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

Assessment of the Bachelor's Thesis

Author of thesis: Niels Erhardsen
Title of thesis: The semiotic self in a digital ideological machine.

<u>Assessment of the primary advisor</u>   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)

Suitability of the selected objective and work approach E
Relative completeness of the literature used for the selected topic E
Ability to critically evaluate and use professional literature D
Logicality of the thesis structure, connection of its chapters D
Language and stylistic level of the thesis F
Compliance with citation norms (should the text repeatedly contain adopted passages without citing the source, the work cannot be recommended for defence) C
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 D

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

The thesis by Niels Erhardsen deals with the interaction and relationship between a human user and technology with human characteristics and attributes, such as the human voice. Niels uses theories of psychotherapy, semiotics and philosophy to explore and analyze the peculiar features of human-technology relations in the 21st century. The main problem with the thesis is that it is written in very bad English that oftentimes prevents understanding. Some parts of the text are therefore very hard or impossible to grasp. Therefore, I am not sure at all if I understood the thesis well.

Niels is concerned that we relate to and interact with technologies as if they possessed a mind and we attribute to them human characteristics. He turns to semiotic psychotherapy for understanding the ultimately unstable ground on the basis of which interaction between two people takes place and the unstable boundary between the self and the other.
As I understand it this is why Niels thinks it is possible that we as users relate to and interact with technologies, such as Alexa, which are specifically designed for human interaction as if they were other human beings. This relation with digital interfaces, however, further complicates any understanding of "self" and the possibility of meaningful interaction and the whole communication process undergoes a profound transformation.

The topic is super interesting and one senses that there are interesting ideas and arguments. It is, however, a bit unclear why Niels chooses to work with the particular theories. Due to the language problems and the perplexing structure it is really hard to arrive at what the whole thesis actually means and what Niel's argument is.

Questions:
Can you explain why you turn to semiotic psychotherapy to understand the human-technology relation of all theories?
Why have you chosen this topic and does it relate in any way to your artistic practice?