

It's a wonderful life  
by Yvette King  
Kings Artist Run Initiative  
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CATALOGUE ESSAY  
by Amy Marjoram

The last time Yvette King was at Kings there was a secret process happening behind the wall. There was expectation and a carnival scent. It was the faux-butter smell of popcorn, although nothing smells like popcorn, not even popcorn. We waited and then, through a hole in the wall, the spitting out of a single perfect popcorn kernel. The gallery was feeding us. Now she is back and she invites us to watch robot television.

Telly can look wrong on the new gigantor flat screens. The wrong things stand out: freaky pupil movements from teleprompters, fake blood seems faker, pancake makeup is more pancakey. The screen's hyper-perfection magnifies the embarrassing flaws. Our amped up TV's have outpaced the shows they show.

Yvette's Robot TV makes the weird artifice of cheap telly productions and the camp extravaganza of advertisements appear perilously close to the carcass of VHS. Her voice modulating intervention is reminiscent of low-tech sci-fi, futuristically retro: it is ideas of the future, made in the past and wiped out by the present. With Yvette's earnest yet pointless mock-up, TV programming appears as a ridiculously dated cardboard non-reality.

Does Robot TV herald the future extinction of TV? Or with the hyper-perfection of display, will productions become glossier, more seamless and inscrutable? This would be a monumental challenge, Yvette's cyborg twist highlights the clunky, low-fi and kind of insane— and perhaps this utter randomness of much television is a big part of what we love. As the Robot TV drones on it melts down meaning, the results are hilarious yet possibly prophetic.

Plastic skeletons seem so artificial, Yvette's use of fondant icing seems a better representation and a hand-made hand translates the limitations of our incredible dexterity. The protective layer of a wedding cake is turned into bones. A cake's most external element becomes our internal support and somehow, weirdly, the substitution fits. Knowing its sugar, you kind of want to lick the knuckles. Yet, the icing bones maintain their futile gesture of giving us the finger, a sweet fuck-off.

In another skewed adaptation, across the gallery floor a robotic dinosaur has a colour matched cord running out of its head. Souped up on mains power, it is getting more grunt and without fear of battery death has become immortal. Yet, in reversing its cordless autonomy, this toy is perhaps evolving backwards.

Dinosaur to robotics— tis a big evolutionary span. It all kind of makes sense, the dinosaur is ingenious yet unsophisticated, it has its bling flashing light tongue but also cheap details like unconcealed screws, perfection and its shitty trail. The dinosaur cost seven bucks but is kind of amazing. Charged up for heavy drudge, it's stamina reeks of ambition although it is not training for much. But the dinosaur is keeping up and this keeps us looking.

Amy Marjoram, 2009.