

l'Ecran Magique



The Etch A Sketch mechanical drawing toy was invented in the late 1950s in France, where it was called *l'Ecran Magique*, or “the Danger Box.” And no wonder! Unlike the more popular handheld versions that followed, the original device measured 80 by 120 *feet* and required three or more automobiles, their drivers, and a mechanical engineer to operate. The poor engineer was often no more than a sacrificial lamb because the Danger Box typically showered him – in addition to any unwitting participants who sat in an open car – with a lethal combination of white hot sparks and radioactive W rays as the drivers “drew” images across the screen. Ohio Art’s miniaturization of the device into a red plastic case with two fission-resistant knobs largely lessened its inherent danger – largely, but *not* entirely.