

The Fibreculture Journal

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Call for Papers March 2014 (please circulate):

**Creative Robotics:
Rethinking Human–Machine Configurations.**

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<http://fibreculturejournal.org/>

http://fibreculturejournal.org/cfp_creative_robotics/

Please note that for this issue, initial submissions should be abstracts only

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all contributors and editors must read the guidelines at:

<http://fibreculturejournal.org/policy-and-style/>

before working with the Fibreculture Journal

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“If one thinks of a classic ‘upstairs/downstairs’ scenario, it is no longer clear where the robots will be lodging” (Turkle, 2010)

We are on the verge of a robotic revolution, a revolution that has long been foreshadowed by science fiction such as Karel Čapek’s play R.U.R (Rossum’s Universal Robots) in 1920 and Isaac Asimov’s first collection of stories I, Robot in 1950. Today, robots are infiltrating our everyday lives, in the form of complex toys, household appliances, and assistants in therapy, eldercare and education. Billions of dollars are being spent every year to turn machines into co-inhabitants, co-workers, assistants, carers, and entertainers. Together with autonomous, self-driving cars and Amazon’s delivery drones, robots promise to radically change our lives in the very near future.

Looked at from this perspective, one could view this ‘robotic revolution’ as simply a matter of investment and technological advancement, in the service of society’s needs. But the next phase in the ongoing human–machine coevolution brings with it an abundance of pressing questions

to explore. Fast growing robotics areas such as Social Robotics and Human–Robot Interaction enlist the expertise of researchers in psychology, biology, cognitive science and social science to contribute their views to dilemmas such as how social robots should look, or how they can interact ‘naturally’ with people. So far the most popular response has been to make the social robot as human-like as possible, neatly closing the loop on science fiction imaginaries such as Asimov’s Bicentennial Man. Yet, before considering the pragmatics of form, function and behaviour, it is worth asking whether we as a culture understand these fundamental questions yet. And who asks the questions? Robots and human–robot configurations are historically and culturally constructed socio-material assemblages, materially enacting provocative political, social and aesthetic relations. Currently, our visions seem to be arrested along the boundary of the human–machine binary; we are either invested in blurring this boundary or reaffirming it.

The Creative Robotics issue of the Fibreculture Journal deliberately positions itself at the uneasy nexus out of which these sociomaterial assemblages emerge, while subscribing to a fundamentally experimental, embodied and performative approach. It addresses an emerging research area that brings concepts and methods from experimental arts and performance, and critical perspectives from social anthropology to the interdisciplinary research of human–robot interaction. The Creative Robotics issue wants to manifest a sense of the scope and diversity of questions and issues raised by present visions of human–robot configurations. At the same time, it wants to unhinge, open up and expand these visions.

To produce this transdisciplinary discourse, this issue of the Fibreculture Journal invites contributions from a wide range of fields and practices, including experimental arts; performance and dramaturgy; science, technology and society; social anthropology; human–robot interaction (HRI); robotics, embodied cognitive science; and artificial intelligence/philosophy. Contributions could explore:

- representation vs. ontology
- embodiment and performativity
- aesthetics and affect
- machines and performance
- thinking with the machine body
- cultural and historical practices
- differentiated entry points for human–machine configurations
- human–robot kinesics and communication
- new practices in human–robot interaction

To shape the discursive landscape of this special issue our editorial process aims for a meshwork of perspectives and a mix of theoretical and experimental practices that explore sociomaterial relations and the ways in which they are historically, culturally and technologically constituted.

The Fibreculture Journal (<http://fibreculturejournal.org/>) is a peer reviewed international journal, associated with Open Humanities Press (<http://openhumanitiespress.org/>), that explores critical and speculative interventions in the debate and discussions concerning information and communication technologies and their policy frameworks, network cultures and their informational logic, new media forms and their deployment, and the possibilities of socio-technical invention and sustainability.