

## From PC World Online E-Toy(s) Story

**Domain name game: Online toy-seller targeted after shutting down art site for alleged confusion.**

by Tom Spring, PC World

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The latest grassroots campaign on the Net isn't for world peace, Y2K awareness, or rain forest preservation. It's a crusade against online toy maven eToys.

Advocates say eToys is using bully tactics against a Web site with the similar name of eToy. The Web site domain name [www.eToy.com](http://www.eToy.com) is an Internet beachhead for a band of mostly European artists with a penchant for anti-corporate art projects.

The eToy group reportedly rebuffed a \$500,000 offer for its name by the eToys electronic-commerce site. Then eToys representatives persuaded a Los Angeles judge to issue a temporary injunction against eToy in November, denying it the use of the [www.etoys.com](http://www.etoys.com) domain.

The commerce site eToys argues that the similar names confuse its customers. It claims people mistakenly log onto the eToy Web site and see material that eToys deems "pornographic."

Members of eToy say pornography is actually art, and the site is not a proprietor of pornography.

EToy isn't being accused of "cybersquatting," a term describing people who buy domain names solely to sell them for huge profits. For its part, eToy is an established group of artists that registered its domain name in 1995—two years before eToys had registered its name in 1997. The organization operates out of four windowless 40-foot orange cargo containers that travel by truck and rail across Europe.

In 1996, the group's "Hijack Project"—which shed light on the practice of site spoofing—won the Prix Arts Electronica, an Austrian award.

Network Solutions, overseer of domain names, complied with the judicial order and decommissioned [www.etoys.com](http://www.etoys.com). However, you can still access the eToy Web site at its actual Internet protocol address.

### Online Protests, Boycotts

Since then, an enormous grassroots campaign of eToy supporters has rallied. The groundswell of support has inspired no fewer than 20 Web sites condemning eToys for shutting down eToy's Web site.

For example, an organization called RTMark is pushing boycotts, pickets, and e-mail campaigns against eToys. Its aim is to lower the company's stock market value.

Representatives for eToys declined to comment on the case. They issued a statement on Monday accusing their foes of everything from selling unregistered shares of eToy stock to having bad taste. In fact, eToy offered itself as a public company last year, selling "shares" of its Internet art. The action was meant as a parody of the growing corporate Internet culture. But the California court apparently didn't get the joke. Its injunction also ordered eToy to stop selling "stock" in the United States.

EToy representatives say the organization has received thousands of e-mail messages voicing support for the art site. Retailer eToys says the company has received e-mail feedback as well, but wouldn't elaborate on its content.

The artists of eToy see the case as a matter of free speech. But retailer eToys sees it as a matter of protecting a trademark, according to a statement by eToys. It seems unlikely that anyone has seen the last of it.

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