even rise a little bit of suspicion that their prime purpose is just to add letters. Example can be Yang's musing on the difficulty of defining large format photography. Thus we learn that „there is actually nothing wrong with this way of definition, because the word ‚large‘ is itself a relative adjective that implies a necessary comparison. ‚Large‘ does not exist unless there is ‚small‘ around.“ Another example could be found in the chapter dedicated to the large format programmes at photography schools. At least the long list of the large format equipment provided to students at UCLA should have been left out.

Besides serious objections I do appreciate certain clarity of style and dedication to the argument. I propose D.

Question:

Could you explain contemporary relevance of the large format practice on the example of one particular artist?

Date: 31. 7. 2018

Signature: 