

Dr Fan Zhang

Contact Information

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Research Interests

Human-Robot Interaction, Sim-to-Real Learning, Self-Supervised learning, General-Purpose Robot Manipulation

Professional Appointments

Guest Scientist, 2023-present

Honda Research Institute Europe GmbH

Projects: Human-Robot Interaction with Multimodal Prompt Tuning

Eric and Wendy Schmidt AI in Science Postdoctoral Fellow, 2022-2023

Research Associate, 2021-2022

Imperial College London

Projects: Innovate UK D-RISK: Learning Edge Cases for Autonomous Vehicles

UKRI Closed-Loop Multisensory Brain-Computer Interface for Enhanced Decision Accuracy

UKRI Trustworthy Autonomous Systems Node in Trust

Holding **UK Global Talent Visa**, sponsored by Royal Academy of Engineering

Education

Ph.D. in Electrical and Electronic Engineering (Robotics), 2016-2020

Imperial College London, UK

Thesis: Perception and Manipulation in Robotic-Assisted Dressing

Supervisor: Prof. Yiannis Demiris (Royal Academy of Engineering Chair in Emerging Technologies)

Awards

The Queen Mary UK Best PhD in Robotics Award 1st place 2020

Best Student Paper Award, IEEE International Conference on Mechatronics and Automation 2016

Best Msc Thesis Award Finalists, Harbin Institute of Technology (<10%) 2016

Selected Journal Publications

Visual-Tactile Learning of Garment Unfolding for Robot-Assisted Dressing

Zhang F, Demiris Y.

IEEE Robotics and Automation Letters (RA-L), 2023. (paper, video)

Learning Garment Manipulation Policies towards Robot-Assisted Dressing

Zhang F, Demiris Y.

Science Robotics, 2022. (paper, video)

Probabilistic Real-Time User Posture Tracking for Personalized Robot-Assisted Dressing

Zhang F, Cully A, Demiris Y.

IEEE Transactions on Robotics, 2019. (paper, video)

Preoperative Optimization of the Surgical Robot considering Internal Diversity of Workspace

Yan Z, Du Z, Zhang F, Wang W.

Selected Conference Publications

Contrastive Self-Supervised Learning for Automated Multi-Modal Dance Performance Assessment

Zhong Y, Zhang F, Demiris Y

IEEE International Conference on Acoustics, Speech and Signal Processing (ICASSP), 2023

Grasp-Oriented Fine-grained Cloth Segmentation without Real Supervision

Ren R, Rajesh MG, Sanchez-Riera J, Zhang F, Tian Y, Agudo A, Demiris Y, Mikolajczyk K

The 6th International Conference on Machine Vision and Applications (ICMVA), 2023

Learning Grasping Points for Garment Manipulation in Robot-Assisted Dressing

Zhang F, Demiris Y.

IEEE International Conference on Robotics and Automation (ICRA), 2020. (paper, video)

Personalized Robot-Assisted Dressing using User Modeling in Latent Spaces

Zhang F, Cully A, Demiris Y.

IEEE International Conference on Intelligent Robots and Systems (IROS), 2017. (paper, video)

Preoperative Planning for the Multi-Arm Surgical Robot using PSO-GP-based Performance Optimization

Zhang F, Yan Z, Du Z.

IEEE International Conference on Robotics and Automation (ICRA), 2017. (paper)

Preoperative Setup Planning for Robotic Surgery Based on a Simulation Platform and Gaussian Process

Zhang F, Yan Z, Du Z.

IEEE International Conference on Mechatronics and Automation (ICMA), 2016. (paper)

Best Student Paper Award

An Under-Actuated Manipulation Controller Based on Workspace Analysis and Gaussian Processes

Zhang F, Su Y, Zhang X, Dong W, Du Z.

IEEE/RSJ International Conference on Intelligent Robots and Systems (IROS), 2015. (paper, video)

Talks

Talks on Assistive Robotics, King's College London,	2023
AI seminar in Statistics, Imperial College London,	2023
State Key Laboratory of Intelligent Technology and Systems, Tsinghua University	2022
Apple Weekly Seminar	2022
Chinese Association Artificial Intelligence (video, live audience: 150,000)	2020
Human Motion Analysis for Healthcare Applications, IET (video)	2019
The Hamlyn Centre, Imperial College London	2017

In the Press

Robotic nurse can dress a mannequin in a hospital gown, New Scientist	2022
Baxter the nursebot to help care for ageing population, The Times	2019
Robotic nurse that helps you dress could aid staff shortage, Bloomberg	2019
Others: Daily Mail, Telegraph, South China Morning Post, IndustryWeek, TexhXplore	

Technical Skills

Programming: MATLAB, Python, ROS, Linux

Design: 3D Printing, ADAMS, Autodesk Fusion 360, Maya, Blender
Others: Anaconda, OpenAI Gym, Event Camera, Tensorflow, PyTorch

Academic Service

I-X Breaking Topics in AI conference, Schmidt Futures	Organizer
ICRA 2023 Workshop: Emerging Paradigms for Assistive Robotic Manipulation	Organizer
Frontiers in Robotics and AI - Robot Learning and Evolution	Review Editor
Scientific Reports	Reviewer
IEEE Transactions on Robotics	Reviewer
IEEE Robotics and Automation Letters	Reviewer
IEEE Robotics and Automation Magazine	Reviewer
IEEE/RSJ International Conference on Intelligent Robots and Systems (IROS)	Reviewer
IEEE International Conference on Robotics and Automation (ICRA)	Reviewer
Winter Conference on Applications of Computer Vision (WACV)	Reviewer

Research Mentorship & Teaching Activities

Nikki Zhong (PhD at Imperial college London), research on human motion modeling	2021-present
Human-Centered Robotics, graduate teaching assistant, Imperial College London	2017-2022
Intelligent Robotics, graduate teaching assistant, Harbin Institute of Technology	2014-2016

Selected Research Projects:

---- Robot-Assisted Dressing for Bedridden Patients

- Garment **grasping/manipulation** using imitation learning and deep Q learning from demonstration.
- **Visual-tactile** fusion for garment unfolding using a framework of model-based reinforcement learning.
- Building **real and synthetic dataset** of garment, including RGB-D and event images.
- Understanding garment configurations for garment **semantic segmentation and depth estimation**.
- **Sim-to-real** robot manipulation policy transfer (PyBullet, Blender engine): GAN in image domain; self-supervised learning in physics domain with Transformer and event cameras.
- Real-time **user posture tracking** using: multi-modal (vision and haptic) information with a probabilistic particle filter; pointcloud with graph neural networks.
- Building **personalized** user model using a dimensionality reduction approach that captures the specificities of different upper-body impairments.
- **Hierarchical multitask control** for robotics relating force and velocity adaptation.
- The above works have been published in top journals and conferences: Science Robotics, IEEE Transactions on Robotics, ICRA, IROS.
- The above works have been covered by several news outlets, including The Times, Bloomberg, Daily Mail, Telegraph, South China Morning Post, IndustryWeek, Chinese Association Artificial Intelligence, TexhXplore, New Scientist, etc. Live demo for NHS, ABB, Apple, MURI, etc.

---- Preoperative Planning for Multi-Arm Surgical Robots

- Optimizing preoperative robot arm positioning using Gaussian Process, for surgeons to perform efficient intervention with multi-arm surgical robot systems (ICRA, ICMA, Best Student Paper Award).

---- Under-Actuated In-Hand Manipulation

- An under-actuated gripper with two three-phalanx fingers for mobile robot in extreme environments, using Gaussian Processes to compensate kinematics errors (IROS 2015).

References available upon request