

A TRUE CONFESSION....by TED CONEY



As this is the last ever newsletter I can reveal that my real favourite TV puppet from the 1950's was not Muffin (sorry Adrienne) but Mr Turnip!

In fact, the only thing I had left, forty years later, when I was looking for an image to represent my childhood in a painting I was working on, was an old scrapbook of pictures of Mr Turnip, I had collected.

I decided that I wanted to track down the original puppet, and as luck would have it, he was residing with his creator, Joy Laurey only

60 miles from where I lived at the time.

Joy was very welcoming and invited me to lunch. She allowed me to make drawings, photographs and measurements of her puppet and gave her consent to allow me to have a replica made.

Over the next few years I visited Joy on several occasions and she even came to our house, much to my children's delight (as she was accompanied by Turnip) to unveil my painting 'Diamonds' This was a work about my parents leaving their home after 60 years and I used the puppet to appear to have one last look around before it all vanished.

I also used Turnip for a more complicated painting 'The Enigma of the Chinese Mask' about ten years later. This was after discovering that Joy had based the head of the puppet on a Chinese mask, which had the ability to seem have different emotions just by a tilt of the actors head. The secret was in the very low, pronounced cheek bones which made the face look as if it had changed, when viewed from different angles. As a young child looking at misty black and white television I always imagined that Mr Turnip's face kept changing expressions, so listening to Joy talk, was a revelation.

For my replica, two puppet maker's made six heads between them, before we got anywhere near the 'real' Mr Turnip.

Another interesting fact I gleaned from Joy was that she had used 'serial stringing' to hang the marionette. This meant that instead of attaching strings to the various limbs, she actually had the threads running through Mr Turnip's body. I think this is why his subtle movements, fascinated me, and I remembered him, years later.

I have used Mr. Turnip in several ways in four of my paintings about family life and Muffin in only one. However, I am beginning to get ideas about a new Muffin painting (after a gap of seventeen years), so you never know!

Ted Coney

You can see 'Diamonds', 'The Enigma of the Chinese Mask' and other paintings involving Mr Turnip AND 'David's Journey' (the painting using Muffin, already covered in an earlier newsletter) at

Ted Coney's Family Portraits.

For more details of opening times and location, visit his web-site at www.tedconeyfamilyportraits.co.uk

Editor: In March 2007 a large number of items owned by Joy Laurey were auctioned off including the original Mr Turnip puppet which realized £3000.

