Transpositions of presence in Media Art - from telekinesis to telepresence.

The following doctoral dissertation focuses on the question of experiencing the transposition of presence, which is a specific kind of state of consciousness reached through use of media technologies. The transposition herein is understood as the movement, change or relocation of the presence perspective – not only in the spacial dimension, but also in the semantic, empirical or sensory aspects. The theoretical basis for the presence transposition concept was inspired by the definition of transposition in music, which is the shifting of a sound pattern (e.g. melody) from one key to another.

The means of changing perspectives and forms of the presence transposition that I intend to describe have had a long tradition. In this research I have made use of a broad scope of cultural history, predominantly Western cultural history. The sources or prototypes of the contemporary telepresence technologies were various ritual practices – body work techniques, intoxication with psychoactive substances, tools made in imitation of vehicles for travelling between different forms of gaining presence and new subjective perspectives (that can shift into objective), such as musical instruments, magical artefacts, costumes, theatrical and performative staffage.

As the critical historical moment in my analyses I have chosen the 19th century. It revealed unusually strong tendencies to compensate the postsacral void, which was a result of the 18th century Enlightenment rationalism that disposed of religion and God into a sphere of contemptuously understood bigotry. An enormous shortfall of faith, metaphysical domain and other "algorithms" that would explain the surrounding reality was visibly present in the 19th century. The Western World still longed for supernatural mysteries as well as for revealing the hidden meanings, which manifested in activities of numerous illusionists, esoterics, parascientists that would try to discover but also to create new rules of world functioning.

In this work I propose a thesis that the abounding in visions and telepresence concepts 19th century new magic industry has become a foundation for shaping the contemporary presence transposition technologies phenomenon. Holograms, video broadcasts, telecommunication industry, extended and virtual reality are tools for illusion creation and for game with subjectivity, they provide transcendental states, replacing or supplementing spiritual practices.

In my research and inquiries the most prominent concept is the relation of the subject – the technology recipient or user – with the medium and its formal characteristics. I transfer the gravity centre from the description and analyses of the media meanings to the means of their use and to the creation of the nets of interactions with the recipient. The self-perception perspective of the recipient is compelling, because among the whole spectrum of analytical and interpretative possibilities that media provide, it is most embedded in the experience of and integration with the

media structure aspect. I am interested in the "corporeality" of technology, which I describe as the *medium syntax*. It is its material, ontological essence and the inherent rules of contact that offer new unique experiences.

The analysis of the presence transposition that has been undertaken in this work is based on three foundations – research perspectives:

- ☐ epistemological sciences, contemporary neurocognitive works on the selfawareness phenomenon and the theory of mind,
- ☐ analyses of historical cultural practices connected to the change of consciousness and the sense of presence. This area is constituted by any artistic, spiritual, religious, mystical and occult practices that served to reach special states of altered consciousness,
- ☐ 20th and 21st century artistic productions undertaking and developing practical methods and techniques to influence the recipients sense of presence.

These three fields of knowledge display very different, sometimes conflicting perspectives. I think it is crucial to emphasise their importance, as they draw a constellation of non-linear history phenomena. The main element that bonds them together is the aspiration to abandon the reality frames, to reach transcendental states and to unite with some form of higher being or to locate one's consciousness in another, non-corporeal existence. Not only are the contemporary digital technologies an answer for the pragmatic needs of man that lead to an increase in the life comfort level, but they are also a synthesis of the long historical process of experiencing transgressive states.