Toys

miguel sicart

playful design

Today

- [ ] Toys and childhood
- [ ] Play and toys
- [ ] Types of toys
- [ ] Playing around
- [ ] Things

Exercise

Toys and childhood

- Childhood is the protected time
- Toys are embodiments of childhood
- But they are also things we leave behind then
- That’s why it’s so complicated to have political toys

But what are toys?

What are games?

- ☐ Formal, privileged form of play
- ☐ Structured
- ☐ Autotelic by design
- ☐ Explicit rules
- ☐ Explicit context

What are toys?

- ☐ The underclass of play
- ☐ Informal
- ☐ Unstructured
- ☐ Generative and malleable
- ☐ Rules imposed onto and through them

The “core” of play

Play studies has focused on games.

What if instead we move toys to the center of play?

What do we gain?
Material thinking
Expressive/Appropriative nature

Understanding toys

Expressive toys

Intrinsic expression

- [ ] A toy generates a world
- [ ] The toy is the center of the expression
- [ ] Dolls

Extrinsic expression

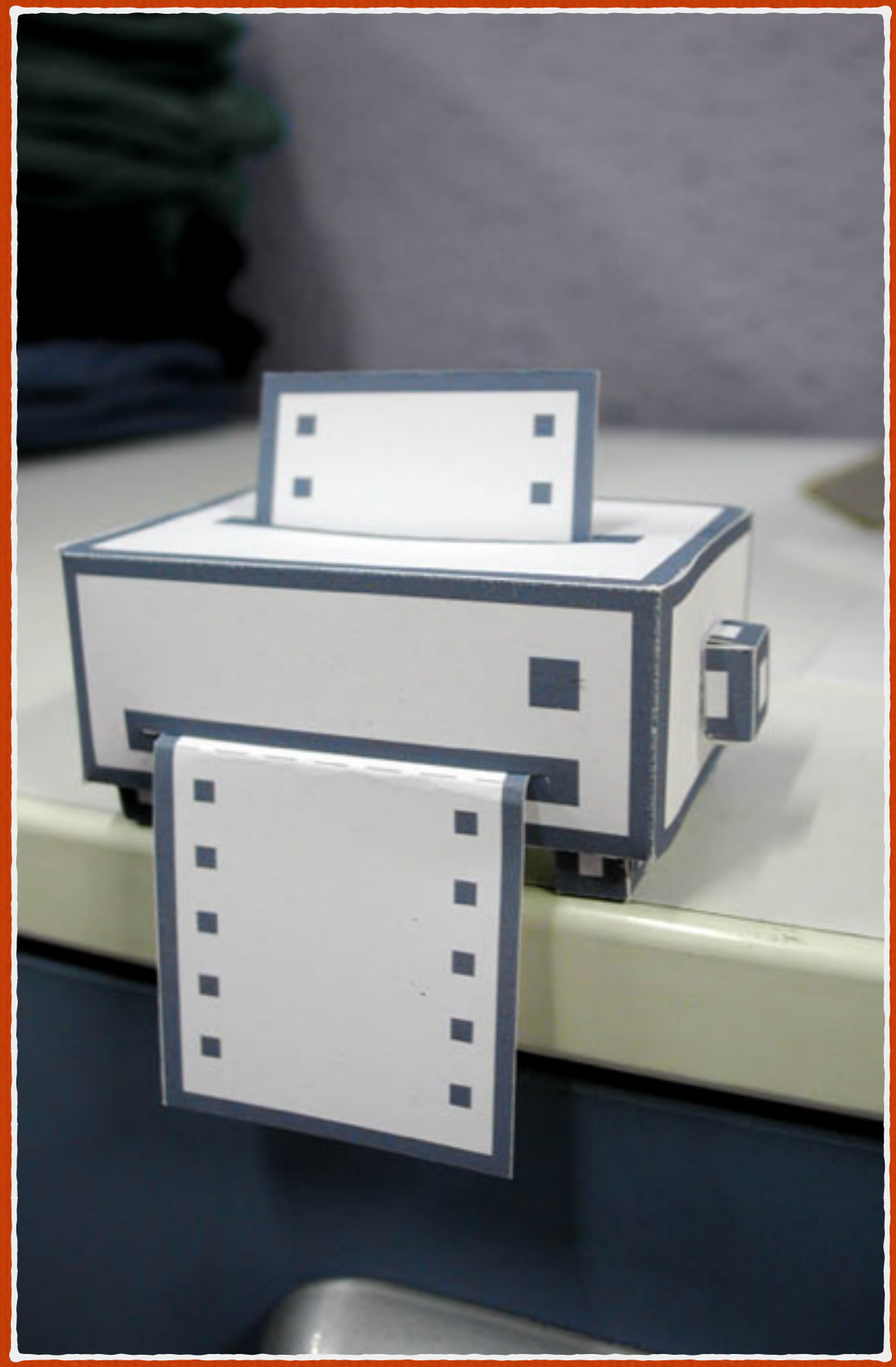
- ☐ Appropriate the world
- ☐ Designed to create a space to play, and play a role in that space
- ☐ Using the world to play: balls

Can’t everything be a toy?

Toys and playfulness

Playful design

Design the openings of a device to be understood, interpreted, and used as a toy

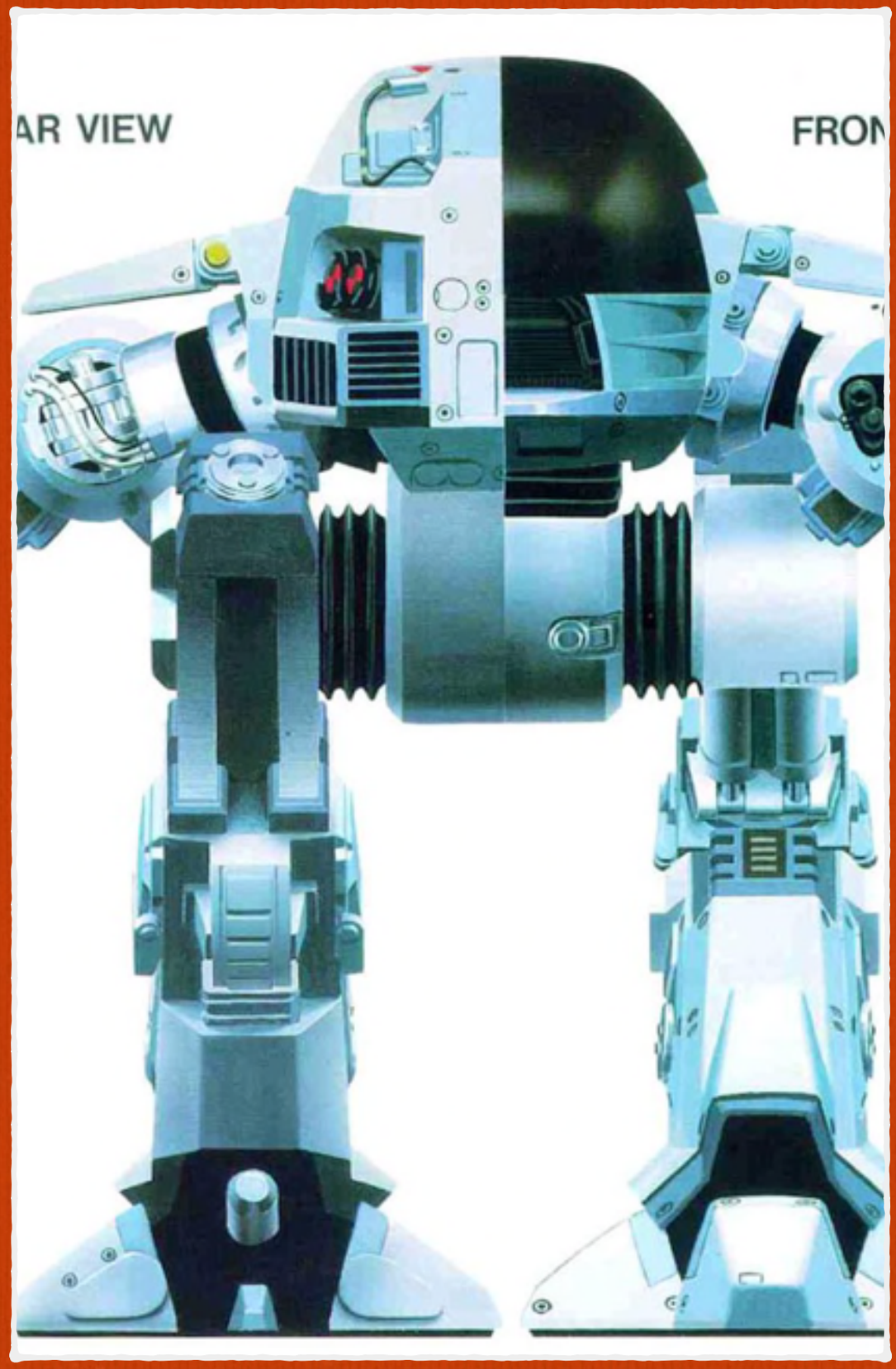


Exercise

Toys as instruments of play

Instruments

Mechanical toys

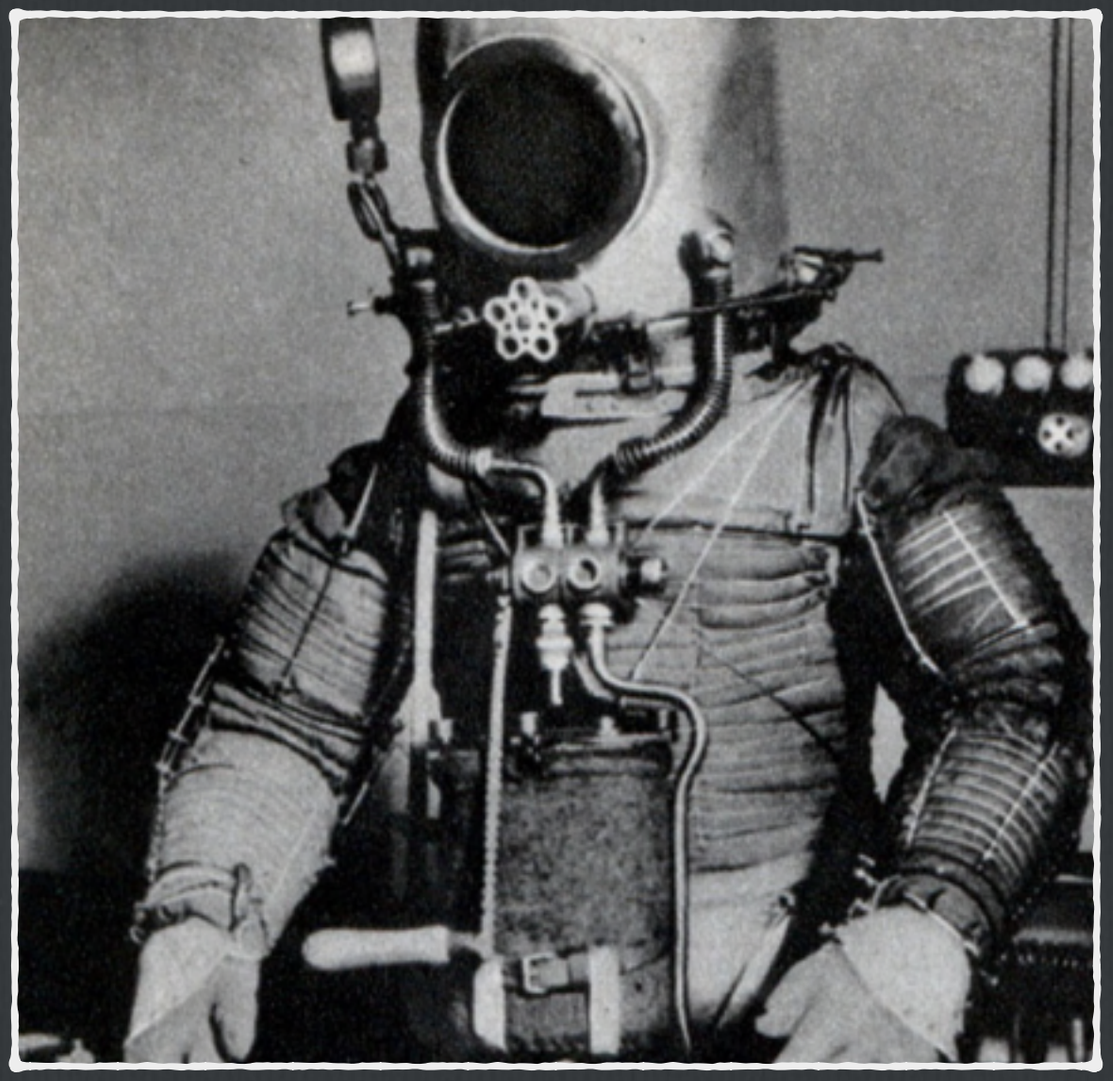


Procedural toys

From instruments to companions

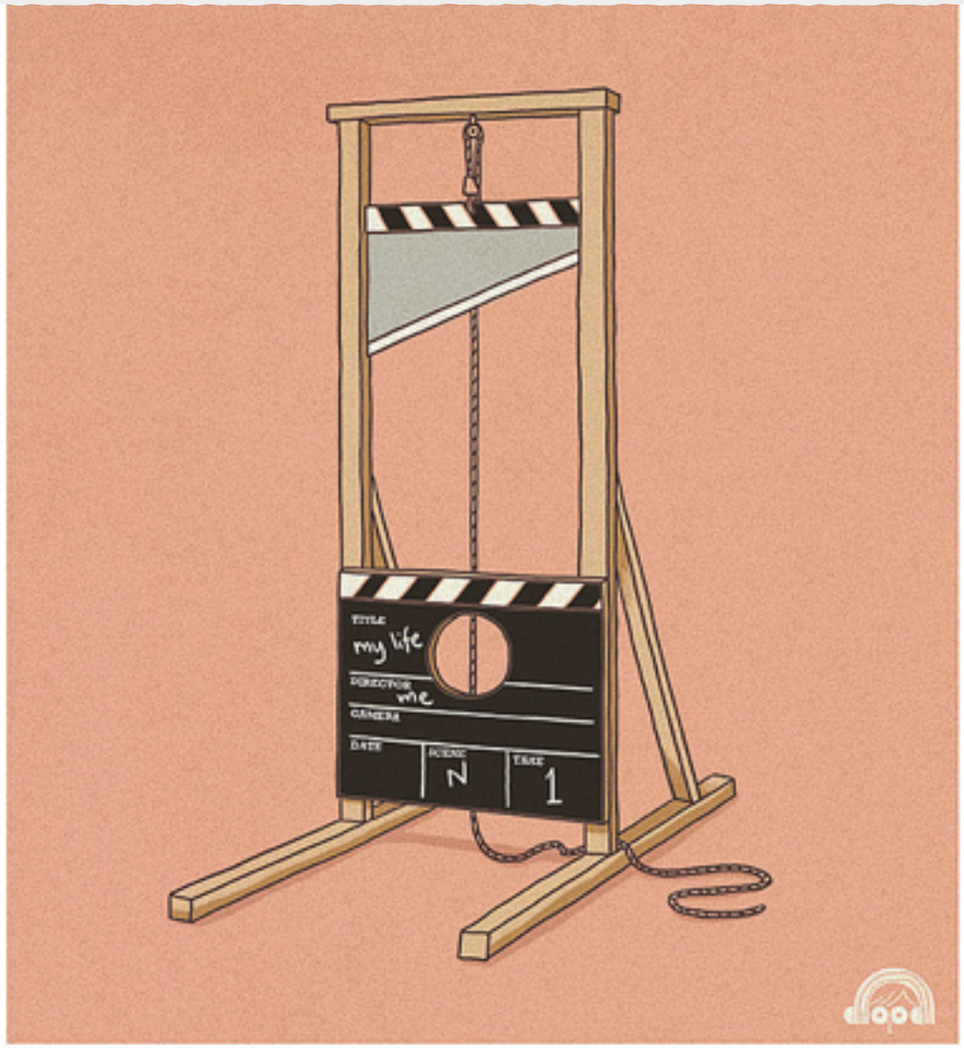
Designing toys

Filtering dimensions

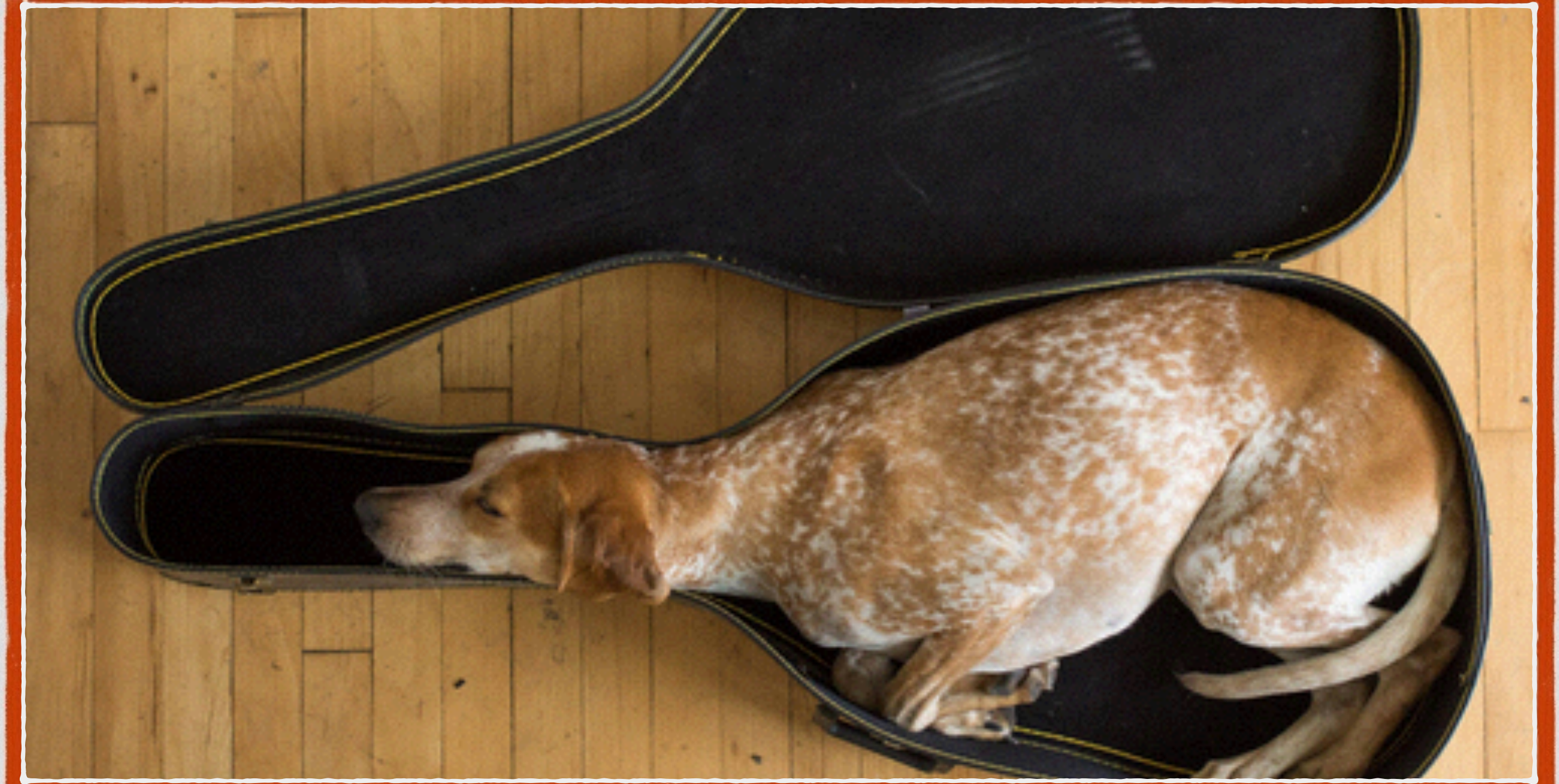


- [ ] Filter context towards play
- [ ] Afford manifestations of a play activity
- [ ] Ball: bounciness, size.

Manifestation dimensions



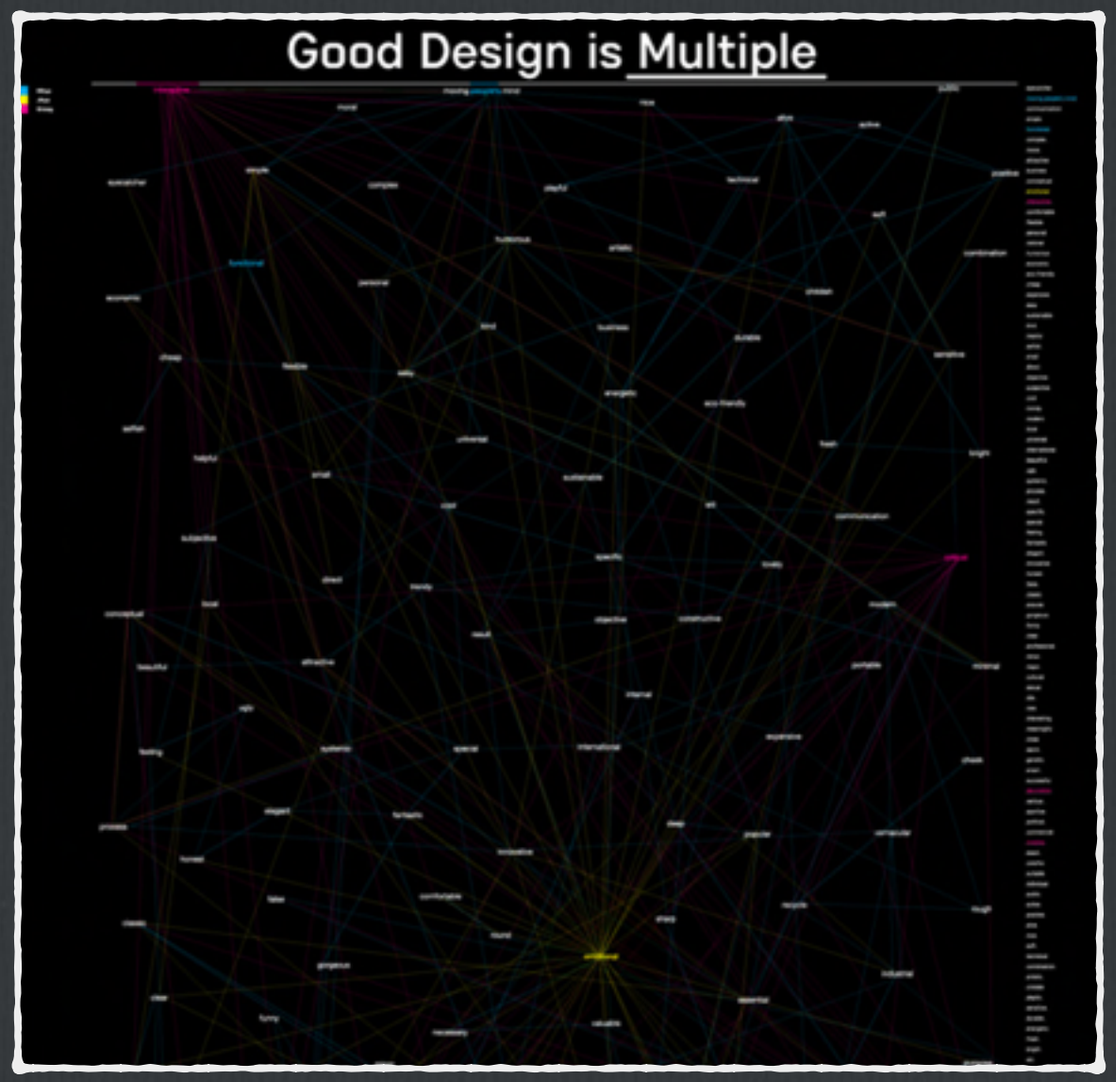
- ☐ Material adjusting to play
- ☐ Appropriation of the manifestation.
- ☐ Everybody designs: playfulness
- ☐ Design: tensions between filtering and manifestations.



Filters and Frames

Can we relate the rules of encounters with this ideas on toys?

Toy design for playfulness



- ☐ Think of the toy as a material filter
- ☐ How does the object place itself in a context, or create a context?
- ☐ How does the toy appropriate or negate an activity?
- ☐ How does the toy engage with rules, and (help) generate rules

The invulnerability of toys

- ☐ Even though toys are not only for children, they are not invulnerable.
- ☐ Because of their appropriative and creative capacities, all toys are ethical and political interventions in the world