

**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: Wenbin Liu

Title of thesis: Photographer's Unconscious Images: From Surrealism to Contemporary Photography

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..... C  
Ability to critically evaluate and use scholarly literature..... B  
Logicity of the thesis structure, connection of its chapters.....D  
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..... C  
Overall evaluation of the thesis.....C

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

Wenbin Liu's thesis explores how photography has been used to express a photographer's psyche, his/her unconscious. The thesis proceeds in three chapters. The first chapter focuses on 19th-century photography and how it was used in psychology, psychiatry and spiritualism. The second chapter focuses on surrealism and photography and the relationship of surrealism to Freud's psychoanalysis. The final chapter describes and interprets several Japanese and Chinese photographers influenced by surrealism in their work.

Although all three chapters develop the thesis topic, they are not sufficiently interconnected and communicate with each other only loosely. Further, mainly the first two chapters are relatively superficial. They summarise and outline the well-known story of 19th century uses of photography in psychiatry and spiritualism and recapitulates basic features of surrealist photography. The first two chapters also overlook some important sources on given topics. For example, in the first chapter, I

miss the reference to Didi-Huberman's *Invention of Hysteria: Charcot and the Photographic Iconography of the Salpêtrière*.

From a supervisor's perspective, I appreciate the improvements Wenbin Liu has achieved while writing the thesis. The first attempts to approach the relation of photography to the unconscious were somewhat chaotic and naive.

Although I do not doubt Wenbin Liu diligently attempted to accomplish the objectives stated in the abstract and introduction chapter, I consider his thesis as only a partially successful assessment of photography's relationship to the psyche of a photographer. However, I appreciate his enthusiasm. I recommend his thesis for the defence and propose C as the final grade.

Question for the defence:

There have been certainly more Japanese and Chinese photographers influenced by surrealism in addition to those discussed in the thesis. What was the criteria for selecting those photographers you have decided to discuss in the thesis?



Date: 24/06/2021

Signature:.....