HOMELESS FOR THE HOLIDAYS (Updated)

It had been built to promote the television network owned by General Electric, but last night when I went to take a screenshot of their New York City ice rink and their lit-up Christmas tree, he was already there, silently using NBC's site in Second Life for a purpose of his own.

I said hello several times, but the thin frail kid said nothing-- though if you clicked on his cardboard box, an automated message told you he was collecting Linden Dollar donations for a Spanish NGO to help the real world's poor.

(And if you're going to do that in an online world, why not do so in a virtual recreation of the world's richest city?)

Since I hadn't heard of the non-profit and he didn't respond at the time, I couldn't confirm right then that he was a genuine emissary of the group. (But in retrospect, that appears to be the case.) And eventually, my attention wandered over to a man with a pompadour and limited English skills at the edge of the skating rink, who had needs of his own.

I said hello and asked AcereroBen Rothlisberger what was up.

"Nothing," he declared. "I can't speak english." I knew enough Spanish to get that he was from Mexico, but confusion set in after a few lines of chat. So I brought out Yossarian Seattle's translator device, and gave it to him. After a few false starts, he was able to get the device working, and something halfway comprehensible started coming across my screen:

AceroBen Rothlisberger: ok ya me entiendes?
Translator v1.6: ok already you understand to me?

"Yes!" I wrote back. "Now I read it in English!"
AcereroBen Rothlisberger: Muy bien muchas gracias  
Translator v1.6: Very well thank you very much

"I hope it helps you in Second Life."

AcereroBen Rothlisberger: me ayudaste muchisimo  
Translator v1.6: you helped me very many

So from there, we were able to talk about many things, such as Oaxaca and the state's current civil unrest, and whether I should visit.

AcereroBen Rothlisberger: si, no te preocupes eso se solucionara  
Translator v1.6: if, you do not worry that it solved

I told him I hoped so, and offered him friendship as I got ready to go.

AcereroBen Rothlisberger: muchas gracias por todo. cuidate y recibe un abrazo de Mexico  
Translator v1.6: thank you very much by everything.  cuidate and receives a hug of Mexico

I offered him a hug from the USA, and that's right about when I took leave of my new acquaintance from Mexico, standing there next to the avatar of an unspeaking homeless child from a Spanish charity on the digital Manhattan sidewalk paid for by the National Broadcasting Corporation.

Update, 12/5, 12:05pm: Rik Riel and a gentleman purporting to represent the
Update, 12/5, 1:20PM: I just contacted representatives with NBCi, sponsors of the Second Life site, asking them about the homeless avatar begging on their virtual property. Will post any response they send here.

Tuesday, December 05, 2006 in Real world in SL | Permalink

TrackBack

TrackBack URL for this entry:
http://www.typepad.com/t/trackback/7043478

Listed below are links to weblogs that reference HOMELESS FOR THE HOLIDAYS (Updated):

» My friend Mensajero, the virtual panhandler from The Click Heard Round the World
After reading about a homeless avatar begging in Second Life (Thanks, Hamlet Au, SL Insider, and my friend Tony) I decided to pop into SL to check it out. I tracked down the resident named MensajeroDeLaPaz Jubilee and got [Read More]

Tracked on Tuesday, December 05, 2006 at 11:28 AM

» Homeless for the Holidays in Second Life from The Daily Glyph
Virtual worlds are colliding. I have met a number of Mexican, French and Brazilian new residents in the last couple of days. And there's another collision taking place in a virtual version of my last network job location. The ghost... [Read More]

Tracked on Tuesday, December 05, 2006 at 03:48 PM

Comments

Sounds a lot like the real NYC.

Posted by: reuben steiger | Tuesday, December 05, 2006 at 06:02 AM

No, if it was the real NYC, Ham would have ignored the homeless guy (who would have been arrested for sitting there in the first place) and cursed out the clueless tourist for blocking his way.

Posted by: rikomatic | Tuesday, December 05, 2006 at 06:32 AM
The Devil Rezzes Prada (The high drama of virtual fashion magazines)

A Brother-HUD of Man (Creating the universal translator)

The Penguin and the Zookeeper (a robot-powered fable)

Swordplay (Full-fledged melee gaming finally arrives)

Snowcrashed (The novel that started it all comes to SL)

SL Vonnegut, or Lonesome No More! (The author as avatar)

Suzanne Vega and the Second Life of live music

The Spaces Between Us (avatars and social cues)

The Second Life of Julian Dibbell (The author talks—and sells—“Play Money”)

What they Gave (Fighting cancer by buying a $2000 virtual car)

Half a WoW (Bigger than Warcraft by 2008?)

Amazon inside (E-commerce from in-world to the Web)

The View from Jerusalem (Wartime interviews in-world)

Running for Life (Avatar dash for American Cancer Society)

New World Headlines (Predicting the metaverse’s future)

Teenage Wasteland (Notes from the Teen Grid)

The Game Developer’s Guide to Pwning Second Life

Avatars on Avatar-Based Marketing (The in-world forum for the Harvard Business article)

Protagonist of the Island Nakama (Creating a commercial microcosm of anime)

-- And He Rezzed a Crooked

I didn't realize there were so many Pittsburgh Steeler fans in Latin America!

Posted by: Terry Cloth | Tuesday, December 05, 2006 at 06:57 AM

Oh and here's a video the Mensajeros produced about this:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BOz2x9cYUhQ

Posted by: rikomatic | Tuesday, December 05, 2006 at 10:34 AM

Post a comment

If you have a TypeKey or TypePad account, please Sign In

Name: __________________________

Email Address: ___________________

URL: ___________________________

Remember personal info?

Comments:

[Preview] [Post]