

Kornblum, Janet. "400 naked Furbys: All staring at you." *USA Today*, January 17, 2002

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400 naked Furbys: All staring at you

When you walk in front of Kelly Heaton's sculpture, dozens of eyes snap open, beaks whirl and click, and voices chirp in mechanical chatter. The sculpture is, in a sense, alive — if you consider Furbys to be a life-form. Heaton, 29, who conceived the project while she was a student at MIT's Media Laboratory, sees them that way.

Not that she felt guilty about stripping the fur off 400 Furbys, reprogramming their brains and embedding them into a wall that reveals just eyes and mouths. Nonetheless, she says, the talking Hasbro toy that became the gotta-have-it gift of 1998 "is a form of machine intelligence."

The piece, *Reflection Loop*, opens today at bitforms, a New York City gallery dedicated to digital art. Each Furby face, sunken into the white concave wall, has an infrared sensor. When you step in front of the wall, the Furbys chatter and move, reflecting your shape. "I'm endeavoring to create the contemporary narcissistic experience of the reflective pool," Heaton says. It's like standing in front of a mirror, but "in this case, it's really looking back at you."

Heaton hopes the piece provokes people to think about everything from technology to life itself. (Dead Furbys are not replaced.) "It's shocking to have hundreds of eyeballs and mouths chattering in the shape of your body. It gives you a very visceral and creepy feeling. It's also hilarious because they're Furby eyes."

- bitforms.com