



Robo Sapiens: Evolution of a New Species

By Peter Menzel, Faith D'Aluisio

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Around the world, scientists and engineers are participating in a high-stakes race to build the first intelligent robot. Many robots already exist -- automobile factories are full of them. But the new generation of robots will be something else: smart machines that act like living creatures. When they are brought into existence, science fiction will have become fact.

What will happen then? With our prosthetic limbs, titanium hips, and artificial eyes, we are already beginning to resemble our machines. Equally important, our machines are beginning to resemble us. Robots already walk, talk, and dance; they can react to our facial expressions and obey verbal commands. When they take the next step and become fully autonomous, what will they do? Will we be partners or rivals? Could we meld into a single species -- Robo sapiens?

In Robo sapiens, Peter Menzel and Faith D'Aluisio present the next generation of intelligent robots and their makers. Accompanying brilliant photographs of more than one hundred robots is an account of the little-known, yet vitally important scientific competition to build an autonomous robot. Containing extensive interviews with robotics pioneers, anecdotal "field notes" with behind-the-scenes information, and easy-to-understand technical data about the machines, Robo sapiens is a field guide to our mechanical future.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

If you believe the children are our future, you're only half right. Photographer Peter Menzel and journalist Faith D'Aluisio traveled around the world interviewing researchers who want to jump-start our evolution by designing and building electrical and mechanical extensions of ourselves--robots. Their book, *Robo Sapiens*, takes its title from the notion that our species might somehow merge with our creations, either literally or symbiotically. The photography is brilliant, showing the endearing and creepy sides of the robots and roboticists and feeling like stills from unmade science-fiction films. D'Aluisio's interviews are insightful and often very funny, as when she calls MIT superstar Rodney Brooks on his statement that we ought not "overanthropomorphize" people. Brooks is an interesting study. Having shaken up the robotics and artificial-intelligence fields with his elimination of high-level intelligence and dedication to tiny, insectoid, built-from-the-ground-up robots, he now works on large, human-mimicking machines. But hundreds of other researchers, in Japan, Europe, and the United States, are working on various aspects of machine behavior, from the eerily lifelike robotic faces of Fumio Hara and Alvaro Villa to the monkeylike movement of Brachiator III; each of them casts a bit of light on the future of their field in their short interviews. Though it's clear that we shouldn't hold our breath waiting for a robot butler, *Robo Sapiens* suggests that much cooler--and stranger--events are coming soon. --Rob Lightner

From Publishers Weekly

"Today's robots... are explorers, space laborers, surgeons, maids, actors, pets." What do they look like? How do they work? And what's next? Tech photographer Menzel and journalist D'Aluisio worked together on *Material World* and *Man Eating Bugs*. Their latest collaboration joins terrific photos of robotsA176 color pictures of themAto short essays, sidebars and interviews explaining what each robot can do, how it works and what problems it was designed to solve. Several researchers tell D'Aluisio that true artificial intelligence (AI) is coming soonAa couple even believe that smart machines will someday wipe out humans. But this volume doesn't really add up to an argument about our mechanoid future: instead, it's an informativeAand handsomeAview of some current work in robotics, from out-there AI research to practical (and profitable) surgical technology. Menzel and D'Aluisio divide the machines they chronicle into six groups: the first two sets try to copy human abilities, while other sorts of 'bots function more like machines in industry or in science education. Many gizmos have special abilities of obvious, even lifesaving, practical use: "Ariel the crab-robot... walks pretty well underwater"; eventually, it will detect and clear mines. "Rosie," a remote boom crane robot, can help control damage from a reactor meltdown. Other constructions simulate human and animal actions, like running and walkingAa field called "biomimicry." More impressive yet are robots designed to investigate psychology and cognition; some of these are learningAand teaching their creatorsAwhat it means to be human. MIT researcher Cynthia Breazel introduces us to Kismet, a Kermit-the-Frog-esque 'droid whose big-eyed, goofy "facial expressions" (in her words) "tune the human's behavior so that it is appropriate for the robotAnot too much, not too little, just right."

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From Library Journal

Robo sapiens will be a new generation of robotsDthe first intelligent robots: smart machines that act like living creatures. The authors of such award-winning works of photojournalism as *Material World: A Global Family Portrait* and *Women in the Material World*, photojournalist Menzel and D'Alusio, a former TV documentary producer, here collect interviews, essays, illustrations, and numerous photographs of all aspects of current research and actual production locations using robots, some of which approach the "intelligent"

level. The coverage includes more than 100 different researchers and developers with their robots. Although the actual color photographs were not included, a sample indicates that Menzel's background as a photojournalist stood him in good stead. The interviews are interesting, and the range of applications areas is fascinating; from medicine to housecleaning, from game playing to dancing robots, there is something for everyone in this collection. While some of the resource and source material appendixes were unavailable at the time of review, the authors appear to try to provide enough information so that readers interested in following up a certain avenue will be able to do so. For most sci/tech collections.

DHilary Burton, Lawrence Livermore National Lab., CA
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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Debra Sudduth:

Here thing why this particular Robo Sapiens: Evolution of a New Species are different and reliable to be yours. First of all reading through a book is good nonetheless it depends in the content of it which is the content is as tasty as food or not. Robo Sapiens: Evolution of a New Species giving you information deeper since different ways, you can find any reserve out there but there is no book that similar with Robo Sapiens: Evolution of a New Species. It gives you thrill reading journey, its open up your own personal eyes about the thing that happened in the world which is perhaps can be happened around you. You can actually bring everywhere like in area, café, or even in your means home by train. Should you be having difficulties in bringing the imprinted book maybe the form of Robo Sapiens: Evolution of a New Species in e-book can be your substitute.

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