# Cod.Act: André et Michael Décosterd

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**Words by Meritxell Rosell (Twitter @dancingmoog)**

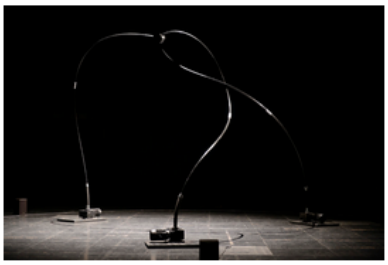
In an age when the virtual world is becoming so prominent in our lives, especially in western cultures, where for example, less and less activities and jobs involve any physical activity (like agriculture or manufacturing), it's particularly interesting to see work that focuses on the mechanical and physical. *Cod.Act* are one of the most renowned names working in new media and kinetic art nowadays and their works include performances and complex interactive installations.

*Cod.Act* is the creation of the two Décosterd brothers, André, musician, composer and programmer, and a specialist in sound applications and algorithmic composition, and Michel, architect specialized in the treatment of plastic and self-taught mechanical engineer, and it emerged from their obsession with sound and mechanical movement.

The work of the Décosterd brothers also finds inspiration in science and the harmonic nature of movement and sound which drives their explorations into finding the perfect fusion of both. In pieces like the series *Siliknost* (I, II, III), *Hotschkuss* and *Ex Pharao*, the human physical activity is the force behind the performances and installations.

Other pieces are pure explorations of movement, form and mechanical energy. Like *Cycloïd*, a captivating kinetic sound sculpture, which traces the space of sound orbits creating unique movement and sounds. Or Cod.Act's latest creation, *Nyloïd*, which was exhibited at Sonar festival in Barcelona this year, a magnificent tripod shaped sound sculpture, consisting of three nylon limbs of 6 metres in length. Like a sort of gigantic Opiliones (the order of long-legged spiders) the graceful movements and sounds of the piece emulate the organic and the living.

Cod.Act, with their utterly elegant and mesmerizing productions, aim to challenge the audience with a reflection on the interactions between sound, movement and their driving forces.



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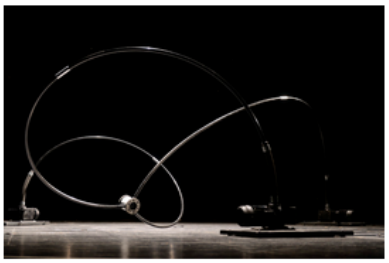

(NYLOÏDE Codact – 2013)

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### Your work involves sound, technology (engineering, architecture), art (sculpture, performance)… When and how did the fascination with them come about?

Myself as a musician and my brother as an architect, have always been fascinated by the technological part of our respective work. Our taste for machines and technology certainly comes from when we were children, because we were stimulated a lot in this direction. Our father was an engineer in electronics and he very often suggested, and helped us, realize electrical, electronically and computing experiments. On several occasions, we were even allowed to work in his laboratory, we were fascinated by this universe.

We always kept this interest for sciences and construction. Very often our ideas are inspired by scientific phenomena, and we like developing and building sound machines. That is how we developed our Cod.Act language.

### What are your aims as a sound artist working in between technology and art?

After my training as a jazz musician, I became interested in sound and electroacoustic music. I've always had an acute curiosity for sound phenomena, the why behind sound and acoustic phenomena. Thus I've specialised in sound synthesis, and especially synthesis based on sound analysis.

This lead to us to create interactive systems that generate sound, where the synthesis can be controlled at each step. The most interesting part in our work is trying to give to our kinetic sculptures a musical or vocal behaviour that is as organic as possible.

This work constitutes a new stage in our researches (in the researches we pursue my brother and me). It's the result of new investigations, each within his domain, on plastic and sound organicity.

### For Nyloïd, in which you explore organic mechanical complex movements, you carried out a lot of research (materials, kinetic energies, sound). What are the biggest challenges you face in the development of your projects?

Regarding the mechanical and plastic aspects, we try to create mechanical devices that have the capacity to move in an organic, natural, random and harmonious way. This orientation began a few years ago with the sculpture Cycloïd-E.

Regarding the musical aspect, we try to create interactive organic sound synthesis. We are interested in the human voice, especially in the spoken voice. We noticed that the human voice is always fascinating; it exercises on us an irresistible attraction and brings a very concrete and emotional dimension to the musical language.

Our biggest challenge is trying to fuse both aspects, sound and movement, to find a relationship between these two aspects, and at the same time, in a substractive approach, to reach a simplicity and radicalism in our expression.

### Solitude or loneliness, how do you spend your time alone?

It is important to know that we both work on the same projects but most of the time alone.

We both do experiments in our own atelier, I create acoustic machines and my brother researches movement and mechanics. We are both passionate by what we do and spend a lot of time, in our respective ateliers experimenting with matter. We produce a new project by pooling the results of our researches.

It works well because since the beginning we've always had the same tastes and the same way of seeing thing, the same artistic language and expression.

### What is your chief enemy of creativity?

To my mind, the worst enemies of creativity are fear of changes, conformity and fear of criticism.

### You couldn't live without…

I couldn't live without the possibility of creating music and without long walks in the mountains to keep things in perspective.

Website **www.codact.ch/**
(All photos courtesy of the artist. Photo credit ©Xavier Voirol)

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