

Name of Graduate: Laura Fil'áková

Reviewer: Zu Kalinowska

Title of Thesis: Salon — Hairdressing Services, Custom Portrait, Digestive Tract, and Examining One's Own Reflection

Grade: I give the mark of – velmi dobře 2

Laura Fil'áková's diploma thesis, "Salon: Hairdressing Services, Custom Portrait, Digestive Tract, and Examining One's Own Reflection" has a refreshing and deeply personal exploration of hair as both material and medium for artistic expression. Through a combination of autobiographical narrative, creative writing, performance-based methodology, and installation, she builds a layered, emotionally intelligent project that blurs the lines between art, labour, care, and identity.

The thesis has an unpretentious tone that is grounded. It effectively sets the stage for a project based on lived experience and vulnerability. Fil'áková's background in both fine art and DIY hairdressing is presented with honesty, highlighting the tensions many young artists face when reconciling paid work with artistic ambition. Her fusion of these two worlds—hair as care, labour, art, and performance creates a conceptual framework that feels relevant and sincere.

One of its main strengths lies in its integration of feminist theory (especially Cristina Morini's writing on affective labour and invisible care work), relational aesthetics (Bourriaud). These references are more than decorative but deeply embedded in the conceptual fabric of the work. By working without mirrors, hosting clients in domestic spaces, and emphasising consent and conversation, the artist reclaims hairdressing from its commercial, hierarchical context and transforms it into a participatory, intimate performance.

The dialogue section is particularly powerful in bringing together all the aspects of the thesis together. It reads as both script and documentation—bringing together the psychological aspects of sitting in a hairdresser's chair. The history of hair trauma and the collaborative trust built through attentive conversation. It also subtly critiques power structures inherent in traditional salons, where stylists project authority without understanding the client's identity. Here, Fil'áková gently subverts this by engaging in mutual negotiation, consent, and care, making the hairdresser a co-creator rather than an enforcer. The repetitive format in the final pages, chronicling every technical step in the colouring and cutting process, cleverly mirrors the monotonous, labour-intensive aspects of both hair maintenance and art production, reinforcing hair as ritual, repetition, and work.

While the thesis shines in its sincerity and depth of care, it could benefit from tighter critical structuring. The narrative sometimes becomes overly digressive, potentially losing readers unfamiliar with the personal context. A clearer division between theoretical analysis, personal reflection, and artistic methodology might have sharpened the impact of the paper as a whole.

The tension between salon as sanctuary and the politics of visibility deserves further unpacking.

Her portfolio shows a strong visual consistency and thematic cohesion. Works like the DIY salon performances and hair painting show that her practice is not only conceptual but materially rich.

Fil'áková's thesis succeeds as a final art project because it challenges traditional hierarchies of artistic production and reframes undervalued, feminised labour as a site of aesthetic, emotional, and political meaning. It is a deeply felt exploration that repositions the everyday act of hairdressing into a transformative artistic gesture—care as performance, hair as dialogue, intimacy as resistance.