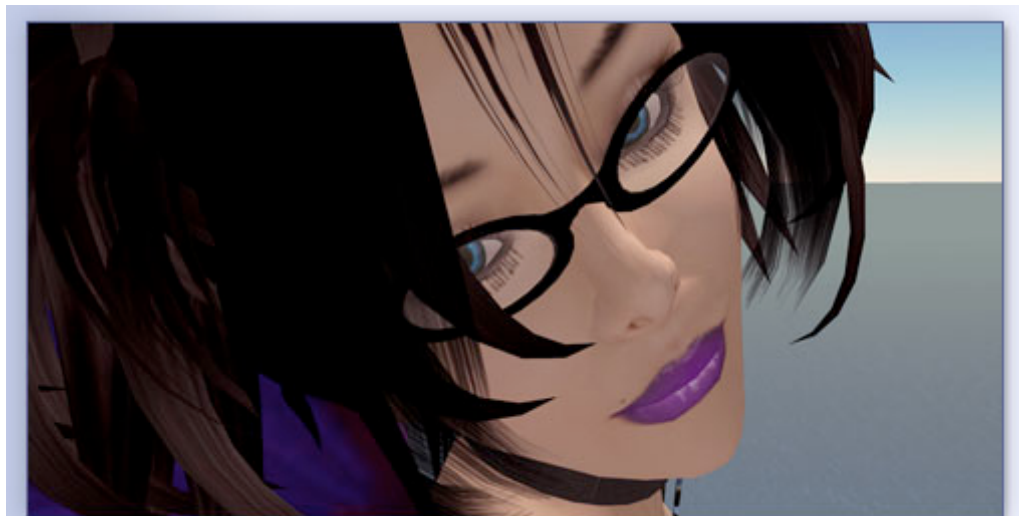


## Skin Deep

### A Warholian take on Second Life



November 27, 2006—Amidst all the commercial hype—sponsored "concerts," storefronts from brands like Nissan, Sony, and American Apparel—the geeky online universe of Second Life is starting to breed some notable art. Leading the way are Italian artists Eva and Franco Mattes, who've taken a cue from Andy Warhol's *13 Most Beautiful Boys* portrait series (which featured some of his favorite "Superstars") and created *13 Most Beautiful Avatars*. The duo spent a year inside Second Life cultivating their virtual groupies (including the admittedly cute "Aimee Weber," above), and though the artists had no role in actually designing their subjects—all Second Lifers create their own avatars using technology developed in the video game world—they (or, more specifically, their avatars) did "photograph" each subject much as any portraitist would. Head spinning yet? You can check out the results in an offline environment starting this week at Columbia University's Italian Academy. Or, click over to [Second Life \(http://secondlife.com\)](http://secondlife.com), where an identical exhibit is currently on view at the Ars Virtua gallery. Just make sure to wear your virtual black turtleneck.

*13 Most Beautiful Avatars, from November 30 to December 19, at the Italian Academy at Columbia University, 1161 Amsterdam Ave., NYC, (212) 854-2306, [www.italianacademy.columbia.edu](http://www.italianacademy.columbia.edu).*

— Staff

Photo: Courtesy of Eva and Franco Mattes

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