



FACULTY OF ARTS
OF CHARLES UNIVERSITY
IN PRAGUE



Department of Anglophone Literatures and Cultures

SUPERVISOR'S REPORT

B.A. THESIS

Michaela Žůrková

The New York School Poets and Visual Arts: The Poetry of John Ashbery and Frank O'Hara

The thesis discusses the impact of visual arts on the poetry of John Ashbery and Frank O'Hara. As a whole, it is a praiseworthy attempt to highlight the importance of visual arts for the two poets—a number of their poems are analyzed in acceptable depth, some of their views on poetry are introduced, and the thesis refers to a good range of critical articles and essays. The most difficult aspect of the writing process was actually shaping the text itself as it was plagued with grammatical errors and awkward expressions, so the errors that remain in the thesis are minor when compared to the original.

Several issues could have been discussed more carefully, especially in the introductory chapter where the New York School poets and artists are treated as withdrawn from the establishment, the academy and politics. Rather than considering the poetry and visual arts of that period as having broken away from the outside world, it could have discussed them within a larger Cold War picture, considering for example their emergence in relation to the new realism of the 1930s and 1940s, as well as in relation to Fascist aesthetics and the doctrine of socialist realism that dominated cultural production in the Soviet Bloc. As Werner Sollors pointed out, for example, the move of Jackson Pollock from Federal Art Project to abstract expressionism was depicted in the West as a movement towards democracy, and “this story helped to cast any realism not only as old-fashioned and obsolete but also as inherently linked to totalitarianism. Imagining realism at best as the mold out of which modernism must always emerge, and at worst as the handmaiden of terror, helped to make modernism appear as the truly expressive art of antifascist and anti-Stalinist resistance, as the signature expression of American democracy.” So willy-nilly the work of these poets and artists was not apolitical, and all the methods and techniques that the thesis discusses could have been interpreted in that context—I wonder what the candidate thinks about that.

Another question that the defense could address concerns the comparison of poetry and painting. Could the candidate elaborate on the differences rather than the similarities of these two cultural forms? For example, could she talk about the differences between an image in a poem and an image in a painting?

Pavla Veselá, PhD.
September 1, 2014

Proposed Grade: **velmi dobře (very good)**