

TECHNOLOGY

Film examines robot fetish

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A symposium on campus screened a film that called attention to sub-cultures that focus on crafted and mechanical women.

Allison de Fren, assistant professor of art history and the visual arts at Occidental College in Los Angeles, presented her film "The Mechanical Bride" on Friday as part of the "Robots and Representation: Emerging Issues in Gender, Technology, Design and Culture" symposium.

The documentary displayed a variety of sub-cultures with aspects of fixation on artificial women. It explored topics ranging from integrating sex dolls into daily routine

to female robotic form fetishes.

De Fren said she discovered, throughout the filmmaking process, most of these fascinations were less about objectifying women and more about being truly in love with a certain object.

"These people aren't interested in reality. They are interested in fantasy," said de Fren. "I started out with a feminist agenda, but the end result was very neutral."

The film presented multiple aspects of the subjects' lives aside from their sexual activity. Many of those shown owning sex dolls personified their dolls, cared for them in a daily capacity, and had reservations about who should and should not be allowed to own a doll.

Larger cultural views on dolls and

robotics were also presented. De Fren found that Germany and Japan were the largest centers for this type of behavior outside of the United States. She said Japanese dolls were less focused on sexual themes than those of the western cultures.

Fabian Winkler, assistant professor of visual and performing arts, helped organize the one-day symposium and said the film explored many of the topics he wanted to address during the event.

"We felt the need, here at Purdue, to discuss gender roles in technology further," Winkler said. "The film relates to a topic that has inspired discussion ... about our own social infrastructure."

The documentary is set to be publicly released later this year.