

ART REACTIVE ART IN SECOND LIFE

A boa may be made of fur, but it is usually made from various types of feathers. Feather boas have been documented for use as adornment since 1820 although they may have been worn as early as the 17th century. Feather boas have fallen in and out of fashion many times over the years, carrying the reputation of being elegant as well as being considered campy or vulgar apparel. **By Looker Lumet**

But no, I am not going to write about these boas! This article features the works of a young avatar so talented that you cannot ignore her, once you have seen her work.

Feathers Boa does not make ordinary digital works. She creates a world of her own, a 3D art work based on several items, which she finds in junk shops or back alleys. Old sepia photos, newspapers, postcards, letters, even broken watches are what she works with in Photoshop to form the central image of her pieces. To create digital 3D objects, Feathers uses Cinema 4Dr10 and says she never leaves home without her camera. A real world art school student, Feathers is very nearly 22 years old and creates her paintings using a combination of oils, mixed media montages and drawings.

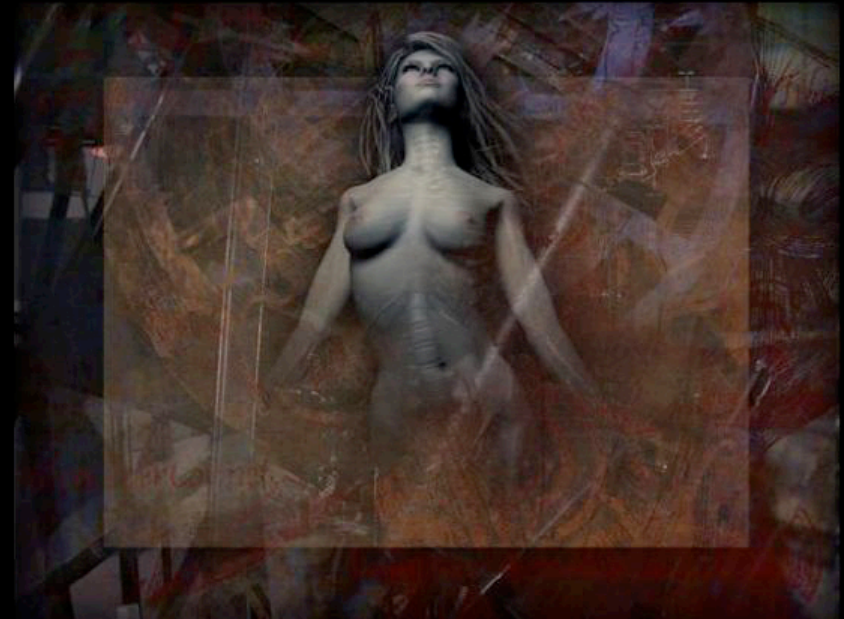
Some time ago, I was asked to submit one of my own works for a build in SL, at the LMU Psychology sim. Although I was honored to be chosen, after seeing which works were selected and exhibited next to mine I was surprised to see a work of Feathers. I was immediately sold and I wondered how it could be that I hadn't yet heard of this talented artist. Since the exhibition at the LMU, Feathers has become one of my friends and I am closely watching her progress. It is amazing to see the depths of her imagination and how she translates that to create her works. To Feathers, SL is all about the freedom of expression. In SL she can do anything she wants. When people like her art work, they can buy it, and she can produce more. There are no limits on her imagination in-world. Every piece of art work Feathers creates is totally different from the previous piece as she is always trying

to produce new things and make art that is unique to SL – art that uses SL as part of the medium.

A perfect example of this concept is a piece telling a whole story of a relationship in one canvas: "Warm heart Cold Heart". Simple and emotional, Feathers captures the beginning and the end of a relationship by showing a real letter written to her at the beginning of a love affair. She was subsequently dumped by the same person via email. The center of this piece shows a heart, the classic symbol of love, warmed by the love letter yet icy cold against the break-up note. Viewing the piece at a distance one only sees the first love letter and red heart. Upon approaching the piece, the image changes to the iced heart and the note marking the end of the affair. This is the power of "reactive" art. The whole love affair is captured on one canvas.

In some cases Feathers' works tell big stories. "Flesh and Blood" tells the story of a lovely person in Feathers' life. A sweet, kind, generous, strong, loving, beautiful friend who contracted a serious illness, caused her to be tired all of the time, drained, pale and waste away. Feathers' grief was overwhelming and she was inspired to create a portrait of her friend, with x-rays and medical imagery but her beauty still shining through. Feathers wanted to capture the emotional moment of a friend who was diminishing and almost gone. Thankfully, in the end, her friend did recover from her illness.

Feathers career has not been without controversy. Although she makes terrific art work, there are



"Flesh and Blood", By Feathers Boa



"Requiem 1", By Feathers Boa



"Requiem 2", By Feathers Boa



"Witch Hunt 1", By Feathers Boa

some pieces that will never be shown again because the pieces were "hated" or disturbed people. When I was shown these controversial pieces I was astonished to see that these were in fact great art works when viewed with an open mind.

To honor her art work, and give these pieces another shot at the light of day, I am including them here in this article and will let Feathers explain her intent and why these works were created.

Feathers moved away from home to attend college in Boston, Massachusetts. While she was gone, one of her friends (a brilliant painter) fell in with the wrong crowd. She wasn't around when Feathers returned from college and visited her hometown. Later Feathers discovered that her friend had overdosed on heroin.

This tragic experience was the inspiration behind the art work called "Requiem" as in "Requiem for a dream." The piece was intended to convey the misguided allure, ugliness, craziness and the sub-

sequent horror of drugs. The controversy began when viewers of the piece misinterpreted the intent and thought the art work was pro-drugs.

Another piece, which I think is one of her best works, is also controversial and proved to be one that most people couldn't handle. Feathers explained that when she was a little girl she was called names and suffered some abuse. She was placed into a state foster care system at the age of 12 and fortunately was assigned to a wonderful older couple, who changed her life completely. Feathers is still processing her past and working through things. With this in mind, she made a hate-filled self portrait about self pity and how some people can get caught up in feeling sorry for themselves. The inspired piece is called "Witch Hunt" and features background images drawn from the Salem Witch Trials.

In the art work, the nude image of Feathers shows her eyes closed at the stake. As the viewer walks up to the image, the flames at her feet ignite, her eyes open and she looks down on you, accusingly.



"Witch Hunt 2", By Feathers Boa

It is the antithesis of "Flesh and Blood" Some people have called this piece pornographic, others accused Feathers of child pornography. But let's be clear of one thing, this is no underage woman highlighted in this piece. It is a shame that Feathers decided to withdraw this piece of art from the SL creative scene.

In 2010, Feathers will participate in a real life show at the Harbor Gallery in Boston with other Caerleon Artists, an assembled group created by Georg Janick, professor at Boston University, of very talented artists and writers who have settled in a colony on Caerleon Isle. Artists on the colony work and live there collaboratively, as well as individually, and many give lectures and workshops on their art. The island itself has been transformed into a fascinating and sometimes chaotic collective work of art featuring the works of Bryn Oh, Nonnatus, Glyph Graves and many more, all curated by Gary Zabel.

It was Gary Zabel, Ph.D, professor at the University of Massachusetts who by coincidence found Feathers Boa in-world, saw that she was a student at the

University, and suggested she bring her art into SL.

About Feathers' work, Dr. Zabel stated on his blog that, "For all her expertise her technical virtuosity is never an end in itself, but the vehicle for communicating a depth of feeling that ranges from the most playful lightheartedness to the darkest spiritual states. In her most profound works, she expresses the extremes of this affective range in elaborating a single theme. Like all genuine art, her creations resist easy paraphrase. But we are fortunate to have in SL an artist who challenges our perceptive abilities with material so richly significant. She promises nothing less than to illuminate a human condition in which vulnerability and transcendence are inseparably intertwined."

"Art is not about the artist, but the VIEWER of art."
- Feathers Boa

www.feathersboa.com