Because I am not here  
Second Life Based Artists, Four Selected Case Studies  
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Lacan Galicia my main Second Life avatar researching in Second Life  
Gazira Babeli "Singing Pizza"  
Unauthorized installation, Ars Virtua, 2006  
© Gazira Babeli  
Snapshot from "Immersiva" 2009-10  
© Bryn Oh  
Karee Kayvon, from 13 Most Beautiful Avatars  
2006-7  
Eva and Franco Mattes aka 0100101110101101.ORG  
digital print on canvas 36 x 48 inches © Postmasters Gallery  
Graphic Design: Gerardo Toledo, 2011.  
Abstract  
Second Life (SL) is an on-line virtual world ‘inhabited’ by avatars that are designed by  
actual life users (SL residents). In SL identity, sociability and subjectivity are important  
and permanent aspects of the goal of having a second (virtual) existence.  
My doctoral thesis (in progress) is centred on the work of 4 artists in SL and how they  
play with autoempathy, identity an subjectivity in the liminal shifting of aesthetic re  
gimes (that rely upon temporalities rather than spatialities) present in their SL artwork.  
This is what Anna Munster calls the distribute aesthetics1 of virtual worlds.  
Lacan Galicia, my avatar in SL, works in four case studies concerning these subjects.  
The expected findings of my research can contribute to the discussion of the theories  
of digital aesthetics and interactive virtual worlds at large.  
Purposes  
• To demonstrate whether and how virtual artists envision and develop alternative and  
effective ways of understanding, performing and interrogating the meaning of virtual  
existence.  
• To find out how virtual existence in SL is assumed, experimented and signified from  
their practice as avatars that perform as artists in a virtual space.  
• To demonstrate how aesthetic and media studies perspectives on virual worlds re  
search may be a valid, but as not yet fully developed analytical tools.  
Objectives  
1. To study ‘SL-based art’, and the avatars that, as artists, create it.  
2. To study how these artists interpret their own contribution as virtual selves dissemi  
nating, concurrently, critical standings about SL ethos.  
3. To analyse both aesthetic experience and art experimentation as currently important  
yet not fully recognised dimensions of SL’s ontology.  
4. To approach the examination of the aesthetic component of user-generated content,  
identifying patterns of contribution to the advancement of new epistemologies of SL  
and virtual worlds in general.  
Expected Findings  
This is a work in progress, three out of four interviews are done so far. The four case  
studies will be completed by January 2012. To date, the data recollected seems to  
ratify the importance that a research perspective anchored in virtual aesthetics and SL-  
based art has for the general theories of digital and virtual art, and virtual worlds.  
Methodology  
I am applying a relatively unprecedented qualitative inquiry method. This is a blend of analytical perspectives from aesthetics (distribute), media studies and visual semiotics.  
The method designed for recollecting information on each case study, both in Actual Life (AL) and Second Life (SL) is quite logical:  
• Collecting material about the artists in AL and SL.  
• Expanding the theoretical foundations and theoretical framework upon which every finding may be contrasted and interrogated.  
• Immersion in situ of my avatar as a ‘privileged’ yet critical observer/interviewer.  
• Intervene recollection of thoughts, narrations, images, sequences of motion, intervention, acting, fiction, etc., within SL.