

Thesis Abstract

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Thesis Title Exploring Consciousness Through <i>Ritual Media</i>			
Thesis Summary This doctoral dissertation proposes <i>ritual media</i> as a new concept and design framework for exploring consciousness through immersive and interactive art. The research emerges from a transdisciplinary context where art, science, technology, spirituality, and embodied practices intersect, aiming to respond to the limitations of conventional scientific methods in addressing the subjective, elusive, and multifaceted nature of consciousness. <i>Ritual media</i> refers to artistic experiences designed to invite a ritual disposition, foster embodied interaction, and induce altered states of consciousness. These experiences are not simply artworks or therapeutic tools—they are iterative, symbolic, and immersive processes that bridge subjective experience and collective meaning-making. The framework integrates principles from ritual studies, phenomenology, psychoanalysis, Buddhist philosophy, somaesthetics, and technoetic art, and serves as both a manifesto and a methodological guide for creators interested in designing media-based rituals of consciousness exploration. The thesis explores three main research questions: 1. How can <i>ritual media</i> be defined and applied to create experiences that shift consciousness and produce insight? 2. What do participants report and reflect upon during ritual media engagements, and how does this feedback contribute to a broader understanding of consciousness and transcendence? 3. How do artists and spiritual or cultural communities interpret and integrate ritual media, and what are the implications for the future of art and design? These questions are addressed through three interconnected tracks: theoretical conceptualisation, the creation of two interactive artworks (<i>Ethereal Phenomena</i> and <i>Convergences of the Spirit</i>), and the evaluation of user experiences. The installations function as proofs of concept for ritual media, integrating meditation, breathing biofeedback, symbolic aesthetics, and gamified interaction to create meditative and transformative experiences. In addition to user studies, the research includes an autoethnographic intervention at the Shingon Buddhist temple Jōrakuji, and an artist interview with Julian Dupont, whose work resonates with the framework. The study introduces original design strategies and novel methods of evaluating subjective experience. It contributes to knowledge in media art, design research, and consciousness studies by offering an adaptable framework for creators, communities, and researchers seeking to use art as a space for inner exploration. Ultimately, <i>ritual media</i> is proposed not only as a category of artistic work, but as a transformative methodology capable of producing experiential knowledge, fostering self-awareness, and reconnecting individuals with embodied, symbolic, and transcendent dimensions of life.			