

Assessment of the Master's Thesis

Author of thesis: Longyu You

Title of thesis: PLANT PORN

ANALYSIS OF THE SOCIAL MEDIA FASCINATION WITH INDOOR PLANTS
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): B

Suitability of the selected objective and work approach C

Relative completeness of the literature used for the selected topic A

Ability to critically evaluate and use professional literature B

Logicity of the thesis structure, connection of its chapters C

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) 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 candidate must address in his/her thesis defense:

The thesis is dedicated to the popularity of indoor plants among millennials and the specificities of subcultures and online communities they form via social media. First off, it deals with the (European, Asian) history of outdoor and indoor gardening from the Neolithic period till modern times. One wonders if it is so necessary to cover such vast history. In such a small space, history which is so vast always ends up being “Wikipedia-like” and the space could have been devoted to a shorter period relevant to the thesis’ argument and to more in-depth research (e.g., houseplants as a hobby during modern times). The author then continues to show how houseplants (and what type of houseplants) have become extremely popular since 2015 based on search data from Google Trends. Importantly, houseplants have turned out to be special favorites of millennials. More of them have taken interest in this hobby than in previous generations. What is at stake is a particular, “cool” aesthetics and

assumed mental and physical health benefits. The thesis centers on how this trend manifests itself on social media - subcultures and communities centered around particular images of indoor plants. The work then describes the author's own online sociological research and its results. Its finding that 85% of plant lovers are millennial females is impressive. Yet, it is a question to what extent gender (or class or race for that matter) influences who tends to respond to such a survey. The thesis then follows up with the results of several in-depth interviews. What I miss is any analysis based on those in-depth interviews. Can any conclusions be drawn? What do they show about the houseplant subculture, the relationship of the interviewed people to their plants and the community? Does it say something about the role this "hobby" plays in their life? Have you looked into what social background these people were coming from?

The thesis then goes on to explore, quite briefly, the history of the relationship of photography and plant representation to analyze the so-called "plant porn" photographs on social media. To explore more closely these images, the author has decided to conduct a survey using image detection software to conclude that from 8 000 photographs with particular hashtags, 30 percent included people in them. The author concludes that "plant lovers... build an extended self and digital identity on their plant social accounts." I remain unconvinced whether, to arrive at this conclusion, a survey was so necessary. Maybe an analysis of a single or a couple of social accounts focused on houseplants (most popular ones or popular on average) would be more productive.

Questions to discuss:

Do you think it is possible that millennial women could be particularly interested in responding to your online survey (yes? no? why?) If yes, how could it influence the outcome?

Can you draw any conclusions from your in-depth interviews?

Do you think the popularity of houseplants among millennials is related to climate change in any way?

Can you elaborate on how popularity of houseplants among millennials is related to the fact that, in comparison to their parents and grandparents, they have more difficulty accessing middle-class lifestyle - stable job, kids, marriage, property ownership?

Date: Signature:.....