

Is there anyone? # 12 Bob Bicknell-Knight

INTERVIEW
January 15, 2021 • Text by [Anna Meinecke](#)

Out of frustration with the British government, Bob Bicknell-Knight made a picture of Boris Johnson - sick with COVID, the prime minister lies in bed and is ventilated. Bicknell-Knight tells us how he is experiencing the pandemic and why he wants to move to the country in 2021.



Bob Bicknell-Knight, Outbreak, 2020. HD video with sound, 1 min 25 sec (looped). Courtesy of the artist.

gallerytalk.net: Are you alone right now?

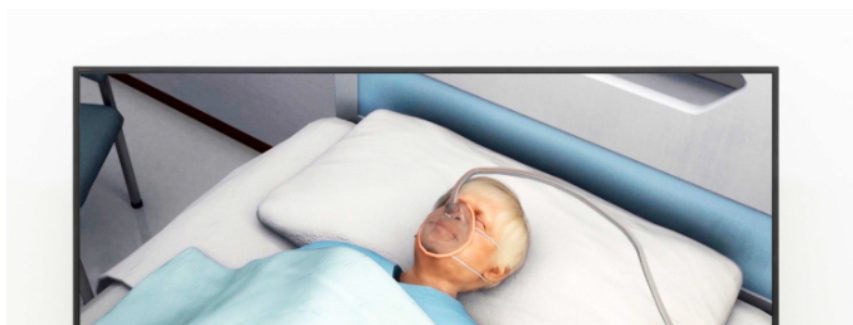
Bob Bicknell-Knight: I'm writing this on a Saturday afternoon at the dining table in my apartment in South London. My partner is sitting opposite. If I were to write on a weekday, I would be sitting here alone - as has been the case for most of the time since March last year. I would listen to music and work on various works of art and curatorial projects.

Are you creative right now?

An interview like this makes me think about myself and my work. I reflect on why I make certain decisions, why I create a certain work of art or what prompts me to make a curatorial decision. This thinking is inherently creative. It's a privilege to be able to do that every day.

Your video work "Outbreak" shows Boris Johnson how he is being treated for his COVID-19 disease. A true incident, but one that has not been documented for the public. Why did you want to create a picture for it?

The work was created in May 2020 on a whim. It was certainly an attempt to deal with the pandemic and its impact in the UK as well as worldwide. At first it wasn't really artistic work. It was more of a distraction, something that kept me mentally occupied for a while. I wanted to create something that would express my frustration with the UK government while addressing the conspiracy theories surrounding COVID, the increasing presence of QAnon and far-right groups. When Johnson got to the hospital in April 2020, many people online questioned whether he really caught the coronavirus or whether it might be a publicity stunt.





Bob Bicknell-Knight, Outbreak, 2020 (Installation view). HD video with sound, 1 min 25 sec (looped). Courtesy of the artist.

Is it absurd?

Yeah it's amazing. Now it's January 2021 and Johnson has made more really terrible mistakes. We have lost nearly 100,000 lives, millions of people in the UK have lost their jobs and then there are all the devastating long-term consequences that Brexit will have on our country. The idea that Johnson could lie about COVID is absurd, but everything the UK government has done over the past year is just as absurd. Why shouldn't they also fabricate a lie like this - just for a bit of good PR?

What makes you happy right now?

Spending time with my partner, cooking, playing video games, riding a bike, working on my art, collaborating with artists, responding nicely to an email. Despite what's going on in the world right now, I have many reasons to be happy.

What are you looking forward to?

I'm currently looking forward to what will bring in 2021. I want to move away from London at the end of the year. I grew up in the country and originally came here to study. While I love getting up close and personal with hundreds of galleries, 2020 showed me that I don't necessarily have to see ten exhibitions a week to stay up to date. But I hope that things will finally start again and that exhibitions will not be postponed all the time. This year I have three solo exhibitions in three different countries, plus various curatorial projects. So there are a few things I'm looking forward to.

"Outbreak" is currently on display as part of the group exhibition "Change Makers: Ways of Protest" at the Elysium Gallery in Swansea, Welsh.

If you want to read more from Bob Bicknell-Knight, we recommend our interview from last spring. He explained to us [what makes a good online exhibition](#) . On its [platform isthisit?](#), he has not only started organizing digital shows since it became popular. More information about Bob can be found [on his website](#) and [on Instagram](#) .

We don't go out, we stay with ourselves - so much so that we sometimes turn a lap too much around ourselves. That's why we listen to what's going on outside. In our interview series "Is there someone?" We speak to artists whose work comment on the present in a touching way.

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