

REVIEWS

Blessed are the characters not controlled by the player and the world they own

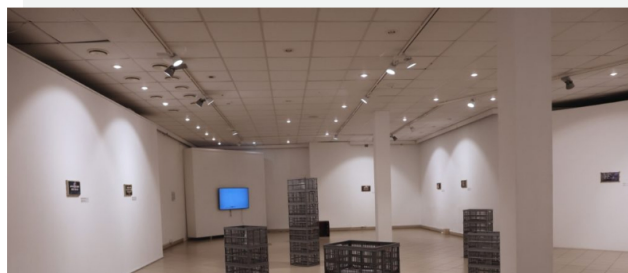
in 2023 february 10, friday
Author of the article: Rosana Lukauskaitė

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A non-player character (NPC) is a pre-programmed computer game character whose behavior is generated by artificial intelligence, and he will be able to communicate only through a limited number of phrases. And while actual NPCs range from pet companions to fantastical creatures, the term has become one of the most popular insults on the internet for boring, predictable people who don't seem to have their own inner monologue. This meme accidentally captures Friedrich Nietzsche's philosophical approach to the prophesied last man (German: *Letzter Mensch*) is an abstract person who seeks only passive comfort and routine. Our behavior as visitors to the exhibition, in the eyes of artists, is probably similar to the behavior of computer-controlled characters: we move anxiously in space, wander from one exhibit to another, chat with other visitors to the exhibition, but do not say anything new, politely repeating long-worn phrases. This personal experience becomes a very universal metaphor for modern life in Bob Bicknell-Knight's (UK) exhibition *Computer Controlled Character*, until 19 February. exhibited in the Exhibition Hall of the Klaipėda Cultural Communications Center (Didžioji Vandens St. 2, Klaipėda). The exhibition is curated by Pita Arreola-Burns and Elliott Burns (Off Site Project).

Nowadays, we are well aware that electronic technology is more than just a tool or a toy. It is also a new environment, an ecosystem that affects almost every aspect of our lives. The question arises – when does the difference between technology and culture become invisible? Players experience computer games not only as a kaleidoscope of digital images, sounds and data, but also as a separate reality with its own culture – a continuation of reality, the phantoms of which penetrate into everyday cultural expressions. A good example of this is the online video game *Fortnite*, which featured dancing, which became massively popular a couple of years ago. Borrowed from real dancers, adapted in the virtual world, and finally returned to real dance floors, these moves have come full circle and returned to their original state in the physical world. However, not all points of convergence between culture and technology are so obvious. Ever-expanding computer technologies tend to merge with cultural forms and become part of a common technological culture. In addition, the density and complexity of technological culture grows as more and more areas of life are exposed to technological improvements and digitization, until we finally look around and realize that we are already living in an augmented reality. Maybe one day collected from various games because more and more areas of life are faced with technological improvements and digitization, until we finally look around and realize that we are already living in an augmented reality. Maybe one day collected from various games because more and more areas of life are faced with technological improvements and digitization, until we finally look around and realize that we are already living in an augmented reality. Maybe one day collected from various games *Will the NPC* quotes depicted in Bob Bicknell-Knight's series of paintings become our common sayings, the origins of which will no longer be traceable? How do you find out who first said: "If you can buy it now, never say *tomorrow*"? Soon the election season will begin and we will see political slogans around us, which are basically not very different from *NPC* slogans.

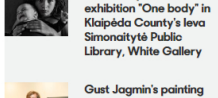
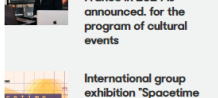
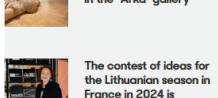
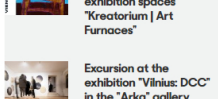
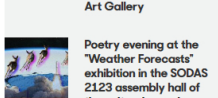
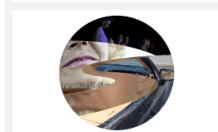


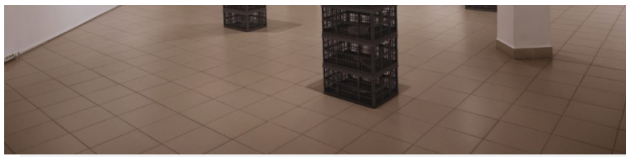
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ART NEWS EVENTS





While the video game industry offers a reality without consequences and death, in the interactive video game *Gone But Not Forgotten*, the artist introduces *NPC*soemeteries. Could a world based entirely on immateriality have an afterlife? Or is it just a mirror image of our own futile efforts to prove to ourselves that there is something after death? Our notions of a mythical



Linus Jusionis exhibition
"Horizonto kilpa" in
"Varta" gallery



Exhibition of glass
monotypes by Ruch
Edelstein "TABULA
RASA" at VDA Telšiai
Gallery



The exhibition "Light
through the glass
ceiling: Magdalena
Avietinaitė (1892-
1984) - creator of the
image of the interwar
state" at the National
MK Čiurlionis Art
Museum in Kaunas



"Restorers": after
opening the box, the
restorers were horrified
- the especially
luxurious fabric fell
apart at the touch



Presentation of the
catalog of the
exhibition "Borders and
Margins: Social
Criticism in Interwar
Lithuania" at the
National Art Gallery



Research and
interviews with
Lithuanian and Dutch
artists in the new book
"If a Tree Falls in a
Forest"



The renewed House of
Signatories invites you
to celebrate freedom



Vaidas Tamošiūnas
photography exhibition
"Light and rhythm in the
images of Vilnius" at the
house of MK Čiurlionis



Exhibition of Urtė
Jasenko's graphic
miniatures "The Story of
One Picture" at the
"Culture Factory" in
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to volumes that are combining into digital sea monsters of a mythical spiritual realm collide with the physically intangible world of data that we have unconsciously created. The precedent of smart tombstones allows us to expect holograms of the deceased to appear on tombstones in the near future. All this has nothing to do with mourning - it is rather an effort of the living to tame the unknown, to preserve "data". In the exhibition video game, instead of an open-space perspective, the player is immersed in an imaginary depth where he becomes the farthest point of perspective. This can be called the process of reality leakage.

Video games only use death as a narrative device, but in such a context it is impossible to create tragic heroes, realistic people whose deaths reveal the drama of their lives. Death itself becomes a plot twist or character because it cannot prevent those it touches from being reborn in the next round of the game. Death in video games is often depicted realistically, without avoiding violent or gruesome scenes, and although the player only witnesses the reflection of death in the virtual world, this creates a feeling of discomfort, because the symbolism of death as an inevitable part of life is undermined by its repetition and meaninglessness in the game. The main work of the exhibition is the computer graphics film "Computer Controlled Character", which tries to imagine what *NPCs who are constantly defeated should feel*, bad guys, with their data disappearing and becoming unreadable in parallel. A voice-over in the piece explains, "Even before the final version of the video game was released, we feared death and that our coded lives would be erased from the board. As our environment continues to evolve, death has become a banality, an unequivocal reminder of the strict order that determines our environment and decisions." In most video games, death after losing a battle means temporary removal from the fictional world. While it's mostly a pointless waste of time for the player, each of these random jolts provides time to reflect on existence itself.



It is said that while walking through a bustling marketplace, the Greek philosopher Socrates once exclaimed, "There are so many things I don't need!" But would he change his mind if the things he was being offered were impractical shadows of the real thing—artifacts from the allegory of the cave

...in the same way as the real thing, and this is the danger of the copy, as it were? Bob Bicknell-Knight's sculptural installation *Unnecessary Junk* explores collectibles from the post-apocalyptic video game series *Fallout*. These objects are mostly useless to the player, but coveted by the computer-controlled population of the game. 3D printed, these pieces become even more deceptive surrogates of the real-world objects that inspired them. What's the use of a plastic Rolleiflex camera-shaped thing that you can't take pictures with? Paradoxically, technical reproducibility itself becomes the ultimate goal here, which is no longer controlled by the rational need to create functional objects, but only by its own logic of reproduction, its own sense of "aesthetics". This sculptural installation exists on the threshold of virtuality and materiality, speculating on how one world extends another in the context of consumer culture and globalization.

Although the term *NPC* is full of contempt for the gray masses, the "herd of sheep", it does not have to be understood as a mere pejorative in order to use it as one of the ingredients of the perception of the *Zeitgeist*. Video games are another human attempt to understand the essence of the nature of being. Many myths and legends are related to fate and prophecies. They tell not only about people whose fate is predetermined, but also about those who challenge fate. Trying to escape the prophecy in mythology brings it closer to its fulfillment, but modern people seem to be free to decide their own destiny. Perhaps the cure for being a zombie is being more aware, so "choose your player" wisely.





The Bob Bicknell-Knight exhibition "Computer controlled character" is open until February 19 in the Exhibition Hall of the Klaipėda Cultural Communication Center (Didžioji Vandens st. 2, Klaipėda).

Photos: Egidijus Jankauskas

Mentioned artists:



[Bicknell-Knight Bob](#)



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