


**Assessment of the Bachelor's Thesis**

Author of thesis: Antti Karjala

Title of thesis: SUBJECTIVE AND PERSONAL, THE DIARISTIC APPROACH IN PHOTOGRAPHY

Assessment of the primary advisor 

Assessment of the opponent 

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

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 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

Overall evaluation of the thesis B

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

Antti's thesis is based on Lucy Soutter's meditations on photography's authenticity as related to the intimacy captured in the so-called diaristic approach of Boris Mikhailov and Nan Goldin. In the first part, Antti formulates the theoretical background of the thesis. He also briefly mentions the indexicality of photography. Yet, the relation between indexicality and authenticity as it is explored in the thesis could have been elaborated more as it remains a bit unclear. The authenticity that is at stake, Antti explains, is less related to truth-value and validity and state of being and is more about the process: performance, enactment and negotiation of subjectivity that is mediated through the body. We are invited to be affected and rather than to make a moral judgement on the artist in question. In the next chapter, Antti tries to map the ways in which authenticity manifests itself in vernacular photography and how it is exploited by business, fashion industry, social media. Antti writes: "These kinds of commercial images could not be further away from any kind of notion of authentic." Does it mean, then, that capitalism ruins the authentic? If yes, how does it also affect the artists in question? I am a bit worried about the implicit dichotomy of "pure" high-brow art and "dirty" cultural industry. At least, it should be explicitly dealt with in the thesis. Antti then goes on to analyze the works of the two artists. In the case of Nan Goldin, the focus is on the vulnerability and ambivalence of intimacy represented in her photographs, their subversion of the traditional

notion of family and their power of affect. But I miss a more detailed attention to how all this makes her work political. Antti then goes on to analyze the work of Boris Mikhailov. In comparison to Goldin, the political context of his work is much more explained, even though hers is also quite specific and important for the understanding of her work. Antti describes Mikhailov's work with the homeless population, whose damaged bodies which his photographs depict are presented as a critical comment on the arrival of capitalism in post-soviet Russia. What I miss is more comparison between the two authors that the work deals with. The focus is on what they have in common (their interest in performativity and enactment, focus on the abject bodies). There are, however striking differences, e.g. Goldin took pictures of a community of which she herself was a part while Mikhailov did not. Is it irrelevant to your thesis?

Questions:

You mention affect a lot in your analyses of the photographs. Can you elaborate on its meaning in your thesis? Is there a theory of affect which could explain how the term is used in your work?

Can you elaborate on the politics of Nan Goldin's intimate photographs of abject bodies in the social context of its time?

Can you explain more the relationship between indexicality and authenticity as it is defined in the thesis?