**PRESS RELEASE**

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**Product Designer launches new concept to promote offline one-on-one communication.**

See the launch video: <https://vimeo.com/66715131>

Using simple technology, the ***Light Conversation*** product has a metaphorical function showing how many verbal phone calls the user makes in a week. The product hopes to call attention to and change the growing online population's choice of medium and multi-tasking. Reflecting on how social “social media” connections truly are may make a return to basic mono-tasking easier, interacting with human voices more intriguing and may indeed make us more 'connected' to who we really are.

***Light Conversation***

How many of us have stopped actual verbal conversations?

In-person interactions with other human beings?

I've realized that I have. I spend my time communicating through limited media - taking shortcuts to express my emotions and thoughts - perhaps because of my trust in technology.

Pinpointing my whereabouts, texting my emotional state with an emoticon, 'liking' my relative’s recent travel plans. It's oh so simple and effortless.

There's a simple online summary on what I'm doing right now, what was done yesterday, which movie I prefer, and my general hobbies. There is a good chance I have underestimated my weight in print, embellished income and accentuated interests, just to be more 'likable' to a wider audience.

Never before had there been reason to question my online purpose or habits. Then, in 2011, I was offered the opportunity to work as a designer in China.  There, social networks can be limited, with some even banned. I took this as an opportunity to leave one of my accounts to see if it made any difference in my social life. To my surprise, some family members considered this act as an attempt to burn family bridges. Others wondered when we had had a dispute. Some acquaintances were sure I had died. Ludicrous as it may now seem, these were natural reactions, yet no one questioned the platform.

Technology has developed rapidly since 1637 when René Descartes first declared: ‘I think, therefore I am’. We can now be localized while tweeting or live tagged while sitting on the bus, not considering that everything we do is being stored as data. Being online has become a most coveted tattoo that we can electronically show off to the world. And, we think there’s no catch.

***Light Coversation*** started as a project. After noticing that my social networking address list had grown quite long over time, I decided to define the term 'friends'. Not once had I stopped to think whether I actually knew these people or not before giving them access to my online life. I did a friend-scan and filtered everyone on the list through three categories:

\* 'Barely spoken with',

\* 'Acquaintances that I’d had at least one conversation over

the last two years',

\* ‘Actual friends'.

The results were shocking. Of my entire 626 friends, I only considered 34 of them to be actual friends. ( See figure 1).

This became the starting point to return to the roots of having actual meetings - good old chitchatting over coffee. And here is where the voice comes in - the least used function on our smartphones.

(see Figure 1 )

The definition of Identity has always been translated into physical documents, like an ID card, birth certificate or fingerprint. Social networking has taken identity to a new official level, seemingly without being official. Our online-self and our offline-self seem to have so little in common. One values extreme openness or at the very least an ego boost. The other - well frankly, it's been forgotten.

***Light Conversation*** is a shout out to get back to our verbal mode. Without voices or ears we can't tell :) from :(.

What you say is as important as ***how* you say it**, and taking time to verbalize gives us a greater understanding of weeding out the fakes from the friends. Mono-tasking may be the preferred language to keep us focused on one thing. Efficient multitasking can still live freely in

machines.

***Light Conversation*** reminds us that without verbal communication we loose the power of control. Instead, we see life as a never-ending number that promotes us to do more, but to an indifferent audience.  Perhaps even enduring more misunderstandings since we are unaware of the intended tone of voice. It just doesn't work that way for me. I don't need a simple timeline that shows my life all neatly wrapped. I’d rather wait for the pop-up moments of reminiscence.

As a Designer, I believe in telling this story with the help of something physical; a product to show that verbal communication may soon become part of a bygone era - if we don’t change.

**Product**:

***Light Conversation*** is a concept phone. Its purpose is to show your verbal behavior. If you make no verbal calls for a week and just choose to communicate through limited media, the phone will gradually increase its light strength until you pick it up and call someone. ***Light Conversation*** then resets to day one, and repeats the procedure. The handle is corded to prevent the user from multi-tasking, so as not to disrupt the focus on conversation and verbal delivery.

**About Amanda Ames:**

Having specialized in exploring the emotional connections consumers create with objects in everyday life, Product Designer Amanda Ames believes in creating a better understanding between cultures and design. Fresh out of London’s Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design, Amanda was hand picked to set up **Liang Dian** and entrusted with designing the entire identity and structure of Beijing's first Design Center.

Following in the footsteps of a Swedish vocal coach/classical singer and a British Radio Sweden reporter/voice-over actor, Amanda has her parents to thank for a second career in music and radio, as well as the best usage of voice as a medium. That and her visual approach of analyzing design issues from a various perspectives of innovation and surprise, led her to this attempt at highlighting what she feels has become a routine behavior for her generation. She hopes a ***Light Conversation*** will spark both media and intimate conversations.

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