

For immediate release
July 2019



Katrin HOCHSCHUH and Adam DONOVAN, *Empathy swarm* prototypes 2018, robotics. Courtesy of the artists.

Robots have feelings too.

QUT Art Museum invites you to explore human-machine relationships in *Empathy swarm*, opening on 17 August.

Can a robot feel empathy?

Empathy swarm is the culmination of a European research project lead by artists Katrin Hochschuh and Adam Donovan to explore whether non-anthropomorphic robots can also produce sympathetic feelings. Experimenting with human-robot social interaction, a swarm of 50 robots connect with visitors to demonstrate compassionate responses to human behaviour.

Psychologists have already shown how easy it is for the human brain to become emotionally attached to inanimate objects, and how our brains are hard-wired for compassion. Hochschuh and Donovan build on this knowledge in a physical environment, inviting visitors to enter a dark room occupied by a bright swarm of glowing robots that as a whole can adapt its behaviour and respond to a person's emotional feedback.

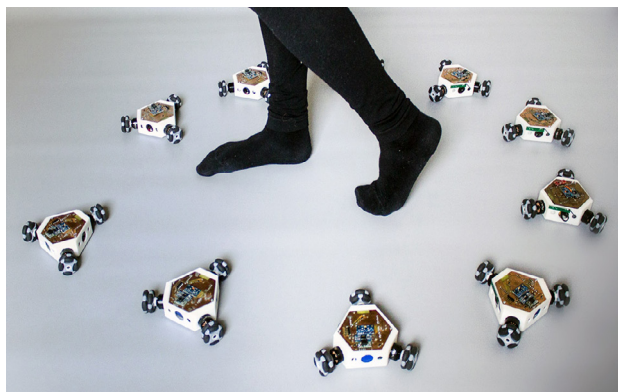
The artists use emotion recognition algorithms and camera tracking, performing social experiments with participants to develop formations, animations and behaviours which become the vocabulary of swarm expression.

Katrin Hochschuh explains, "The robots experience themselves and their environment in the form of different radii – it is like with us humans in social situations, we have an interest radius but also a radius of privacy which both change with our moods. Depending on these radii we are attracted to someone or need more space for ourselves. The robots react in exactly the same way and express their needs and emotions through their movement."

The opening weekend of *Empathy swarm* coincides with QUT's free robotics and technology festival *Robotronica* on Sunday 18 August. Showcasing some of the world's latest advancements in robotics and technology, *Robotronica* is a celebration of innovation and an opportunity to glimpse the possibilities of the future. *Empathy swarm* will be open to the public from 10am during the festival, with a free artist talk presented by Katrin Hochschuh and Adam Donovan at 11am.

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For media interviews with artists Katrin Hochschuh and Adam Donovan, or QUT Art Museum's Gallery Director Vanessa Van Ooyen or Assistant Curator Katherine Dionysius, or for high-res images, please contact Sian Conway Lamb, Senior Marketing Officer, 07 3138 3380 or sian.conwaylamb@qut.edu.au.



Katrin HOCHSCHUH and Adam DONOVAN
Empathy swarm 2018, detail view. Courtesy of the artists



OPENING WEEKEND

[Empathy swarm](#) and [Gemma Smith: Rhythm sequence](#)

opening night

6pm-8pm, Friday 16 August

(light canapes and refreshments provided)

[Compelled by colour: In conversation with Gemma Smith](#)

2pm-3pm, Saturday 17 August

Exhibition

17 August – 27 October

[Robotronica](#)

10am-4pm, Sunday 18 August

[Artist talk: robotic empathy](#)

11am-12pm, Sunday 18 August

QUT Art Museum

2 George Street, Brisbane

www.artmuseum.qut.edu.au

artmuseum@qut.edu.au | 03 3138 5370

Tues-Fri 10am-5pm, Sat-Sun 12pm-4pm | FREE

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SPONSORS



This project has been assisted by the Australian Government through the Australia Council, its arts funding and advisory body.



Work co-produced at Kontejner within the framework of EMAP / EMARE and co-funded by Creative Europe.



Robot omni wheels produced and sponsored by Rotacaster.



Robot brain microcontrollers sponsored by Espressif.



Behaviour and robot tracking cameras sponsored by Arducam.

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