

The Joy of TV

an internet exhibition curated by Sera Waters

Mary-Jean Richardson, John Coleman, Josh2000, Katrina Weber, Deidre But-Husaim, Shaw Hendry, Louise Flaherty

In what has turned out to be a lucky coincidence, this exhibition celebrating the joy of television is occurring in 2006, the fiftieth anniversary of TV in Australia. It is difficult to believe that once upon a time we didn't have TV in our lives. For good or bad, in 2006, TV makes up a significant part of many of our days. Ironically, I have learnt from TV that it is healthy for children to watch only one hour of television a day. When I was growing up I watched more than one hour, but could never quite rival my friend, who, on top of going to school could have filled the hours of a full time job watching the box. The artists of this latest on-line Vitamin exhibition, The Joy of TV, have presented their own television memories, and what better medium to do them in than a self-designed version of Fuzzy Felt.

The world of TV seems bound by no limits. Inside our television, we can imagine, there exists a galaxy of possibilities that could unfold forever. But the world of TV viewing, however, is ordered by rules, censorship, budgets, time and other limitations. Perhaps the greatest hurdle to limitless TV watching are restrictions that are self-imposed or were set by our parents in our "best interests" and we can't help but still adhere to. Three artists in particular address these ideas in The Joy of TV; Louise Flaherty, Katrina Weber and Josh2000.

Sadly, as a child Katrina was given only one hour a week to enjoy the mindless entertainment of TV. She used to use her allocated hour to keep up with The Henderson Kids; Brains in particular it seems. Josh2000 reveals that TV started him on the path to street art early, with sneaked glimpses of The Warriors proving the most influential. Impressively, Josh2000 can attribute his interests today back to this film and to his love of TV. Like many of the Y-Generation, Louise grew up with the characters from Degrassi Junior High and Degrassi High. Louise and many others (including myself) watched Joey, Snake and Wheels, collectively known as Zit Remedy, performed their one and only song, 'everybody wants something...'. I, myself can't remember if the song was a disaster or a success, but I can still remember the song to this day. Degrassi has become a collective memory for those who were teenagers in the early 90s and I am pleased to say that a revamped series is making new memories for today's teenagers.

Mary Jean Richardson and Deidre But-Husaim have revealed a certain sci-fi strain to their tele viewing. Mary Jean, rather than representing the first real human moment in space, preferred the fictional reality of Lost in Space. Somehow, the emotional plots, the characters and soundtrack made the unreal space more attractive than the real (conspiracy theories aside). For her TV memory, Deidre gives the cybermen from Dr. Who, whom she found highly frightening, a twist with fuzzy felt. I wonder how Deidre feels today about the scary characters of the new series of Dr. Who?

John Coleman has drawn his memory from the greatest of Australian TV genres; the Soapie. He records his, and his mother's, great amusement at the sudden killing off of a character in Bell Bird. Much laughter can be gained from badly-acted serious soapie moments and if we think of Home and Away, Neighbours, Days of Our Lives, or best of all, Passions, we are overcome with dodgy scenarios.

Finally, Shaw Hendry has used his fuzzy felt piece to draw upon an influential strain of children's television; Japanese anime. Prince Planet is a particularly early example of Japanese-made anime that preceded such shows as Astro Boy and Kimba the White Lion, and was only ever produced in black and white. Shaw's homage to this superhero captures the simple and handmade styling of Japanese anime that continues to have a strong influence on animation the world over.

From The Joy of TV we can see that tele has meant different things to each generation, family and individual. It racks some of us with guilt (oh, all those wasted hours), but has also offered comfort, understanding, enlightenment and even inspiration. While this exhibition advises moderation (at your parents' lingering discretion), remember TV is a joy. May it live another 50 years.