

## Pixel-perfect avatar hotties



Some of the avatars featured in an exhibition of 13 of the most pixel-perfect.

Photo: *Eva & Franco Mattes*

Joel Gibson

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The real world has already infiltrated the simulated universe of Second Life.

An online, 3-D, virtual world built entirely by its 4.6 million role-playing members, it has its own dedicated Reuters correspondent, ABC shop, real estate millionaire and even a terrorist group, detonating virtual atomic bombs in pursuit of virtual democracy.

But now Second Life is also infiltrating the real world. A New York art gallery has staged an exhibition of portraits of its "13 most beautiful" people, while the ABC's *Four Corners* program screened a documentary shot mostly within the world's surrounds on Monday.

The [New York exhibition](#), by the Italian artists Franco and Eva Mattes, featured portraits of the 13 sexiest Second Life "avatars" - the name given to the alter egos that players create for themselves, which are, almost without exception, sexy.

After living in the virtual world for more than a year, the artists began scouting for the best-looking of the 10,000 to 20,000 avatars that inhabit Second Life each day and held "photo sessions" with 13 of them.

With names like Desire Strangelove, Flurry Splash, Honeywell Lollipop and Nubiiian Craven, the 13 virtual hotties range in appearance from Pamela Anderson lookalikes to Arabian babes and Hispanic hunks.

The number was chosen as a homage to New York artist Andy Warhol, who made portrait series of New York's "13 Most Beautiful Boys" and "13 Most Beautiful Women" in the early 1960s.

The difference, of course, is that these are portraits of unreal people. "These are photos of self-portraits, somehow," Franco told New York's *Radar* magazine.

Just like in real life, he said, "the more beautiful will really find friends" in Second Life.

Sometimes labelled "the Bonnie and Clyde of contemporary art", the Matteses have built a reputation in contemporary art circles for risque stunts such as building a Vatican spoof website that drew one million hits in a year, running media campaigns for non-existent action movies, or announcing that the Nike company had purchased the Vienna's historic Karlsplatz and renamed it "Nikeplatz".

Their show closes at Chelsea's Postmaster Gallery today after a one-month run, where gallery owner Magda Sawon would only say that "a lot of" the portraits sold for US\$8500.

In the *Four Corners* program, the journalist Ticky Fullerton became "Ticky Tripsa" and interviewed both the avatars and the people who dreamed them up, exploring accusations of virtual rape, real world court cases and fears that virtual worlds could become a vehicle for money laundering.

"One of the most interesting things is the overlap between the real world and the virtual world and the issues it creates, which are mostly legal ones," she said.

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