

Bob Bicknell-Knight
Non-Player Character
20th January – 19th February 2023
Klaipeda Exhibition Hall, Didžioji Vandens g. 2, 91246 Klaipėda, Lithuania



Non-Player Character is a solo exhibition by artist, curator and writer Bob Bicknell-Knight, curated by Pita Arreola-Burns and Elliott Burns (Off Site Project), presenting a research-based body of work exploring the many facets of non-player characters (NPCs) in video games, from their looping lives to the repetitive dialogue that they bark at the player character, as a metaphor for the boundaries of human action within an increasingly algorithmic, surveilled existence.

NPCs are characters in video games that are controlled by the computer. They have a predetermined set of behaviours programmed by artificially intelligent (AI) software. The lives of these characters revolve around the player. They are stuck in the game world, doomed to repeat the same day for eternity, waiting to be interacted with.

In Non-Player Character Bicknell-Knight exhibits paintings, sculptures, a CGI video and an interactive video game, examining the game development tools used to create NPCs whilst imagining what NPCs are thinking and feeling on a daily basis.

The central piece in the exhibition, titled Non-Player Character, is a CGI film commissioned using funding from Arts Council England. The looping video explores the NPC as a vehicle by which we can understand human navigation of an increasingly codified and controlled existence. Controlled by the AI software, NPCs have predetermined sets of behaviours. Programmed to repeat the same day, their lives revolve around the player, waiting for interaction. Bicknell-Knight's film imagines what enemy NPCs are thinking and feeling, forced to be defeated over and over, until their data becomes unreadable.

Each enemy NPC 3D model that you see in the film has been directly taken from a different video game. The script, written by Bicknell-Knight, is read out in a series of high-pitched tones, referencing the use of grunts instead of professional voice acting in early video games. Grunts were used in the 90s and early 2000s when budgets were smaller, sound hardware was more basic and the cartridge space for video games were limited. Within the film these enemy NPCs have been killed by the player, falling off the map into a white non-space, breaking into small pieces to be subsequently recycled and reused to create endless copies of their own selves. Their collective memories have become homogenised whilst their voices have been replaced by a series of grunts. The work resides on a 3D printed USB drive resembling the arm of a Deathclaw from the popular post-apocalyptic video game series Fallout. Viewers are invited to watch the film whilst sitting on a series of custom-made cubes featuring the video game textures from a number of the enemy NPCs included in the film.

A series of paintings throughout the exhibition space contain different NPC quotes from a number of video games from the past 20 years. The paintings explore NPC dialogue in video games, short one-line audio clips spoken by NPCs that populate the game world. These short sentences are called barks and can be random or in reaction to the player or events happening within the game. The phrases are often repeatedly spoken to the player within the game world, sometimes heard hundreds or even thousands of times in a single playthrough. Each painting includes a specific bark from a different game, written in the games typeface and set against imagery taken from within the specific game world.

Bicknell-Knight's 2D works are hybrid paintings. The pieces begin as digitally edited fabricated images. They are then printed onto canvas, stretched and then painted onto with acrylic paint, with the offline artist's hand interacting with the original online digital image. The sides are colour matched, and the front of the canvas is partially painted onto. The paintings are held in a series of 3D printed frames, produced without a perimeter to expose the inner workings of the structure. They are intentionally elaborate, taking inspiration from traditional frames from the 18th century, deliberately drawing attention away from the subject of the work and emphasising the artificial nature of the painted representation.

The sculptures in the exhibition explore collectible items in video games, objects within different game worlds that can be collected by a player, and more specifically vendor trash, items found in video games that serve little or no use to the player, other than to be sold to NPC vendors for in-game money. This mainly occurs in role-playing games (RPGs), with the most well-known types of vendor trash being extremely poor-quality equipment or items that are literally useless other than their value to vendors. The sculptures in the exhibition include a series of useless items from the video game series Fallout. These items, ranging from a garden gnome to a human skull, have been 3D printed with translucent filament and are exhibited in a number of stacked plastic crates combined with transit blankets, referencing elements of the archive, storage facilities and industrial globalisation.

The interactive video game in the exhibition, *Gone But Not Forgotten*, transports the audience into a misty forest filled with the graves of a number of NPC companions from different video game worlds. NPC companions accompany the player throughout the game and usually have complimentary skills that boosts the players abilities. Their role in the overarching story can be anything from being a helpful sidekick to a potential love interest. They are NPCs within the game world that many players become particularly attached to, with some mourning their digital deaths in the same way that you might mourn a relative or close friend. Each grave within the work is custom made, referencing the companions' specific traits or interests.

Non-Player Character is an in-depth investigation into the tools and technologies used to create NPCs in video games, continuing Bicknell-Knight's ongoing investigation into the lack of agency and autonomy experienced by the vast majority of living human beings as they are unable to enact real change around the globe, 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 exhibition is accompanied by An AI Werewolf in Large Language Models, a text written by Pita Arreola-Burns and Elliott Burns. You can read the text by going to the following link - <https://bit.ly/AI-Werewolf>



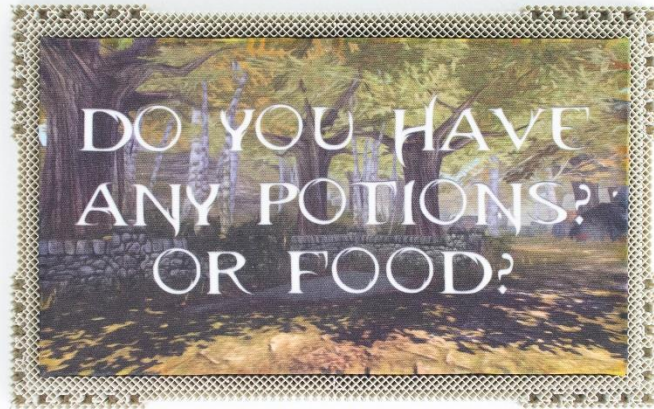
Non-Player Character, 2023
Installation view



Non-Player Character, 2023
Installation view



Non-Player Character, 2023
Installation view



Do You Have Any Potions? Or Food?, 2022
Ink and acrylic on canvas, plywood, 3D printed marble PLA plastic
21.3 x 34 x 3.5 cm
Unique



Can You Help Us With Some Items, 2022
Ink and acrylic on canvas, plywood, 3D printed marble PLA plastic
21.3 x 34 x 3.5 cm



Non-Player Character, 2023
Installation view



Hey! Listen!, 2022

Ink and acrylic on canvas, plywood, 3D printed marble PLA plastic

21.3 x 34 x 3.5 cm

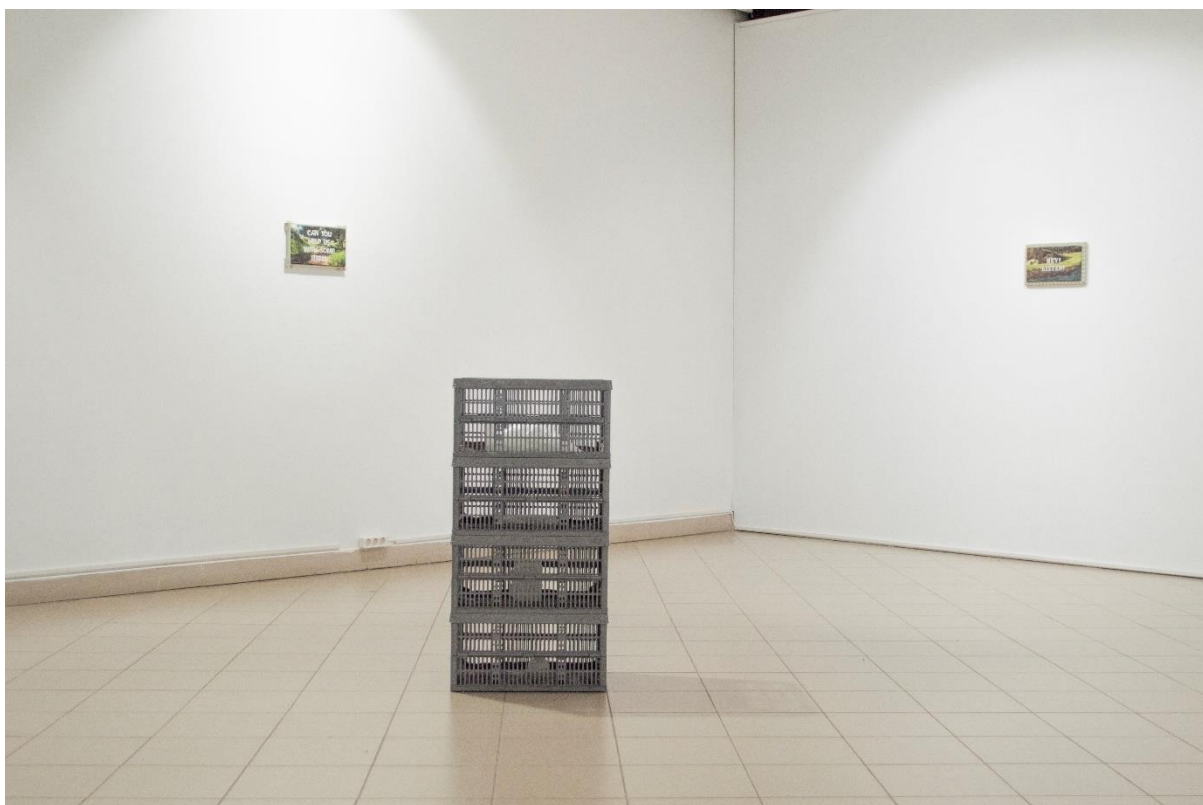
Unique



Non-Player Character, 2023
Installation view



Why Buy Tomorrow What You Can Buy Today, 2022
Ink and acrylic on canvas, plywood, 3D printed marble PLA plastic
21.3 x 34 x 3.5 cm
Unique



Non-Player Character, 2023
Installation view



Vendor Trash, 2023
3D printed translucent PLA plastic, plastic crates, transit blankets
Dimensions variable



Vendor Trash, 2023
3D printed translucent PLA plastic, plastic crates, transit blankets
Dimensions variable



Vendor Trash, 2023
3D printed translucent PLA plastic, plastic crates, transit blankets
Dimensions variable



Vendor Trash, 2023

3D printed translucent PLA plastic, plastic crates, transit blankets

Dimensions variable



Vendor Trash, 2023
3D printed translucent PLA plastic, plastic crates, transit blankets
Dimensions variable



Non-Player Character, 2023
Installation view



Non-Player Character, 2023
Installation view



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Dimensions variable



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Dimensions variable



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3D printed translucent PLA plastic, plastic crates, transit blankets

Dimensions variable



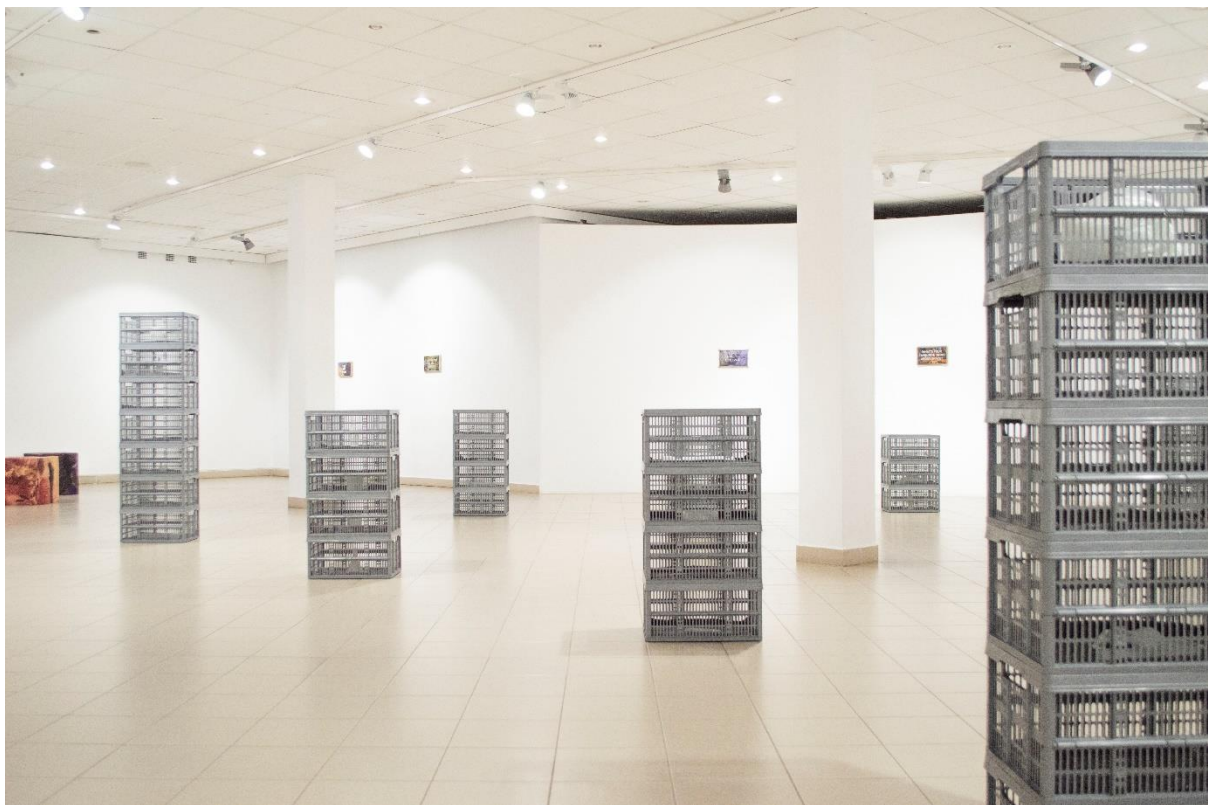
Vendor Trash, 2023

3D printed translucent PLA plastic, plastic crates, transit blankets

Dimensions variable



Vendor Trash, 2023
3D printed translucent PLA plastic, plastic crates, transit blankets
Dimensions variable



Non-Player Character, 2023
Installation view



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Dimensions variable



Vendor Trash, 2023

3D printed translucent PLA plastic, plastic crates, transit blankets

Dimensions variable



Non-Player Character, 2023
Installation view



Vendor Trash, 2023
3D printed translucent PLA plastic, plastic crates, transit blankets
Dimensions variable



Another Settlement Needs Our Help, 2022
Ink and acrylic on canvas, plywood, 3D printed marble PLA plastic
21.3 x 34 x 3.5 cm



Vendor Trash, 2023

3D printed translucent PLA plastic, plastic crates, transit blankets

Dimensions variable



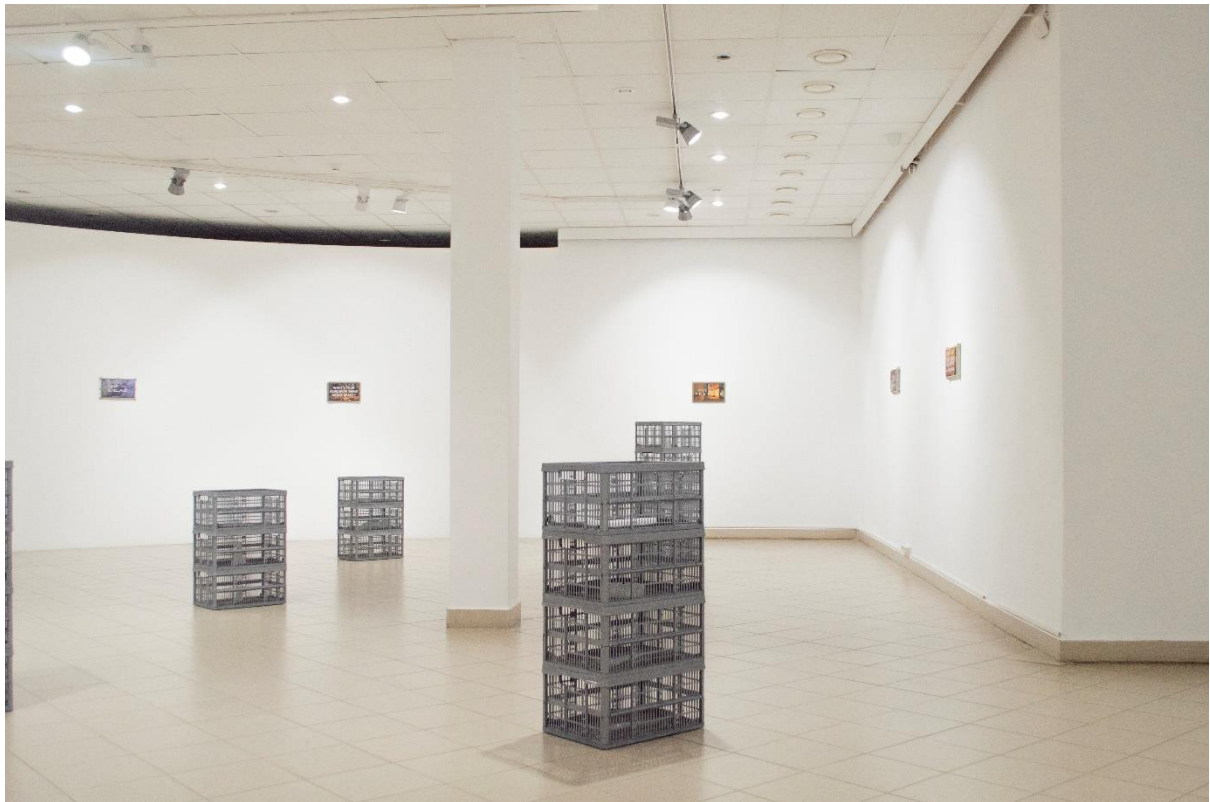
Vendor Trash, 2023
3D printed translucent PLA plastic, plastic crates, transit blankets
Dimensions variable



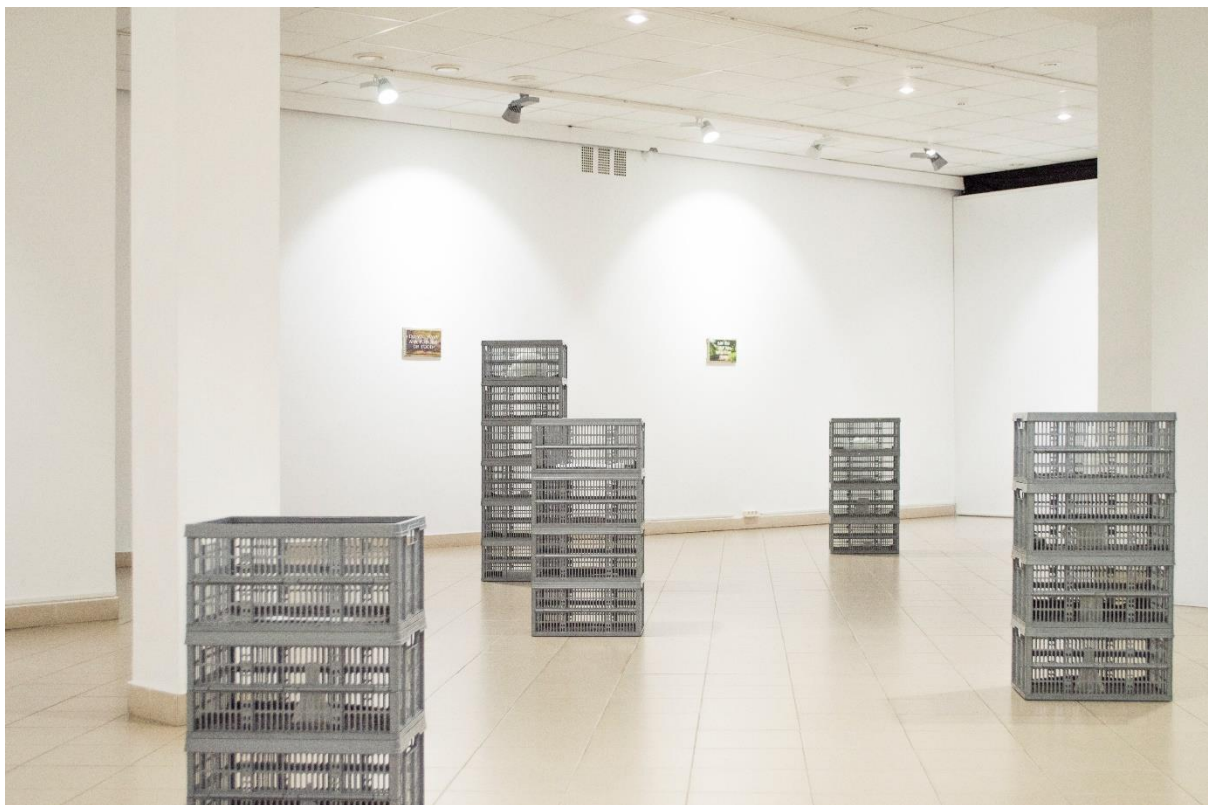
Vendor Trash, 2023

3D printed translucent PLA plastic, plastic crates, transit blankets

Dimensions variable



Non-Player Character, 2023
Installation view



Non-Player Character, 2023
Installation view



Vendor Trash, 2023
3D printed translucent PLA plastic, plastic crates, transit blankets
Dimensions variable



Vendor Trash, 2023
3D printed translucent PLA plastic, plastic crates, transit blankets
Dimensions variable



Vendor Trash, 2023
3D printed translucent PLA plastic, plastic crates, transit blankets
Dimensions variable



Vendor Trash, 2023

3D printed translucent PLA plastic, plastic crates, transit blankets

Dimensions variable



Try To Get Your Combat Multiplier Even Higher, 2022
Ink and acrylic on canvas, plywood, 3D printed marble PLA plastic
21.3 x 34 x 3.5 cm



Non-Player Character, 2023
Installation view



Non-Player Character, 2023
Installation view



Non-Player Character, 2023
Installation view



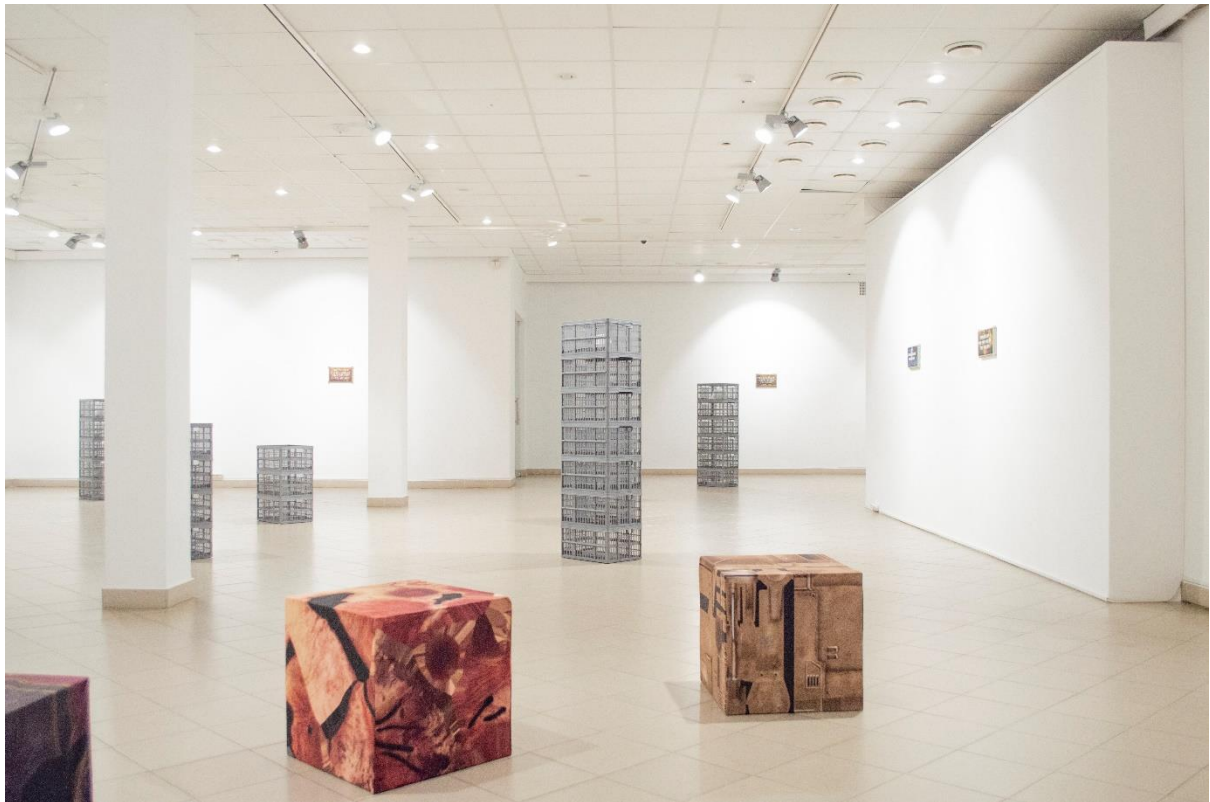
Vendor Trash, 2023
3D printed translucent PLA plastic, plastic crates, transit blankets
Dimensions variable



Pam Pa Ram, 2022

Ink and acrylic on canvas, plywood, 3D printed marble PLA plastic

21.3 x 34 x 3.5 cm



Non-Player Character, 2023
Installation view



Non-Player Character, 2023
Installation view



Almost Makes You Wish For A Nuclear Winter, 2022
Ink and acrylic on canvas, plywood, 3D printed marble PLA plastic
21.3 x 34 x 3.5 cm
Unique



Vendor Trash, 2023
3D printed translucent PLA plastic, plastic crates, transit blankets
Dimensions variable



Vendor Trash, 2023
3D printed translucent PLA plastic, plastic crates, transit blankets
Dimensions variable



Vendor Trash, 2023
3D printed translucent PLA plastic, plastic crates, transit blankets
Dimensions variable



Vendor Trash, 2023

3D printed translucent PLA plastic, plastic crates, transit blankets

Dimensions variable



Non-Player Character, 2023
Installation view



Non-Player Character, 2022

4K video with sound, 3D printed marble PLA plastic, USB drive, USB male to female cable
9 min 38 sec

Commissioned by Petra Szemán using funding from Arts Council England

Watch the film by going to <https://youtu.be/yls9PPpRIYw>



Non-Player Character, 2022

4K video with sound, 3D printed marble PLA plastic, USB drive, USB male to female cable
9 min 38 sec

Commissioned by Petra Szemán using funding from Arts Council England

Watch the film by going to <https://youtu.be/yls9PPpRIYw>



FFXIII-LR_X360_MONSTER_Anubys_Body_D.png, 2022
Ink on canvas, plywood, MDF board
47 x 47 x 47 cm
Edition of 3, 1AP



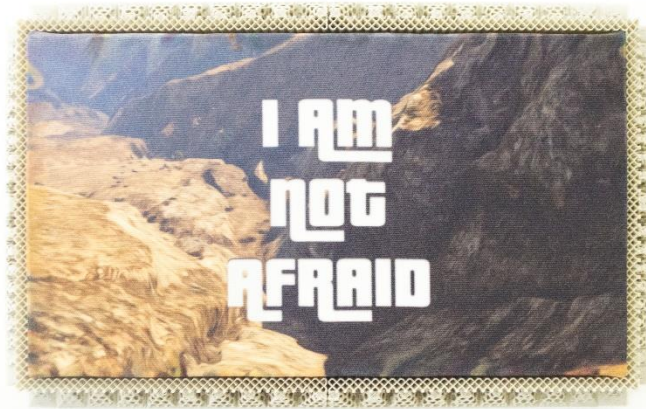
revenant_head.png, 2022
Ink on canvas, plywood, MDF board
47 x 47 x 47 cm
Edition of 3, 1AP



cis_inf_battledroid.png, 2022
Ink on canvas, plywood, MDF board
47 x 47 x 47 cm
Edition of 3, 1AP



Non-Player Character, 2023
Installation view

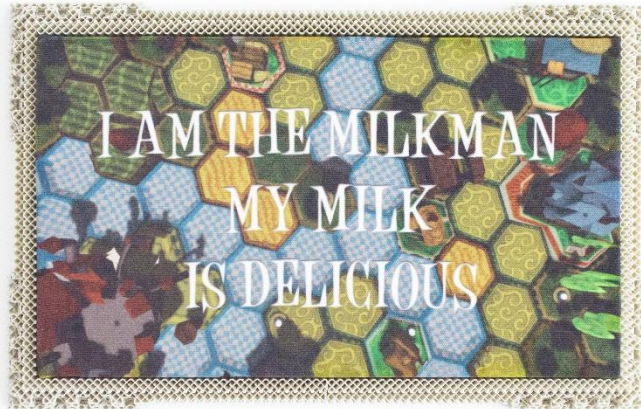


I Am Not Afraid, 2022

Ink and acrylic on canvas, plywood, 3D printed marble PLA plastic

21.3 x 34 x 3.5 cm

Unique



I Am The Milkman My Milk Is Delicious, 2022
Ink and acrylic on canvas, plywood, 3D printed marble PLA plastic
21.3 x 34 x 3.5 cm
Unique



Non-Player Character, 2023
Installation view



He's Dead, 2022

Ink and acrylic on canvas, plywood, 3D printed marble PLA plastic

21.3 x 34 x 3.5 cm

Unique



Vendor Trash, 2023
3D printed translucent PLA plastic, plastic crates, transit blankets
Dimensions variable



Vendor Trash, 2023
3D printed translucent PLA plastic, plastic crates, transit blankets
Dimensions variable



Vendor Trash, 2023
3D printed translucent PLA plastic, plastic crates, transit blankets
Dimensions variable



Non-Player Character, 2023
Installation view



What's Your Favourite Thing About Space?, 2022
Ink and acrylic on canvas, plywood, 3D printed marble PLA plastic
21.3 x 34 x 3.5 cm
Unique



Vendor Trash, 2023
3D printed translucent PLA plastic, plastic crates, transit blankets
Dimensions variable

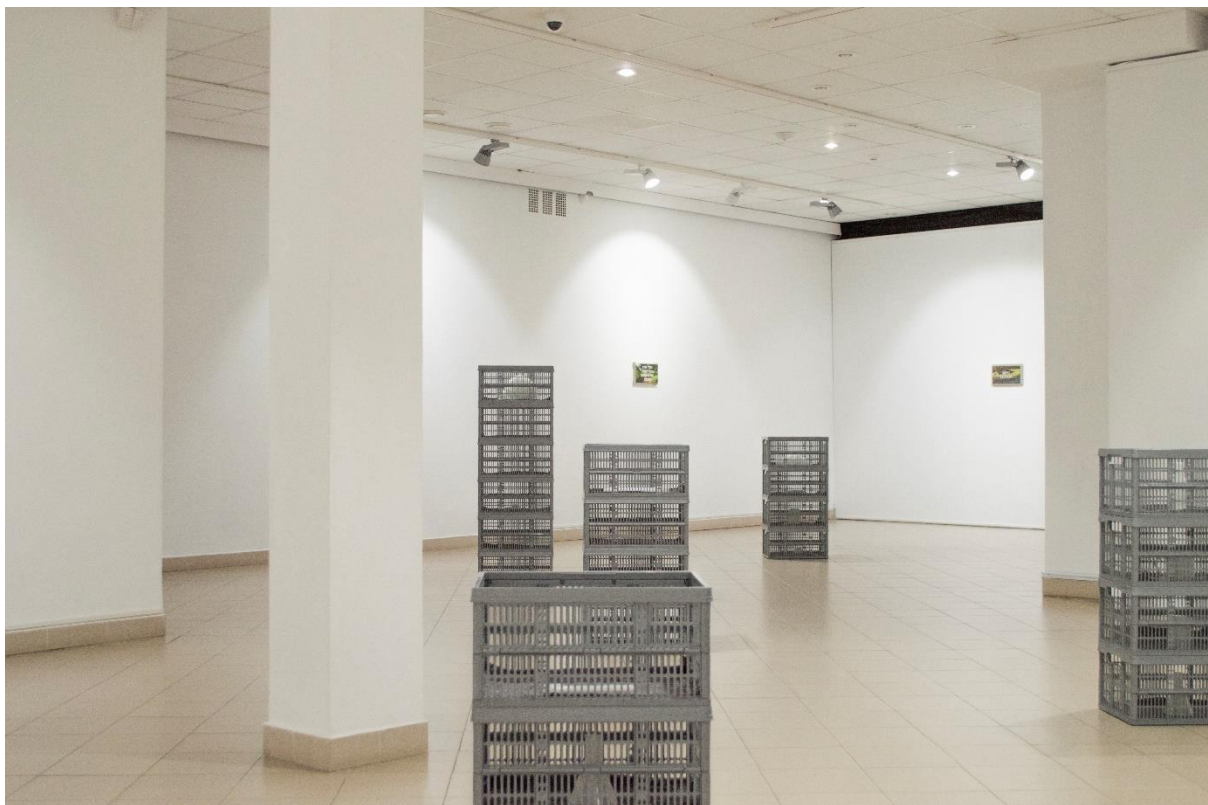


Take No Prisoners, 2022

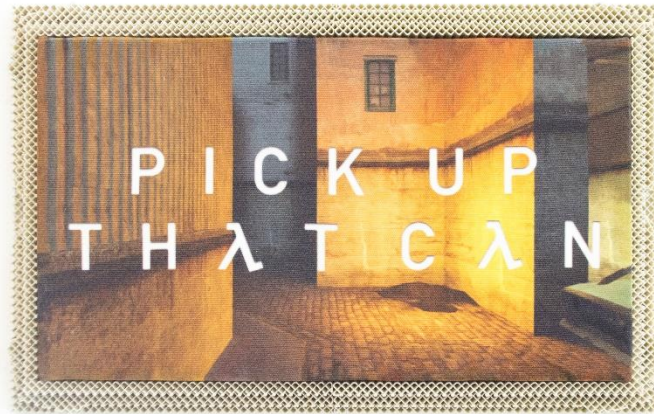
Ink and acrylic on canvas, plywood, 3D printed marble PLA plastic

21.3 x 34 x 3.5 cm

Unique



Non-Player Character, 2023
Installation view



Pick Up That Can, 2022

Ink and acrylic on canvas, plywood, 3D printed marble PLA plastic

21.3 x 34 x 3.5 cm

Unique



Never Should Have Come Here, 2022
Ink and acrylic on canvas, plywood, 3D printed marbled PLA plastic
21.3 x 34 x 3.5 cm
Unique



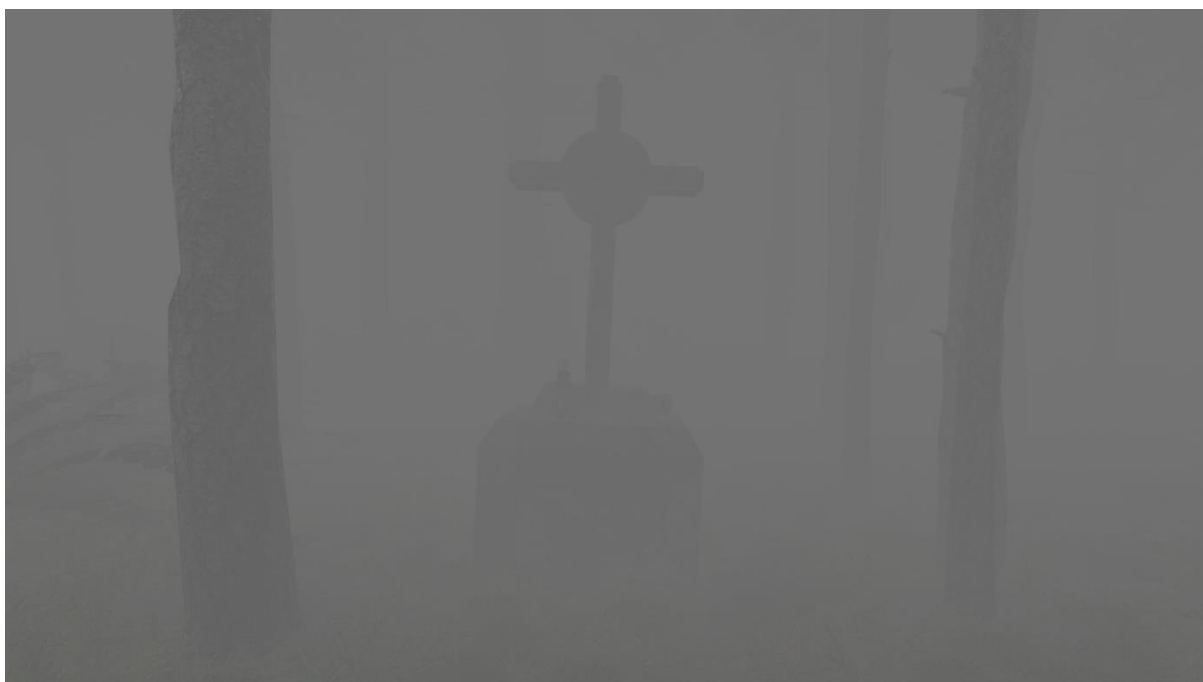
Non-Player Character, 2023
Installation view



Gone But Not Forgotten, 2022
Interactive video game environment, 3D printed PLA plastic
Dimensions variable



Gone But Not Forgotten, 2022
Interactive video game environment
Dimensions variable
Edition of 3, 2AP



Gone But Not Forgotten, 2022
Interactive video game environment
Dimensions variable
Edition of 3, 2AP



Gone But Not Forgotten, 2022
Interactive video game environment, 3D printed PLA plastic
Dimensions variable



deathclaw.png, 2022
Ink on canvas, plywood, MDF board
47 x 47 x 47 cm
Edition of 3, 1AP



Non-Player Character, 2023
Installation view



Never Should Have Come Here, 2022
Ink and acrylic on canvas, plywood, 3D printed marbled PLA plastic
21.3 x 34 x 3.5 cm
Unique