PET

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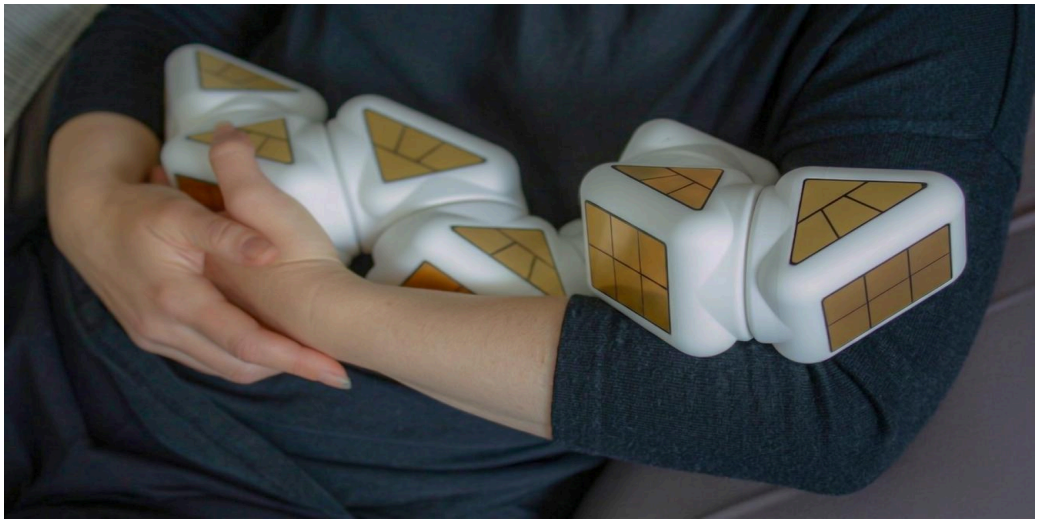

TLDR

PET is a robot that uses distributed articulation, tactile sensing, and LLM-driven behaviours to produce physically responsive companionship through touch rather than language or anthropomorphic form.

Project Description

PET (Personal Embodied Touch) is an experimental artwork exploring companionship and intimacy through embodied, non-verbal interaction. Designed to be held, handled, and physically engaged rather than observed at a distance, PET reframes human–robot interaction around touch, feel, and physical responsiveness rather than language, faces, or task-oriented behaviour.

The robot's aesthetic emerges from function and materiality: smooth continuous surfaces, distributed articulation, and a body optimized for being lifted, cradled, and repositioned in human arms. PET's segmented architecture — conceptually influenced by geometric subdivision in computer graphics — increases the spatial resolution of touch, enabling the robot to distinguish where and how it is being touched across its entire body. Embedded sensors and distributed actuation enable localized modulation of resistance, compliance, and motion in real time.

PET's actions emerge from a four-stage control system: a reflexive layer protects against extreme inputs; tactile sensors are processed and categorized into gestures in real time; gesture sequences are sent to a large language model that develops a feeling about the interaction and selects a matching behaviour; that behaviour is then enacted by the robot, incorporating movement patterns and tactile feedback.

Conceptually, the work draws from sculpture, functionalism, affective computing, and personal robotics, positioning the experience of robots as phenomenological rather than symbolic. By focusing on the felt experience of the machine, PET moves away from representational tropes toward direct, sensory-based interaction.