



PRISM



Artist's Bio

~~Parker Milliken is a video artist, visual programmer,~~
and electronic musician from the D.C. area currently
based in Boston, Massachusetts. Their work evaluates
the emotional and political implications of mass
surveillance, computer technologies, and communicative
capitalism—emphasizing the deep social alienation and
exploitation that arise from these aspects of our
everyday lives.

Artist Statement

~~Taking its name from the National Security Agency~~
surveillance program, PRISM is a video poem told
through the intertwining dreams of a woman trapped in a
virtual world and an all-knowing alien lost in the
stars. Throughout its duration, PRISM explores the
everyday pains and harsh political realities of a world
not unlike our own, arguing that our dreams of a better
world can only be realized through coming together in
solidarity against the innately exploitative,
capitalist machine that enmeshes us all.



From the long and ongoing research process that led to this work the term “surveillance society” is no overstatement. When every aspect of our interpersonal communication is mediated through global networks of computers actively cataloging and collecting our every interaction, mass surveillance is not just the result but in fact the project. Notable in this regard, such technology only came to be so deeply suffused into our culture at the behest of powerful and state-supported tech companies, who merely picked up the torch of its development out of the U.S. government’s counterinsurgency operations during the American-led effort to prevent the establishment of a Communist Vietnam and in subsequent private-sector government contracts and special projects (such as ARPANET and PRISM). Thus, it is overwhelmingly evident that the goal is, and has always been, to provide the American empire with hidden and immeasurable power to quell any dissent from the global capitalist system. For people around the world, this must be understood as a crisis of our freedom and a serious threat to all political movements and peoples seeking radical change.

With PRISM, I strive to both acknowledge this fact and recognize its implications on our collective psyche through art. It is no longer enough to say that mass surveillance simply mediates our relationship with the state. We must also recognize its logic in our relationships with one another. Through the same cultural hegemony that facilitates capitalism’s logic taking root in our thoughts and behavior, we replicate the practices of surveillance in our everyday lives. Evident in the social urge to share our every experience online, in the normalization of virtual interaction, in the notion that the internet represents some kind of freedom from our “real” lives; computers are ultimately so much more than just a tool of state control. From the moment we learn to live like nodes of a machine’s circuits, as isolated programs, we will do just that.

