SUMMARY

Portrait photo series '' Social media mannequin"

The bachelor's thesis *"Social Media Mannequin"* explores the evolving concept of beauty and its impact on individual self-perception, with a focus on the influence of digital culture and social media. The theoretical part examines the historical development of beauty ideals – from the classical harmony of antiquity to today's fragmented and hybrid aesthetic values – highlighting how cultural, social, and technological changes have redefined what is considered beautiful.

Central to the thesis is the phenomenon referred to as the *"mannequin effect"* – a condition where individuals strive to meet unrealistic, idealized beauty standards shaped by social media platforms. Through the widespread use of filters, editing tools, and algorithm-driven aesthetics, natural human features are often replaced with digitally altered perfection. Recent studies show that a significant portion of young people experience dissatisfaction with their appearance, with 70% of young women and 60% of young men expressing discontent, often starting at a very early age. This trend has serious implications for mental health, identity formation, and self-worth.

The thesis aims to raise awareness of the importance of natural beauty, encouraging critical reflection on how social media aesthetics shape body image and consumer behavior. It questions whether we are moving toward authenticity or surrendering to a digital ideal that prioritizes sameness over individuality.

The practical component of the thesis consists of a conceptual portrait photo series that juxtaposes two contrasting visual worlds: natural, unedited beauty versus highly stylized, filtered aesthetics influenced by social media. For the photo series, I deliberately chose non-professional models who do not fit conventional beauty norms, to emphasize diversity, realism, and individuality. The creative process included detailed planning of lighting, styling, and editing techniques to visually enhance the conceptual contrast between the two sides.

This project has allowed me to explore an ongoing question in my artistic practice: how far should one go in editing an image without compromising the subject's natural identity? Through experimentation and reflection, I was able to find a balanced approach – a visual "golden mean" – that respects authenticity while acknowledging the power of digital tools. The final result reflects my artistic vision and successfully communicates the core message of the thesis: that true beauty lies in self-acceptance, diversity, and being real in a world increasingly dominated by virtual ideals.