

# Click and It's Gone

**Peter Glaser** was born in 1957 in Graz, Austria and lives as a writer in Berlin. The member of the Chaos Computer Club has been following the leading technological trends of the digital world and their cultural consequences for more than two decades. Ingeborg Bachmann Literature Prize 2002.



PHOTO: ANDREAS MÜHE

■ You can find hardware everywhere. Cumbersome tin boxes, with fans whirring noisily inside, bulky monitors, printers at least the size of a bread bin. Only mobile phones are already sometimes so small that you worry that, in a careless moment, you might just breathe them in.

The devices are now finally starting to creep away into jackets, shoes and jewelry. There are 100 million mobile phone owners in the USA alone, who telephone for an average of six minutes every day, but spend hours putting their phone away or hunting for it in bags, coats or rucksacks. Clothing manufacturers and goldsmiths are now working on ways to save this wasted time. Nowadays, clothes not only have pockets for mobile phones and MP3 players, but sometimes even have integrated (washable) wiring, microphones in the collar, headphones and even integrated GSM mobile phones and music players. In an emergency, intelligent outdoor outfits can communicate the position of the wearer by satellite, and even data about his current health thanks to sensors in his clothing.

The jeweler Denise Chan has collaborated with IBM scientists to create ear clips that can also function as tiny telephone receivers. And it's no longer even necessary for the phone to ring when you receive a call: A call can just as well be received in a ring which begins to pulse in different colors, depending on who is calling. This jewelry is just one of the many attempts to integrate technology into everyday life seamlessly enough to banish the current impression of living in a machine room.

Basically, the communications and computer technology of the future only needs to satisfy one more wish: The hardware should disappear and just leave the functions. In 1892, Max Plessner claimed that the development of a dictation typewriter was imminent. But the issue of voice recognition has still not been solved perfectly.

The path that these developments follow can be seen from the enhancement of multimedia kiosks, including cash machines and information pillars. In the past, these appliances were always bulky and menacing – "vandalproof". The latest systems consist simply of a projector that can throw all the content, that used to be visible on a touchscreen smeared by greasy fingers, onto any desired surface. An infrared camera then detects where I am pointing with my finger. All it takes is a smart flash of light. A movement of the hand and the system goes click. It's just like it should be whenever high-tech is involved. Like magic, but real.