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

Assessment of the Bachelor's Thesis

Author of thesis: Madison Sable
Title of thesis: Identity in Contemporary Art: Trap or Tool for Empowerment?

Assessment of the opponent

Author of the assessment (first name, last name, workplace): Tomáš Dvořák, 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..A
Relative completeness of the literature used for the selected topic............................B
Ability to critically evaluate and use scholarly literature..A
Logicality of the thesis structure, connection of its chapters......................................B
Language and stylistic level of the thesis..A
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..B
Originality of the thesis, contribution to the development of the field of study...........C

Overall evaluation of the thesis...B

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

Madison Sable's thesis focuses on the problems of identity politics in contemporary arts through the examination of identity labelling in both historical and contemporary perspectives. By drawing on works of Igor Zabel, Linda Nochlin, JooYoung Choi or Olúfẹ́mi O. Táíwò, the author dissects geopolitical, national, gender, racial or ethnic aspects of identity as sites of negotiation between the dominant and the marginal.

The author proceeds by readings of several seminal texts, by summarizing and paraphrasing them to uncover various levels of otherness (geopolitical in Zabel, sexist in Nochlin etc.) while gradually building an argument of her own, articulated as more or less a conundrum or a dilemma: identity (labelling) can be viewed as both an empowering gesture leading to recognition and a trap of submitting oneself to the hegemonic viewpoint. The thesis is essayistic in its style and I thoroughly enjoyed reading it; at the same time I feel it could have done more if it engaged in a more

detailed analysis of identity labels and classifiers as used in both current and historical artistic, curatorial, academic as well as market practices. "Dominant viewpoint" or "marginalized groups" are vague and rough concepts that often have the effect of themselves homogenizing complex and heterogeneous realities. Already within postmodern thinking, "identity" has been assessed as plural, unstable and fluid – but also as situationally enacted site of negotiation, contestation and self-construction. There are strategies of assigning identity but also of self-fashioning. Can we really claim that globalization equals homogenization or does it also include moments of cultural heterogenization and indigenization? I would argue that the dilemma of the trap versus empowerment, as phrased by the thesis, is to a large extent an effect of its rhetoric: we can never know what identity labels do until we take a close look at particular situations and agents, at who and when and why labels someone in this way or another. Could the author illustrate her understanding of identity with a specific example, ideally one from contemporary photographic practice?

I recommend the thesis for defence and suggest B as the final grade.

Date: .....30. 5. 2022.........   Signature:..