Algorithms, Complexity, and Sociotechnical Constructions of the Self

Spring 2019

Playable Media

Spring 2019

Critical Technical Practice

Playable Media

About me

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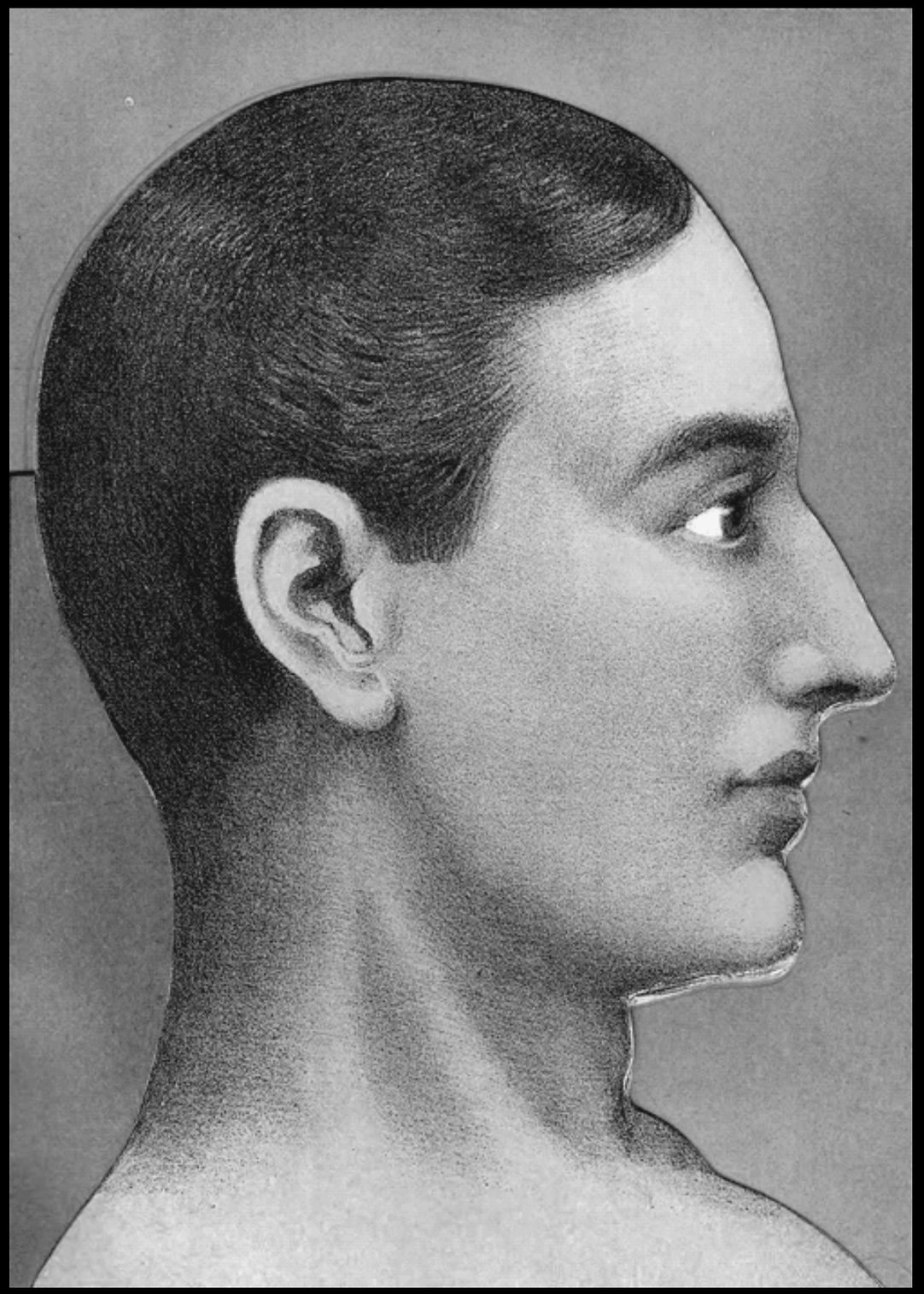
PhD in game studies
Play design/theory



Some basic information

- Course: come up with a concept, explain why it could work, make a prototype, show it can work, write why it is playful and how.

- Structure: 2 weeks of classes, one week without classes in which you just *work*. Then 4 classes, then break, Then 5 classes, then we’re done.

- We work hard.

- Questions?

What to do?

- Three options:
  - Prototype + Report (3000 words max)
  - Prototype + Tests + Written report (1500 words max)
  - Written report (6000 - 10000 words)

What to make?

- Games (boooooooooooring)
- Toys
- Playgrounds
- Digital Servicies
- Critical Playful Art
- Activist Media

Today

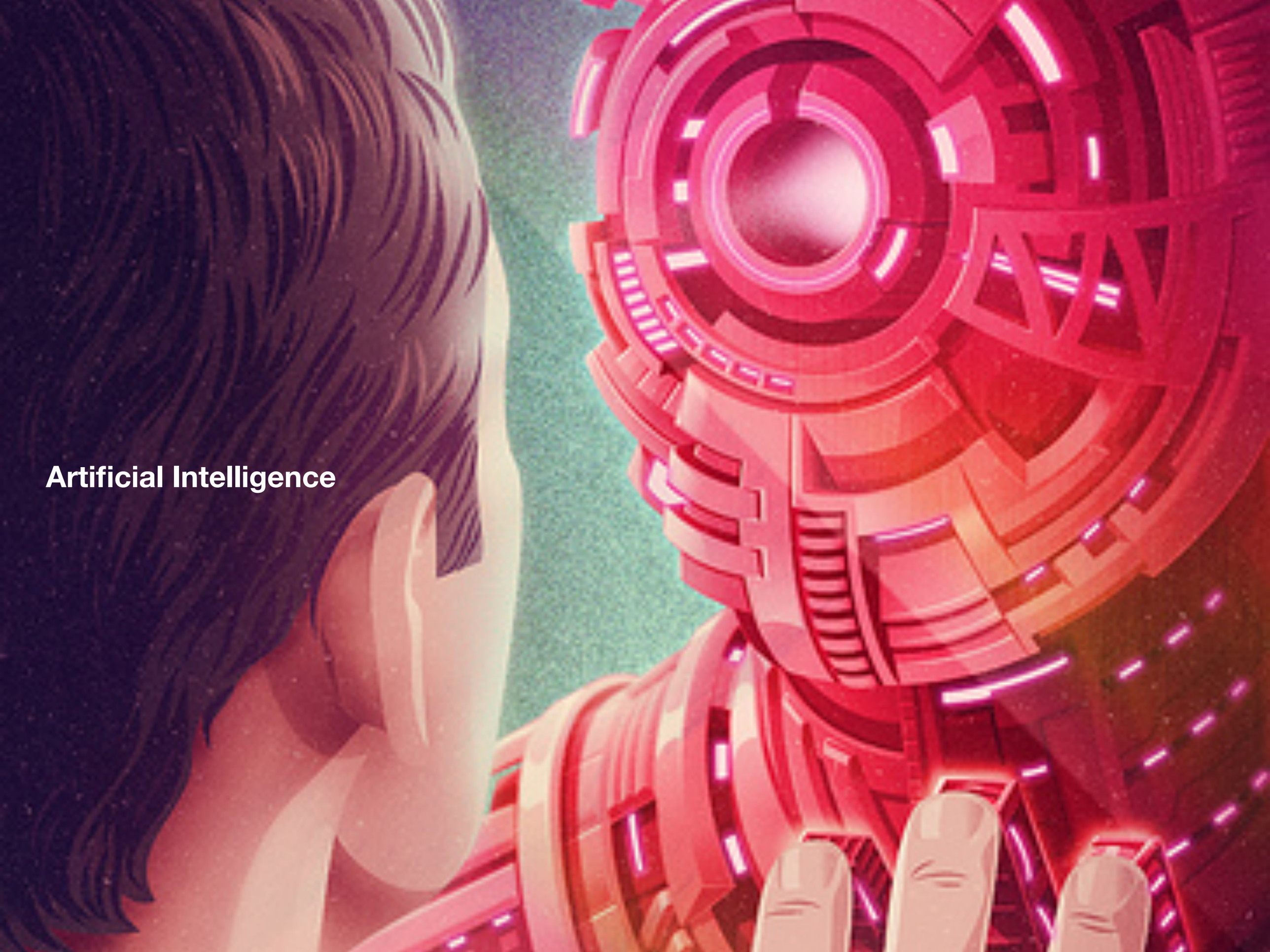
USER'S MANUAL

third edition

Critical Technical Practice

MC68000

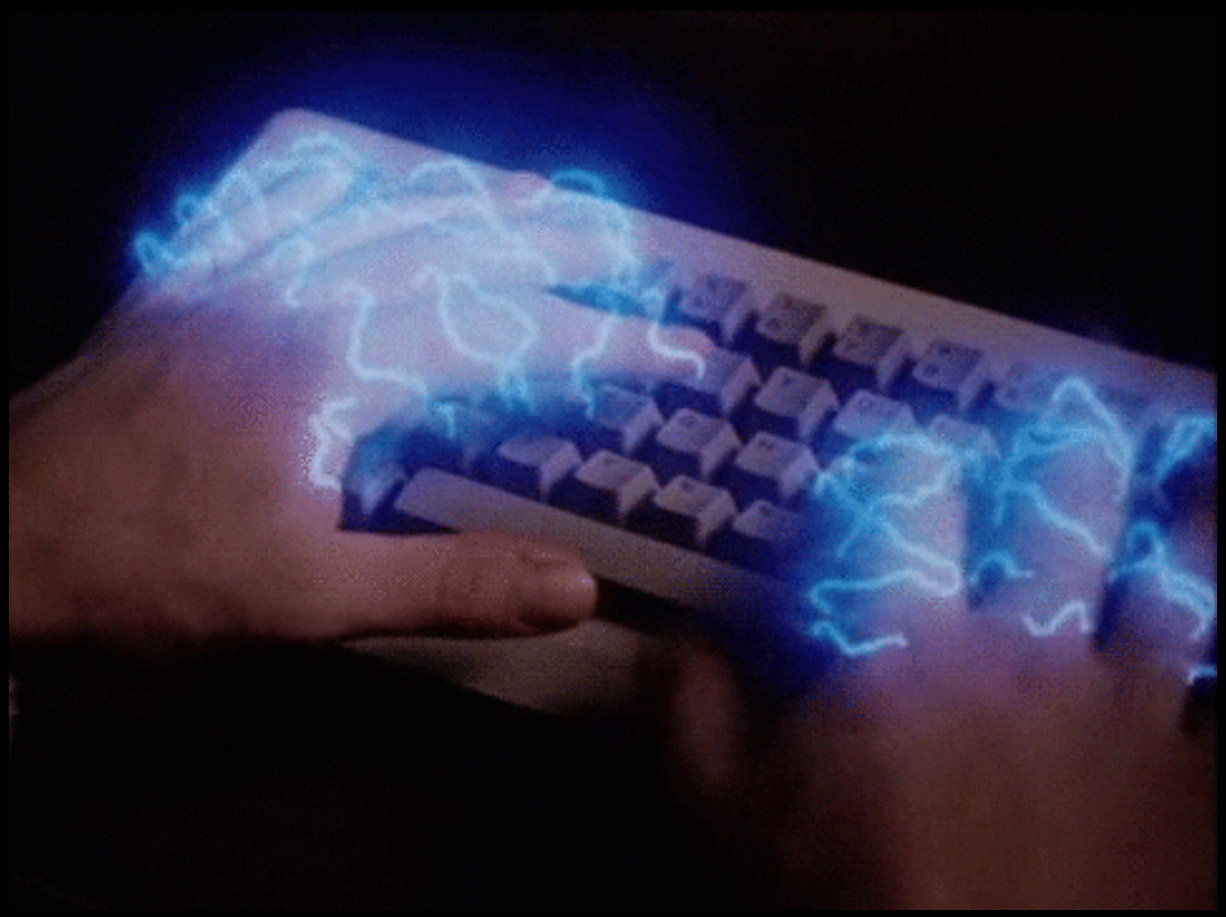
Break
away
from


Artificial Intelligence

design

Critical Technical Practice

- Analysis of contemporary technical discourse
- Identification of dominant metaphors and assumptions
- Critique of assumptions
- Development of alternatives



making as theory
theory as making

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- Functionalism
- Systems-thinking / Design thinking
- User-centered design
- Usability
- Games, not play

Play Design as Critical Technical Practice

or, one way of understanding what we will be doing.

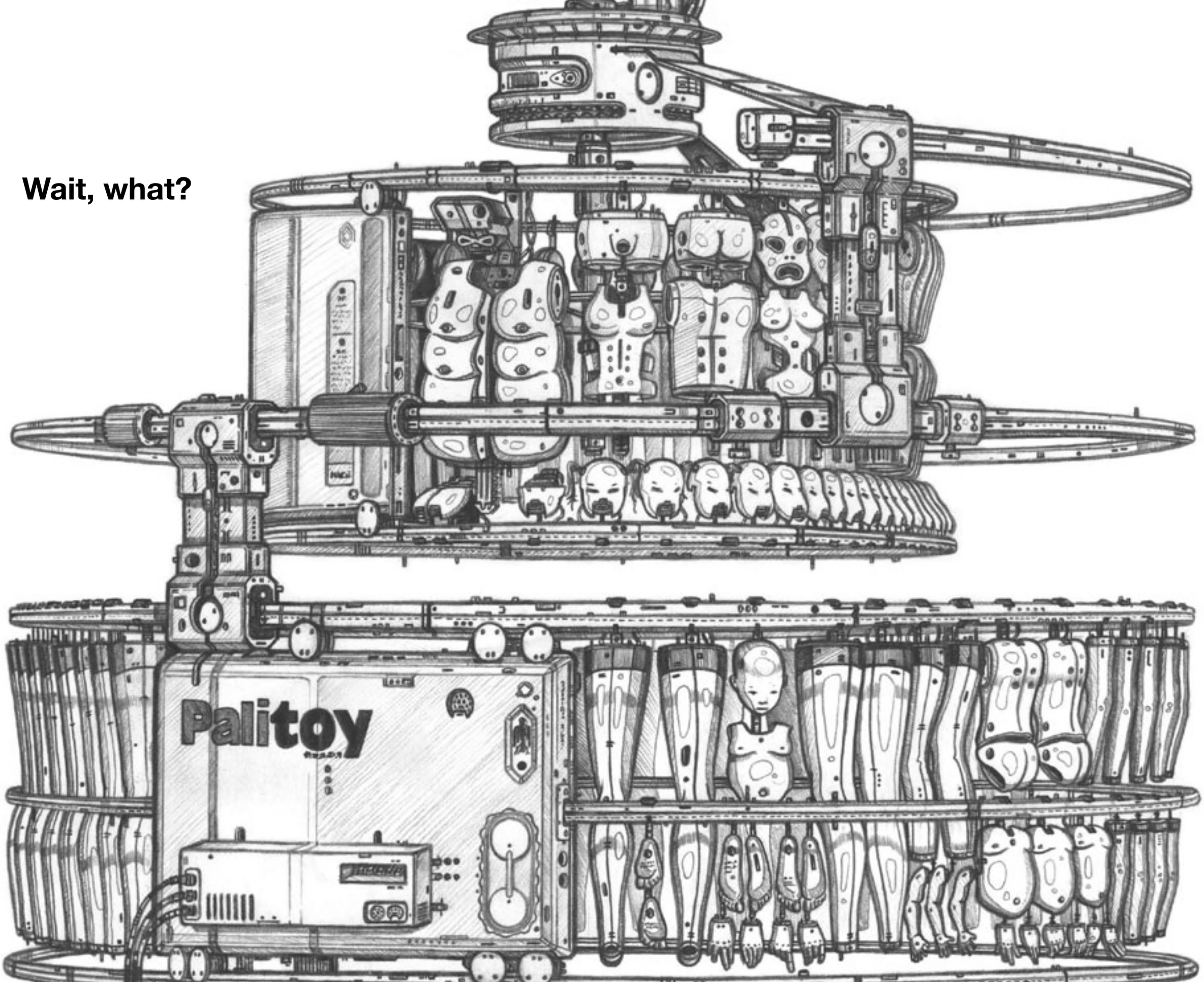
Critical: what is our theory?

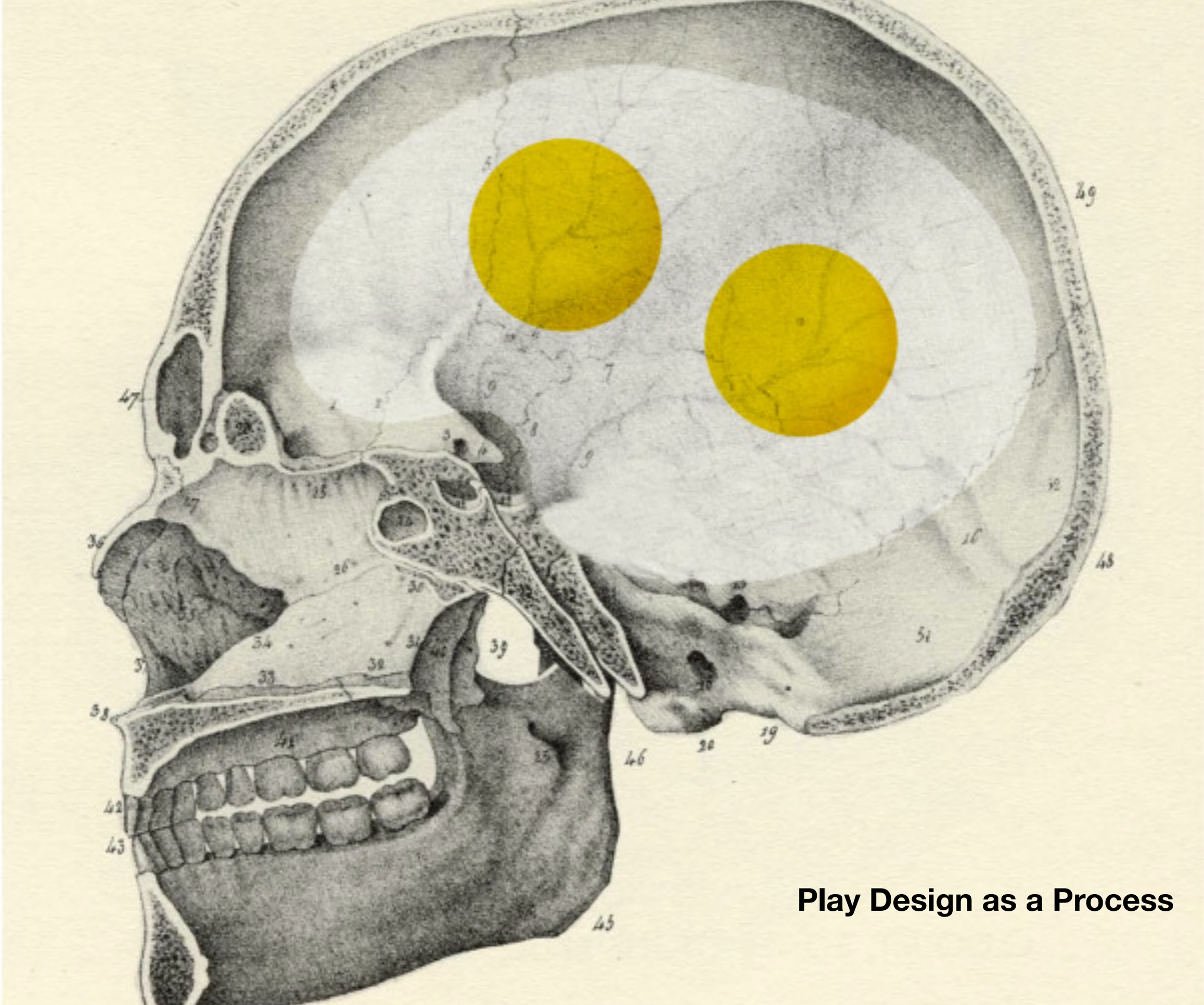
- Play theory, but not just that!
- Looking at technology design from the *perspective* of play.
- Play as a lens in design.

Technical Practice

- *Making*: our prototypes are arguments.
- *Users*: play design as *making people play*.
- Activity-centered
- Technology as interface/ mediation for experience

Wait, what?





Play Design as a Process

- Identify dominant metaphors: how are things done now?
  - usability, functionalism, common interfaces, assumptions of users
- Look at the *needs* and the *situation* from the lens of play:
  - *agon, alea, ilinx, mimicry*
  - *making people play*

- Subvert assumptions of design based on play.
- How to make something so that it is experienced through:
  - appropriation
  - expression
  - individuality (in a community)
  - autotelic (even with a goal)

TELL ME THE TRUTH !

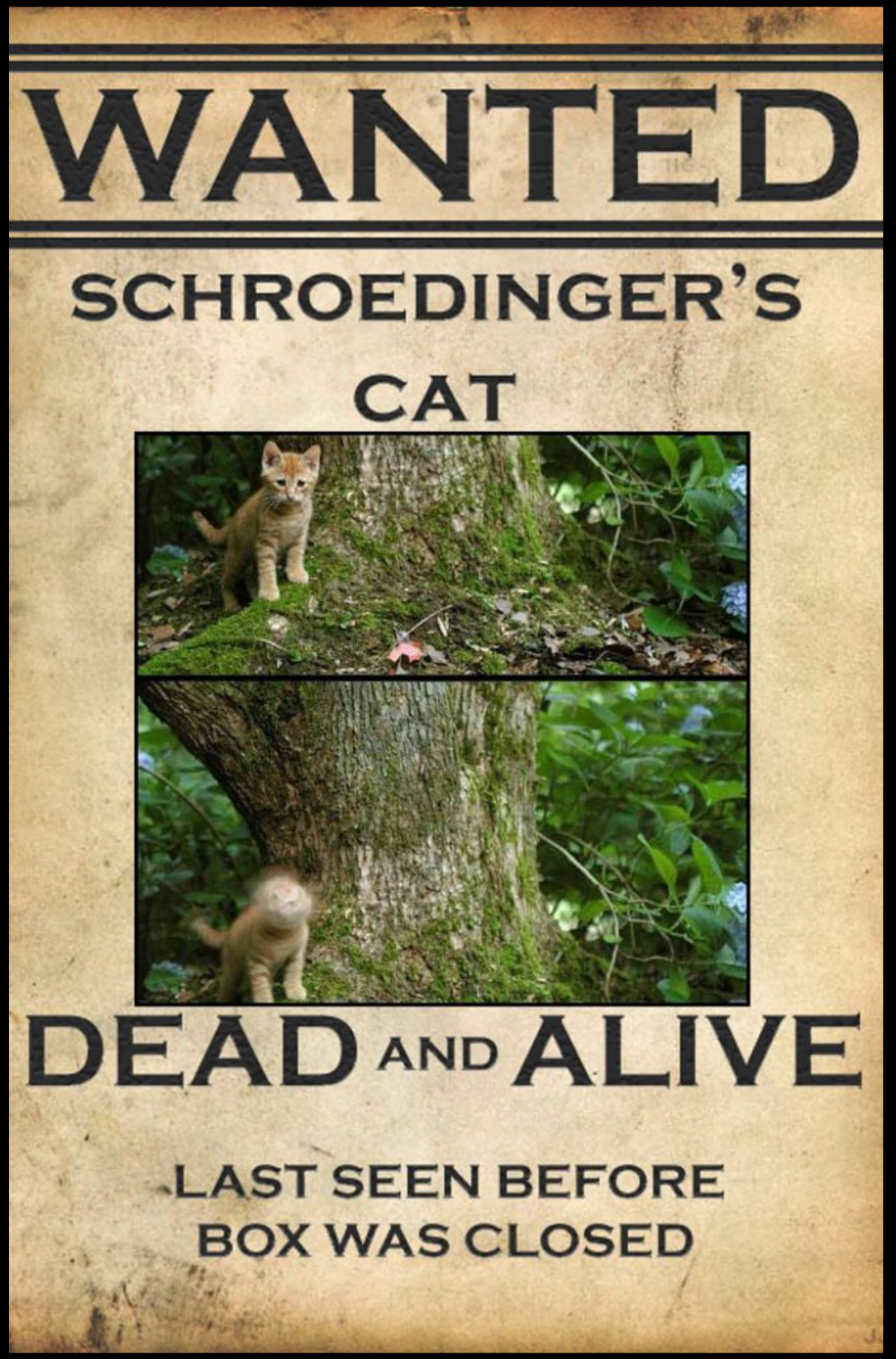
... WHAT TRUTH ?

Practice!

Loose couplings

metaphors that require user interpretation.

Subvert affordances and signifiers



Wiggle Spaces

More than one way of performing an action. More than the obvious interactions

Subverting user-centered design

Stage Setting

Context as a source of play experience

Subverting context-driven design: we setup our own stages

- Downplaying system authority
- Designing a situation
- Aesthetic and embodiment: experiences *felt* like games (*game feel* as crucial)

Summary

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