

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

Assessment of the Master's Thesis

Author of thesis: Hassan Sarbakhshian

Title of thesis: Iranian Jews and Their Family Photo Albums: Memories of a Disintegrated Community

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)

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.....B
Logicality of the thesis structure, connection of its chapters.....A
Language and stylistic level of the thesis.....B
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.....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:

Hassan Sarbakhshian's thesis focuses on the family photo albums of newer generations of immigrant Iranian Jews. The author discusses historical, cultural and religious situation of Iranian Jews, situates photographic albums within the theoretical framework of cultural and collective memory, addresses the shift from analogue to digital family photography, and analyses a number of family photographs acquired during his field research.

The thesis opens with a rather lengthy yet relevant outline of the historical, political and religious background defining the situation of Jews in Iran as one of disintegrated community. This prepares the ground for the discussion of the role of family albums and their understanding as a form of cultural memory – the text draws on a number of key thinkers (namely Susan Sontag, Roland Barthes, Marianne Hirsch and Houman

Sarshar), whose ideas are often presented in the form of quotations or paraphrases, the chapter feels a little bit like reading notes and could benefit from further editing that would help the author's own arguments to come through. The final section discussing particular examples of family photographs is where the author is at his best – he switches to a mode more personal and essayistic, combines images and text in an original and insightful manner, where one feels almost like sitting with the author leafing through a family photo album. Only the fact that these images are part of larger wholes – i.e., the albums – is somewhat missing from the author's analysis, since he tends to treat them as individual images. However, the thesis presents a great contribution to existing research about diasporic memory practices, I recommend it for defence and suggest A as the final grade.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'DMW' or similar, written in a cursive style.

Date: ..24 August 2020..

Signature:.....