RCA - IIS Design Lab Innovation Academy (NY)

Event series / RE : THINKING THE ~~ROBOT~~
March 22nd to 25th 2018, UTokyo NY office, New York

An event series was held by 'UTokyo NY office' with support by the Robot Revolution Initiative. These events presented research from biomimetic machine mechanics, bio-likeness of robots, fundamental vision theories and breakthroughs in high speed robotics of the Institute of Industrial Science (IIS). Our objective was to reach out to a diverse audience ranging from industry to academia to startups. With this in mind, we prepared a panel discussion and a two day creative workshop.

The Panel Discussion was held on Thursday, March 22nd in the Microsoft Reactor at Grand Central Tech - a hub for technology startup companies. We were joined by around 70 people, hailing from both industry and academia.

We invited four speakers to join our panel: Former IIS Prof. Ikeuchi Katsushi (Principal Researcher of AI&R Division at Microsoft), Assistant Prof. Wendy Ju (Information Science at Cornell Tech), Associate Prof. Oishi Takeshi (Computer Vision Laboratory at IIS) and Prof. Miles Pennington (Design-Led Innovation at IIS). The discussion was moderated by Alicia Tam Wei, our New York insider and connector.

Each Professor was asked to give a short overview of their research area, before engaging in a discussion exploring the intersection of all their research fields. The atmosphere was casual, to facilitate exchange and networking.

The creative workshop was held on the weekend of March 23rd & 24th, at Smart Design: an international strategic design consultancy firm in Manhattan.

The workshop was split across two days - the first day was about using drawing for idea generation and the

second day introduced making as method for thinking. About 17 participants from academia and creative industries joined the intense and fun event. The outcomes were refreshing and diverse, and ranged from a personal robotic limb to a swarm drone system for emergency purposes.

The workshop participants were inspired by lectures from Prof. Ikeuchi Katsushi, Prof. Teruo Fujii, Associate Prof. Oish Takeshi and Prof. Miles Pennington.

While in New York, we started to reach out to potential academic partners like Columbia University, Cornell Tech and the New York Institute of Technology. Other potentially promising connections were made to organisations like Grand Central Tech, New Lab and New INC.

The activities in New York began to generate interest in the research topics of the IIS, and we are looking forward to strengthening partnerships with industry and academia to start collaborations.

Prof. Miles Pennington / Christian Felsner