

Philosophy of Human Technology Relations
Panel Proposal: The Domestic Posthuman

Panel Description:

In this panel, we seek to present our current project examining domestic posthumanism and invite response. Drs. Weiss and Reid present an overview of their project and discuss its significance and Dr. Forlano provides a critical response.

Panel Description: Home is the place where humans first cultivate our humanity in an extended embodied dialogue with our caretakers. Yet home and care have both been overlooked in discussions of human-technology, where the objects of investigation are rarely domestic ones and the mediated humans in question are almost never infants, children, disabled, or elderly. Whereas the digital technologies flourishing in laboratories, offices, cities, and marketplaces have commanded the primary attention of philosophers and scientists of technology since the 1990s, a range of domestic materials and practices are an equally if not superlatively rich domain for exploring human-technology hybridizations and augmentations. Domestic Posthumanism, in contrast, explores the neglected intersection of posthumanism with the home, and examines the range of critically-overlooked mediated materialisms and embodiments affiliated with this aboriginal human space. In this project, we investigate the reasons and ramifications of the dismissal of domestic subjects and objects among philosophers of technology, and detail how their inclusion in discussions of technological mediations will redefine key components of posthumanism.

Abstract 1: Dr. Dennis Weiss, Hardware

Central to any understanding of the paradigm shift from humanism to posthumanism is an understanding of human-technology relations in which the once firm boundaries between human and technology have been breached and technology has become definitive of the human condition. From transhumanists to new materialists and critical posthumanists, one finds a greater emphasis on “what things do” (Verbeek), originary technicity (Stiegler), and “Homo Sapiens Technologicus” (Puech), and being “natural born cyborgs” (Clark). While these accounts of technological mediation are sophisticated developments in understanding the nature of human-technology relations and move us beyond simplistic accounts of technology as neutral or autonomous, they are often under-theorized, especially in regard to examining the nature of these relations and their shape relative to specific human beings, the so-called users of technology. This presentation seeks to complicate this oft-told story by focusing on several narratives that challenge this dominant construction of posthumanism. In beginning with the more tender “arts of personhood” and describing practices and processes that prompt us to revisit several classical cyborg, clone, and robot myths this presentation uncovers a softer side of contemporary hardware, rooted in intimate contexts often overlooked by posthumanism.

Abstract 2: Dr. Colbey Reid, Software

Drawing from Russel Belk's seminal assertions regarding the extended self that soft objects possess a special affinity for bodily sensation activated through the skin, and from contemporary biological and cognitive psychological research that foregrounds the skin as a hitherto neglected intelligence center, this presentation surveys three domestic technologies that have not garnered attention in posthumanist philosophical circles: interior design, fashion, and comic books. In each case, not only have they been overlooked but they have been rejected and even shamed as conceivable sites of serious philosophical and technological experimentation. This presentation investigates the ideology underpinning the logic of rejection and shame that permeate these categories, recovering the neglected genres of bodies and interiors affiliated with their mediation styles. In doing so it reconsiders the larger question of how "software" reconfigures the time frame of posthumanism, shifting from the fast, disembodied pace of algorithms to that of craftsmanship to demonstrate how human-technology mediations can be driven by slow consumption and production models and are oriented toward the recovery of older, lost/forgotten modes of consumption and production. As an antidote to the dramatic pictures of cyborgs, robots, and avatars that populate current posthumanism mythologies, the presentation proposes alternative images, stories, and myths drawing on overlooked "soft" technologies.

Abstract 3: Dr. Laura Forlano, Responding to The Domestic Posthuman

Dr. Laura Forlano has accepted an invitation to offer a critical response to *The Domestic Posthuman*. Forlano is a Fulbright award-winning and National Science Foundation-funded scholar, writer, social scientist, and design researcher. She is an Associate Professor of Design at the Institute of Design (ID) and Affiliated Faculty in the College of Architecture at Illinois Institute of Technology, where she is Director of the [Critical Futures Lab](#). Her research is focused on aesthetics and politics at the intersection of design and emerging technologies. She has studied the materialities and futures of socio-technical systems, such as autonomous vehicles and smart cities; 3D printing, local manufacturing, and innovation ecosystems; automation, distributed labor practices, and the future of work; and computational fashion, smart textiles, and wearable medical technologies. She is currently working on a project called "Material Imagination."