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301 WEST SUPERIOR, FLOOR 2 CHICAGO IL 60654 MONDAY-SATURDAY 10 - 6 PHONE 312.664-9582

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## ANKE LOH TALKS ABOUT HER WORK AND DESIGN PHILOSOPHY

**Your work is known for intersecting fashion with technology. Has this always been the case?** It seems technology has always played a part in my design, but not consciously at first. In the beginning I was interested in changing textiles, be it just treating cotton or just treating polyester to make the textile interactive any way I could. At first it was very simple, using heat and light sensitive pigments to make my clothing interact with the sun and with heat, whether inside or outside. I later used sensors. For me, it didn't matter whether it was technological or not. As long as the fabric could have a reaction, that was the main motivation.

**What is it about fashion technology that currently interest you?** What really interests me now is new technology in general. There is currently a very interesting move toward technology, happening only a little bit in ready to wear, mainly athletic wear. I follow what's going on in larger companies, those who are trying to incorporate technology in eyewear or watches...what we see now is a trend for technology use in objects, and not really in clothing yet. But it is coming. It is very exciting to watch.

**Tell us a bit more about your Design Philosophy.** The main idea, at least for me is to see pieces on a mission, where there is a certain kind of statement or certain kind of attitude behind it. In the end it doesn't matter if it is with technology or with fabric choices or with certain cuts or aesthetics but simply that there is some kind of choice that you make. Sometimes the choice is subtle; sometimes it speaks loudly. The choice to somehow please somebody or not please somebody else - this can be done in many ways.

**What is one choice, or mission statement, you have made?** This is actually kind of a bridge between where I came from and my early days in Chicago, around 2006. I was adjusting to America and to Chicago and to this certain beauty codex, one that people here were so comfortable with and I wasn't. I was strongly defensive, not wanting to adjust to these American beauty standards. So I used a comb as more of a weapon rather than just as a graphic print on a t-shirt, as an identity mission to just be yourself. I have been selling these shirts since 2006/2007, and am very happy to be able to show them here at LuminaireX.



*Anke's utilization of the comb graphic on her fashion at Illuminate, an earlier exhibition of her work at Luminaire*

**As are we! What other pieces are you showing here?** I also have shawls here, and these pretty much illustrate my desire to be more experimental and as research-focused as I have been since my move to Chicago while at the same time trying to interpret some of my technological prototypes into something more wearable.

**How exactly did you do this?** These are all very much inspired by light movement into knit structures. We photographed these plastic optical fiber dresses I had, and this generated light images. We took these images and put them into a machine and developed a knit from that. From this we did some digital printing of light on scarves. Light movement - there is a range of scarves around that mission statement.

**At this time, not much of your work ready-to-wear. Why is this?** Before I moved to Chicago, I was always interested in research and experimentation, but I didn't really go with these often because it wasn't very sellable. Experimental work is expensive to do; the development of this kind of item costs much more than you can sell it for. Once I came to Chicago, I thought this may be the time I could indulge more in the research and experimentation, so I stopped doing ready to-wear in a collection sense. But this is also frustrating to a certain degree.

**So what is next for you?** I am collaborating with a research institution in Berlin now where I am working on jewelry pieces. I am still based on a small budget, so there is a restriction to it, but now I am definitely beyond creating only prototypes. It is something that will be ready for the market. Once the LED jewelry pieces are ready, I hope to be back to show them at Luminaire.

**We indeed are privileged to have you here at LuminaireX. What made you decide to join us?** Obviously, I love Luminaire - we collaborated before and it was a lot of fun for both of us. I think that bringing LuminaireX to Chicago is the right thing to do right now, inviting local designers and giving them a platform to show their work next to all this great, established, internationally-recognized design and artwork. It is really an honor to be here and show my scarves and statement pieces.