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Photos attached. *Attachments follow.*

ARTIST CREATES NEW EXHIBIT IN VIRTUAL WORLD FOR MARS ISOLATION TEST CREW

To help future Mars astronauts overcome the potential psychological threats of an unprecedented duration of social isolation and separation from Earth, scientists at SIFT and ATW are exploring the use of a Virtual World ecosystem called ANSIBLE to extend their physical environment virtually and allow them to communicate with Earth in innovative ways. The project was named ANSIBLE after the science fiction term for a machine that allows people to receive answers to messages in a reasonable amount of time, even over interstellar distances.

ANSIBLE is being tested at a remote Mars Simulation facility run by the University of Hawaii, where international crews of six scientists live in isolation on the Mars-like northern flank of Mauna Loa at 8200 ft above sea level. The conditions are explicitly designed to be similar to those of a planetary surface exploration mission, and include a communication delay that reduces their ability to connect with the outside world. Using ANSIBLE, crew members have the opportunity to immerse themselves in 3D virtual simulations of Earth-type places and activities designed to benefit their psychological health. Head-mounted displays are used to wrap a 3D world around them to create the feeling of being in another location, and special software allows them to simulate real time conversations with avatars of family and friends. The experiment addresses the impact of social isolation and a lack of sensory stimulation during a future Mars mission that could take more than two years to complete.

One of the many activities available for the crew in the virtual world system includes an art gallery with changing exhibits. The noted Los Angeles artist, Kristine Shomaker is this month's featured artist. Her show entitled "A Comfortable Skin" deals with society's obsession with physical appearance. Using a comic book style, Ms. Shomaker presents a diary of herself dealing with issues of identity, both within her physical self and her virtual self, within a virtual

world. Having ultimate control over one's avatar's appearance elicits a dialogue about appearance in the digital age, with selfies and avatars all becoming a modern means of self-expression. How do these online bodies we now often inhabit open up new worlds, new politics, new communities and new realities and new understandings of our true self?

The "Comfortable Skin" art show will be exhibiting within the ANSIBLE ecosystem beginning February 1, 2016.

The ANSIBLE system is funded by the NASA Human Research Program contract # NNX14CJ06C.

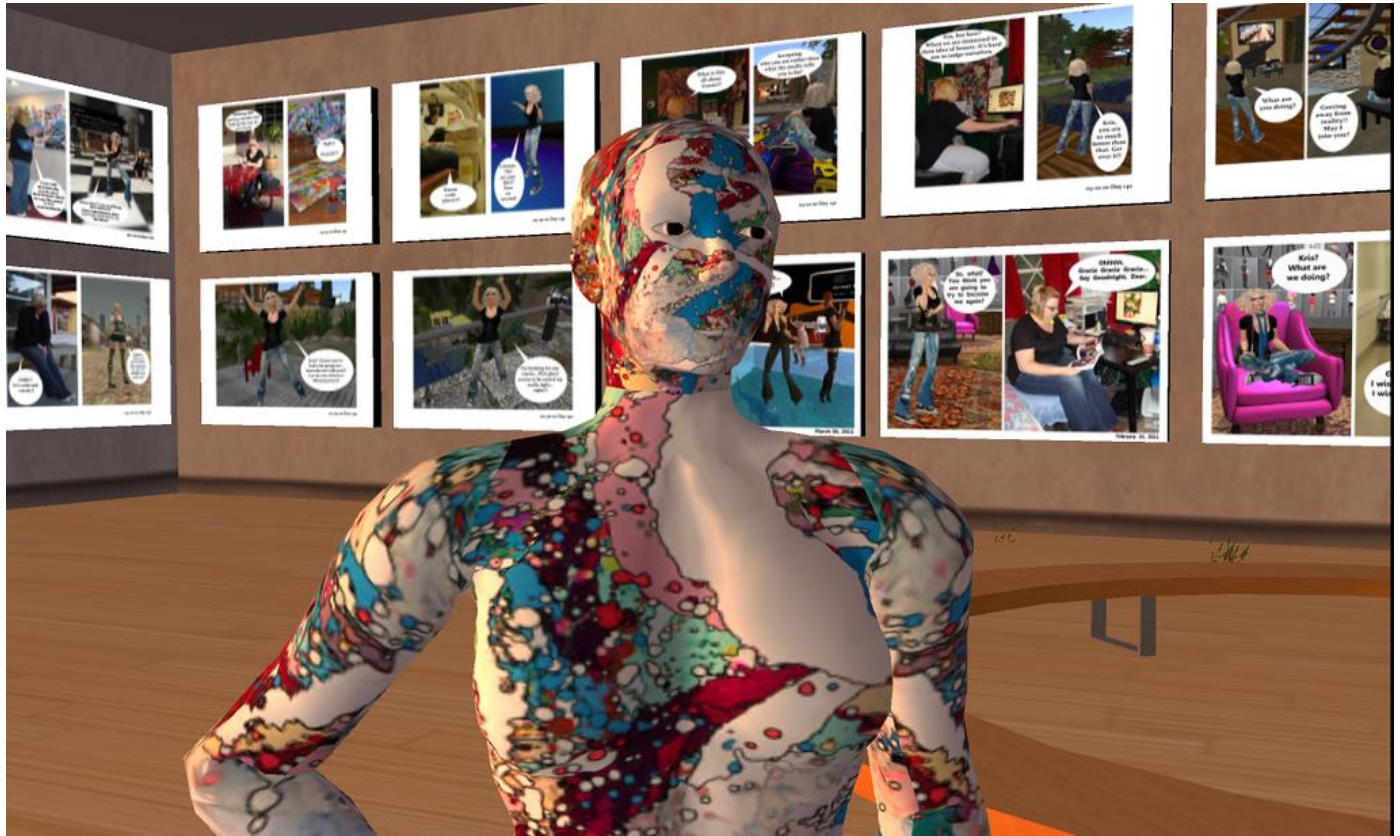
KRISTINE SCHOMAKER is a new media and performance artist, painter and art historian living and working at the Brewery artist complex in Los Angeles California. She received her BA in Art History and her MA in Studio Art from California State University at Northridge. Kristine works with various interdisciplinary art forms including online virtual worlds to explore notions of online identity and the hybridization of digital media with the physical world. www.kristineschomaker.net

All These Worlds, LLC builds virtual environments and experiences for health, training, and other meaningful applications. It uses the latest research into the benefits that virtual places and avatar use have on people to create highly effective solutions for a broad range of clients. <http://www.alltheseworldsllc.com>

Smart Information Flow Technologies, LLC (SIFT) conducts research and development in Human Factors and Artificial Intelligence across domains ranging from commercial and military flight decks to healthcare to make the information flow between humans and technology better for both sides - more efficient, productive, pleasant, and safe. <http://www.siftech.com>

HI-SEAS is a University of Hawaii long-duration Mars exploration analog study located at approximately 8,000 ft. elevation in an abandoned quarry on the northern slope of Mauna Loa. HI-SEAS hosts a variety of research studies and recently completed an eight-month mission with a crew of six. A new group of six crewmembers began their work on a 12-month mission in August 2015. Research topics include food, crew dynamics, behaviors, roles and performance, and other aspects of space flight. <http://hi-seas.org>

Image



New Media and Performance Artist Kristine Schomaker presenting “Comfortable Skin” (as an artistic avatar) within the ANSIBLE Virtual World eco-system. © JF Morie 2016

Link to more images and high-resolution versions at <http://skydeas.smugmug.com/A-Comfortable-Skin-by-Kristine/>

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