

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

Assessment of the Master's Thesis

Author of thesis: Hanna Samoson

Title of thesis: Artist and Athlete: The Search for Meanings of Long-Distance Running in Contemporary Art

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.....	A
Relative completeness of the literature used for the selected topic.....	A
Ability to critically evaluate and use scholarly literature.....	A
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).....	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.....	B
Overall evaluation of the thesis.....	A

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

The objective of the Master thesis of Hanna Samoson is to investigate the meaning and experience of long-distance running from the perspective of a runner. The thesis is based on practice-based (I would say artistic) research. It aims to answer mainly two questions: How to approach long-distance running experience alternatively, from the perspective of a runner's inner/spiritual experience? How to communicate the inner states of mind, particularly the flow, through and by art?

The thesis is clearly and well structured; the argumentation more or less chronicles the research process and development of Hanna's thoughts, ideas, reflections and artistic attempts to answer key research questions. The thesis is thus a report on a long-term research project Hanna conducted during her studies at FAMU. In 20 chapters, Hanna reviews the academic literature on running, discusses several texts written by long-distance runners, describes and interprets artworks of several artists, and reflects on the artistic projects she realised as a part of the long-term exploration of her running experience.

The thesis is written in a telling and authentic style. Being myself a regular (although not a long-distance) runner, I found Hannah's thesis convincing. I mainly appreciate her idea to approach running from the perspective of self/experience contrary to its general and stereotypical conception based on health, fitness, winning and measuring. That is, I value mainly her aim to address running alternatively. Contrary to mainstream discourse of the popular (commercial) culture, she persuasively stresses spiritual and qualitative aspects of running. She intentionally ignores its numerical and quantified aspects, which is the dominant approach to running, mainly since digital wearables track every measurable aspect of running experience.

Although Hannah's running experience is mainly spiritual and her artworks are abstract and poetic, they are all described convincingly. Her struggle to express her experiences artistically (particularly expansion of consciousness and the flow that Hanna understands in the sense of Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's conception) is also given in a persuasive style.

In this regard, I can only add some further reading recommendations. While reading the thesis, I often thought about the conceptions of the *quantified self* (Deborah Lupton, 2016) and *qualified self* (Lee Humphreys, 2018). These "selves" are closely related to digital media (primarily wearables and photographs, social networks, etc.) and address how our identities are co-created via technologies. Regarding the methodological approach to address the spiritual aspects of the flow, Lefebvre's rhythm analysis could be helpful (see T. Edensor's article Rhythmanalysing marathon running: 'A drama of rhythms' published in 2017 in journal Environment and Planning), particularly when combined with, for example, Chris Nold's technique of bio or emotional mapping (<http://biomapping.net/>) or with some other technique used in "walking" methodologies (see for example <https://walkinglab.org/about/>; Karen O'Rourke. 2016. Walking and Mapping: Artists as Cartographers). Regarding re-enchantment and sport, see Dino Numerato's study Revisiting Weber's Concept of Disenchantment: An Examination of the Re-enchantment with Sailing in the Post-Communist Czech Republic (2009, Sociology).

I consider Hanna's thesis excellent. I recommend it for the defence and propose A as the final grade.

Questions for the defence:

In my view, Hanna Samoson succeeded in delivering a convincing textual answer to her first question: How to approach long-distance running experience alternatively, from the perspective of a runner's inner/spiritual experience? However, the answer to how to communicate the inner states of mind, particularly the flow, through and by art, remained answered only tentatively. Her final artistic conception of "drunce" (druncing, long-distance dancing) is undoubtedly intriguing. However, I am not sure whether it could be considered as the answer to the second question? Could you please outline what do you consider as "the best" artistic expression of the running experience?



Date: 23/06/2021

Signature:.....