

**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: 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): 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.....	B
Ability to critically evaluate and use scholarly literature.....	B
Logicity 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.....	B
Overall evaluation of the thesis.....	B

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

The objective of the Master thesis of Hassan Sarbakhshian is to investigate the family photography of Iranian Jews who emigrated from Iran. The thesis focuses mainly on photographs which were captured in Iran before families relocated from Iran to other countries (mostly Israel). Besides the consideration of these photographs as tools for remembering, Hassan discusses their function as a means of identity construction for emigrants. The thesis also touches the changing role of photography concerning its transformation from analogue to a digital and networked image.

The thesis is clearly and well structured. Hassan first concentrates on the history of the cultural, political and religious background of Iranian Jews. In the following chapters, he considers the significance of family photography for the preservation of cultural memory. All these chapters are written in satisfactory academic style however I particularly appreciate the second part of the thesis which is based on the discussion of the selected images (Hassan discusses almost fifty photographs either

collected from books, archives and his respondents or taken by himself) related to the life of Iranian Jews in Iran or in emigration. All the photographs are discussed mainly by recalling Barthes' *Camera Lucida* however Hasan interprets images mainly from the perspective of cultural, social and political circumstances (*studium*) instead of the perspective of subjective meaning projections into the images (*punctum*). Although Hassan's interpretations are mostly interesting, it is not apparent upon which criteria he has selected the images.

The final part of the thesis is based on meeting and interviewing Iranian Jews living in emigration. However, his approach seems somewhat journalistic instead of, for example, sociological or ethnographic; the thesis could be better grounded in methodology (photo-elicitation could be a suitable methodological approach). Hasan also supports his argumentation with sufficient amount of literature sources; nevertheless, there are certainly much more relevant books and articles he could use (e.g. Bathen's books and articles on vernacular photography).

I consider Hasan's thesis acceptable. I recommend it for the defence and propose B as the final grade.

Questions for the defence:

Could you describe in more detail how you collaborate with your participants? Do you, for example, interview participants while looking at their family albums? How could you describe the role and purpose of your portraiture photography of Iranian Jews in your research? What should these images tell?



Date: 31/08/2020

Signature: .....