

////////// **Commotion**



The interactive installation *Commotion* was realised in December 2003 during our week-long workshop at the Department of Media & Interaction Design of the ECAL University in Lausanne, Switzerland. Professor Zai (etoy.CORPORATION) had invited us to give the students an introduction into how to overcome and redesign the standard computer interface with the help of a USB-Device and some electronics.

Alexandre Armand and Bram Dauw translated this task into a voice-controlled Carrera race. Two players activate the electric cars by making engine noises with their mouths. The volume level is converted into real acceleration by a programmed application. The intermediary apparatus is a helmet equipped with a microphone: it acts simultaneously as inter- and intraface, because at high velocities the helmet starts juggling the "driver" like in a real race, making orientation and putting the car back on the track after hitting the curve too fast a challenge.

The work successfully demonstrates the potential of new approaches in the field of interaction design: instead of limiting (game-)design to onscreen events and forcing the user to silently adapt to more manual control elements, the computer here serves as an analogue facilitator and forms a multisensory technological environment. The man-machine interface, completely integrated into the game, creates a new experience for players and audience. *Commotion* is also a spectacle for viewers/listeners. The acoustic performance of the work establishes a spontaneous reference to the onomatopoeic actionism of the Dadaists. But here the voices do not trail off without effect: the more realistic the vocal imitation of a Formula-1 engine, the more racyly the car accelerates—into the crashtest ... For all parties childhood memories are awakened and become reality in a new manner. Media Art that—like *Commotion*—puts focus on the creative expansion of the possibilities of human interaction shapes the way we experience technology and therefore how we articulate its sociocultural meaning. At the same time it occupies the space where design and art, game and reality intersect.