

Xuechao ZHANG

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SUMMARY

Robotics engineer and AI researcher with a background bridging hardware and software, specializing in dexterous manipulation and active perception. Proven record from research to production — with industry deployments (at **Apple, Bosch, Tencent**, etc.) and publications at top conferences (**CoRL, IROS**).

EDUCATION

- **Arizona State University** Arizona, USA
Master, Robotics and Autonomous Systems GPA: 4.0/4.0 Jan. 2025 - May. 2026 (Expected)
- **Shanghai Jiao Tong University** Shanghai, China
Master, Electronic Information GPA: 3.6/4.0 Sept. 2021 - Mar. 2024
- **Georgia Institute of Technology** Atlanta, USA
Exchange Student in Atlanta Summer Program GPA: 3.9/4.0 Jul. 2018 - Aug. 2018
- **Southeast University** Nanjing, China
Bachelor, Robotics Engineering (Chien-Shiung Wu College) GPA: 3.7/4.0 Sept. 2017 - Jun. 2021
 - Chien-Shiung Wu College is a pilot college in Southeast University to cultivate top-notch undergraduate students selected from multiple science and engineering departments.

PUBLICATIONS

1. Yang W, Xie Z, **Zhang X**, et al. TwinTrack: Bridging Vision and Contact Physics for Real-Time Tracking of Unknown Dynamic Objects[J]. arXiv:2505.22882, 2025. [Paper](#) [Page](#) [Video](#)
2. **Zhang X**, Wang D, Han S, et al. Affordance-Driven Next-Best-View Planning for Robotic Grasping[C]//Conference on Robot Learning (CoRL). PMLR, 2023: 2849-2862. [Paper](#) [Page](#) [Video](#)
3. **Zhang X**, Ding X, Ren Y, et al. Toward Global Sensing Quality Maximization: A Configuration Optimization Scheme for Camera Networks[C]//2022 IEEE/RSJ International Conference on Intelligent Robots and Systems (IROS). IEEE, 2022: 13386-13391. [Paper](#) [Video](#)
4. Hou Y, Li J, Fang Z, **Zhang X**. An Initialization Method of Deep Q-network for Learning Acceleration of Robotic Grasp[C]//2020 IEEE International Conference on Networking, Sensing and Control (ICNSC). IEEE, 2020: 1–6. [Paper](#)

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

- **Self-Improving Robotic Policy via Evolving Contexts** Aug. 2025 - Present
Research Associate @ [Interactive Robotics Laboratory](#) Advised by [Prof. Heni Ben Amor](#)
 - Developed a framework that leverages **Vision-Language Models (VLMs)** for robot policy optimization, incorporating **image/video-based feedback** alongside scalar reward signals.
 - Designed a **self-evolving memory** mechanism that utilizes VLMs to analyze past trajectories and distill failures into actionable insights, dynamically curating a knowledge base for **in-context learning** that guides future decision-making.
 - Preliminary results in simulation have shown improved performance over reinforcement learning baselines, especially in **sparse-reward** environments.
- **Contact-Rich Dexterous Manipulation** Jan. 2025 - Jul. 2025
Research Associate @ [Intelligent Robotics & Interactive Systems Lab](#) Advised by [Prof. Wanxin Jin](#)
 - Conducted research on model-based planning for contact-rich dexterous manipulation, including fingertip in-air manipulation, and **LEAP Hand** on-palm reorientation.
 - Designed a real-time contact-implicit **Model Predictive Control (MPC)** framework based on a recently proposed complementarity-free multi-contact dynamic model. Implemented in **Python** with **CasADi**, sustaining **50–100 Hz** control, matching or exceeding reinforcement-learning baselines on challenging dexterous tasks.
 - Introduced a global sampling-based contact-position replanning layer on top of MPC, yielding a **bi-level** controller that escapes local minima; achieved **90.1%** average success on continuous-rotation tasks over a **20 object** test set.
 - Co-developed a **20 Hz 6-DoF pose tracker** for unknown dynamic objects in contact-rich scenes by integrating the contact dynamics into a visual-tracking pipeline; geometry is supervised via **Gaussian Splatting**, while physical parameters (mass, inertia, friction) are **updated online** via sampling-based optimization. Summarized in paper^[1].

- Active Perception and Robotic Grasp Prediction** Sept. 2022 - Aug. 2023
Research Intern @ Shanghai Artificial Intelligence Laboratory *Advised by Dr. Dong Wang*
 - Conducted research on **robotics grasping prediction** in cluttered desktop scenes, focusing on active perception under partial observability.
 - Proposed **ACE-NBV**, an affordance-driven next-best-view policy that actively selects next camera poses which guide the arm toward feasible grasps for target objects.
 - Formulated a **multi-task learning** scheme over a shared implicit neural representation to couple grasp affordance and 3D reconstruction; leveraged the paradigm of novel view imagery from **NeRF** to predict grasp affordances for previously unobserved views.
 - Demonstrated significant improvements over current state-of-the-art methods by consistently identifying more informative views, resulting in a comparable grasp success rate with **32.4%** fewer observations.
 - Published a paper^[2] as the first author in **CoRL 2023**.
- Real-Time Digital Twin Platform of Multi-Robots** Feb. 2021 - Mar. 2022
Graduate Researcher @ Shanghai Jiao Tong University IWIN-FINS Lab *Advised by Prof. Jianping He*
 - Contributed to the development of a multi-robot testbed that exploits the ideas of digital-twin system.
 - Designed and implemented a distributed PTZ camera network and AprilTag visual positioning system which can achieve **120 Hz** tracking frequency, **10 ms** delay, and **0.5 mm** tracking error.
 - Proposed a multi-camera sensing quality model and an optimization strategy for camera network configuration based on this model, which improves the overall positioning performance of the platform.
 - Published a paper^[3] as the first author in **IROS 2022**, and submitted an invention patent.
- Competition Robots Software and Hardware Development** Apr. 2019 - Nov.2020
Team Leader @ Southeast University Smart Car Team
 - Designed a Mecanum wheeled chess-playing robot, which utilizes IMU and cameras for self-positioning, an electromagnetic system for moving chess pieces, and algorithms for solving the Eight Queens problem and playing the Quoridor. [Video](#)
 - Designed an intelligent car which is powered by supercapacitors, capable of wireless charging at 30 W through self-made circuits, and utilized inductors to detect alternating currents for navigation. [Video](#)
 - Designed a self-balancing bicycle robot, which was manufactured using 3D printing and utilizes an IMU and a flywheel system for balancing. [Figure](#)
 - Won the **Second Prize** of the 14th National College Student “NXP Cup” Smart Car Competition and **First Prize** of the 10th Jiangsu Provincial College Student Robotics Competition. Submitted **two** invention patents.

WORK EXPERIENCE

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- Silicon Validation Automation System** Apr. 2024 - Jan. 2025
Robotics Engineering Intern @ Apple Inc.
 - Architected and delivered a **UR10e**-based automation system for USB interoperability validation. Task included device ports localization, cable plugging (e.g., Type-C, HDMI) and simulating user operations on HID devices.
 - Implemented and fine-tuned state-of-the-art **6-DoF visual localization**, achieving precision of **0.3 mm/2°** with marker and **2.0 mm/5°** without markers at 1 m working distance.
 - Fused camera and force/torque feedback for contact-aware control, reaching **99.2%** grasp success (universal boxes) and **96.5%** cable-insertion success over **200+** device SKUs in a full regression pass.
 - Developed a **Python**-based robotics toolkit covering system calibration, front-end task management, robot path planning and visualization, plus robust fault-recovery and logging, enabling **24/7** reliable operation.
 - Deployed across labs in **Shanghai/Tokyo/Cupertino**; results presented to **VP**-level leadership.
 - Autonomous Driving Car Demonstration Model** Aug. 2023 - Jan. 2024
Strategic Intern (Part-time) @ Bosch (China) Investment Ltd.
 - Designed and implemented an autonomous indoor navigation platform using a Raspberry Pi-powered demonstration vehicle, equipped with onboard camera for real-time perception and control.
 - Developed educational materials and documentation as part of the global Bosch AI Learning Curriculum, and conducted online and offline training sessions for internal staff, reaching over **100** employees.
 - Swarm Robots System for Cooperative Construction** Jun. 2022 - Sept. 2022
Research Intern @ Tencent Robotics X Lab
 - Contributed to the development of a digital-twin system for heterogeneous robots, including **quadruped robots and Mecanum wheeled robots**, which can transport blocks/slopes to construct multi-layer buildings.
 - Designed the mechanical and electrical systems and developed the embedded software based on the Robot Operating System (ROS) to enable Mecanum wheeled robots to operate blocks/slopes under centralized control.
 - Integrated the visual sensors and IMU of the robots using Kalman filtering to enable autonomous localization, reducing positioning error by **43%** and improving positioning information reporting rate by **57%**.

HONORS AND AWARDS

- Ira A. Fulton Schools of Engineering Graduate Scholarship, ASU Aug. 2025
- Outstanding Graduate of Shanghai Jiao Tong University Mar. 2024
- First Class Academic Scholarship from Shanghai Jiao Tong University Sept. 2021&2022
- SMC Corporation Scholarship Sept. 2022
- “Chien-Shiung Student” of Southeast University (Top 1%) Jan. 2021
- Second Prize of the 14th National College Student “NXP Cup” Smart Car Competition Aug. 2019
- Second Prize of Zhengbao Education Scholarship Jun. 2019

SKILLS

- **Programming Languages:** Python, MATLAB; Additional: C++, CUDA, Swift, Verilog
- **Theoretical Knowledge:** control theory, optimization, deep learning, computer vision
- **Robotics Experience:**
 - **Algorithms:** MPC, RRT, SLAM, NeRF, Gaussian Splatting, Diffusion, Reinforcement Learning
 - **Systems & Tooling:** PyTorch, Docker, ROS, simulation (MuJoCo, Isaac Lab, SAPIEN, Simulink, Webots)
 - **Hardware & Platforms:** PCB design, CAD, 3D printing; Franka Emika, Universal Robots, NVIDIA Jetson