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## Kelly Heaton

RONALD FELDMAN

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Visitors to this show are greeted by a huge blow-up of an article from the *New York Times* that describes a run on Tickle Me Elmo dolls; nearby is *Live Pelt Archives*, a display case filled with antique artifacts of the fur trade. Both objects are touchstones for Heaton's project, an absurdist stunt that involves a collection of used Elmo dolls, a prototype "Elmo fur" coat, and a working "fur studio" set up in the gallery. Linking the fur trade—which to a great extent determined early relations between Europeans and Indians in North America—to contemporary trade routes (all the dolls were bought on eBay), Heaton addresses changing mores in fashion and capitalism. The almost feudal stratification of the fur industry, with its trappers, skimmers, taxidermists, merchants, and buyers, is explicated along with the social meaning of fur (or, in this case, bright red synthetic fur). While the show might come across as an extended joke, if you read between the lines—and past the dopey Elmo faces leering at you from all over the gallery—it's quite a lesson in history, economics, and exploitation.

—Martha Schwendener



*Portrait of the Live Pelt Fashionista, 2003.*