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Final animation statement  
Animating Resistance  
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The idea for this animation was born out of an episode of the podcast *Chapo Trap House* featuring journalist Max Read, in which they discuss Read's article, *The AI Slop Problem is Only Going to Get Worse*. His research explores the implications and economy behind AI images and content (AI slop) being mass produced for social media platforms. In the episode, host Will Menaker cites the short story *Pay for the Printer* by Philip K. Dick as an allegory for the AI-produced content and culture. In the story, America is a few hundred years following its collapse. Most of the landscape is destitute. The characters are traveling from one settlement to another. Where they are coming from has many useful goods, including a nice car. Where they go is falling apart. Most objects disintegrate to the touch. This is because of the state of their Biltong. After the destruction of the country, an alien species called Biltongs came to Earth. Biltongs can take an object and create a *near* perfect copy of it. Each settlement has a Biltong, and they rely on the Biltong to create the goods needed for living. The first settlement has a healthy Biltong, and many "originals" to print from. The other settlement's Biltong is sick and has for hundreds of years been making copies of copies, leading to their gradual decrease in quality and longevity. Since the collapse of the country, everyone has completely relied on their Biltongs. People have completely lost all production, manufacturing, and artisan skills. The story ends with someone having carved a wooden spoon, the simple act of which inspires the others that they can recreate independent means to survive.

*Pay for the Printer* is a story from 1956, well before artificial intelligence technology was developed. While the story's premonitions certainly apply to AI, they are relevant to mass manufacturing and cultural hegemonic production more broadly. We have an ecologically devastating reliance on cheaply manufactured and limited use plastics. Our media landscape is flooded with remakes of popular films, wanting for novel stories, plots, or settings. And of course, cheesy AI-produced music soon to surely take over the radio. Even in the last couple weeks, the much-anticipated 2024 Spotify wrapped came out. In the past these were artistically driven summaries and mood-based annual recaps of your listening behaviors and patterns. After massive layoffs at the company this year and massive disapproval upon exploring their wrapped, people are speculating that they were completely AI-produced, and that is why they were so lacking in creativity, fun, and even accuracy.

Animation has a specific affordance that makes it a useful medium for representing the *Pay for the Printer* story and themes: indexing. Digital photography and film was criticized for being less representational of a subject compared to traditional film, and animation goes a step further, by reflexively not trying to capture the subject "exactly as it was." It admits its representational position. The ability to increase degrees of separation from the original subject offers a useful visual mechanism for representing the Biltong's prints of prints, each one more removed from the original than the last. AI is also indexical, only able to reference training data to generate output. The parallel referential relationships in animation, artificial intelligence, and cultural

nostalgia drive the intention and creation of the animation. As well as the sentiment that these forces are not beneficial to our society.

The animation uses three references to the original objects it is representing (mug, apple, shoe). The first is a stop motion animation taken with a DSLR camera. The next is a high-quality 3D scan of the same objects using the Polycam app. The third is another 3D scan, however one that is disfigured. The original idea was to use a 2D photo or potentially a drawing for the third degree of separation. However, after Polycam produced decrepit scans of the mug for the first 4 tries, I had the idea to use the “failed” scans as the third representation. I purposefully scanned the apple and shoe quickly and with too little data to generate the *broken* images.

The first half of the audio and animation is set within the *Pay for the Printer* world, as a public service announcement to all Americans about how to use the Biltongs. The latter half of the animation uses phrases and quotes from the Chapo Trap House and Max Read episode, paired with the deterioration of the objects. The audio script was put into a text-to-speech generator and three separate voices are used.