

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

Assessment of the Master's Thesis

Author of thesis: Christian Henninger

Title of thesis: Collaboration within photography

Assessment of the primary advisor

Assessment of the opponent

Author of the assessment (first name, last name, workplace): Tomáš Dvořák, KF
FAMU

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)

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| Suitability of the selected objective and work approach..... | A |
| Relative completeness of the literature used for the selected topic..... | B |
| Ability to critically evaluate and use professional literature..... | B |
| Logicity of the thesis structure, connection of its chapters..... | A |
| Language and stylistic level of the thesis..... | C |
| 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..... | B |
| Overall evaluation of the thesis..... | B |

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

Christian's master thesis investigates the relationships between the photographer and
the photographed through the analysis of works by Anthony Luvera, Micky Allan,
Wendy Ewald, and Broomberg & Chanarin.

The thesis traces a specific authorial practice when the artist, instead of simply
portraying his or her subjects of interest, delegates certain tasks to them and sets up a
situation of mutual collaboration and participation in the creation of the photographic
oeuvre. The four case studies are very well researched, described and analysed, the
author also draws on a number of theoretical texts that address the (changing) nature
of authorship in photography and arts. Christian managed to reframe the
understanding of the photographic act and to shift our attention from an authorial,
sovereign gesture of the artist towards the social encounter that actually conditions it.
He focuses primarily on socially engaged photography, when the artist interacts with
laymen or socially and culturally marginalized persons and communities.

I very much appreciate the focus on social conditions and modes of interaction among the participants of the photographic operation. However, I think the appeal can be pushed even further, beyond “artistic” projects where the danger of exploitation remains less or more present. The author might benefit from the work of Ariella Azoulay, for example, especially her notion of the “civil contract of photography”. She criticizes the establishment of the photographer as the sovereign of the photograph and introduces the concept of photographic citizenry, in which the photograph can never be claimed or possessed by anyone of the participants.

If we look beyond the very moment of making the photographs and focus rather on the way these artistic projects are presented and disseminated (including their framing in the thesis itself), can we really conclude that the sovereign power of the photographer was undermined or relocated within the network of relationships among the various protagonists? It seems to me that these projects still operate within the traditional setting of the photographer as master and expert who, for example, needs to teach his or her collaborators how the gear works and what they are supposed to do with it. It is not surprising, then, that they often target subjects that are deprived in one way or another. Nowadays, no one really needs any extra skill to take a photograph or even a privileged access to photographic technology or to the media of image dissemination and sharing. Thanks to this, taking a photograph becomes more a social encounter rather than the production of an artwork, at least in certain contexts.

The thesis proposes a valuable angle to questions of authorship in photography and investigates thoroughly the relationships among participants in several works of socially engaged photography. I recommend Christian Henninger’s thesis for the defence and propose B as the final grade.

Date:11.05.2019.....

Signature:.....