

GAMESCENES

ART IN THE AGE OF VIDEOGAMES

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07/17/2022

GAME ART: BOB BICKNELL-KNIGHT NON-PLAYER CHARACTER (2022)



Bob Bicknell-Knight, *Non-Player Character*, 2022. 4K video with sound, 3D printed USB drive 9' 38" (lower resolution version embedded here)

Bob Bicknell-Knight's latest project is entitled *Non-Player Character*. Commissioned by Petra Szemán, *Non-Player Character* is a looping CGI video exploring the inner lives of non-player character's (NPCs) as a metaphor for the boundaries of human action within an increasingly algorithmic, surveilled existence.

NPC is an acronym used to indicate characters in video games controlled and managed by the machine. Their behavior tends to follow predetermined and/or recognizable patterns. They do not have an independent, autonomous life, but are *de facto* subservient and functional to player's prerogatives. As Bicknell-Knight writes, "they are stuck in the game world, doomed to repeat the same day for eternity, waiting to be interacted with".

In his video, the British artist explores the feelings and emotions of NPC, which, in turn, reflects the lack of agency and autonomy experienced by the vast majority of living human beings as they are unable to enact *real* change in the world as they are dominated by higher forces, from the world of finance to the will of corporations, from increasingly pervasive bureaucratic systems to the inertia, greed, and corruption of the political class.

The video shows NPC slowly plummeting from the sky. They fall into a Stanley Kubrick's sterile white environment, evocative of a White Cube. The characters break apart upon hitting the ground and their fragmented bodies are instantly recycled to produce endless copies of their own selves. The video is accompanied by a relaxing soundtrack featuring monologues from the POV of the NPCs. They share horror stories about their meaningless lives in a world devoid of free will. Hell is other NPCs.

Interestingly, *Non-Player Character* physically resides on a 3D printed USB drive resembling the arm of a Deathclaw from the *Fallout* video game series.



[LINK](#): Bob Bicknell-Knight

Posted by Matteo Bittanti on 07/17/2022 in 3D ANIMATION, MACHINIMA, VIDEO | [Permalink](#)

