

L'UNITÉ DE RECHERCHE TRAVERSES,
LE CENTRE DE SÉMIOTIQUE & RHÉTORIQUE
ET LE DIGITAL LAB LIÈGE

ONT LE PLAISIR DE VOUS INVITER À LA CONFÉRENCE DE

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*Talking to a Toaster: On the notions of body and space
in everyday interaction with digital assistants*

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Voice is toward other voices, it is listened to, responded to through voice or other actions, and it talks back. We live a moment when voices more frequently emanate from things across our environments, as our current relationship with consumer electronics is said to be at a paradigmatic shift. The internet-of-things and associated digital assistants – voice-controlled artificial intelligence software embedded within a variety of commercial products – are to make our homes smart, connecting every object in the spaces we inhabit to everything and everyone.

Social roboticists are acknowledging this move as a march of social robots from the laboratory into the big wide world, as these gadgets are to communicate with us in a friendly and personal manner. Even if they

are only simplified versions of social robots, these commercial products maintain the rhetoric of their predecessors; designers conceive of their sociality and effects of presence in relation to an intentional mind, which, in this case, manifests via voice.

While recognizing their power and specificity, here I think about these voices not in terms of the inner of an individual, but starting from the opening between bodies and the world. Grounding this take in actual, everyday interactions with digital assistants, I trace enactments of bodies and environments as distributed and relational. The discussed engagements come from an American university classroom, so reporting on this context is also an occasion to reflect on pedagogy and methods for noticing.

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