

FONTANEL

In his book, *The Fourth Discontinuity*, historian Bruce Mazlish argues that humankind has entered into a new stage in its co-evolutionary relationship with technology. He asserts that earlier in history, Copernicus, Darwin and Freud created new scientific and cultural paradigms by shattering three closely held fallacies; the delusions that mankind was separate and discontinuous from the heavens, the animal kingdom, and the unconscious mind. Similarly, he argues we are presently in a stage of history which will inevitably lead to the overturn of a fourth delusion or discontinuity—that humankind is separate from its technology.

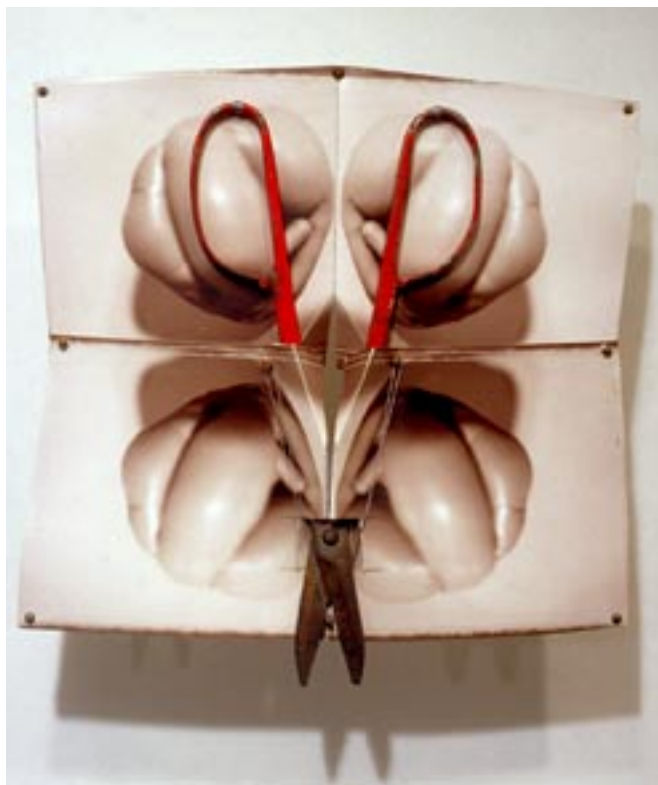
In making his argument for the ending of the fourth discontinuity, he calls for the recognition that we are on an evolutionary continuum with the machines that we have created; a continuum which is very different from that which connects us with the animal kingdom. He argues that human biological evolution, as understood in cultural terms, will lead us to recognize that our technology is part and parcel of our evolving human nature. He posits that the future will see further blending and merging of our species with our technology. Machines will have human-like traits and humans will adopt machine-like traits. There will be super-thinking machines and perhaps machines with what we call emotions or feelings. We, in turn, may incorporate machines into our physical being in order to live longer lives or to more fully integrate with our technology.

The art of Ellen Garvens seems to intuit such a future. Her fragile constructions impart the sense of a new life evolving from old. She wants her art to blur the boundaries between the organic and inorganic, between image and object, between 2-D and 3-D, and between human and non-human. She often designs her pieces to visually reference the bisymmetrical nature of living things. At first glance, her constructions are reminiscent of organic forms found in nature. In fact, these forms also contain disconcerting passages incorporating technology and tools. In this manner, Garvens' work addresses humanity's adaptation to and melding with its own technology. She depicts the uneasy interdependence of human life and technology.

Her pieces often reference the human body as a time worn object, an artifact merged with the precision and modernity of our tools.

Ellen Garvens' work is pinned to the gallery walls in groupings so as to mimic the conventions of scientific specimen displays. The gallery is transformed into the artist's personal natural history collection; a collection that scrutinizes the artifacts of life co-existing, evolving and merging with our machines.

Jack Bentley, Curator



Red Scissors

1998

mixed medium on steel