

CHARLES UNIVERSITY
Faculty of Social Sciences
Institute of Communication Studies and Journalism

MA THESIS REVIEW

NOTE: Only the grey fields should be filled out!

Review type (choose one):

Review by thesis supervisor Review by opponent

Thesis author:

Surname and given name: Kunovski, Filip

Thesis title: Reemergence of Analogue Photographic Practice: Affects, Intentionality and Significance

Reviewer:

Surname and given name: Silverio Robert

Affiliation: FSV UK

1. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RESEARCH PROPOSAL AND THESIS (mark one box for each row)

		Conforms to approved research proposal	Changes are well explained and appropriate	Changes are explained but are inappropriate	Changes are not explained and are inappropriate	Does not conform to approved research proposal
1.1	Research objective(s)	X				
1.2	Methodology	X				
1.3	Thesis structure	X				

COMMENTARY (description of the relationship between the research proposal and the thesis. If there are problems, please be specific):

Filip Kunovski tries in his thesis to find reasons behind the re-emerging trend of analogue photographic practice within the contemporary digital context. He is theoretically well-equipped. The text demonstrates a thorough understanding of complex concepts related to digital materiality and photographic theory. By referencing key scholars like Lev Manovich, Roland Barthes, and others, the text shows a broad and well-researched foundation in the field. The text critically engages with the debates around materiality and indexicality, showcasing a nuanced understanding of different perspectives. (Perhaps more space might have been dedicated to another important aspect of printed analogue photographs, which is the concept of fetish.) The work effectively highlights the evolution of these concepts from traditional to contemporary views. It integrates a variety of theoretical perspectives and scholarly references, such as the work of Edwards, Jay, and Fackler, to build a comprehensive discussion on the nature of photography and materiality.

2. EVALUATION OF THE THESIS CONTENT

Use letters A – B – C – D – E – F (A=best, F= failed)

		Grade
2.1	Quality and appropriateness of the theoretical framework	A
2.2	Ability to critically evaluate and apply the literature	A-B
2.3	Quality and soundness of the empirical research	C
2.4	Ability to select the appropriate methods and to use them correctly	C
2.5	Quality of the conclusion	C
2.6	Thesis originality and its contribution to academic knowledge production	B-C

COMMENTARY (description of thesis content and the main problems):

3. EVALUATION OF THE THESIS FORM

Use letters A – B – C – D – E – F (A=best, F= failed)

		Grade
3.1	Quality of the structure	B
3.2	Quality of the argumentation	C
3.3	Appropriate use of academic terminology	A
3.4	Quality, quantity and appropriateness of the citations (both in the theory part and in the empirical part)	A-B
3.5	Conformity to quotation standards (*)	A-B
3.6	Use of an academic writing style, and correct use of language (both grammar and spelling)	A
3.6	Quality of the textual lay-outing and appendices	A-B

(*) in case the text contains quotations without references, the grade is F; in case the text contains plagiarised parts, do not recommend the thesis for defence and suggest disciplinary action against the author instead.

COMMENTARY (description of thesis form and the main problems):

4. OVERALL EVALUATION (provide a summarizing list of the thesis's strengths and weaknesses):

To describe the situation, Kunovski combines grounded theory with long, semi-structured interviews. The sample of photographers is large enough; besides, they are from different countries, which makes it more heterogeneous and therefore relevant.

So far, so good—the author is well-read and treads with care. Yet, I cannot avoid certain skepticism about the whole thesis. I have my doubts even about the research questions: “(1) In which part of the digital process does the emotional experience differ from that of analogue photography?; (2) How and when (if at all) do feelings/emotions occur in the process of physical (tactile and haptic) interaction with the materials for the creation of analogue photographs?; (3) What is the relationship between the haptic/tactile and emotional engagement with materials in the process of creation?; (4) Does the tactile/haptic engagement in the analogue photographic experience serve as a decisive factor for preferring the analogue over the digital photographic process?”

The problem is that while the first two questions are very broad, the last two are directed specifically at one aspect: tactility. Tactility is important, yet there are so many themes that can be tackled. Analogue photography has so many specific qualities that many photographers may start to use it for completely different reasons. Additionally, human beings are complex, and many reasons for our actions are hidden from us.

Of course, semi-structured interviews can reveal something, but we can never be sure that part of the reasons the heart has, the brain is not aware of. Perhaps that is the reason why some parts of the answers are vague or metaphorical: “I don't know how else to explain it. I don't feel that way with a digital camera,” “It's a whole magical world that happens there,” “But, something was missing. Analogue was more the experience, I guess. Totally different feeling.” (To be fair, there are also strong points, like when Markéta says that: “There are emotions,” yet the photographs are quite vague, often using phrases like “ritualistic veneration.”)

The author succeeded in putting together a large body of material on the subject. He didn't do anything wrong; his research is thorough. Yet, the topic is so complex, combining not only media studies but also psychology and even emotions, which the authors themselves have difficulty explaining, that I cannot say I learned something new from the author's findings. The findings are well described, but at the same time, the approaches and answers of the interviewed photographers are so widely ranging that I cannot put my finger on something and say, “This is new,” or “This is a finding that would be generally valid” (simply because the reasons photographers work with analogue photography differ to a large extent).

Having said that I do respect the author's honest effort, amount of work as well his theoretical background.

I suggest this thesis should be accepted and graded B or C.

5. QUESTIONS OR TOPICS TO BE DISCUSSED DURING THE THESIS DEFENSE:

5.1	Any of the above mentioned objections is open to discussion
5.2	

5.3	
5.4	

6. ANTIPLAGIARISM CHECK

The reviewer is familiar with the thesis' score in plagiarism analysis in SIS.

If the score is above 5%, please evaluate and indicate problems:

6.1	
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7. SUGGESTED GRADE OF THE THESIS AS A WHOLE (choose one or two)

- ~~A~~ — Excellent (excellent performance)
- B — Excellent (excellent performance)
- C — Very Good (above the average standard but with some errors)
- ~~D~~ — Very Good (above the average standard but with some errors)
- ~~E~~ — Good (generally sound work with a number of notable errors)
- F — Fail (unsatisfactory performance)

If the mark is an "F", please provide your reasons for not recommending the thesis for defence:

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Date: 01/09/24

Signature: ...Robert Silverio.....

A finalised review should be printed, signed and submitted in two copies to the secretary of the Department of Media Studies. The electronic version of the review should be converted into a PDF and uploaded to SIS, or sent to the Department of Media Studies secretary who will upload it to SIS on the reviewer's behalf.

Do not upload PDFs with a scanned signature, the review uploaded to SIS must be without signature.