

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

Assessment of the Bachelor's Thesis

Author of thesis: Juan Cevallos

Title of thesis: Playing against the photoprogram

Assessment of the primary advisor ✓

Assessment of the opponent ✕

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

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.....	D
Ability to critically evaluate and use scholarly literature.....	D
Logicality of the thesis structure, connection of its chapters.....	C
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.....	E
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 candidate must address in his/her thesis defence:

The objective of the Bachelor thesis of Juan Cevallos was to summarise and critically consider Vilém Flusser's philosophy of photography, particularly his concept of "playing against the apparatus". This theoretical consideration was supposed to be followed by small case studies describing and assessing examples of artistic and creative ways of playing against the photography apparatus and its programmes. The thesis meets these objectives, however, only with several objections.

Flusser's conception of playing against the apparatus is described unconvincingly as Juan only paraphrases or quotes several Flusser's arguments with minimal consideration of the literature and scholars using and further elaborating on Flusser's ideas. See, for example, Zylinska's *Nonhuman photography*, several Lenot's papers and books, Ch. T. Smith's, A. Berti's and for example M. Fuller's papers published in the journal *Flusser Studies*. The chapter on Flusser's conception of playing against the apparatus is unfocused and in the minimal way critical and interpretative. Juan is mostly able to take excerpts from books and other sources, but he has difficulties to

use literature for building his authorial argumentation. Some parts of the thesis are too superficial and not clearly incorporated into the line of arguments (for example, the chapter on the technological development of a camera).

The second part of the thesis focuses on experimental photography. It tries to identify and interpret artworks of those artists, who could be considered as playing against the program of the camera. However, this part is again very superficial, Juan only rephrases Flusser's thoughts on the role of experimental photographers and mentions a list of approximately ten artists. Nevertheless, he describes their work only in one or very few sentences and thus, it is not clear why the work of these artists could be considered as an example of how to play against the apparatus.

Although I do not doubt Juan diligently attempted to accomplish the objectives stated in the abstract and introduction chapter, I consider his thesis as only partially successful assessment of the possibilities to play against photography in contemporary increasingly automated visual culture. The thesis of Juan Cevallos should be improved in many ways, but it is still acceptable. I recommend his thesis for the defence and propose D as the final grade.

Questions for the defence:

You do not use any images for illustrating your arguments, and your description and interpretation of artworks playing against the apparatus is superficial. Could you take at least one example of an experimental photographer and carefully assess and explain in what sense could be his/her work (or a single image) considered as fulfilling Flusser's idea of playing against the apparatus?



Date: 30/08/2020

Signature: