



Invention, Technology, and Tomorrow

Director of M.I.T.'s prestigious Artificial Intelligence Laboratory and arguably the world's most important figure in robotics, Rodney Brooks is a technology visionary, a ground-breaking scientist, and a creative entrepreneur. If there is a "leading edge" in the world of technology, his spectacular career has certainly been spent exploring it.

Brooks has played a major role in some of the most exciting, state-of-the-art inventions in a field bursting with invention. The company he founded, iRobot, sent a robot to Mars to collect samples for NASA, helped create the Predator robot aircraft for use by the military in Iraq and Afghanistan, and recently brought the first commercial robot to market (named Roomba, it weighs less than 6 lbs., sells for \$199, and cleans floors). By deftly combining the latest artificial intelligence technology with easy-to-use interfaces, Brooks has developed robots for government, industry, scientific research, and kids who want to have fun.

Indeed, fun is never far away when Brooks, a lively speaker, explains his passion for invention and discovery. "A voluble Australian," according to Time Magazine, "he's famous for finding radical, counter-intuitive approaches to intractable problems".

To the general public, Brooks is best known for his popular book, *Flesh and Machines: How Robots Will Change Us* and for his role in the underground movie classic, *Fast, Cheap, and Out of Control* (the movie's title derives from Brooks' iconoclastic advice to NASA concerning the kinds of robots to develop for use in outer space).

He has been a frequent guest on numerous television and radio programs, including *Good Morning, America*, the *Discovery Channel*, and *NPR Science Friday*.

It's easy to see why the media is fascinated with Brooks, for he skillfully addresses, from the perspective of an engaged scientist, Big Questions that have traditionally been the domain of fiction writers and fantasists:

- Can robots "think" and "feel" and be "alive"?
- When does artificial intelligence stop being artificial?
- Will humanoid robots some day live comfortably among us?
- What's the distinction between conscious and unconscious?
- Will robots eventually take over?

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Dr. Brooks received degrees in pure mathematics from the Flinders University of South Australia and the Ph.D. in Computer Science from Stanford University in 1981. His research is concerned with both the engineering of intelligent robots to operate in unstructured environments, and with understanding human intelligence through building humanoid robots. He has published papers and books in model-based computer vision, path planning, uncertainty analysis, robot assembly, active vision, autonomous robots, micro-robots, micro-actuators, planetary exploration, representation, artificial life, humanoid robots, and compiler design. Dr. Brooks is a Founding Fellow of the American Association for Artificial Intelligence (AAAI) and a Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS).

Robotics today occupy a position similar to that of the computer industry twenty-five years ago: namely, technologies that have been developed in research laboratories by visionary scientists such as Rodney Brooks are about to explode into countless forms of everyday use.



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—Time Magazine

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