## Introduction

In completion of the Urban Media Lab Studio in Suzhou and our exploration of the digital facades and culture of Shanghai, I have grown profoundly as both a designer and in mind. Experiencing the culture of China has been both shocking and insightful, seeing the fantastical architecture that residents walk past and view as their everyday norm with streets often being eerily underpopulated while the metro bustles to the brim. In addition to the culture and personality of Shanghai, the team of Vicky and Maya that I worked with alongside Shanti and the StrongLED tech team was a baptismal introduction to what its like working on a real team in the workforce. Such have been the most significant parts of my experience:

## First Presentations and StrongLED Tour

My impression of StrongLED was a very future-forward thinking company filled with radical designers in conjunction with experienced tech teams but it is clear that the backbone of the company is based around the science of their products, no design team and the production line that keep the company moving. While there is a whole section dedicated to leisure (gym, yoga room and ping pong tables etc), it seems ultimately unused despite having class timetables.  With the tour of their museum and factory, StrongLED facilities gives off a very healthy and strong environment for workers to thrive in, but seem to lack some of the guidance that a good digital design team as well as an office UX design team could provide them.

Additionally, after seeing everyone's presentations, it was clear that everyone had very strong visions of what they wanted their final designs to be. While a few of us had bonded and developed our working relationships at the beginning of the trip, we acknowledged the significance of diversity and the holistic impact it would have on our projects and decided to split the groups to celebrate that. As Maya and I were both interested in the environmental effects in conjunction with digital facades of Vicky's presentation we decided to work together.

## Concepts and Implementation

In order to get all our separate ideas into fully developed ideas on paper, we used the design method "Brainwriting 6-3-5", producing our three main concepts.

The first was based on a Chinese proverb "The Carp Leaps Through the Dragon's Gate", representing success being attainable by any person no matter their position or status. It was first suggested by Maya as fish being projected into a river with smoke as their medium. Vicky had then given the storytelling aspect by alluding to the Chinese proverb as we developed the initial concept to have more weight and significance to both locals as a Chinese story and to tourists as a phantasmal experience. The concept resulted as a fish who would swim around pulsating, encouraging users to touch it and once it had that input, it would swim up a waterfall and become a dragon of unique colour – representing the user.

As we had limited time, we had only implemented this idea as a non-interactive digital façade in the round lighting room.

Our second concept revolved around Chang e and the phases of the moon. It was imagined as a story to be told alongside the phases of the moon so it could only be truly experienced by locals who walked past everyday and had an interactive unique experience during the full moon, where Chang e would come out and watch over everyone.

As we discussed this idea, we had decided the user interaction wasn't developable enough to be a fully-fledged idea and decided to pass on it after going through expert evaluations and presentations to Luke, Steven and Shanti.

Our third concept, titled, "Messages to the Moon", was directed towards city workers that often lived far from their families and rarely had the opportunity to visit, especially during the full moon. The concept was meant for users to submit their own messages of remembrance and love, where everyone's messages would combine to fill up the moon until it was full, and then it would explode and all the messages would rain down. As we brought this to become our final concept, it was implemented with a selection of emojis for users to send, as the pixel resolution we were working with wouldn't display words very well. Additionally, our concept would have echoed whatever the user's message was in different languages so everyone viewing the display would be able to understand, however with emojis, a similar message can be understood universally.

Overall, both my team and I are very proud with the products we produced during the intensive studio and are excited to keep in touch with each other and StrongLED to collaborate further in the future.

Challenges and Opportunities

As opposed to the regular studios in Sydney, I was working with a team of people whom I had never known or worked with before. Thus, it was difficult meet on the same wavelength despite our interests in the same areas. Each of us had different ways of doing things and especially with our upcoming deadline, no matter how much I wanted to do everything myself, it was simply impossible. Often our solutions for moving towards separate creative directions would be to get peer or expert input to prove the worth of our distinct ideas which demonstrates a bad habit in future endeavours when we are working in real teams and won't have s higher-up to decide such things for us. While I feel as if I have developed strongly both as a designer in my skills but also in my interpersonal skills, I understand there is still a lot more I need to learn of which I can only do so with more experience.

Conclusion

At the beginning of the studio, I felt intimidated by the freedom we had in our creative paths, but now I understand with the context of culture and social rules as well as the constraint (and affordances!) of the lobby and round room displays, I feel extremely proud of the product we have produced from the studio with StrongLED and I am excited to develop it further with after sight and new evaluation.