Interdisciplinarity is hard: Who knew?
My background

• Trained in computer science
  – *Artificial intelligence* and robotics

• Working on
  – *Emotion* and *personality* simulation
    • Psychology, neuroscience
  – Interactive *narrative*
    • Thinking about *genre*
    • *Farce* (Punch and Judy)
Education

Three tries at art and technology
Center for Art and Technology (1998-2004)

Minor built from existing courses, plus:

• Artist talks
• Capstone course
  – Take seniors in engineering and art
  – Tell them to collaborate
  – What could possibly go wrong?

Prlick, interactive installation, Yim, Novak, and Horswill
Postmortem

What went right
• **Community** building
  – Focus for students
  – Focus for faculty
• Good for the right kind of student
• Relatively **inexpensive**
  – Economically sustainable

What went wrong
• Little **cross-learning**
  – Programming curriculum designed for engineering students
• **Culture clash**
• Mutual **instrumentalization**
  – “I’m making a game; will you paint my textures for me?”
  – “I want to make a ”
• **Faculty didn’t learn** anything new
Animate Arts (2004-2010)

- Goal: liberal artist-technologists
- Social engineering
  - Get students early
  - Bring them into both cultures

- Integrated curriculum
  Visual design, sound design, cinema, art theory, narrative theory, game design, computer science
  - Loosely based on Bauhaus Vorkurs
  - Team taught

- 2 quarter senior project

- Faculty seminar used to prototype curriculum

*Observed*, interactive installation, Eric Mika, 2007
Postmortem

What went **right**

- Interdisciplinary **teams**
  - Atmosphere of mutual respect
- Faculty **walking the walk**
- **Devotion** to program
  - Many students viewed it as their “real” major
- Got a lot of students **jobs**

What went **wrong**

- 2 years not enough
- Team teaching is **expensive**
- **Differing goals** between faculty and students/admin
- Institutionally difficult
  - Joint between **four schools**
  - **Not a priority** for any particular department
  - Heavy **faculty attrition**
    - 80% of participating faculty left university
    - Weren’t replaced
Creative Art and Technology Studio (2011-???)

• **Student** group
  – No formal curricular component
  – Minimal load on institution
  – High load on student volunteers

• Focused on
  – Short courses
  – Community building

• Good at **generating interest**
  – 80 students in first week

• Hard for them to devote large **blocks of time**
Lessons learned
(or at least biases documented)
Problems, not professions
Methodological promiscuity
Protect making as a mode of inquiry
Thanks to Patrick Winston for this marvelous phrase

Tyranny from below
None of this is how a modern, neoliberal, US university operates.