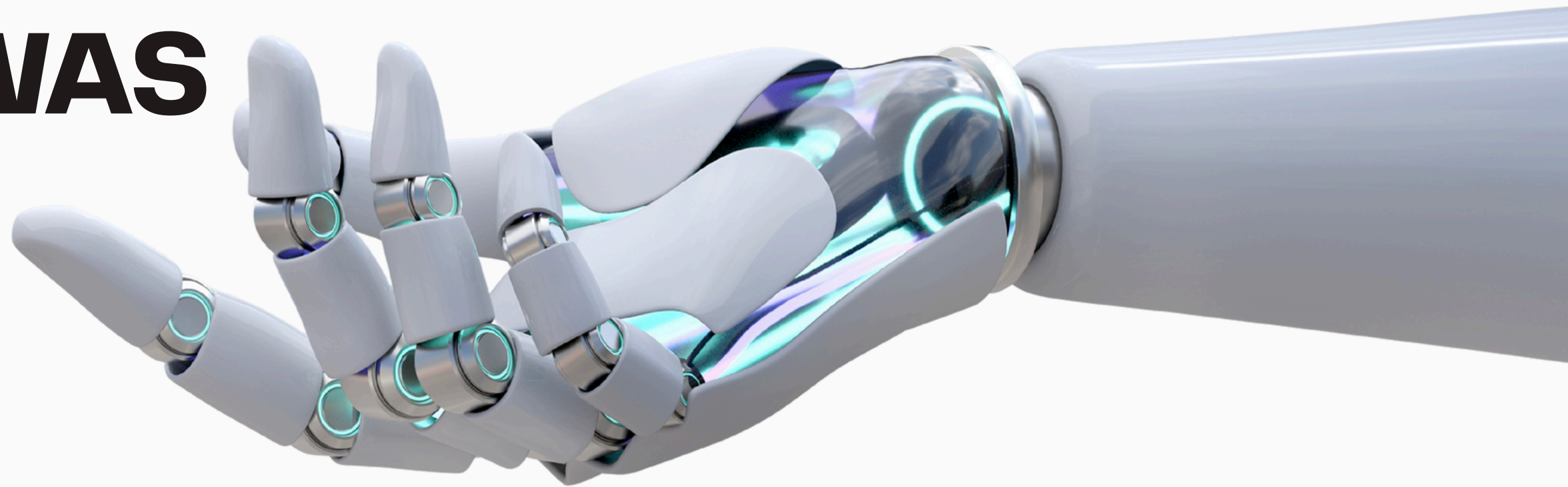


THE HUMAN TOUCH VS. AI:

A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHARACTER-BASED EMOTIONAL ENGAGEMENT IN HYBRID CINEMA

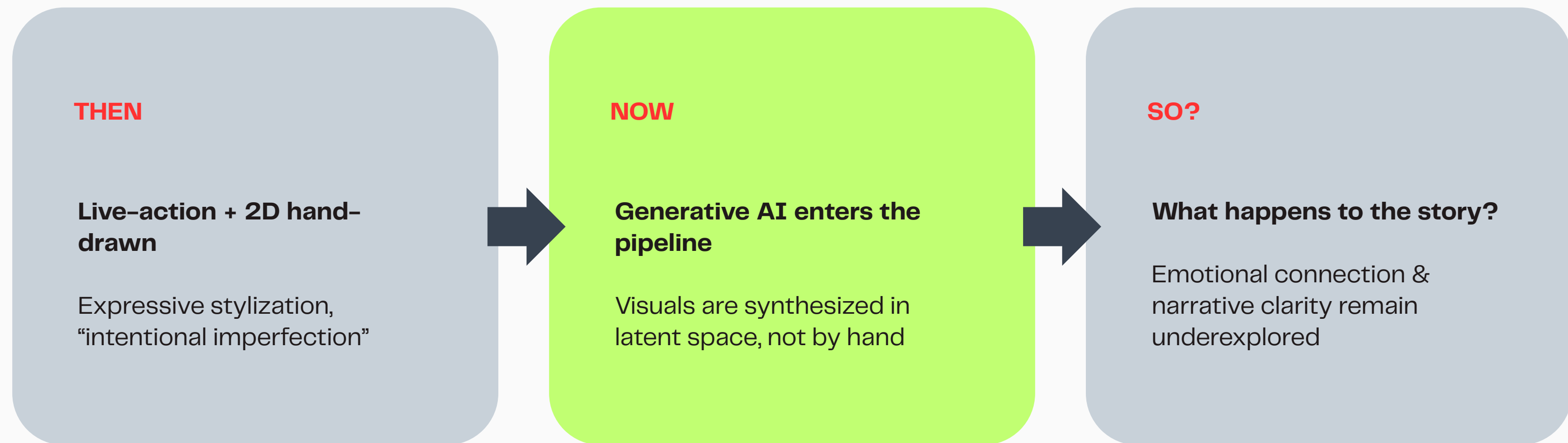
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**IF YOU DIDN'T
KNOW IT WAS
AI, WOULD
YOU STILL
FEEL THE
SAME?**



Most studies test audiences who already know. We remove the label.

HYBRID CINEMA AT A TURNING POINT



Visual style is not merely aesthetic – it drives empathy and how clearly we follow the plot.

TWO PARADIGMS

The Human Touch

- Trace of the animator's hand
- Intentional imperfection
- Indexicality: each line indexes human movement

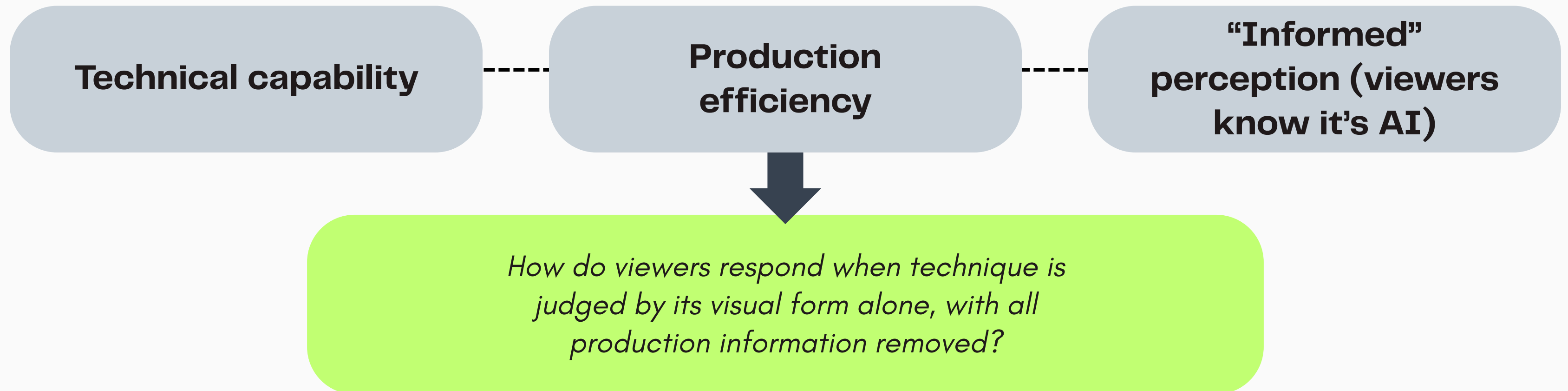
Wells (1998); Gunning (2007)

The Ghost in the Machine

- Probabilistic recombination
- Fluid, but detached from craft
- Form = statistical prediction

Manovich (2020)

THE RESEARCH GAP



FOUR STRANDS OF LITERATURE

A) Authenticity & AI bias

The “AI” label alone lowers perceived emotional depth: an authenticity gap.

[4] Hong & Curran; [5] Ragot et al.; [6] Jago

B) Uncanny valley & motion

Jittery, inconsistent motion triggers discomfort; realism depends on organic motion.

[7] Mori; [8] Katsyri et al.; [9] Prince

C) Human touch & indexicality

The “presence of the animator” builds connection; synthesized motion may lose it.

[1] Wells; [2] Gunning

D) Technical limits & narrative

Temporal consistency is still a core hurdle; flicker can break the story.

[10] Sora report; [11] Wang et al.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS & HYPOTHESES

RQ1

How does technique influence character-based emotional engagement?

H1 – Hand-drawn rated higher on empathy, vitality & intimacy, even when blind

RQ2

Does perceived authorship mediate audience response?

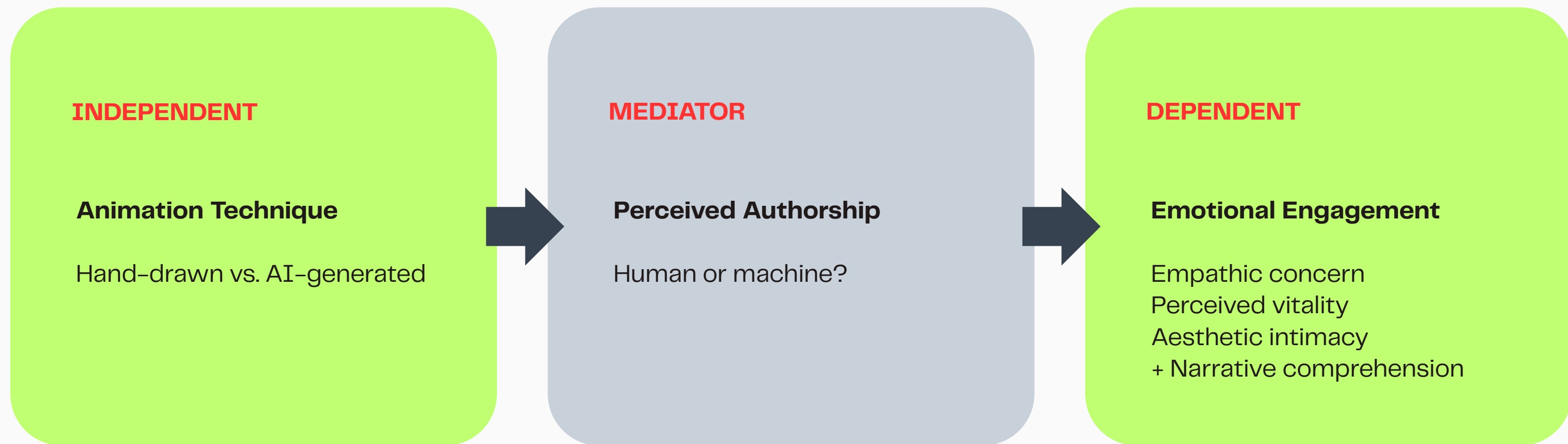
H2 – Cues read as “human-made” predict higher engagement, regardless of actual method

RQ3

How does technique affect narrative comprehension?

H3 – AI version comprehended less, due to flicker & unstable details

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK



Controlled: Script - Live-action footage - Characters - Duration - Pacing

WHAT WE MEASURE

Empathic Concern

Emotional alignment with the character's situation

Does the hand's trace stabilize empathy, or do latent variations disrupt it?

Perceived Vitality

Liveliness, "soul" and expressive movement

Organic imperfection vs. algorithmic, artificial liveliness

Aesthetic Intimacy

Closeness created by texture and visual form

Pencil lines vs. high-frequency machine artifacts

Narrative Comprehension

Understanding of plot, motivation & coherence

Do shifting visual details blur the story?

PRODUCTION DESIGN

SHARED CORE

One script – Identical live-action footage

Version A

The Human Touch

- *2D hand-drawn*
- *Each frame stylized manually*



Version B

The Ghost in the Machine

- *Diffusion-based video stylization*
- *Prompted to strictly mimic Version A's style*



**Illustration only: author's character (A) & ChatGPT redraw (B)*

Same duration - Same pacing - Same narrative structure

BLIND SCREENING & DATA COLLECTION

1

Production

2

Blind Screening

3

Analysis

Viewers watch with no information about how the film was made.

Likert-scale ratings

- Empathic concern
- Perceived vitality
- Aesthetic intimacy
- Narrative comprehension

Open-ended questionnaires

- Detailed emotional reactions in the viewers' own words

CONTRIBUTIONS

01

**A framework linking
animation technique to
audience engagement in
hybrid cinema**

02

**Perceived authorship as a
mediating construct
between production method
and response**

03

**Extends debates on
authenticity & indexicality
into the generative-AI era**

For filmmakers: keeping the emotional “heart” of a story while integrating AI.

LIMITATIONS

1

Single narrative, small planned sample

May limit generalizability across genres and cultures

2

Style-matching may be a confound

“AI origin” vs. “stylization fidelity” effects can blur

3

Self-reported measures

Pre-existing attitudes toward AI are reduced by blinding, not eliminated

4

Fast-moving AI

Findings may have a short shelf life as consistency improves

**VISUAL STYLE ISN'T
JUST AESTHETIC. IT
SHAPES HOW WE FEEL
AND UNDERSTAND.**

Next: produce both versions – blind screening – empirical findings





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