

Replacing third-party material without copying it

Armin Müller-Stahl, the opening: what the problem was, what we researched and decided, how our AI practitioners worked, and what came out.

ALL IMAGES AND VIDEOS WERE CREATED FROM THREE PHOTOS OF ARMIN MÜLLER-STAHL: ONE PICTURE FROM OUR 2026 INTERVIEW, AT THE AGE OF 90, AND TWO PHOTOS FROM HIS PRIVATE ARCHIVE. THE CHARACTER SHEETS WERE MADE FROM THESE. THIS IS A TEST, NOT THE FINAL RESULT.

THE PROBLEM

Of 96 archive excerpts in the openings, 79 came back from the ORF rights department with "no" or "no, but". Question: can third-party material be replaced by generated material that evokes the same world without copying the original?

WHAT WE RESEARCHED

- Does a brief in words carry the world across a wall behind which nobody sees the original?
- What does a character sheet buy over words alone? (control run without a sheet)
- Does one character hold across six decades, and what do two real photos from his archive change?
- Three styles for the same montage: photoreal, 3D, pencil.

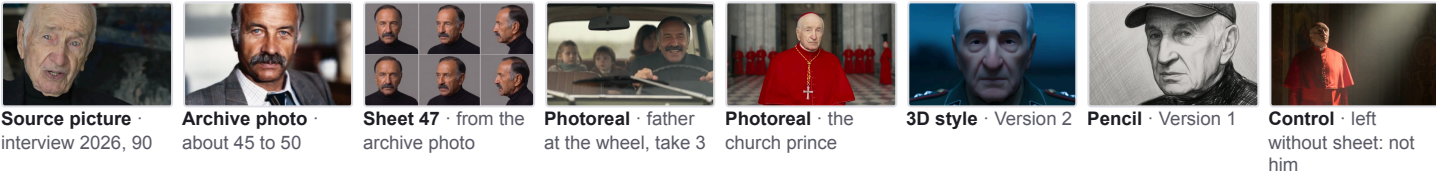
WHAT WE DECIDED

- Clean room: only the brief crosses the wall.
- The face from our own material only; two archive photos by the producer's decision and at his risk.
- Style references stay with the humans, the style crosses in words.
- Every prediction written before spending, graded after; failed attempts stay on record.
- Every input has a source-list row before use.

OUR AI SETUP WITH EMPIRICA

Broadcaster › Original › ffp-archive: brief › Wall › storyboard: shot list, prompts, predictions › imagegen: character sheets › videogen: Seedance runs › Page, PDF

Empirica measures every step: a prediction before every spend, a verdict after, a ledger and source-list row for every input, calibration across all runs.



ELEVEN TAKES

TAKE	WHAT	RESULT
V-002	Test A photoreal, Version 3	13/13 shots; him from the sixties on; insignia invented
V-003	Test A 3D style, Version 2	one character throughout, recognisably him
V-009	Test A pencil, Version 1	line throughout, 11/13 fully monochrome
V-010	Test A photoreal, take 3, archive age ladder	young faces from the archive photos; the young man reads 35 to 40
V-011	Test A pencil, take 2, pencil ladder	line in about 9/13; no red any more
V-005	Test B photoreal, conclave	only he carries the face; two aerial shots
V-006	Test B 3D style	holds
V-007	Test B control without sheet	a plausible cardinal, not him (blind)
V-001, V-004, V-008	three replaced takes	age, face leak, mixed style; kept on record

CALIBRATION: 37 PREDICTIONS

25 held

5 failed

4 partial

3 not run

WRITTEN BEFORE	ODDS	VERDICT
All 13 montage shots, first take	0.30	held, under-confident
Four age sheets pass first time	0.35	failed
Second pass fixes the face leak	0.55	held
Control: not recognised blind	0.75	held
Identity across six ages (A-1)	0.45	partial
Re-run: face from the archive photo	0.70	held
Re-run pencil: line 13/13	0.75	partial, 9/13

WHAT WE LEARNED

- Only he has the bound face; every other figure gets a different face in words, or the sheet leaks onto all of them.
- Age in words stalls after two or three rungs; a real photo at that age moves it on the first try.
- Itemise absent decoration; insignia on the uniform still came in five of five runs.
- The style has to stand in every shot; dark and wide shots tip into photograph.

Before anything is published: the written consent of Armin Müller-Stahl is pending; the producer shows the two archive photos at his own risk, photographer and source of the film frame are not recorded; a model trained on his face (version C) is deferred.