



Symposium will focus on how gender is represented in robotics

October 21, 2010

WEST LAFAYETTE, Ind. — The role of gender in technology, especially robots, will be highlighted during a one-day symposium, art exhibition and film screening at Purdue University.

"Robots and Representation: Emerging Issues in Gender, Technology, Design and Culture" is Nov. 5 in the Discovery Learning Research Center.

"As engineering and technological advancements make humanoid robots in our everyday lives a reality, rather than science fiction, we want to better understand the role that gender plays in the design of actual robots," said Shannon C. McMullen, an assistant professor of visual and performing arts and one of the event's organizers. "One of the questions we want to explore is how does the representation of gender change as more women enter the field of robotics? In the cultural realm, a second question we are interested in is how can artistic investigations help us ask questions about gender and robots? The symposium brings together scientists, artists and other experts for a multi-disciplinary discussion of the relationship between gender and robotic forms."

The event is free and open to the public, but people are encouraged to register in advance at <http://www.cla.purdue.edu/vpa/etb/robots/index.html> (<http://www.cla.purdue.edu/vpa/etb/robots/index.html>). The keynote address will be presented at 9:15 a.m. by Brenda Laurel, chair of the graduate program in design at California College of the Arts. She is a designer, researcher and writer whose work focuses on human-computer interaction and the cultural aspects of technology. She also studies interactive fiction, computer games and virtual reality.

"The Mechanical Bride," a feature-length documentary produced and directed by Allison de Fren, will be shown at 2 p.m., and a discussion will follow. de Fren is an assistant professor of art history and the visual arts at Occidental College in Los Angeles. Her film shows the fantasy of creating the perfect female artificially, as seen in science fiction film, television and literature.

The art exhibit, which will feature video documentations of artistic explorations of the cultural and political significance of humanoid robots, will run concurrently.

A detailed schedule of the symposium is available at <http://www.cla.purdue.edu/vpa/etb/robots/schedule.html> (<http://www.cla.purdue.edu/vpa/etb/robots/schedule.html>)

The event is sponsored by the Office of the Provost, colleges of Engineering and Liberal Arts, Susan Bulkeley Butler Center for Leadership Excellence, Women's Resource Office and the Program in Electronic and Time-Based Art.

Writer: Amy Patterson Neubert, 765-494-9723, apatterson@purdue.edu (<mailto:apatterson@purdue.edu>)

Sources: Shannon McMullen, 765-494-0160, smcmullen@purdue.edu (<mailto:smcmullen@purdue.edu>)

Lorraine G. Kisselburgh, assistant professor of communication, lorraine@purdue.edu
(<mailto:lorraine@purdue.edu>)

Catherine E. Pope, director of Purdue Women's Resource Office, cepo@purdue.edu
(<mailto:cepo@purdue.edu>)

Fabian Winkler, assistant professor of visual and performing arts, fwinkler@purdue.edu
(<mailto:fwinkler@purdue.edu>)