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ART IN REVIEW; Kelly Heaton -- 'Reflection Loop'

By KEN JOHNSON

Bitforms

529 West 20th Street, Chelsea

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A lot of artists these days are using fancy machines -- cameras, video equipment and computers, mainly -- to create pedestrian art. Far less numerous are those who create interesting machines. Tim Hawkinson and Roxy Paine are two; now there's Kelly Heaton, another uncommonly inventive young sculptor.

The title of Ms. Heaton's project, "Reflection Loop," suggests a work of daunting cerebralism. But it actually has the appeal of a big toy and a fine sculptural presence. Into a freestanding square white slab with a slightly concave front, Ms. Heaton has imbedded in a grid formation 400 mechanical eyes and mouths taken from Furbies, those cute, furry big-eyed toys that resemble Koala bears. As you approach the panel, the eyes and mouths begin to open and shut to the sound of whirring and chattering. The effect is delightful and curiously warming -- you feel as though all these little creatures are happy to see you.

The rear side of the panel, an impressively complicated system of wiring and computer parts, is almost as interesting as the front. Also compelling are Ms. Heaton's diagrammatic plans. They look like what the cartoonist R. Crumb would draw if he were a toy inventor. Whether Ms. Heaton's machine deserves to be credited with deep meaning is unclear. Its effect is more amusing than thought-provoking, but it does leave you looking forward to whatever she will come up with next. KEN JOHNSON