

Beyond the Puppeteer: Exploring Performer-Puppet Separation

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Puppetry asks our audience to accept the **illusion of life**.

But what happens when the performer steps further and further away?

This project examines how **shifting the performer's presence** – through hand-operated puppets, masks, stage effects, and robotic puppets – challenges and redefines **how we perceive agency on stage**.

POD (2021): The Hidden Performer

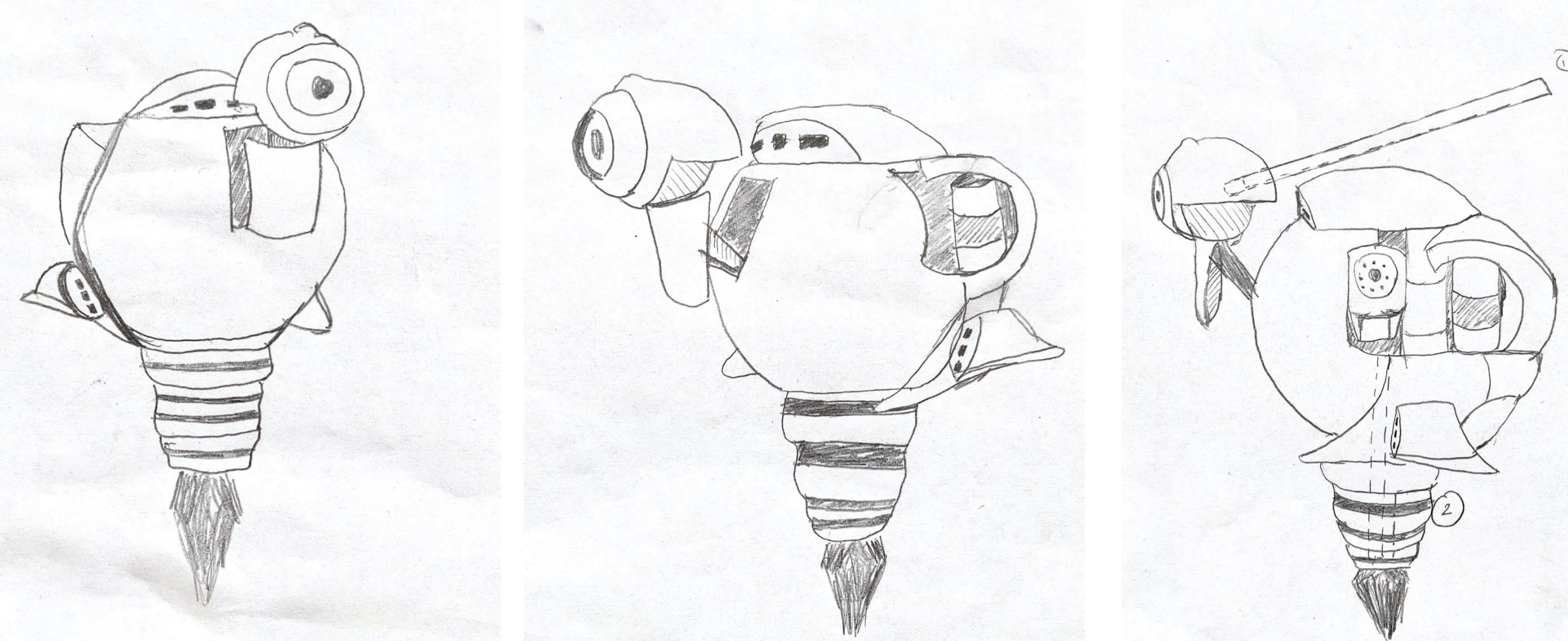


Figure 1. Sketches of SAM's design



Figure 2. Concealed performance with off-stage voice

A foam robot puppet (SAM) operated by a performer in a zentai suit, with voice delivered off-stage. With the performer obscured, the puppet's range of motion becomes the **sole source of visible expression**, requiring close coordination between the voice and physical performers to present a single, unified character.

May's Mandala (2022): Visible Performer



Figure 2. Animal puppets performed by costumed actors in full view.

The 24 animal puppets built for *May's Mandala* featured diverse mechanisms, including rod, hand puppets, and fabric-based effects.

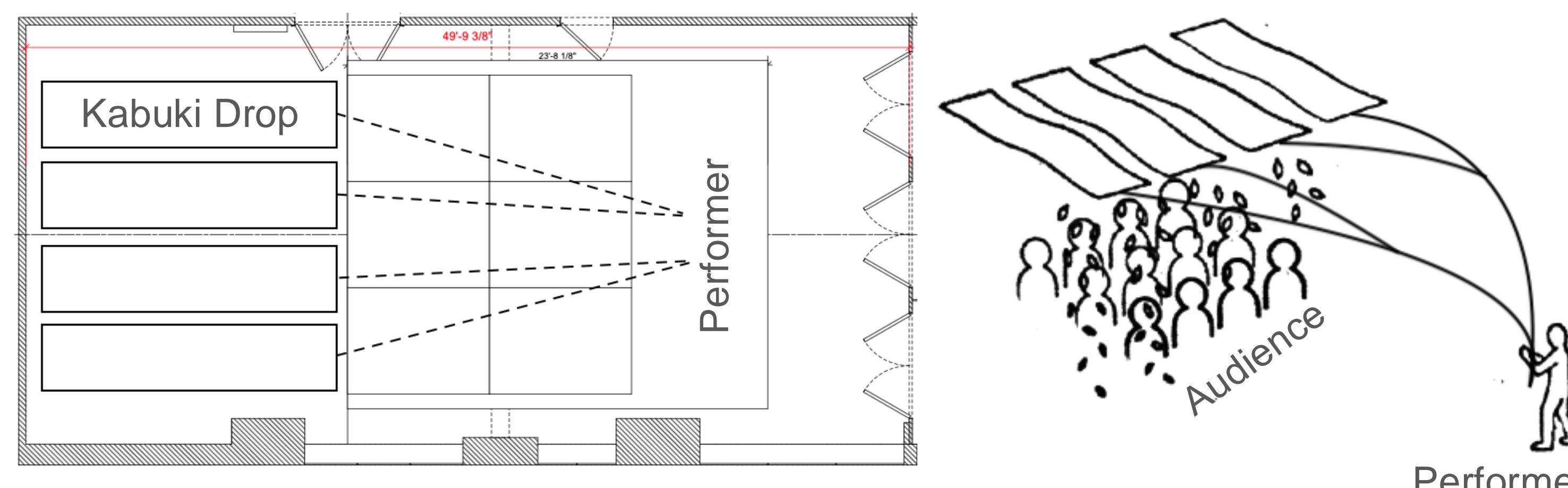


Figure 3. Sketches of the kabuki drop for the Oak Tree

A performer-controlled kabuki drop system released paper leaves through cloth panels suspended above the audience, **physically extending the character's presence** into the audience's space.

MONSTER (2023): Masked

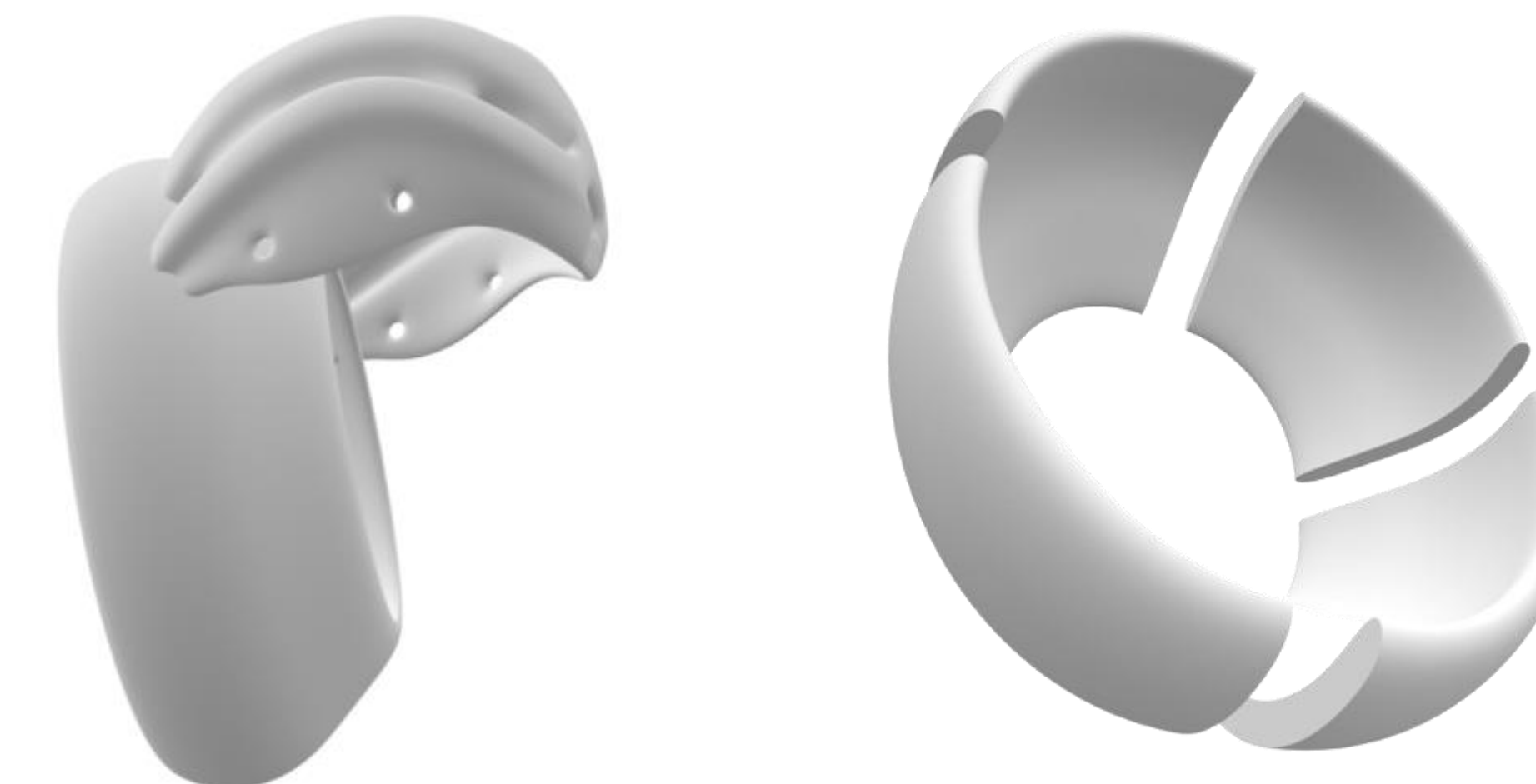


Figure 4. A custom 3D modeled mask that concealed the performer's face.



Figure 5. The Monster's false mask is removed to reveal the "true face"

A 3D-printed monster mask obscured the performer's face, **shifting all expressive responsibility** to voice and body.

Tele-Puppetry (2024)

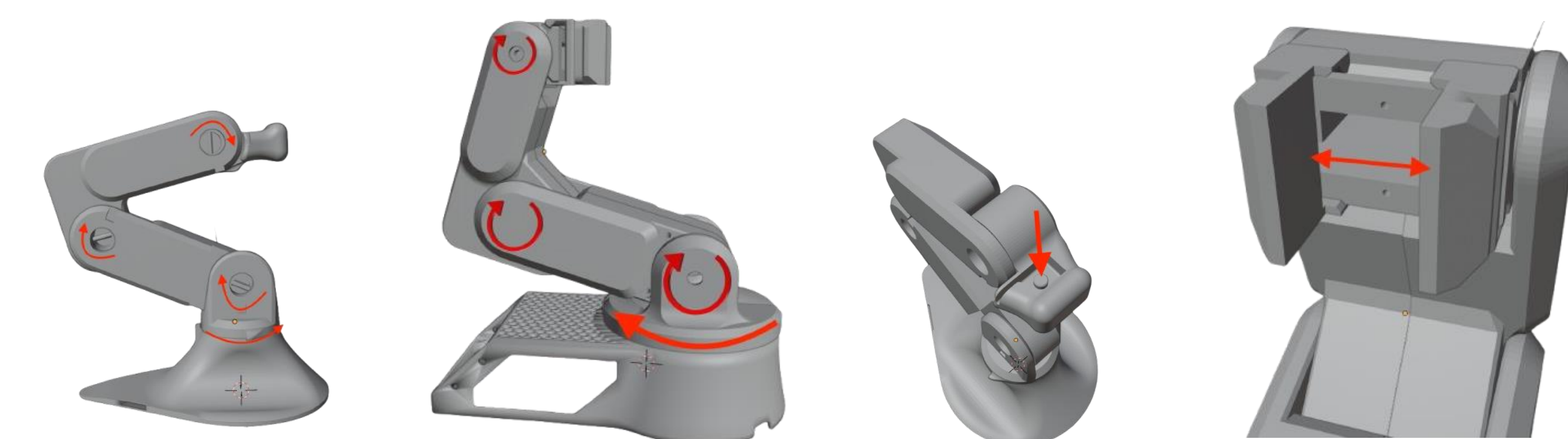


Figure 6.

A robotic arm (right) remotely controlled by a smaller scale replica (left)

Figure 7.

Fine motor control (right) is achieved with a button mechanism on the remote (left)

A remote controlled robotic puppet skeleton, investigating **if expressive performance can persist** without the performer's physical presence.

Acknowledgement

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Conference materials available via QR code.

