



Sean Follmer

Associate Professor of Mechanical Engineering and, by courtesy, of Computer Science

Bio

BIO

Sean Follmer is an Associate Professor of Mechanical Engineering and Computer Science (by courtesy) at Stanford University. His Research in Human Computer Interaction, Haptics, and Human Robot Interaction explores the design of novel tactile physical interfaces and novel robotic devices. Dr. Follmer directs the Stanford Shape Lab and is a faculty member of the Stanford HCI Group. He is a core faculty member of the Design masters program focusing on innovation and human centered design at Stanford.

The Shape lab explores how we can interact with digital information in a more physical and tangible way. Towards our goal of more human centered computing, we believe that interaction must be grounded in the physical world and leverage our innate abilities for spatial cognition and dexterous manipulation with our hands. We develop advanced technologies in robotics, mechatronics, and sensing to create interactive, dynamic physical 3D displays and haptic interfaces that allow 3D information to be touched as well as seen. We are specifically interested in using these novel interfaces to support richer remote collaboration, computer aided design, education, and interfaces for people with visual impairments. In pursuit of these goals, we use a design process grounded in iterative prototyping and human centered design and look to create new understanding about human perception and interaction through controlled studies.

Our research in Human Computer Interaction and Human Machine Interaction currently directed the following areas:

- Shape Changing and Tangible User Interfaces
- Haptic Interaction
- Accessible User Interfaces for People who Are Blind and Visually Impaired
- Shape Changing Robotics
- Design and Debugging Tools for Physical Computing and Robotic Systems

Dr. Follmer received a PhD and a Masters from the MIT Media Lab in 2015 and 2011 (respectively) for his work in human-computer interaction, and a BS in Engineering with a focus on Product Design from Stanford University. His talk featured on TED.com was named one of the best science and tech TED talks of 2015 and has been viewed more than 1.5 million times. He has received numerous awards for his research and design work such as an Alfred P. Sloan Fellowship, NSF CAREER Award, Google Faculty Research Award, 17 Best Paper Awards and nominations from premier conferences in human-computer interaction (including Five Best papers at ACM UIST, Two Best Papers at ACM CHI and an IMWUT Distinguished Paper Award), Fast

Company Innovation By Design Award, Red Dot Design Award, and a Laval Virtual Award. His work has been shown at the Smithsonian Cooper Hewitt Design Museum, Ars Electronica Center, and the Milan Design Week.

ACADEMIC APPOINTMENTS

- Associate Professor, Mechanical Engineering
- Associate Professor (By courtesy), Computer Science
- Member, Bio-X
- Faculty Affiliate, Institute for Human-Centered Artificial Intelligence (HAI)
- Member, Wu Tsai Human Performance Alliance
- Member, Wu Tsai Neurosciences Institute

HONORS AND AWARDS

- Best Paper Award, ACM CHI 2023 (2023)
- NSF CAREER Award, National Science Foundation (2022)
- Best Paper Award, ACM CHI 2021 (2021)
- Sloan Research Fellowship, Alfred P. Sloan Foundation (2021)
- Best Short Paper Award, ACM VRST (2019)
- Distinguished Paper Award, ACM IMMUT Volume 2 (2019)
- Best Paper Award, ACM UIST 2017 (2017)
- Google Faculty Research Award, Google (2017)
- Best Demo Award, ACM UIST 2016 (2016)
- Best Paper Award (x2), ACM UIST 2016 (2016)
- Google Faculty Research Award, Google (2016)
- Best Paper Award, ACM UIST 2013 (2013)
- Best Paper Award, ACM UIST 2012 (2012)

PROGRAM AFFILIATIONS

- Symbolic Systems Program

PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION

- Postdoctoral Associate, MIT Media Lab (2015)
- PhD, MIT Media Lab (2015)
- S.M., MIT Media Lab (2011)
- B.S., Stanford University , Engineering (2009)

LINKS

- Shape Lab Site: <http://shape.stanford.edu>
- Talk on TED.com: https://www.ted.com/talks/sean_follmer_shape_shifting_tech_will_change_work_as_we_know_it

Research & Scholarship

CURRENT RESEARCH AND SCHOLARLY INTERESTS

Human Computer Interaction, Haptics, Robotics, Human Centered Design

Teaching

COURSES

2025-26

- Design Methods: DESIGN 141 (Win)
- Introduction to Research in Design: DESIGN 192 (Spr)
- MS Design Thesis 1: DESIGN 361A (Aut)
- MS Design Thesis 2: DESIGN 361B (Win)
- MS Design Thesis 3: DESIGN 361C (Spr)

2023-24

- MS Design Capstone Project 2: DESIGN 361B (Win)
- MS Design Capstone Project 3: DESIGN 361C (Spr)
- Product Design Methods: DESIGN 141 (Win)

2022-23

- MS Design Capstone Project 1: DESIGN 361A, ME 316A (Aut)
- MS Design Capstone Project 2: DESIGN 361B, ME 316B (Win)
- MS Design Capstone Project 3: DESIGN 361C, ME 316C (Spr)
- Product Design Methods: DESIGN 141, ME 115B (Win)

STANFORD ADVISEES

Doctoral Dissertation Reader (AC)

Kai Jun Chen, Sehui Jeong, Brian Vuong

Postdoctoral Faculty Sponsor

Vinitha Ranganeni

Doctoral Dissertation Advisor (AC)

Savannah Cofer, Saehui Hwang, Olivia Tomassetti

Master's Program Advisor

Samuel Awuah, Jesus Chavez, Kathleen Coleman, Carter Eid, Trishna Gunna, Chloe Ha, William Huang, Carolyn Lee, Danna Lenis-Granada, Loïc Poisson, Jonathan Siskind, Andy Wang

Doctoral Dissertation Co-Advisor (AC)

Eunyoung Kim, Alessandra Napoli

Doctoral (Program)

Matt Caren, Sammie Staudinger, Yujie Tao, Brandon Wong

Publications

PUBLICATIONS

- **The Accessibility of Data Visualizations on the Web for Screen Reader Users: Practices and Experiences During COVID-19** *ACM TRANSACTIONS ON ACCESSIBLE COMPUTING*
Fan, D., Siu, A., Rao, H., Kim, G., Vazquez, X., Greco, L., O'Modhrain, S., Follmer, S.

2023; 16 (1)

- **Detecting Touch and Grasp Gestures Using a Wrist-Worn Optical and Inertial Sensing Network** *IEEE ROBOTICS AND AUTOMATION LETTERS*
Cofer, S., Chen, T. N., Yang, J., Follmer, S.
2022; 7 (4): 10842-10849
- **An All-Soft Variable Impedance Actuator Enabled by Embedded Layer Jamming** *IEEE-ASME TRANSACTIONS ON MECHATRONICS*
Do, B. H., Choi, I., Follmer, S.
2022
- **Robotic Presence: The Effects of Anthropomorphism and Robot State on Task Performance and Emotion** *IEEE ROBOTICS AND AUTOMATION LETTERS*
Kim, L. H., Domova, V., Yao, Y., Huang, C., Follmer, S., Paredes, P. E.
2022; 7 (3): 7399-7406
- **Beyond Being Real: A Sensorimotor Control Perspective on Interactions in Virtual Reality**
Abtahi, P., Hough, S. Q., Landay, J. A., Follmer, S., ACM
ASSOC COMPUTING MACHINERY.2022
- **A Model Predictive Control Approach for Reach Redirection in Virtual Reality**
Gonzalez, E. J., Chase, E. D. Z., Kotipalli, P., Follmer, S., ACM
ASSOC COMPUTING MACHINERY.2022
- **Slide-Tone and Tilt-Tone: 1-DOF Haptic Techniques for Conveying Shape Characteristics of Graphs to Blind Users**
Fan, D., Siu, A., Law, W., Zhen, R., O'Modhrain, S., Follmer, S., ACM
ASSOC COMPUTING MACHINERY.2022
- **Supporting Accessible Data Visualization Through Audio Data Narratives**
Siu, A., Kim, G., O'Modhrain, S., Follmer, S., ACM
ASSOC COMPUTING MACHINERY.2022
- **Augmenting Perceived Softness of Haptic Proxy Objects Through Transient Vibration and Visuo-Haptic Illusion in Virtual Reality** *IEEE TRANSACTIONS ON VISUALIZATION AND COMPUTER GRAPHICS*
Choi, I., Zhao, Y., Gonzalez, E. J., Follmer, S.
2021; 27 (12): 4387-4400
- **Generating Legible and Glanceable Swarm Robot Motion through Trajectory, Collective Behavior, and Pre-attentive Processing Features** *ACM TRANSACTIONS ON HUMAN-ROBOT INTERACTION*
Kim, L. H., Follmer, S.
2021; 10 (3)
- **Hybrid Actuation With Unidirectional Clutches for Handheld Haptic Controllers** *IEEE ROBOTICS AND AUTOMATION LETTERS*
Choi, I., Gonzalez, E. J., Follmer, S.
2021; 6 (3): 4827-4834
- **COVID-19 highlights the issues facing blind and visually impaired people in accessing data on the web** *W4A: Web Accessibility*
Siu, A. F., Fan, D., Kim, G. S., Rao, H. V., O'Modhrain, S., Follmer, S.
2021: 1-15
- **Balloon Animal Robots: Reconfigurable Isoperimetric Inflated Soft Robots**
Stuart, A. D., Hammond, Z. M., Follmer, S., IEEE
IEEE.2021: 6941-6947
- **Grasp Analysis and Manipulation Kinematics for Isoperimetric Truss Robots**
Hammond, Z. M., Usevitch, N. S., Follmer, S., IEEE
IEEE.2021: 6140-6146
- **Acoustic Communication and Sensing for Inflatable Modular Soft Robots**
Drew, D. S., Devlin, M., Hawkes, E., Follmer, S., IEEE
IEEE.2021: 11827-11833

- **A Causal Feeling: How Kinesthetic Haptics Affects Causal Perception**
Chase, E. D. Z., Wolff, P., Gerstenberg, T., Follmer, S., IEEE
IEEE.2021: 347
- **HIGH FORCE DENSITY MULTI-STAGE ELECTROHYDRODYNAMIC JETS USING FOLDED LASER MICROFABRICATED ELECTRODES**
Drew, D. S., Follmer, S., IEEE
IEEE.2021: 54-57
- **Lightweight High Voltage Generator for Untethered Electroadhesive Perching of Micro Air Vehicles** *IEEE ROBOTICS AND AUTOMATION LETTERS*
Park, S., Drew, D. S., Follmer, S., Rivas-Davila, J.
2020; 5 (3): 4485–92
- **An untethered isoperimetric soft robot.** *Science robotics*
Usevitch, N. S., Hammond, Z. M., Schwager, M., Okamura, A. M., Hawkes, E. W., Follmer, S.
2020; 5 (40)
- **An untethered isoperimetric soft robot** *SCIENCE ROBOTICS*
Usevitch, N. S., Hammond, Z. M., Schwager, M., Okamura, A. M., Hawkes, E. W., Follmer, S.
2020; 5 (40)
- **Foxels: Build Your Own Smart Furniture**
Perteneder, F., Probst, K., Leong, J., Gassler, S., Rendl, C., Parzer, P., Fluch, K., Gahleitner, S., Follmer, S., Koike, H., Haller, M., Assoc Comp Machinery
ASSOC COMPUTING MACHINERY.2020: 111–22
- **User-Defined Swarm Robot Control** *Proceedings of the 2020 CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems*
Kim, L. H., Drew, D. S., Domova, V., Follmer, S.
Association for Computing Machinery.2020: 13
- **Design and Analysis of High-Resolution Electrostatic Adhesive Brakes Towards Static Refreshable 2.5D Tactile Shape Display** *IEEE TRANSACTIONS ON HAPTICS*
Zhang, K., Gonzalez, E. J., Guo, J., Follmer, S.
2019; 12 (4): 470–82
- **Beyond The Force: Using Quadcopters to Appropriately Grasp Objects and the Environment for Haptics in Virtual Reality**
Abtahi, P., Landry, B., Yang, J., Pavone, M., Follmer, S., Landay, J. A., Assoc Comp Machinery
ASSOC COMPUTING MACHINERY.2019
- **Investigating the Detection of Bimanual Haptic Retargeting in Virtual Reality**
Gonzalez, E. J., Follmer, S.
edited by Spencer, S. N.
ASSOC COMPUTING MACHINERY.2019
- **shapeCAD: An Accessible 3D Modelling Workflow for the Blind and Visually-Impaired Via 2.5D Shape Displays**
Siu, A. F., Kim, S., Miele, J. A., Follmer, S., Assoc Comp Machinery
ASSOC COMPUTING MACHINERY.2019: 342–54
- **Tactile Code Skimmer: A Tool to Help Blind Programmers Feel the Structure of Code**
Falase, O., Siu, A. F., Follmer, S., Assoc Comp Machinery
ASSOC COMPUTING MACHINERY.2019: 536–38
- **Evaluating the Minimum Jerk Motion Model for Redirected Reach in Virtual Reality**
Gonzalez, E. J., Abtahi, P., Follmer, S., ACM
ASSOC COMPUTING MACHINERY.2019: 4–6
- **Editing Spatial Layouts through Tactile Templates for People with Visual Impairments**
Li, J., Kim, S., Miele, J. A., Agrawala, M., Follmer, S., Assoc Comp Machinery
ASSOC COMPUTING MACHINERY.2019

- **Pinpoint: A PCB Debugging Pipeline Using Interruptible Routing and Instrumentation**
Strasnick, E., Follmer, S., Agrawala, M., Assoc Comp Machinery
ASSOC COMPUTING MACHINERY.2019
- **SwarmHaptics: Haptic Display with Swarm Robots**
Kim, L. H., Follmer, S., Assoc Comp Machinery
ASSOC COMPUTING MACHINERY.2019
- **Dynamic Composite Data Physicalization Using Wheeled Micro-Robots.** *IEEE transactions on visualization and computer graphics*
Goc, M. L., Perin, C., Follmer, S., Fekete, J., Dragicevic, P.
2018
- **Electrostatic Adhesive Brakes for High Spatial Resolution Refreshable 2.5D Tactile Shape Displays**
Zhang, K., Follmer, S.
edited by Kuchenbecker, K. J., Gerling, G. J., Visell, Y.
IEEE.2018: 319–26
- **An Accessible CAD Workflow Using Programming of 3D Models and Preview Rendering in A 2.5D Shape Display**
Siu, A. F., Miele, J., Follmer, S., Assoc Comp Machinery
ASSOC COMPUTING MACHINERY.2018: 343–45
- **Investigating Tangible Collaboration for Design Towards Augmented Physical Telepresence** *DESIGN THINKING RESEARCH: MAKING DISTINCTIONS: COLLABORATION VERSUS COOPERATION*
Siu, A. F., Yuan, S., Pham, H., Gonzalez, E., Kim, L. H., Le Goc, M., Follmer, S.
edited by Plattner, H., Meinel, C., Leifer, L.
2018: 131–45
- **Designing Line-Based Shape-Changing Interfaces** *IEEE PERVASIVE COMPUTING*
Nakagaki, K., Follmer, S., Dementyev, A., Paradiso, J. A., Ishii, H.
2017; 16 (4): 36–46
- **shiftIO: Reconfigurable Tactile Elements for Dynamic Affordances and Mobile Interaction**
Strasnick, E., Yang, J., Tanner, K., Olwal, A., Follmer, S., ACM
ASSOC COMPUTING MACHINERY.2017: 5075–86
- **Shape Displays: Spatial Interaction with Dynamic Physical Form** *IEEE COMPUTER GRAPHICS AND APPLICATIONS*
Leithinger, D., Follmer, S., Olwal, A., Ishii, H.
2015; 35 (5): 5-11
- **Jamming User Interfaces: Programmable Particle Stiffness and Sensing for Malleable and Shape-Changing Devices** *UIST'12: PROCEEDINGS OF THE 25TH ANNUAL ACM SYMPOSIUM ON USER INTERFACE SOFTWARE AND TECHNOLOGY*
Follmer, S., Leithinger, D., Olwal, A., Cheng, N., Ishii, H.
2012: 519-528
- **TessalTable: Tile-based Creation of Patterns and Images** *4th International Conference on Tangible, Embedded and Embodied Interaction*
Allison, A., Follmer, S., Raffle, H.
ASSOC COMPUTING MACHINERY.2010: 203–204
- **d.note: Revising User Interfaces Through Change Tracking, Annotations, and Alternatives** *28th Annual CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems*
Hartmann, B., Follmer, S., Ricciardi, A., Cardenas, T., Klemmer, S. R.
ASSOC COMPUTING MACHINERY.2010: 493–502
- **Family Story Play: Reading with Young Children (and Elmo) Over a Distance** *CHI2010: PROCEEDINGS OF THE 28TH ANNUAL CHI CONFERENCE ON HUMAN FACTORS IN COMPUTING SYSTEMS, VOLS 1-4*
Raffle, H., Ballagas, R., Reville, G., Horii, H., Follmer, S., Go, J., Reardon, E., Mori, K., Kaye, J. ', Spasojevic, M.
2010: 1583-1592