

## **Bachelor thesis review (supervisor)**

**Name and surname:** Anna Marie Newkirková

**Title:** The Live Model-Drawing Experience and Mental Wellbeing: A Phenomenological Study

**Supervisor:** PhDr. Marek Urban, PhD.

### **1. Style and formatting:**

The bachelor thesis by Anna Marie Newkirková demonstrates a high level of adherence to APA 7th edition guidelines, with a well-organized IMRaD structure, appropriate citation practices, and a clear presentation of research findings. The formatting follows the specified standards, contributing to the overall readability and academic rigor of the document. As a supervisor, my only concern is connected to the voice of the narrator: as will be described later, the thesis represents findings from complex qualitative research combining various methods in both data collection and data analysis phases. And yet, the thesis does not emphasize how much work this actually was, nor why is this kind of work important.

### **2. Theoretical introduction:**

The thesis explores the experience of live model drawing and its impact on mental wellbeing through a phenomenological study. The introduction sets the stage by discussing the way of how art is constructed in the society, using theoretical lenses of George Dickie and his institutional theory of art and Arthur Danto with his conceptualization of the Artworld. The socially constructed nature of the art (in contrast to more positivist theories) allows to attribute unique meaning to the representation of the art for every individual (as will be important for research part of the thesis), and still to bear in mind the commonly accepted boundaries given by the professional world of artists and art institutions (i.e., the Artworld). In this sense, art is constructed when an artifact is introduced, judged and accepted by the professional community.

In thesis, this is correctly contrasted with the notion of art therapy, or, more broadly, expressive therapies, where artifact does matter, it is the artistic process that heals. The findings of the thesis balance between these two concepts: individuals experiencing live model drawing sessions highly benefit from the therapeutic effects of the artistic process, connect self-expression with their identity, but the art itself remains more ephemeral, although it is discussed a lot.

### **3. Methodology and Results:**

The thesis adopts a qualitative research methodology, emphasizing phenomenological inquiry to understand the experiences of individuals. The first part of the data collection was conducted through unstructured phenomenological interviews that consist of three separate interviews with each participant. Although the thesis presented the case study analysis of three participants, each participant was interviewed three times for approx. two hours. As the second part of the data collection, Anna Newkirk led a reflexive diary throughout the process of her own visits in live

drawing sessions, with the goal to triangulate the findings regarding the experience of others with experience of her own. This autoethnographic approach, as much as recognized in a foreign literature, is still only very marginal in our academic environment.

For data analysis, the thesis employs a combination of thematic analysis and narrative analysis methods. Thematic analysis was used to identify, analyze, and report overarching patterns within the data, while narrative analysis provided a way to delve into individual stories and experiences, offering a rich, detailed understanding of the impact of live model drawing on mental well-being of individuals. These methodological approaches align well with the phenomenological aims of the study, facilitating a deep exploration of the subjective experiences of the participants.

#### **4. Ethics:**

There are no concerns regarding the ethics of the research. The anonymization went beyond the simple “change of participant names”, the thesis invested a lot of effort to alter characteristics that may lead to the identification of the participants.

#### **5. Conclusion**

The thesis of Anna Marie Newkirková stands out for its deep engagement with the subject matter, combining theoretical background with qualitative research to offer a nuanced view of the role of art for mental well-being of individuals. The inclusion of autoethnographic elements enriches the study, providing a personal lens that complements the participant narratives and overarching themes. Overall, the thesis is a significant contribution to understanding the importance of creative expression in personal development. In conclusion, I would also add that Anna Marie Newkirková worked on her study independently, she was able to create her own research goals, select the appropriate methodological tools and conduct the analysis; obviously with my nudge now and then.

With this being said, **I gladly recommend the thesis for the defense with a grade excellent (1).**

In Raleigh, USA, 06.02.2024

PhDr. Marek Urban, PhD.