

**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: Ranaji Deb

Title of thesis: Representation of Suicide Across Media & Cultures

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..... A  
Relative completeness of the literature used for the selected topic.....A  
Ability to critically evaluate and use scholarly literature..... A  
Logicality 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.....A

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

The objective of the Master thesis of Renaji Deb is to explore the ways how suicide has been represented in fine art and popular culture. The argumentation of the thesis is historically and sociologically well grounded. The thesis is well structured into five chapters and two parts. The first part traces mainly the history of suicide representations since ancient times until modern ways of representing suicide in fine art. This part is based on the extensive amount of resources, and it discusses the representation of suicide in great scope and depth covering not only very long period but also diverse geographical, cultural and religious variations of suicide representations.

The second part focuses on contemporary post-internet representations of suicide. It is based on big data analysis of the diverse range of images disseminated and circulating across commercial image photo banks like Getty images, photo-sharing sites as Flickr and social networks like Instagram and Pinterest. This part of the thesis thus describes Renaji Deb's original research based mainly on Google's Vision AI large image

datasets classification and subsequent data analysis. Although I am not able to assess the “statistical” and “algorithmic” analysis as it is beyond my knowledge, I found the description and discussion of data collection, classification and analysis techniques as convincing. As it is indicated by the last chapter of the thesis (Further research & experiments) Ranaji Deb is also well aware of the limitations of his quantitative and statistical analysis. That is why he proposes other mostly experimental ways of investigating suicide representations and discourses. I appreciate that Ranaji is well aware that the big data needs thick data (in this sentence, I am paraphrasing title of the article by Tricia Wang, see <https://medium.com/ethnography-matters/why-big-data-needs-thick-data-b4b3e75e3d7>).

The thesis of Ranaji Deb is in several aspects excellent: his argumentation is based on a comprehensive assessment of academic literature across sociology, literature studies, film studies, history and art; the empirical part based on big data analysis is convincing and credible; Ranaji can discuss limitations of his research. I recommend the thesis for the defence and propose A as the final grade.

Questions for the defence:

The topic of your research, in many respects, raises challenging ethical issues. It is not much the case of your “big data” analysis, but particularly your experiments (Suicidal Objects, “darkroom” experiment) could be ethically controversial. Do you consider ethical issues related to your research and artistic practice? How do you manage to meet ethical research obligation not to harm participants?



Date: 31/08/2020

Signature: .....