



**The politics of  
design artifacts**

# This workshop

## What?

- Introduction to design politics
- Critiquing artifacts
- Writing design manifesto

## How?

- Examples and discussion
- Model for design critique
- Pressure-cooker critique exercise
- Design manifesto homework

## Why?

- Sharpen your design identity
- Be aware of the consequences of design
- Identify the social context for your prototypes

# Section 1: Understanding the Politics of Design Artifacts

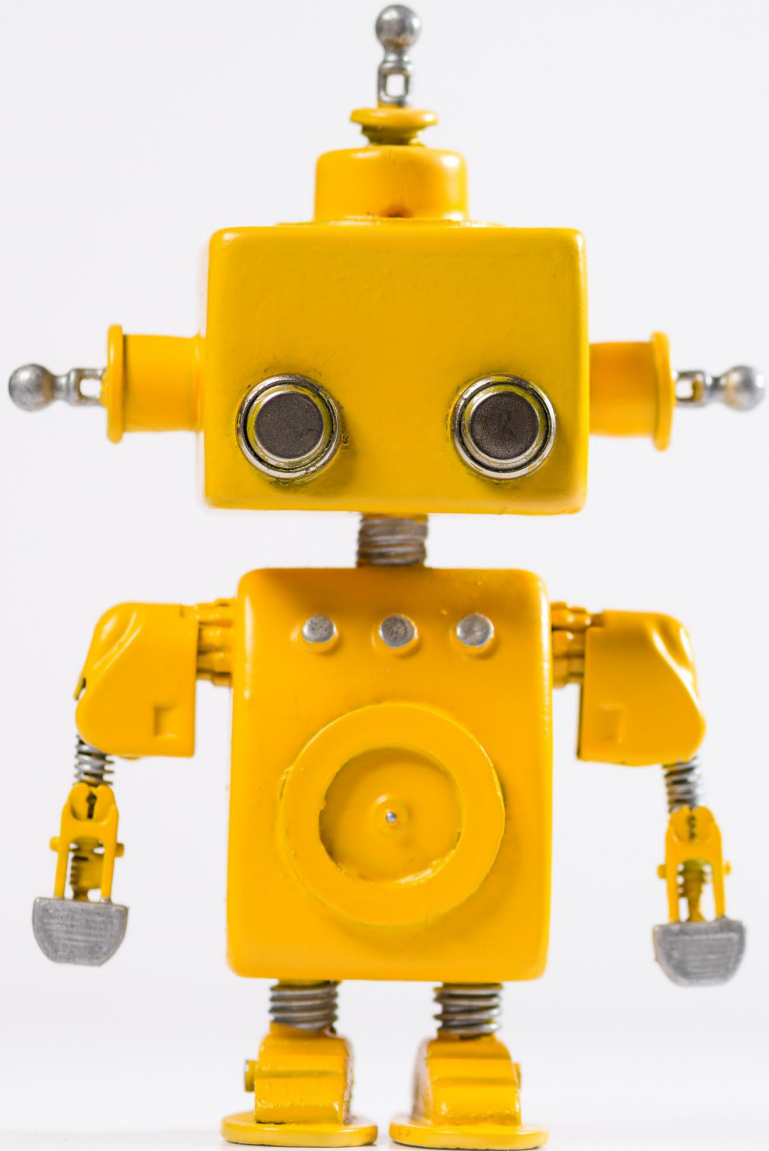


**Technology is not neutral**

Design has socio-cultural consequences

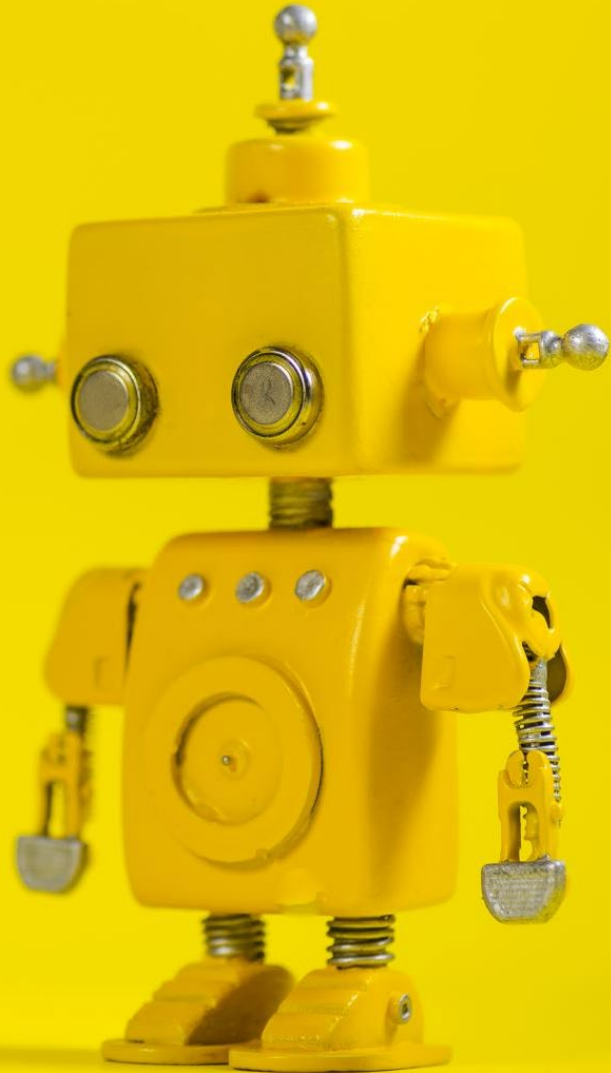
Design expresses ideological worldviews, intentionally or not





As students, you are assembling a *repertoire* of design exemplar.

Don't consider only their form and function, but also the worldview they express.



## On Right and Wrong

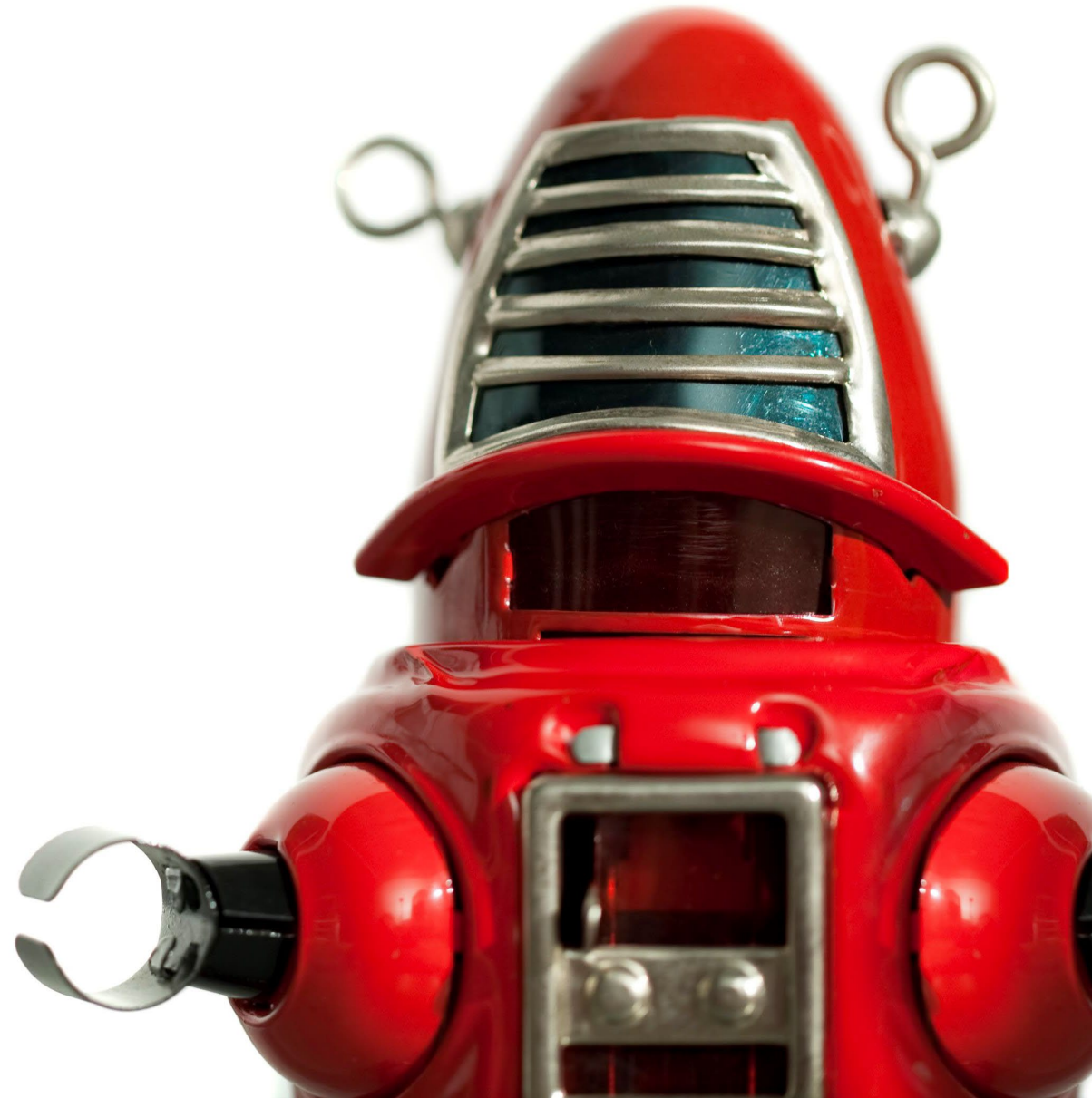
My objective is to equip you with some tools for recognizing the politics of design artifacts.

That's the starting point for developing an informed opinion.

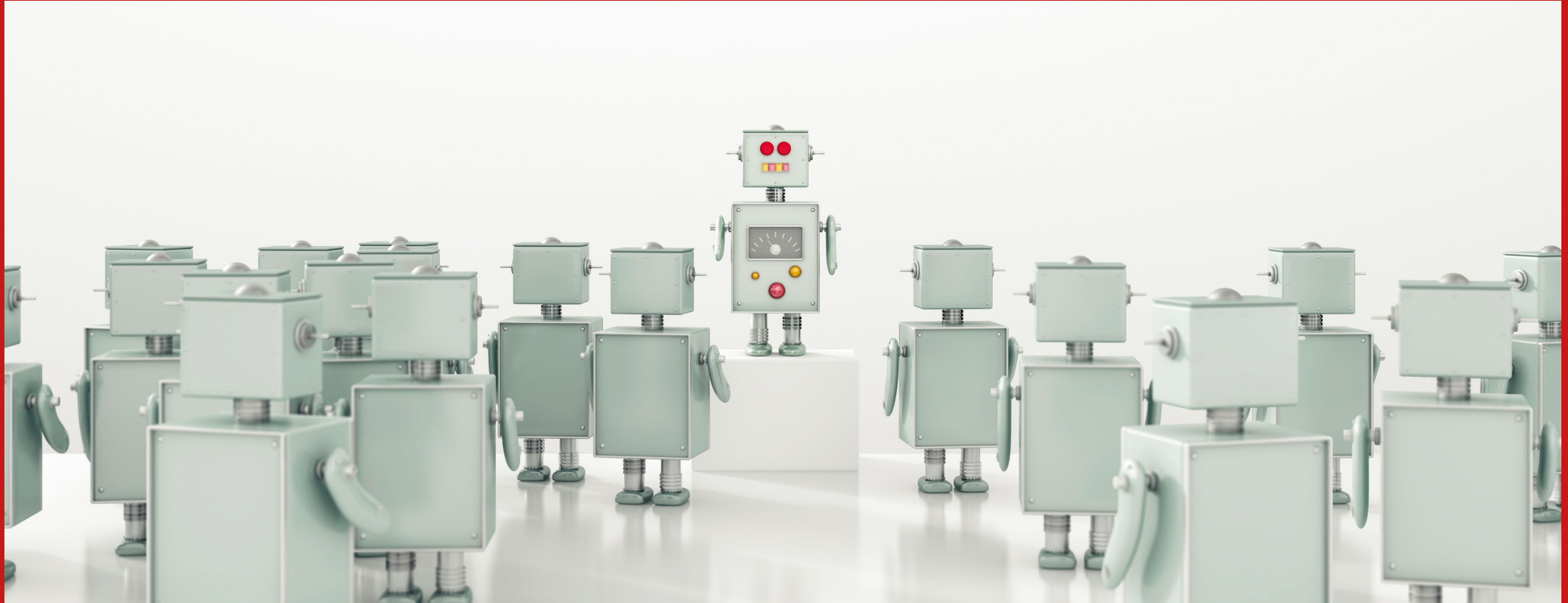
## **Design Anxiety**

Should we design NOTHING?

Maintenance and repair as  
revolutionary acts

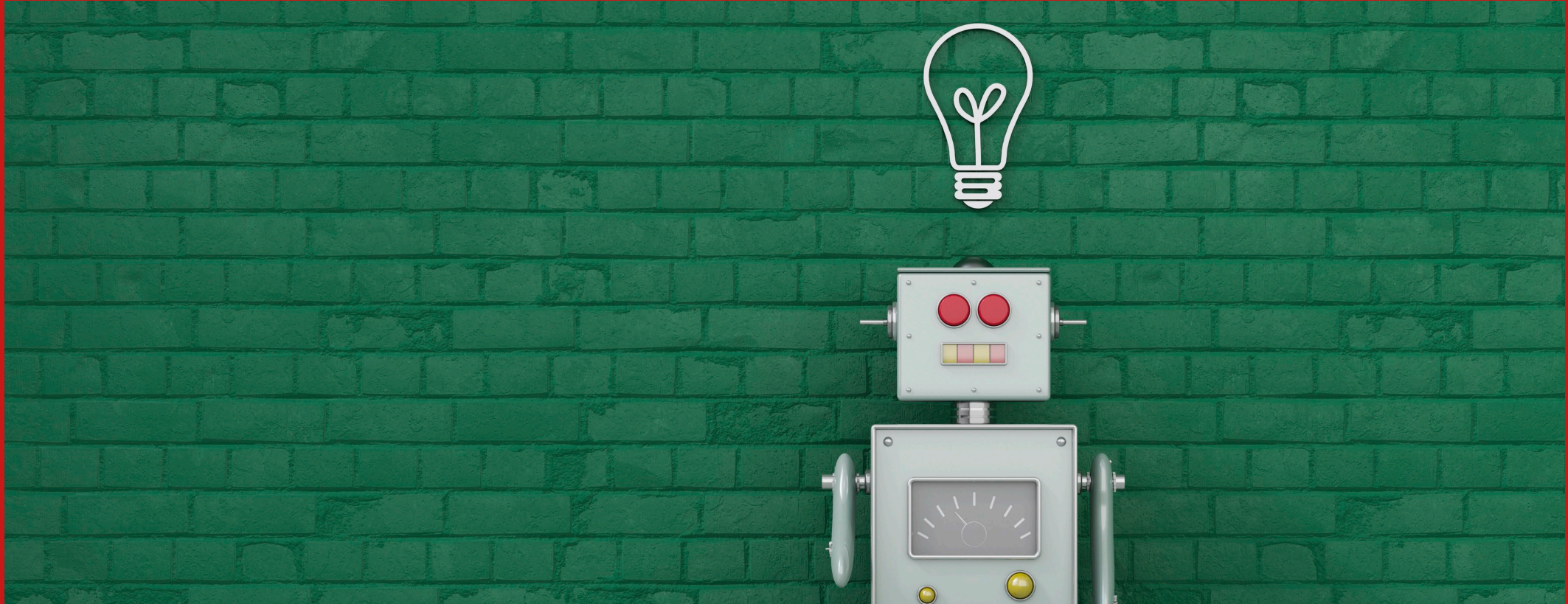


# Questions?





## Section 2: Critiquing Design Artifacts



# Critique? What's that?

Critique is **NOT** your opinion.

Critique is **NOT** a summary of your data.

Critique is **NOT** proof of success or failure.

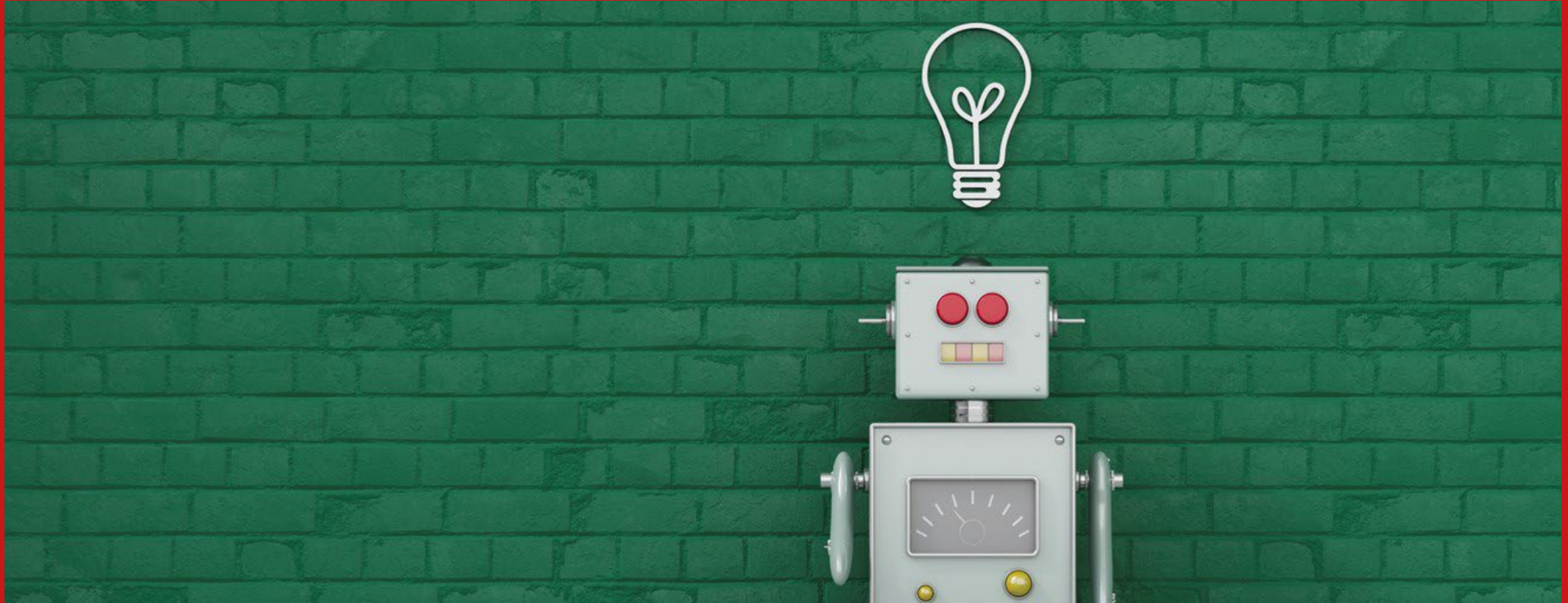
Critique is **NOT** negative criticism.

Critique **reveals and teases out** patterns in data.

Critique **amplifies and clarifies** what you observe.

Critique **builds a mini-theory** based on your perspective on an object.

Let's start from some examples of categories



# Desirability and values



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# Conflict



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# Persuasion



# Imaginaries



## A (quick) close reading

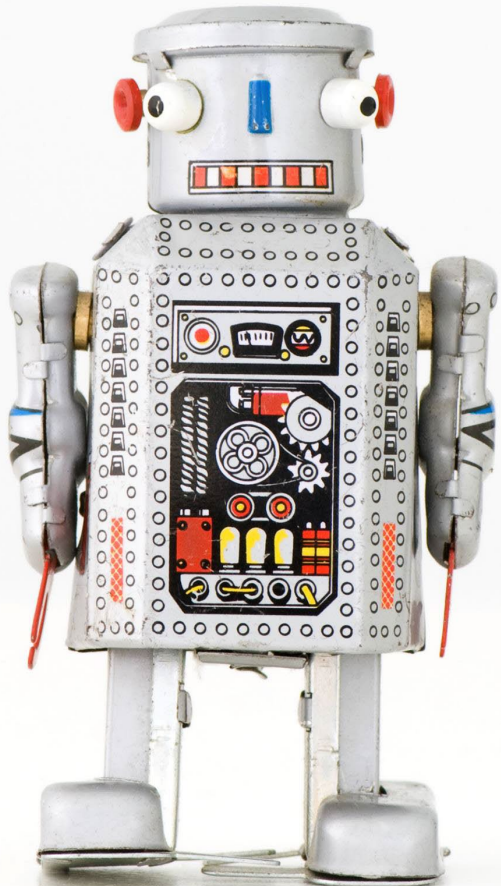
The coffee machine

Who gets free coffee? How?  
Why?

Perk with a nod to neoliberal  
efficiency





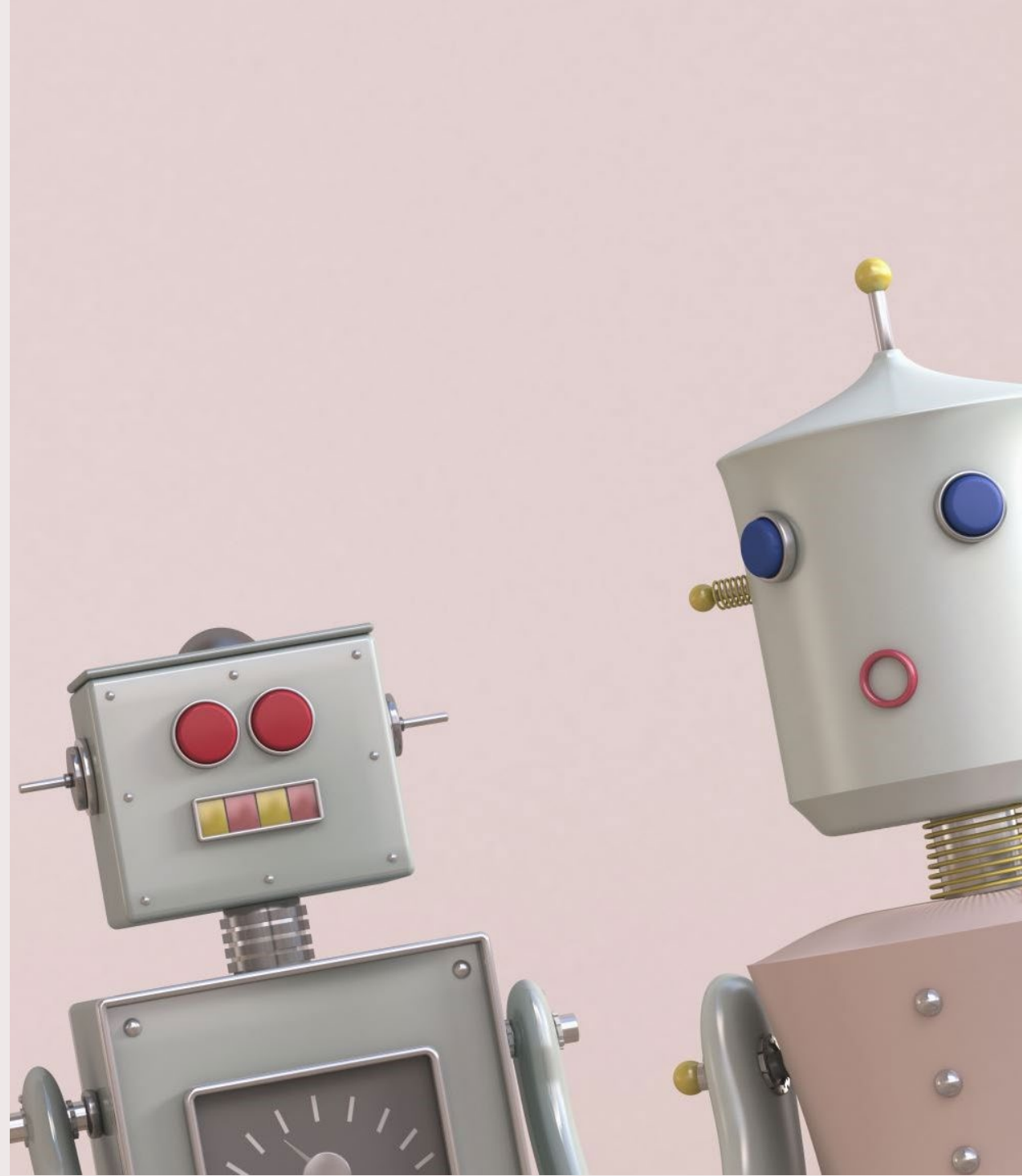


## What did we just do?

- Curiosity
- Context and discourse
- Values and conflict
- Forms, functions, characteristics
- The bigger picture



[edu.nl/4ktwm](https://edu.nl/4ktwm)



# Exercise: Pressure-cooker political critique



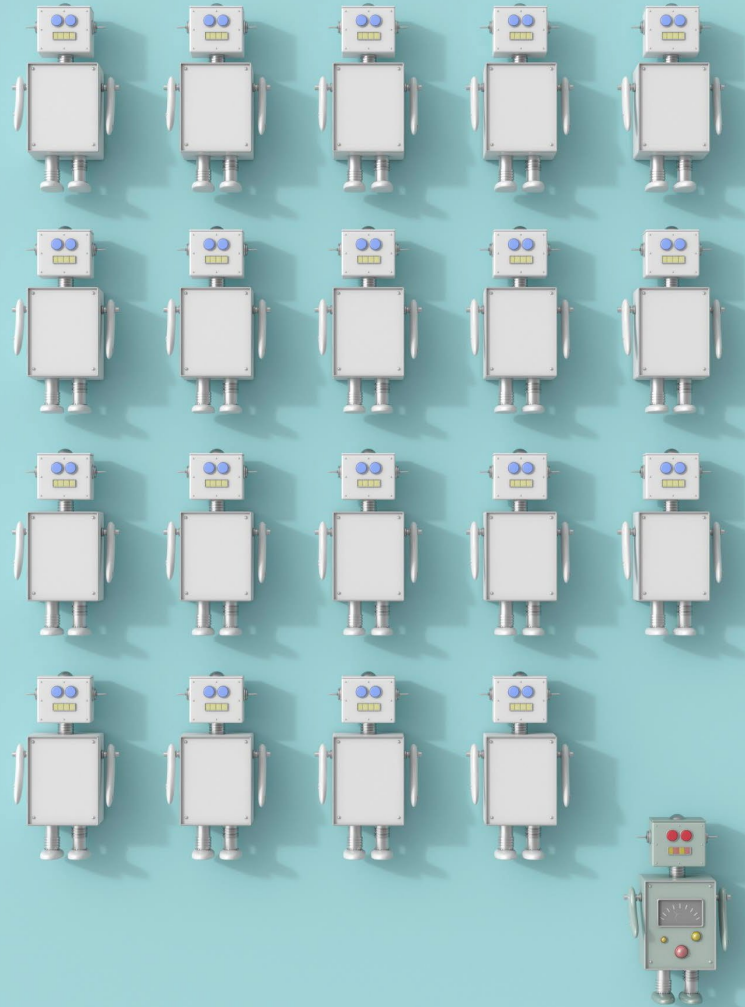
# Pressure-cooker political critique

Divide into groups of three.

Explore this floor, find politically intriguing objects.

Apply the schema (modifiable).

Regroup in 15 minutes.





## Feeling stuck?

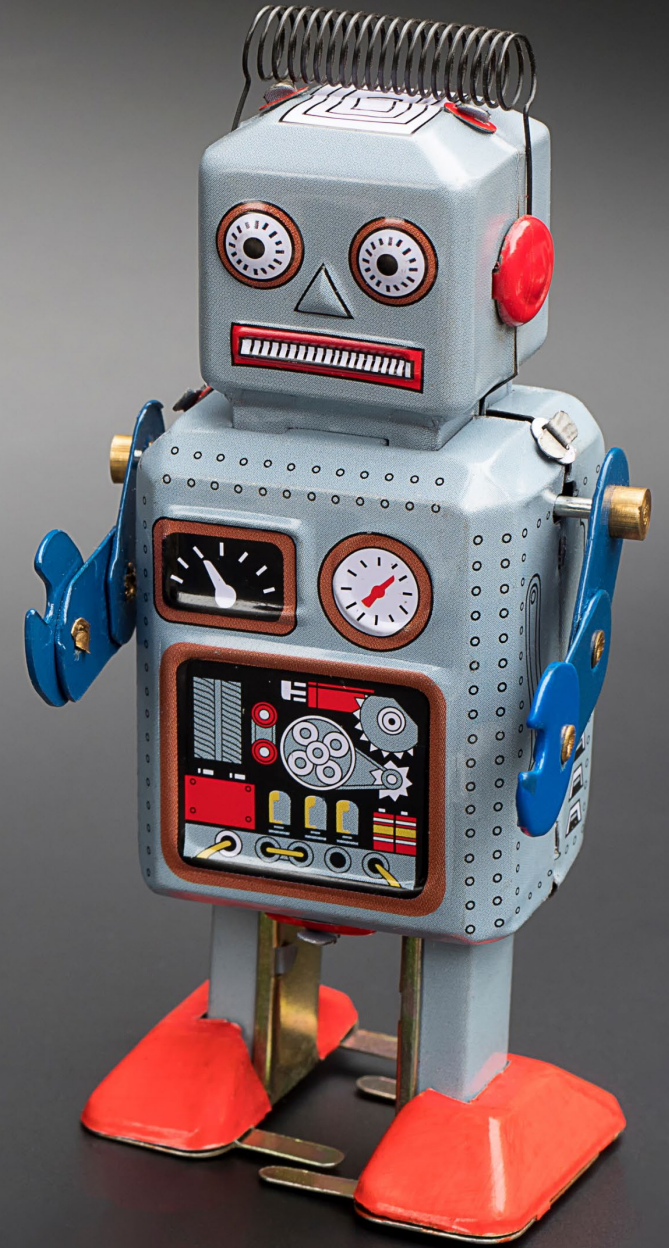
Are there coffee cups in the machine?

Who goes in which toilet?

Who cannot pay for coffee?

Which doors can't be opened?

**What did we learn from the exercise?**





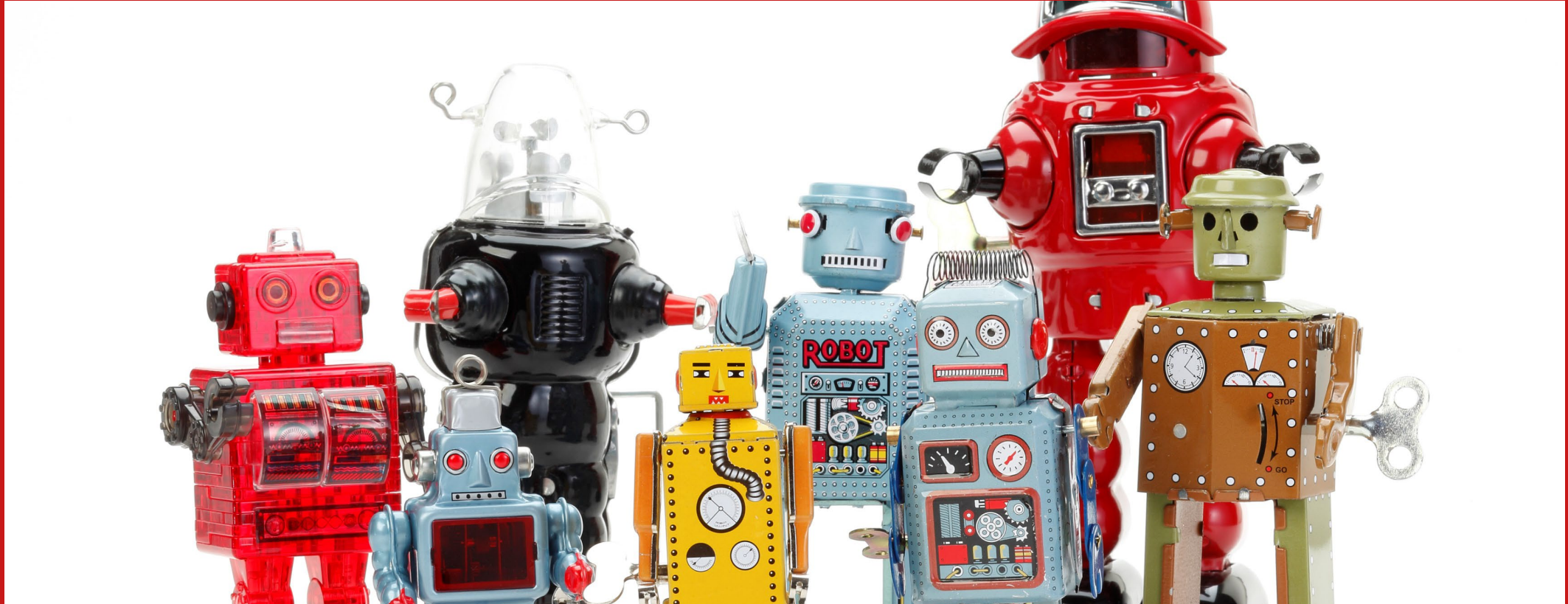
## **Critique's bigger picture**

The importance of context

Understanding broader implications

From critique to design opportunity

## Section 3: Design manifestos



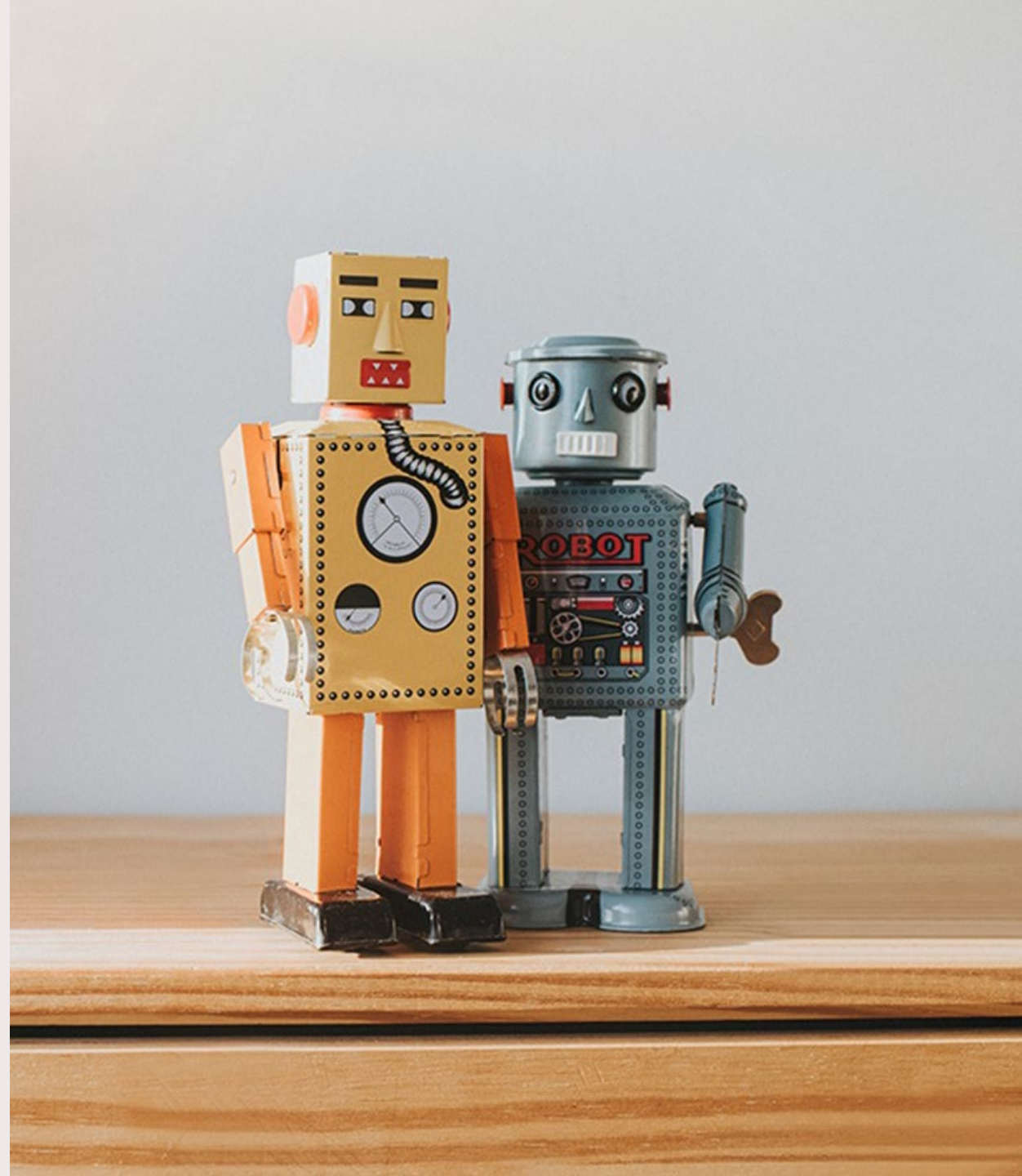


# Design manifesto

Sharpening vision and identity

Positioning yourself in the field

Focusing on what's important to you



# Pentax MX (1976)

Durability

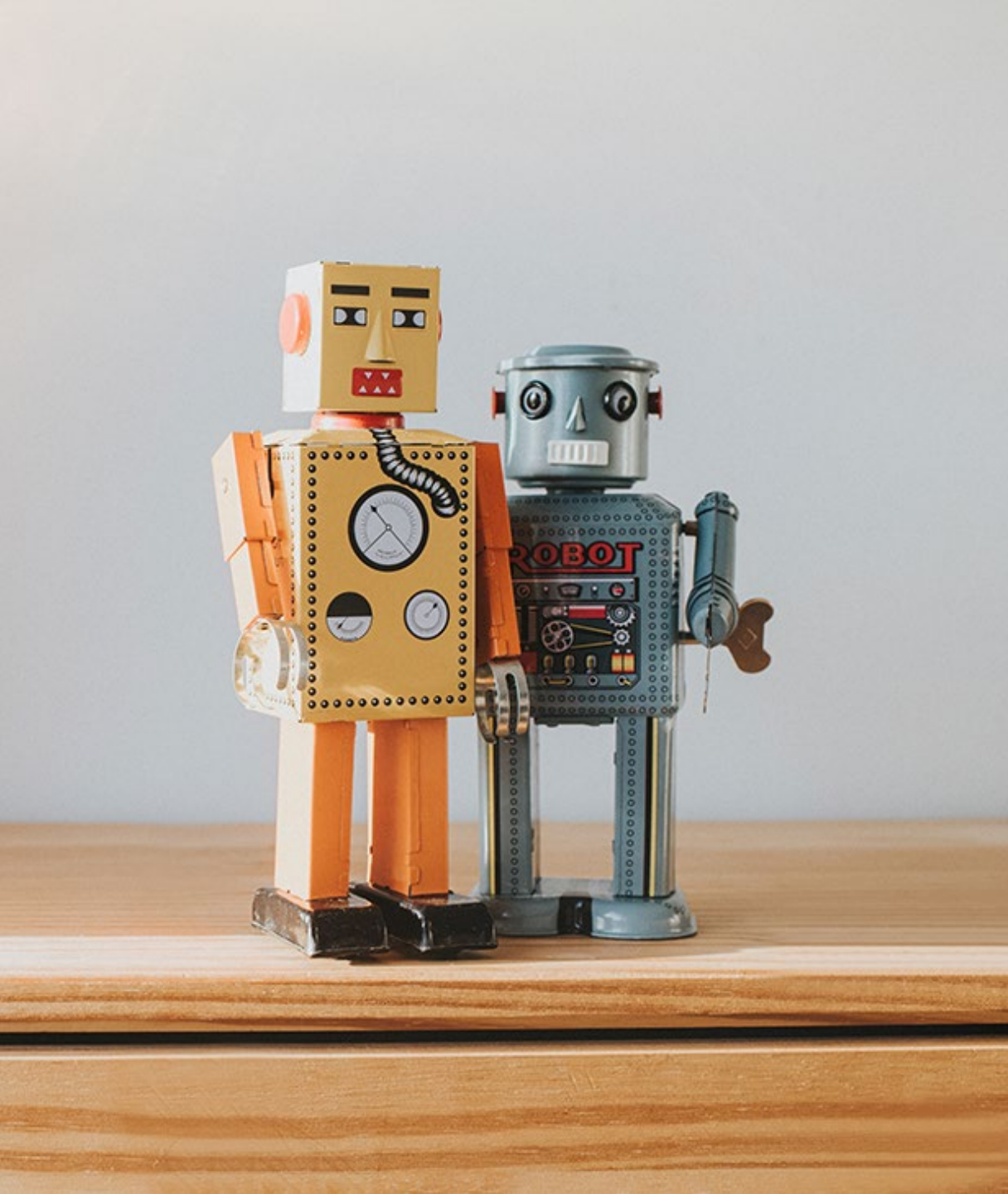
Against planned  
obsolescence

Openness

Repairability

Tactile qualities





## Manifesto writing

Use questions from the critique schema

Select a personally significant artifact

Express inspiration and motivation

# This workshop

## Bases of design politics

- Technology isn't neutral
- Design has socio-cultural consequences
- Design expresses a worldview

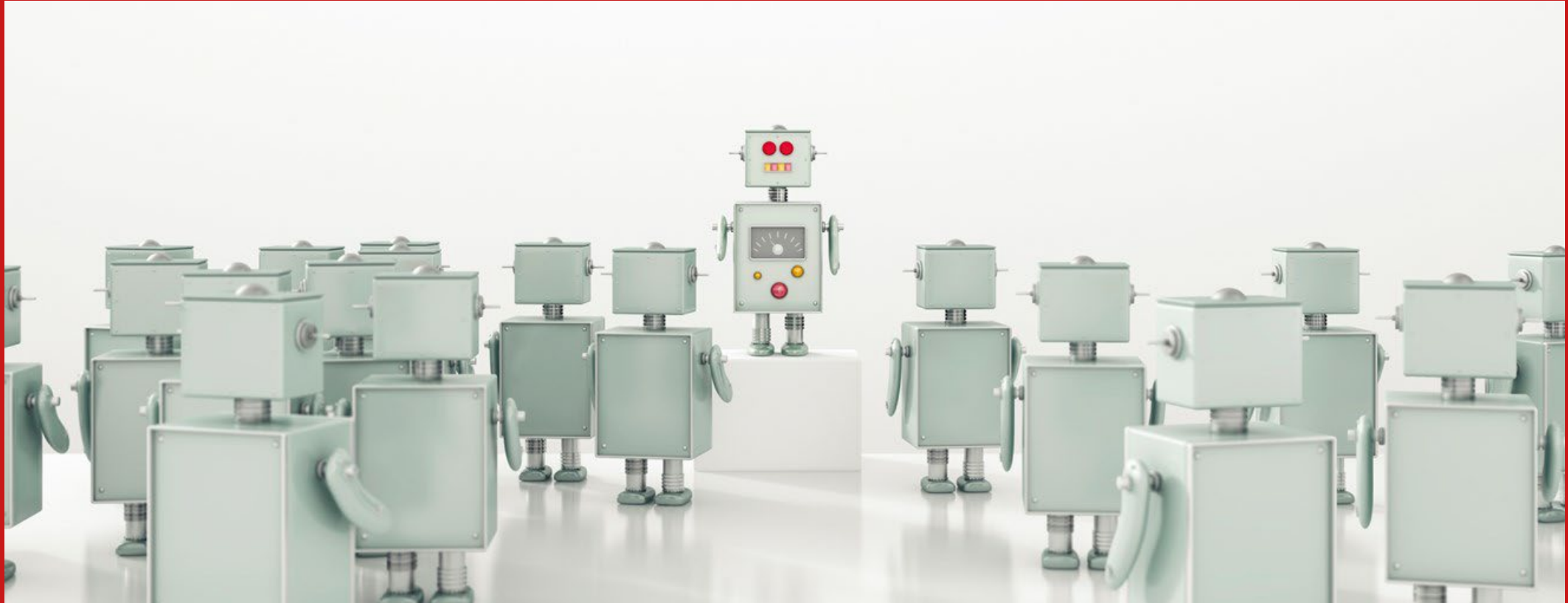
## How to critique an artifact

- Critique is more than data summary
- Identify desirability, values, conflict, persuasion, and imaginaries

## How to write a design manifesto

- Be immersed in the design discourse
- Focus on what's meaningful to you

Design is NOT going to save the world (on its own)





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design artifacts**

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I don't believe that anyone ever looks at the last slide. See [link here](#).