

= Elmo 's World =

" Elmo 's World " is a 18 @-@ minute @-@ long segment that was shown at the end of the children 's television program Sesame Street . It premiered on November 16 , 1998 as part of the show 's structural changes , designed to appeal to younger viewers and to increase ratings , which had fallen in the past decade . The segment was developed out of a series of workshops that studied the changes in the viewing habits of their audience , and the reasons for the show 's lower ratings . " Elmo 's World " used traditional elements of production , but had a more sustained narrative . It was presented from the perspective of a three @-@ year @-@ old child as represented by its host , the Muppet Elmo , who was performed by Kevin Clash . In 2002 , Sesame Street 's producers changed the rest of the show to reflect its younger demographic and the increase in their viewers ' sophistication .

Long @-@ time writer Judy Freudberg came up with the concept of " Elmo 's World " , and writer Tony Geiss and executive producer Arlene Sherman helped develop it . Instead of the realism of the rest of the show , the segment presented Elmo moving between and combining two worlds of live action and computer @-@ generated animation , which looked like " a child 's squiggly crayon drawing come to life " created by the host , and with " a stream @-@ of @-@ consciousness feel to it " . Elmo 's pet goldfish Dorothy and the members of the Noodle family were silent in order to allow Elmo to do all the talking , and to give children the opportunity to respond to what they saw on the screen .

" Elmo 's World " remained popular throughout its run . In 2009 , " Elmo 's World " temporarily ceased production and was replaced by " Elmo the Musical " in 2012 .

= = Background = =

By the early 1990s , Sesame Street had been on the air for over 20 years and was , as author Michael Davis put it , " the undisputed heavyweight champion of preschool television " . The show 's dominance began to be challenged throughout the decade by other television shows for preschoolers such as Barney & Friends , by the growth of the children 's home video industry , and by the increase of thirty @-@ minute children 's shows on cable . Sesame Street 's ratings declined , so the Children 's Television Workshop (CTW) , the organization responsible for putting the show on the air , responded by researching the reasons for their lower ratings .

For the first time since the show debuted , the producers and a team of researchers analyzed Sesame Street 's content and structure and studied how children 's viewing habits had changed . The analysis was conducted during a series of two @-@ week @-@ long workshops and was completed in time for the show 's 30th anniversary in 1999 . The CTW found that although the show was produced for children between the ages of three and five , their viewers had become more sophisticated since its debut and began to watch the show sooner , as early as ten months of age . The producers found that the show 's original format , which consisted of a series of short clips similar to the structure of a magazine , was not necessarily the most effective way to hold young viewers ' attention . They also found that their viewers , especially the younger ones , lost attention with Sesame Street after 40 to 45 minutes .

The first way the CTW addressed the issues brought up by their research was by lowering the target age for Sesame Street , from four years to three years . In late 1998 , they created a new 15 @-@ minute segment entitled " Elmo 's World " , hosted by the Muppet Elmo , that was shown at the end of each episode . The segment used traditional elements (animation , Muppets , music , and live @-@ action film) , but had a more sustained narrative . " Elmo 's World " followed the same structure each episode , and depended heavily on repetition . It focused on child @-@ centered topics such as balls and dancing , from the perspective of a three @-@ year @-@ old child , and was " designed to foster exploration , imagination , and curiosity " . Instead of an adult providing narration , Elmo led the child through the action .

In 2002 , Sesame Street 's producers went further in changing the show to reflect its younger demographic and increase in their viewers ' sophistication . They decided , after the show 's 33rd

season , to expand upon the " Elmo 's World " concept by , as San Francisco Chronicle TV critic Tim Goodman called it , " deconstructing " the show . They changed the structure of the entire show to a more narrative format , making the show easier for young children to navigate . Arlene Sherman , a co @-@ executive producer for 25 years and one of the creators of " Elmo 's World " , called the show 's new look " startlingly different " .

= = Development and filming = =

Long @-@ time Sesame Street writer Judy Freudberg came up with the idea of creating a segment with " an entirely different format " from the rest of the show during the CTW 's workshops , and writer Tony Geiss further developed the idea with her . Freudberg stated that the concept " was radical because we had never veered from that magazine mosaic and had never given any character more than another character to do " .

Animator Mo Willems came up with the idea of creating a less @-@ realistic setting compared to the rest of the show . The segment presented Elmo moving between and combining two worlds of live action and computer @-@ generated animation , which looked like " a child 's squiggly crayon drawing come to life " created by the host , and with " a stream @-@ of @-@ consciousness feel to it " . The segment was filmed at a different time than the rest of the season , much of it in front of a blue screen , with animation and digital effects added later . Kevin Clash was Elmo 's principal puppeteer for " Elmo 's World " . For more complicated shots that showed Elmo 's entire body , a puppet called " Active Elmo " was operated with assistance from other puppeteers ; the puppet was also filmed in front of a blue screen and edited later .

In addition to Freudberg and Geiss , other writers of " Elmo 's World " included Emily Kingsley and Molly Boylan . The theme song was based upon a song Geiss wrote called " Elmo 's Song " , with lyrics changed to fit the segment . Writer Louise Gikow and The New York Times called it " a show within a show " . Clash called it " a playdate between the child and Elmo " , and felt that its intimacy provided an effective teaching tool . He also called it " an instant success " . Davis compared " Elmo 's World " with the long @-@ running children 's TV show Peewee 's Playhouse .

The CTW , as it has done throughout its existence and for all the shows it produced , conducted extensive studies on " Elmo 's World " . They found that the segment had high appeal for children , regardless of their age , sex , and socioeconomic background . Attention and participation such as hand @-@ clapping , moving along with the music , and counting along with the characters increased with repeated viewing .

= = Characters = =

The Muppet Elmo , who represented the three- to four @-@ year @-@ old child , was chosen as host of " Elmo 's World " because he had always tested well with Sesame Street 's younger viewers . Elmo was created in 1979 and was performed by various puppeteers , including Richard Hunt , but did not become what his eventual portrayer Kevin Clash called a " phenomenon " until Clash took over the role in 1983 . Elmo became , as writer Michael Davis reported , " the embodiment " of Sesame Street , and " the marketing wonder of our age " when five million " Tickle Me Elmo " dolls were sold in 1996 . Clash believed the " Tickle Me Elmo " phenomenon made Elmo a household name and led to the " Elmo 's World " segment . Clash called " Elmo 's World " " a colorful , lively celebration of creativity " and " one of the most imaginative endeavors I 've ever been involved in " . He stated that the segment provided him with new challenges and opportunities for " creative risk @-@ taking " .

According to Clash and Gikow , Elmo 's pet goldfish Dorothy and the members of the Noodle family were silent in order to allow Elmo to do all the talking , and to give children the opportunity to respond to what they saw on the screen . Dorothy 's silence allowed children to fill in the blanks , and her curiosity , which was created and enhanced by Elmo 's imagination , allowed the writers and researchers to insert the curriculum lessons they want to convey . Up to nine goldfish were used per episode , so they could be replaced when necessary . Several fish were needed each season , and

the surviving Dorothys were given good homes afterwards .

Mr. Noodle was played by Broadway actor Bill Irwin , who had previously worked with Sherman in short films for Sesame Street . When he became unavailable , Sherman asked her friend Michael Jeter to replace Irwin as Mr. Noodle 's brother Mr. Noodle . Jeter was in the role beginning in 2000 , until his death in 2003 . Kristin Chenoweth played Mr. Noodle 's sister Ms. Noodle , and Sarah Jones played Mr. Noodle 's other sister Miss Noodle . According to Freudberg , " Mr. Noodle , who never speaks , is all about trial and error . When you throw him a hat , he acts like he 's never seen one before . Kids feel empowered watching him because they can do what he can 't " .

= = Muppet performers = =

Kevin Clash - Elmo

= = = Additional Muppet performers = = =

Pam Arciero

Fran Brill - Zoe

R. Bruce Connelly

Stephanie D 'Abruzzo

Rick Lyon

Jim Martin

Joey Mazzarino

Jerry Nelson - Count

Martin P. Robinson - Telly and Snuffy

David Rudman - Baby Bear

Caroll Spinney - Big Bird and Oscar

John Tartaglia

Alice Vernon

Steve Whitmire

Bryant Young

= = End of production = =

" Elmo 's World " remained popular throughout its run , especially for the younger viewers for which it was designed . In 2009 , when " Elmo 's World " temporarily ceased production , the producers of Sesame Street began taking steps to increase the age of their viewers and to increase their ratings . By the end of the show 's 40th anniversary in 2009 , 3 @-@ year @-@ old viewers had increased by 41 % , 4 @-@ year @-@ olds by 4 % , and 5 @-@ year @-@ olds by 21 % . According to The New York Times , executive producer Carol @-@ Lynn Parente " was itching to revamp the final segment " even before production of " Elmo 's World " ended , but was prevented by the apparent satisfaction of the viewers and by tight budgets . They were also reluctant to replace the segment ; as writer Joey Mazzarino explained , it was " an emotionally charged process " because Freudberg had become ill and was not present for the discussions about it .

Although " Elmo 's World " was replaced by " Elmo the Musical " in 2012 , it continued to appear on repeats of Sesame Street , on DVDs , and on the show 's website , which sold products related to the segment .