

RARE

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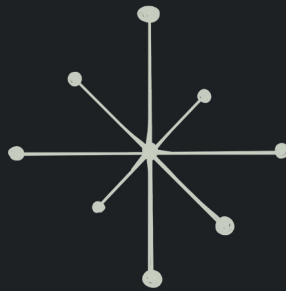
NECESSITIES

TALES OF EVERYDAY DEVICES!

BY NADINE COCINA



**FUNCTIONS THAT ONCE
WERE SIDE EFFECTS!**



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This is an additional booklet to the Master's Thesis *Rare Necessities* by
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ESCAPING THE PERFECTLY BORING

When we take a step back in our daily lives with technology and consider how we perceive our devices and tools, we usually focus heavily on the functionalities and proper use of a device. This impacts not only the value we assign to a device, but also defines our role in the human technology relationship.

I believe that we don't adjust our world according to technology, but rather according to how we think about technology and ourselves. Therefore, technology can never stand alone, but always in connection with humans and their idea of technology.

What happens if we shift our focus in our everyday technological experiences away from efficient use and functionality? *Rare Necessities* creates a poetic side to our relationship with technology and speculations on how small side effects might eventually become a necessity.

Sharing my thoughts within a speculative series of devices, I invite to rethink this narrative for a moment in our minds when perceiving complex technological devices. Usually, we are caught up in trying to understand something, whereas this work triggers us to consciously experience a device differently – and in this case, to erase their prior purpose. This time, not caught up in immediate task-driven necessity, but caught up in rarity. A rare focus, ultimately creating a rare necessity.

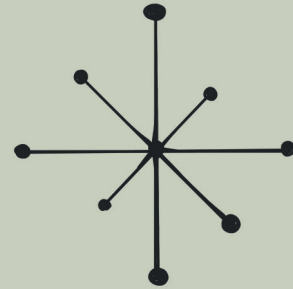
HOW MANY
LIGHTS ARE
LEFT?

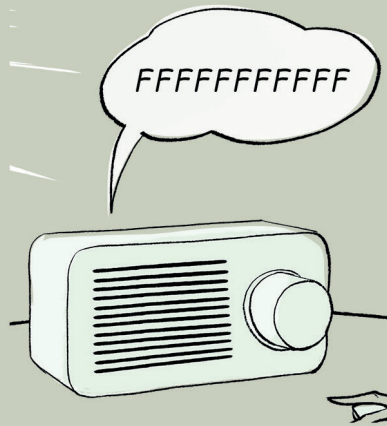
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A SPECULATIVE SERIES OF DEVICES



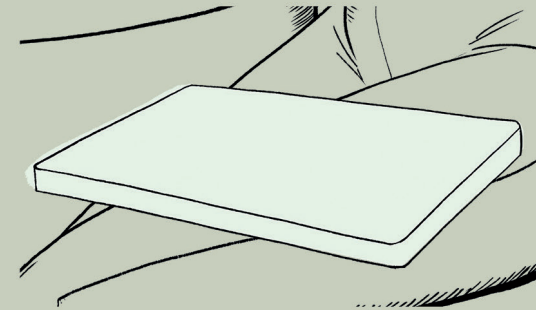


LOST FREQUENCIES

Usually, our daily electronic devices are not very hearable – especially living in a city where people get used to the noisy soundscape of machines and technology, such as loud cars. Whereas when it gets quiet due to less human activity within a space, one can suddenly start to hear the drowned out things. Suddenly, we hear streetlamps buzzing and our TV receiver too. Our devices seem most alive during their use, but actually when every human activity is laying still, they become auditive very loud.

The speculative device LOST FREQUENCIES picks up exactly this ambient soundscape of our everyday life; from the clicking, grinding sounds of a computer, to the very faint noise of an external hard drive.

We live in a very visually driven era, which is also rubbing off on the technology, our devices, and their development. Especially when it comes to our digital devices, we are heavily focused on the visual graphical user interface, whereas mechanical sounds that our devices make are trying to be kept as quiet as possible. However, if the suppression of such sounds continues, we might as well miss those subliminal sounds we hear everyday and remind us of our devices' presence in our lives.



HEATWAVE

It is often the case with digital devices, that while we enter a kind of trance and immerse ourselves in the digital user interface, our body is no longer that noticeable and relevant to us. But eventually after some time, a little signal arrives at our body: the laptop is heating our lap.

This sensation – emerging from a laptop blowing out hot air with internal fans to cool down – is the device giving us a feedback we can feel on our skin.

And this particular sensation of heat emanating from our devices is not only experienced on a laptop, but other devices and establishments with devices – oftentimes entire rooms with many machines are perceptibly warm.

This phenomenon is manifested in the HEATWAVE device and allows a person, whenever the necessity arises, to be able to experience this sensation that radiates from our devices to our body. After all, it's not just about the heat itself, but about the heat coming along the use of our devices. It captures a very intimate essence that still reminds us of the usage of a technological tool.

IS THIS WHAT
IT FEELS LIKE
TO BE AROUND
YOU?





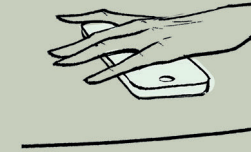
STANDBY ME

Our electronic devices come in different shapes and sizes, with different functions and purposes. However, many devices have one thing in common: a small integrated light signal. A signal that indicates a certain status of the device. But each signal accordingly, plays by its own rules; whether they indicate a battery status or simply that the device is in standby mode, each uses different color displays or even blinking patterns, ultimately creating a huge palette of different lights we collect throughout our lives.

Especially at nights, when everything else is dark, when all lights are out, one starts to notice them apart from their device and function as a small play of lights. They are vividly blinking and moving in a dancing-like manner, ultimately reminding us of each device staying awake during the night.

The carried light is only a small visual signal for us to understand a status. Therefore, the speculative device STANDBY ME can also occur in all possible sizes, but with the small light as the main purpose of the device. Here, the light signal is not carried by the device, but the light signal carries the devices' form as an homage to its origin – which juxtaposes the absence of the function and presence of the small signal.

Each individual light signal tells its own story and is responsible for something different. Through STANDBY ME we remember and perceive anew our constant company through technological devices day after day.



CAUGHT (UP) IN THE ACT

With the increased use of our smartphone and new standards, we have acquired a new urge, perhaps a necessity, to be constantly reachable and to make others reachable. And interestingly, we transfer this accessibility of people to the device itself. The device is no longer only in our minds something that is very close to us and our bodies, but we begin to develop a physical feeling and need to have that device at our disposal.

Even the mere appearance of a phone makes many people want to reach out and grab it. This dependency, if not addiction to the device itself, becomes apparent in our behavior, when we check for messages that are not here, when we want to sense signals we do not receive. No responses, only empty exercises we repeatedly practice.

The speculative device CAUGHT (UP) IN THE ACT discards the functions of the phone and makes this behavioral quirk apparent, of practicing these movements and touches with the smartphone, namely the grasping for something that is not there. The grasping for nothing that suddenly becomes anything possible. The haptic feeling of this simple figure and the movements memorized in our muscles.

Similar to the principle of other objects that keep our hands busy like fidget cubes or worry stones, here the haptic feeling is stimulated by its properties: it has a smartphone-like shape, a smooth surface and some buttons that are usually pressed when activating the device. This maintains the action of reaching for the device itself - but as a result, no functionality is found, only what we originally reached for - nothing.

I KEEP



PRACTICING

THESE EMPTY

EXERCISES

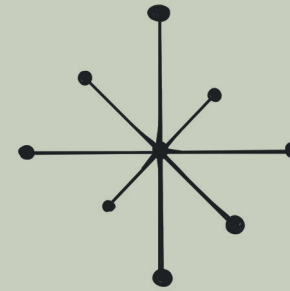




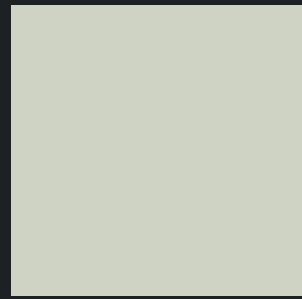
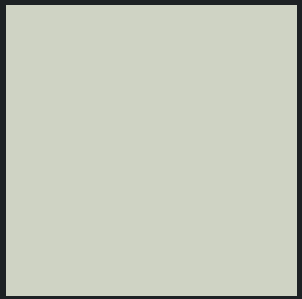
STATE OF LIGHT

Many of our everyday devices consist almost entirely of screens, and probably the biggest screen we own is the one of the television. However, it is interesting to see what happens to the space during this deep immersion and focus on our part. The light that emanates from screens is not consciously perceived as such in the situation of use. It is a thing that we overlook (or look through) during use, because we are interested in the formation of pixels that provide us with certain content. But the device and its actions reflect back onto our space – illuminating the walls, the furniture, and our skin.

The device STATE OF LIGHT is based on the ultimate necessity to bathe in technological light and remind us of our personal devices' presence. It echoes the changing lights of our digital screens with which we are familiar. It plays only one nuance of light over the entire screen at a time (time comparable to frames per seconds); after all, we're not supposed to interpret and read something into the screen, but into the light itself that surrounds the environment. This time it is not about focusing on a program or an interface and making it a task to interact with it - but purely about the atmospheric and physical experience, about the feeling and the position of such devices in our environment.



COVERED IN ARTIFICIAL LIGHTS



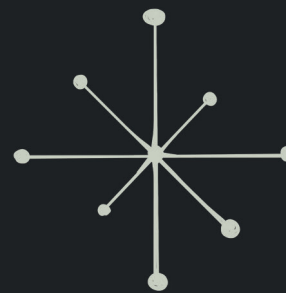
WISH YOU WERE HERE

As in most situations, we are so busy with our tasks and thoughts that certain things, especially minor auditory or visual happenings, are barely perceptible. But when we put this preoccupation aside, we allow these things to consciously appear and all of a sudden they grow loud in our minds. And it is no different with these side effects emanating from our devices – from being barely perceptible, these side effects can suddenly fill the space as we place our attention on them.

The “Rare Necessities” devices refer and contrast to today’s technologies by the conception of ultimate, screenless devices, being not necessarily visually challenging or in any way complex, but rather allowing the exploration of one’s environment, mind and body in relation to the personal technological use.

How would an entire establishment and room with a variety of said devices look, sound or feel like - combining different sounds from multiple LOST FREQUENCIES devices together. How many STANDBY ME devices would you use, which colors, and in what room would you install them? Would you carry them with you whenever you travel? For what situation would you play the sound of a TV receiver or of a laptop fan? Entire sound compositions and lighting can be explored anew or revisited in memory of a particular situation or person.

This series is a new way of interacting with our devices, while not focusing on our tasks, problems, and not wanting to understand the functions. In fact, it allows us to engage in an aesthetic experience with technology during our everyday life - an intimate, playful, and personal genesis of new experiences.



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