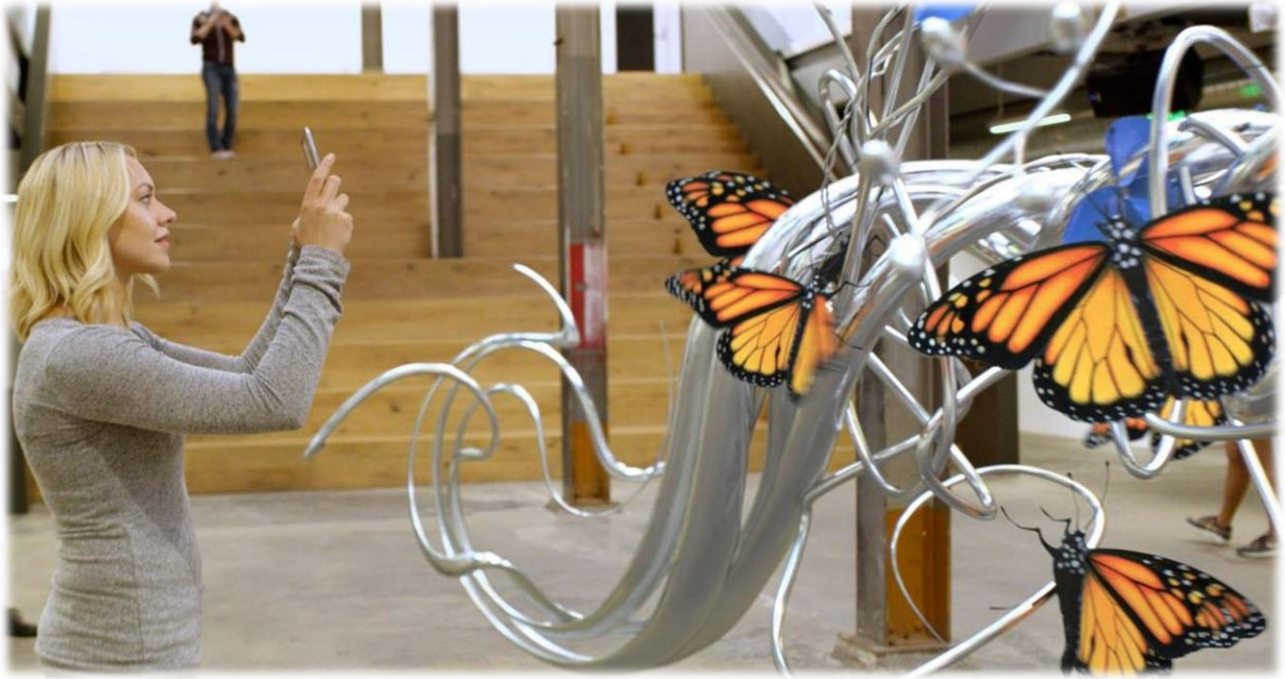


Image: digitalartsonline.com



The Digital Dimension

I have a love-hate relationship with digital. My age I guess, but also a craving for the natural world and for people to talk to each other, rather than screens. At the same time, I have spent much of the past twenty years tapping away on keyboards, so perhaps it's one rule for me, one rule for them. But I still enjoy the *simmering-under-the-surface* mentality of the verses in this section.

The first two poems, almost twenty years apart, rail against screen technology: that large gadget that sits in our living room and the small one we hold in our hand.

If television was not

***The box that sits in the favoured room
Of every favoured house
(and some not so favoured)
Breathes a breath of exotic waves
And transmits exotic thoughts,
Casting a spell on this modern age
That outshines the things we are taught.***

***But what if that box was taken away,
Removed from people's view
(By some God-like decree).
Would people begin to think again
And live a meaningful life;
Notice the smell of a summer's rain
That surpasses some far-flung strife?***

***People might start to talk once again,
Discuss the day's affairs,
(Local affairs that is):
Whether the kids did well at school
And why the cat's got fleas.
Using the power that the senses rule
To appreciate all that one sees.***

Adelaide, 1984

In the early 1980s colour television was a relatively new phenomenon, but within a few years every household had one. Even if you were poor you had to have a tele. In 1984 it sometimes felt that TV was indeed *Big Brother* - controlling all and sundry who gathered before it – an experience beyond anything which had been there in earlier times.

The poem ***if television was not***, asks what would happen if the ever-present box was taken away. I felt that people, notably children, were spending too much time sitting passively in front of the tele, while neglecting more natural pursuits. They knew more about overseas wars than the world outside their front door! Watching TV employs two of our senses, but to be whole we could be invoking five. I also believed strongly that violence on television could have a negative impact on the mind of the viewer, as has proven to be the case, notably in the USA.

Mobile Crazy

***“Hello?
No, it's me.
I'm on the train,
It's just coming in.
Meet you by the tree.”***

***“Hi there.
Can you check
The bottom drawer
Where I keep my specs?
Figures you need to see.”***

**“Darling,
Didn’t we just.
So much to drink.
Love you in that mood.
Do it again with me.”**

**“Bitch!
How could she?
Even worse than
When she’s with the rest.
Be right home for tea.”**

Cheltenham, 2002

Two decades later **Mobile Crazy** homes in on a widespread dislike for the objectionable manner in which some people used their mobile phones, particularly on public transport and in places where anyone within earshot becomes privy to all that is said. Much of what *is* said is extremely trivial and sometimes quite personal. Do I really need to know, where the guy near me is going to meet his wife, or instructions from another across on where to find something he has lost? One behind is having a chat on what she did with her lover, while an older man in front is railing against a family friend who strays beyond the accepted line. I do not need to listen to - what is for me at least - totally inconsequential rubbish. The basic reason for *silent carriages*, I guess.

TV Dreams

**Do you dream in purple or blue?
Or maybe colours of a different hue?
Red, blue, and green
If spotty would seem
To be influenced greatly
By the television screen.**

**Imagine a dream of last night’s view,
With ‘Starsky and Hutch’ and adverts too.
Bombs in the cornflakes,
Blood in the coke;
The dream is for real,
It’s the day that’s the joke!**

Adelaide, 1980.

Written early on, in what has been for me a lengthy poem writing era, **TV Dreams** alludes to more complex poems to come. It tackles the exponential growth of the digital dimension, while also addressing the inner (and perhaps troubled) workings of an active mind.

The mention of *Starsky and Hutch* - a well-known TV drama - plus adverts, bombs and coke, references the ever-growing influence of US lifestyle, on the way we live life elsewhere.

Google Travels

**The word
That Google gave us
Was like a word
From God!
But we
Came to find out later,
It did not give
A sod.**

**As instructed
By the screenshot
We scurried
To the bus,
Secure
In false illusion
That bus would come
For us.**

**We waited
At the bus stop
As they powered
In and out.
One – O – Eight
Was missing;
The air was filled
With doubt.**

.....
Lecce, Puglia, May 2022

**Almost
In desperation
We realised
our mistake,
Then reverted
To our human brains
Before it was
Too late.**

**“No 108’s
Ever coming
To this spot
We’ve been assigned,”
I proclaimed to
My travelling partner;
“Let’s leave Ol’ Google
Behind.**

**So that’s when
We held our hand out,
To summons
The next best thing;
An autobus
To the station
And a train
To travel in.**

**The problem,
We found out later,
Was that Google
In all its prime
Couldn’t tell
The difference
Between Winter
And summertime.**

**The moral
Of this story
Is not to trust
In A.I. help.
Use your own
Intuition;
It’s safer
And more heartfelt.**

Waiting at a bus stop in Lecce, Italy, my daughter, Alice, and I, were perplexed when no bus arrived to take us to the coast. She had checked Google and the 108 was due at 10.40. In desperation we hailed a bus to the local railway station and took a train instead. Google had given us the summer timetable, while we were still in winter.