

Robot 250 Background

Robot 250 is a massive city-wide community art and technology program culminating in a two-week festival in July with exhibits, workshops, outdoor displays, movies and other installations throughout the Pittsburgh area. It was launched by Carnegie Mellon University and the University of Pittsburgh with program support from a host of local community groups and financial support from The Heinz Endowments, The Grable Foundation and The Claude Worthington Benedum Foundation. The mission of Robot 250 is to foster creativity, build a sense of community and raise the technical literacy of our entire region, while coinciding with the city of Pittsburgh's 250th anniversary celebration. Participants include middle school students, artists, families and the general public, as well as Carnegie Mellon, Georgia Tech and University of Pittsburgh faculty, staff and students, who are gathering to build customized robots using cutting-edge technology and educational materials developed at the Carnegie Mellon Robotics Institute.

Workshops:

A key component of Robot 250, a series of community workshops and open studios, is already complete. The robots that were created during the workshops express concerns of the people within that community, innovatively investigate those concerns, and will be displayed during the two-week festival in July. These concerns include safety, environmental pollution, violence and the contemporary and abiding burdens of being human.

One focus of the project is to engage middle-school girls with technology, changing their perception about what it is and demonstrating that they too can use technology to create things and express themselves. Moving robots from the science fiction world and providing these girls with an opportunity to design arts-based robots with emotive connection, has engaged their creativity and involvement.

BigBots

The most visible component of Robot 250 will be the installation of BigBots, giant robotic artworks that push the boundaries of what a robot can look like and do. These artworks sense, process those sensations and take action, and thus give the appearance of mindful intent, the hallmarks of a robot. The directing of that apparent intent, usually in unprecedented ways, is the prime medium of the robotic artists, just as clay is to the sculptor, or human movement to the choreographer. Their designs range from the mobile "Look-See Tree" with its six motion-activated mini-theaters to the rooftop-installed, 15-foot foam "You're #1" hand, which will point to people, blocks or even miles away.

The BigBots will be on display at the Mattress Factory, Children's Museum, Warhol Museum, Carnegie Science Center, PPG Plaza, Pittsburgh Center for the Arts, Citiparks' Flagstaff Hill and the Roving Art Cart, the Carnegie Museum of Art and Phipps Conservatory.

Why Robots?

Robot 250 uses technology and robotics as "new media" that provide participants the means to creatively communicate an issue about their neighborhoods that is important to them. Robot 250 empowers them to participate in community development and challenges preconceptions about robotics, bringing a fresh perspective to the debate about what robotics is for and what robots will be.

Key Events

Robot 250 is a year-long program that culminates in a two-week event of family activities, including hands-on workshops, student and artist exhibitions and film presentations.

Media Event - July 10

BigBot installations begin in April and remain through July

City-wide Robot 250 Festival - July 11-28

Robot Block Party - July 19-20

How you can participate

For more information about how YOU can participate in Robot 250 visit www.robot250.org.