



# Designing Robots – Designing Humans

## - a three-day seminar discussing our posthuman future

*Designing Robots – Designing Humans* is a public seminar on how robots will engage human beings as learners and cultural beings in the future. Robots are already in our public sector, but few consider the dynamic changes caused by this use of future technology. Together with a group of excellent robot researchers we will discuss questions raised by new robot design and human-robot coexistence.

### Speakers include:

- Jennifer Robertson, Professor of Anthropology and the History of Art at University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, USA
- Lucy Suchman, Professor of Anthropology of Science and Technology in the Department of Sociology at Lancaster University, UK
- Morana Alac, Associate Professor in Communication and Science Studies, University of California, San Diego, USA
- Claudia Castaneda, Senior Scholar-in-Residence at B.A. Wellesley College; Ph.D. University of California, Santa Cruz, USA

Sign up for one or more seminar days here:

[Designing robots – designing humans](#)

or by using QR-code:



*Registration deadline is March 21*

The seminar is a joint event hosted by Future Technologies, Culture and Learning, Department of Education, Aarhus University & ROCA (Robot Culture and Aesthetics) Department of Arts and Cultural Studies, University of Copenhagen in collaboration with Asian Dynamics Initiative, University of Copenhagen

# Designing Robots – Designing Humans

## Robots in Japan

*Tuesday March 25, 2014 at University of Copenhagen Southern Campus (Amager),  
Room 27.0.09, Building 27, Njalsgade 136, 2300 Copenhagen S.*

In current debates about robots in Denmark and elsewhere, Japan is known for its industrial robots in the 1970s and humanoid robots in the 2000s. Japan is often mentioned as the hub of emerging robot technologies on a global scale. In Japan, discourses proudly proclaim Japan to be *Robotto taikoku*, the empire of robots, and promote the idea that Japanese people love robots.

The 25<sup>th</sup> aims at providing nuances to this monolithic conception of robots in Japan. Scholars with insight into Japanese society, culture, and robotics will present various perspectives on robots in Japan that address discourses and imaginaries of robots in Japan and elsewhere.

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09:00-09:15: **Marie Roesgaard**, Associate Professor at University of Copenhagen and Head of Asian Dynamics Initiative: *Welcome and introduction*

09:15-09:45: **Jennifer Robertson**, Professor in Anthropology at University of Michigan:  
*"Robot Genders"*

This presentation explores and interrogates the gendering of humanoid robots manufactured today in Japan for employment in the home, hospital, theatre, and workplace.

09:45-10:15: **Elizabeth Jochum**, Post.Doc at Aalborg University:

*"Where were the bots? Mobile Robotics in Japan Post-Fukushima"*

This lecture explores the response and aftermath of Fukushima and the influence of extreme scenarios on innovative robot technologies, highlighting cutting-edge research into mobile robotics at TEPCO and other research centers worldwide.

10:15-10:45: **Marco Nørskov**, Assistant Professor at PENSOR, Aarhus University:

*"Exploring the Uncanny Valley"*

10:45-11:15: Coffee break

11:15-11:45: **Cathrine Hasse**, Professor in Anthropology at Aarhus University:

*"Artefacts that talk: culture and mediating technology"*

The talk takes up the notion of artefacts as cultural tools and signs and discusses how socially assistive robots impact professional work life and professional identities as multistable, active change agents.

11:45-12:15: **Gunhild Borggreen**, Associate Professor at University of Copenhagen:

*"The Astro Boy effect"*

The presentation investigates the visuality of Tetsuwan Atomu (Astro Boy) by Tezuka Osamu and discusses what discursive influences this fictional robot figure has on robotics in Japan.

12:15-13:00 **Discussion:** Is there anything "Japanese" about robots from Japan? Can robots become aware of and respond to different cultural backgrounds when they interact with humans? And if so, how will this affect human-robot interaction in future societies?

Presentations should be limited to 20 minutes, allowing for 10 minutes questions after each.

# Designing Robots – Designing Humans

## Roboethics and Robot Rights

*Wednesday March 26, 2014 at Dept. of Education, Campus Emdrup, Aarhus University,  
Room D170, Tuborgvej 164, 2400 Copenhagen NV.*

Robots have expanded from being used for mechanical work in the industrial sector to be a new factor to be counted on as a companion for children in schools, as a teacher of adult education, a soother and comforter of elderly and a nurse helper in the health care sector. As yet, very few empirical studies have looked into how sociable robots transform human relations and how human relations transform robots.

On the 26<sup>th</sup>, robot researchers and philosophers will present and discuss their views on ethical and social implications of robotics.

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10:00-10:10: **Jamie Wallace**, Associate Professor at Aarhus University:  
*Welcome and introduction*

10:10-11:05: **Jennifer Robertson**, Professor in Anthropology at University of Michigan:  
*"Robot Rights vs Human Rights: Forecasts from Japan "*  
The possibility of robots acquiring civil status before flesh-and-blood humans raises profound questions about the nature of agency, citizenship, coexistence, and the very concept and definition of humanness.

11:05-12:00: **Finn Olesen**, Associate Professor at Aarhus University:  
*"Thinking about and acting with robots"*  
This presentation follows the Dutch philosopher Mark Coeckelbergh, who has argued for "...a relational approach to moral status, which sees moral status as something that emerges through relations between entities." Hence, relationships determine how moral status is dispersed, not specie.

12:00-12:40: Lunch (there is a cantina on campus)

12:40-13:35 **Cathrine Hasse**, Professor in Anthropology at Aarhus University:  
*"Posthuman Roboethics"*  
The talk discusses Isaac Asimov's three laws of Robotics. When viewed from a posthuman and spinozist perspective, the idea of an autonomous robot harming an autonomous human is senseless and thereby challenges existing roboethics.

13:35-14:30: **Raffaele Rodogno**, Associate Professor at Aarhus University:  
*"Can robots have rights?"*  
From a structural analysis of rights I proceed to present two major functional analyses of rights; i.e. the *will theory* and the *interest theory*. While the will theory requires that right-holders possess the capacity for a certain type of agency, the interest theory requires that right-holders be the bearer of interests. But can robots be shown to fulfill any one of these two requirements?

14.30.16.50: **Theresa Schilhab**, Associate Professor at Aarhus University  
*Summing up the day*

Presentations should be limited to 35 minutes, allowing for 20 minutes discussion.

# Designing Robots – Designing Humans

## Humanoid Robot Visions

*Thursday March 27, 2014 at Dept. of Education, Campus Emdrup, Aarhus University, Room A200, Tuborgvej 164, 2400 Copenhagen NV.*

Robot design is advancing at an incredible pace. Though many robots in practical reality are still far from the visionary imaginaries presented in movies like Star Wars, the design of robots is improving both the technical and social skills of the machines.

The 27<sup>th</sup> will discuss questions raised by new robot designs and the way robots engage with humans.

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12:30-12:40: **Cathrine Hasse**, Professor in Anthropology at Aarhus University:  
*Welcome and introduction*

12:40-13:20: **Morana Alac**, Associate Professor at UC San Diego:  
*"On everyday encounters with an educational robot and the quest for individualized instruction"*  
This talk will focus on a preschool's indigenous methods employed in engaging a robot. I will pay attention to touch, spatial organizations and how communicative modes feature in encounters between preschool inhabitants, researchers and their robot. I will relate this to examples from US mass media outlets articulated to tame anxieties that educational robots provoke. I will show how these ideologies, inscribed in the technology, are acted and contested at the preschool.

13:20-14:00: **Jennifer Robertson**, Professor in Anthropology at University of Michigan:  
*"Cyborg Able-ism"*  
This presentation explores and interrogates the development and application of robotic prosthetic devices that effectively transform senior and disabled persons into human machine hybrids.

14:00-14:30 **Questions and plenary discussion**  
Discussants: Associate Professor Jamie Wallace, Aarhus University & Associate Professor Gunhild Borggreen, University of Copenhagen

14:30-14:50: Coffee break

14:50-16:10: **Lucy Suchman**, Professor at Lancaster University & **Claudia Castaneda**, Senior Scholar-in-Residence at Emerson College:  
*"Robot Biographies"*  
This joint presentation turns the sensibilities of object biography onto a class of objects for which the term 'biography' takes on a sense more closely aligned with the biological beings from which the word is derived. These are humanlike machines and, more specifically, robots.

16:10-16:40: **Questions and plenary discussion**  
Discussants: Professor Estrid Sørensen, Ruhr-Universität Bochum & Professor Dorte Marie Søndergaard, Aarhus University

16.40.17.00: **Cathrine Hasse**, Professor in Anthropology at Aarhus University  
*Summing up the day*