

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

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**Assessment of the Bachelor's Thesis**

Author of thesis: Anushka Gambhir

Title of thesis: SOCIAL MEDIA AND DOCUMENTARY PHOTOGRAPHY

Assessment of the primary advisor ✓

Assessment of the opponent ✕

Author of the assessment (first name, last name, workplace): Michal Šimůnek,  
Department of Photography

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.....A  
Ability to critically evaluate and use professional literature..... B  
Logicity 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) .....A  
Sufficient extent of image attachments, justifiability and suitability of attachments, graphic layout.....C  
Originality of the thesis, contribution to the development of the field of study.....B  
  
Overall evaluation of the thesis..... B

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

Anushka Gambhir's bachelor thesis focuses on the crisis of documentary photography, which she considers from the perspective of social media and social photography. She explores how social photography expands our understanding of what documentary evidence is and in what sense it can be understood as a response to the crisis of documentary photography.

The thesis is divided into nine chapters that logically follow each other. In principle, however, the whole work can be understood as composed of two parts. In the first part (chapters 1-5), Anushka recapitulates the changing understanding of photography as a medium that can authentically, realistically, and truthfully document reality. In doing so, she briefly traces the familiar story of the shift from a realistic understanding of photography to the questioning of this claim and debates around the so-called crisis or death of documentary photography, which has been discussed mainly with the advent of digital photography and digital manipulations. This section then concludes by referring to B. Nichols and T. de Bromhead. It outlines the variability of the

documentary genre by reminding us of the typologies of different modes of documentary film. While this part of the thesis is written satisfactorily, it may not have been necessary to be the focus of so many pages of the thesis. Instead, Anushka could have concentrated more on discussing the genesis of citizen journalism, for example, or on reflections on the post-truth era.

Thus, the second part of the thesis is the more crucial part, which Anushka introduces with a detailed summary of the concept of new mixtures recently introduced by Mette Sandbye. Through the lens of this concept, she then seeks to look at content on social media that, from the user's point of view, is in some ways similar to what Sandbye calls new mixtures. However, one key difference is that Sandbye is talking about artistic documentary photography, in which a specific author-artist always creates/curates new mixtures. In the case of social media, curation is primarily determined by either black-boxed algorithms or requires filtering activity by the user (tracking certain accounts, hashtags, metadata). There is thus a significant risk of, for example, creating information bubbles into which algorithms lock us or into which we lock ourselves.

However, this second part is also useful by summarizing four case studies of social media coverage of events (George Floyd, Khartoum Massacre, Farmer's Protest in India, Capitol Riots in the US). Inspired by the famous 18 Days in Egypt project, Anushka even writes about her project based on creating a platform curating content related to Farmer's Protest in India. It is a pity that she does not allow the reader to see the results of this project (she does not provide the URL), at least in the form of illustrations (screenshots).

The thesis meets the requirements for an acceptable bachelor thesis. I recommend it for defense and grade it with a B.

Questions for the defence:

You correctly mention partial shortcomings of social media (instantaneousness, opacity, the problem of information overload, etc.), but overall, you highlight their ability to document reality. However, it raises the issue that social networks only bring a very short-term, instant "documentary consciousness." What do you think will be left of social media content in 20, 50, or 100 years? What will a future historian or perhaps a future archaeologist digging through the sediments of our culture be able to find out about our world? Will the digital content shared on social media, due to its processual nature and its dependence on very temporary data storage, even be part of the future sediments of our time?



Date: 3/6/2022

Signature: .....