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Etoy: They'll Take Manhattan

by Mark Anderson

8:45 a.m. May. 1, 2000 PDT

NEW YORK -- If Frank Sinatra's signature song holds true, etoy can now make it anywhere.

On Saturday, the Swiss culture-jamming corporation etoy premiered its exhibit "Impact Management: The etoy.CORPORATION in Manhattan" at New York's Postmasters Gallery.

The event, attended by several hundred black-clad New Yorkers as well as etoy investors and stalwarts, was a celebration on two counts.

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First, it honored the 1,700 veterans of last year's legal melee with eToys.com -- a fight that began as a trademark dispute and ended earlier this year with a befuddled Internet retailer recoiling from a lawsuit that had sprawled into a global media performance piece.

Second, the event was a release party for the post-eToys CD TOYWAR.lullabies.

On hand to remix *TOYWAR.lullabies* for the VIP event after the opening was etoy supporter DJ Spooky That Subliminal Kid. Bobbing his ski-capped head as he intermixed breaks plundered from the 21-track CD -- including new material by Negativland, Poopoo Varmint, Steev Hise, Mono Pause, and People Like Us -- DJ Spooky recast the music that, as *lullabies'* liner notes states, "inspired theTOY.soldiers for their infamous operations and evolved into sweet battle hymns hummed by thousands of plastic toys."

"We don't paint; we don't do sculpture," said etoy's president, who goes by the moniker Gramazio. "Our artistic interest is in conceptual works that interact with society, technology, and media."

The only other physical product to have emerged from the etoy virtual experiment -- etoy's share certificates -- were also gathered and displayed for the first time. Detailing the corporation's six-year history via cryptic computer graphics and Kraftwerk-by-way-of-James-Bond photo shoots, each certificate is an original work that represents an etoy investment of \$3,000 or more. (Chris Truax, the lawyer who represented etoy in its fracas with eToys, also attended to accept an etoy share certificate in lieu of monetary compensation for his work.)

Etoy's four agents in attendance mingled with the crowd throughout the evening. The foursome will remain headquartered at the "etoy.TANK" parked outside Postmasters through May 11, when the exhibit ends.

Etoy's living quarters and mobile studio have been fashioned out of a 40-foot cargo container plus \$500,000 in investments and sponsorship. Sponsors' logo scan be found prominently placed on both the etoy.TANK and on patches on each etoy.AGENT's left sleeve.

"Each etoy.TANK is a standard-sized cargo container, and that makes it easy and cheap to ship it around the world, wherever the latest etoy action is," said Gramazio. Previously, etoy.TANKS -- Gramazio claims a total of seven worldwide -- have also been located in Vienna, Zurich, Manchester, Monza (Italy), Geneva, Budapest, San Diego, and San Francisco.

While the etoy-curious puzzled over the dozens of shares hanging on Postmasters' walls, etoy.AGENTS also courted potential investors by showing them around the etoy.TANK.