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### **"The Synthetic Performances Project and the Cultural Work of 'Second (Life) Art'"**

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In some recent work carried out in the 'virtual world' of Second Life, new media artists Franco and Eva Mattes, also known as 0100101110101101.org, have re-staged, using digital avatars, signal works of 1970's body and performance art like Vito Acconci's Seedbed and Chris Burden's Shoot, as well as employing digital animation to provide a kind of simulation of 7000 Oaks, Joseph Beuys's landmark public art project from the early 1980s. Such re-castings of canonical pieces in art history is not unfamiliar as a postmodernist aesthetic strategy for identifying and critiquing some of the unexamined assumptions of and about earlier, sometimes genre-formative undertakings. What makes this particular aesthetic intervention, which the artists call Synthetic Performances, novel and important, however, is its commentary on the relationship of performance, embodiment and virtual varieties of public space. The work raises some key questions about the conditions required to create meaningful exchanges between artists and art publics in virtual environments, while also suggestively importing useful notions from earlier performance and public art projects to challenge and expand the typically limited conceptual frameworks applied toward the analysis of such phenomena as cybersexualities, the mediatization of violence and the information-technology abetted transformation of the meanings and uses of public space. In my analysis of this work, I employ some of W. J. T. Mitchell's foundational writings on visual culture and some of Lisa Nakamura's more recent work on visual culture in cyberspace as principal reference points. Throughout, I focus on introducing and explicating Synthetic Performances as an especially salient example of intermediality in performance.