

Assessment of the Bachelor's Thesis

Author of thesis: Martin Lee

Title of thesis: Vicarious Trauma

Assessment of the primary advisor

Assessment of the opponent

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

Suitability of the selected objective and work approach B

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 B/C

Language and stylistic level of the thesis A

Compliance with citation norms (should the text repeatedly contain adopted passages without citing the source, the work cannot be recommended for defence) A

Sufficient extent of image attachments, justifiability and suitability of attachments, graphic layout A

Originality of the thesis, contribution to the development of the field of study A/B

Overall evaluation of the thesis B

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

Martin Lee's thesis is about witnessing trauma, experiencing it vicariously, through media or art. It introduces the topic by its clinical definition and uses psychoanalysis for elaboration on that definition. It then goes on to focus on the history of media witnessing in the age of mass media. One can experience trauma also if one is physically not present at the traumatic event in question but is exposed to its media coverage given it is personally relevant to that particular witness. Lee shows how this can be manipulated by various political forces, a question he returns to at the end of the thesis. Chapter two then discusses how art deals with trauma and how the former then relates to potential audience via case studies of Joseph Beuys's and Tracy Emin's oeuvre. While Beuys uses indirect and abstract language to communicate the impact of trauma, Emin is more confessional and confrontational eliciting a negative response of disgust or shock in her audience. While one might experience trauma as a result of media presentation, given it is perceived as personally relevant, also in art the crucial question remains whether the viewer can relate to the depicted experience. The degree of one's involvement in the particular media or art presentation seems to be the crux of the matter. Of course, in art "a deeper exploration of the subject matter" is at stake.

The topic of the thesis is highly relevant, the thesis itself is well written and well structured. The main problem concerns the way contemporary art and mass media relate to each other in the thesis.

In one chapter we are presented with “terrorist” attacks communicated by mass media, in another we deal with artists. But what are we to make of this juxtaposition? Since there are no conclusions drawn, the reader must make them herself. It is a pity that the conclusion of the thesis mentions art only briefly. The author speaks about that trauma can be triggered also by private experience - the loss of a loved one, breakup, etc. But he does not deal with the question how mass media/social networks mediate this kind of “private” trauma which is not directly related to catastrophic events that happen in public space. The case of Tracy Emin is pertinent. How do mass media/social networks deal with trauma related to mental states such as depression triggered by events that are difficult to share with others? Another question to discuss is the role class, gender, race play in the different ways trauma is experienced through art and mass/social media. What kind of impact do social/mass media have and who has access to contemporary art? How is it relevant? The author of the thesis deals with the question of political manipulation of trauma through mass media and social networks. Can we talk about manipulation also in relation to trauma depicted in contemporary art? Why yes or why not? If yes, how is that manipulation different from mass/social media? The conclusion hints at the capacity of art not only to mediate the impact of trauma but also to heal. Can you elaborate?