

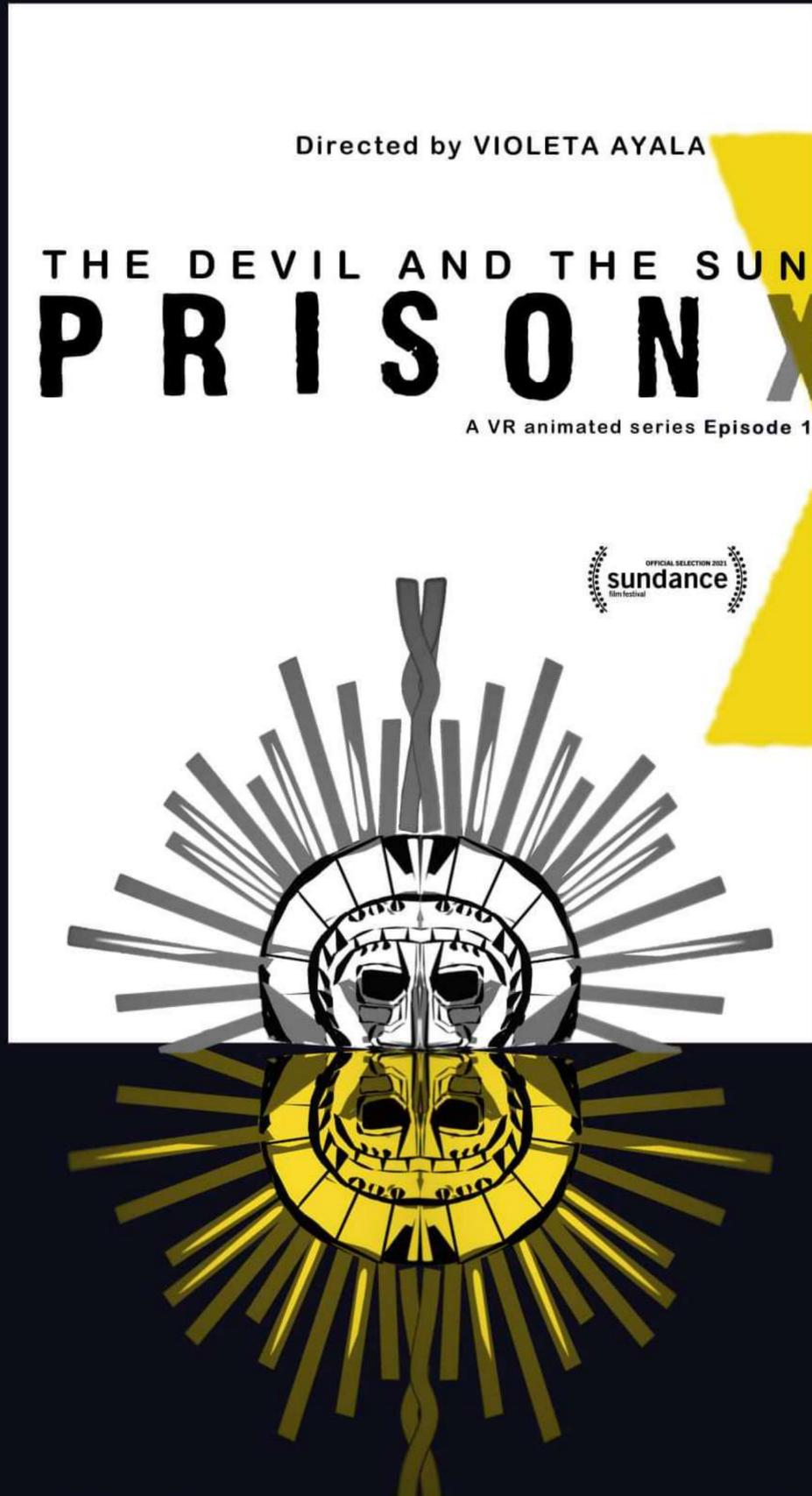
Prison X

Chapter 1: The Devil and the Sun

Media kit



Info



Synopsis

Heavy doors open and you are swept into the surreal world of Prison X, an infamous jail inside a Neo-Andean underworld. As you coexist amongst devils, saints, wicked characters, corrupt prison guards and even a western filmmaker, you have to hang onto your soul so La Diabla doesn't snatch it away.

The Devil and The Sun is the first chapter of a series of six episodes inside PrisonX, a journey inside the dreams and nightmares of the Andean underworld.

Specs

Interactive

Available on Oculus Rift / Quest 2 tethered / HTC Vive

Runtime: approx. 30 min

Credits

Directed by

Violeta Ayala

Created by

Violeta Ayala

Produced by

**Dan Fallshaw, Violeta
Ayala, Roly Elias**

Lead Developer

Alap Parikh

3-D Generalist

Alberto Santiago

Character Designer

Maria Corvera Vargas

Motion Capture

**Violeta Ayala, Dan Fallshaw,
Roly Elias**

**Sound Design/
Virtual Reality Mix**

Roly Elias, Citizen Kay

Music

**XNYWOLF, Simon Wallbrook
(in development)**

3-D Illustrators

**Rilda Paco, Roly Elias, Olivia Barron
(in development)**

Cast list

The Jaguaress

Quilla

Dan Magpie

Juki

Supay

Violeta Ayala

Nicole Ukelele

Genesis Owusu

Roly Elias

**Anamaría Gómez
Jaramillo**

**Jaguars and
little kid**

Nuna

Vassily

Bus driver

Johnny

Suri Blue

Celina Debassey

Zelko Nedic

Roly Elias

Dan Fallshaw

The Story

In 2010, we started filming our previous project *Cocaine Prison* inside San Sebastian Prison in Cochabamba, Bolivia. During our four years working inside the prison, we always wanted to share what it was like to be inside the prison, and how it was to navigate this labyrinth of ad-hoc walls and contradictory ideas.



San Sebastian felt like a microcosm of the world outside, where inmates work, get things in the market and buy or rent their cells. Inside, there's a hardware store, a chapel, a school, a nursery and a gym. When it was opened in 1935, the prison was built to hold 250 inmates; now, it holds over 1,000 people, including the prisoners' families. At San Sebastian, inmates can control almost everything about their lives, with one caveat: they aren't allowed to leave.

For many prisoners, their only means of escape was their imaginations. With *Prison X*, we offer people a different way of experiencing a prison, that might lead them to question what it means to be free or imprisoned, colonized or decolonized...

Building the story world

Prison X draws on our experiences in San Sebastian Prison and Andean mythology to blur the lines between fiction and reality.

The prison we've built in VR juxtaposes the giant with the miniature, reality with fantasy, and the contemporary with the ancient. The shifts in scale reflect two Neo-Andean traditions: Las Alasitas, where people buy miniature versions of the things they want hoping that Ekeko (the God of Abundance) will convert dreams to reality; and the Carnival of Oruro, where people honour Ito (Mother Earth) by dancing La Diablada (the Devil's Dance) with big and spectacular costumes.



The technique

To create a hand-drawn version of the prison, we started by using photogrammetry to extract information from photographs we shot inside the real prison, and created a 3D computer model of the prison's main courtyard. A physical scale model of the prison was built by architect Jair Ronald Ayma Inocente, and artist Olivia Barron drew the initial illustrations.



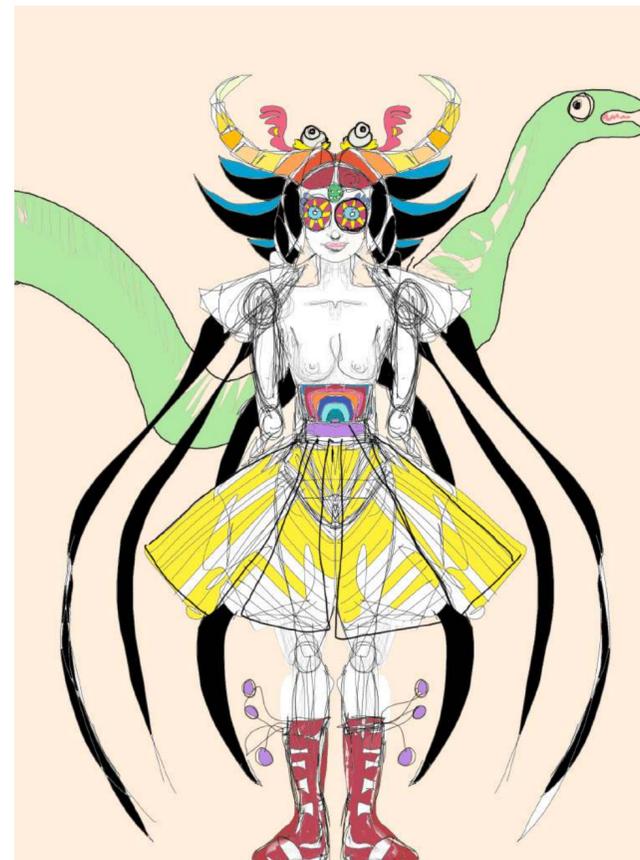
*Model and image by Jair Ronald Ayma Inocente.
Images not for re-use.*

But we didn't just want to create a VR walkthrough of the prison, we wanted to convey its character and essence. Using videos, photographs and our experience in the prison, we created a 3D version of Inti's cell, before moving on to create the prison's main courtyard, which forms the basis for this first episode of Prison X.



Inspired by people we met in San Sebastian jail, the characters of prison X were conceptualised by fashion designer Maria Corvera Vargas. Rilda Paco, an artist and journalist, hand-painted the characters in three dimensions with a virtual reality painting tool, bringing them to life inside the virtual world.

A version of the devil-god worshipped by miners in the Andes was created with a 3D-printed animatronics puppet of La Diabla and workshopped at the MIT Open Documentary Lab in 2019.



La Diabla at MIT, illustration by Maria Corvera Vargas, 3D illustration by Rilda Paco. Images not for re-use.

Performance Capture

When we first started Prison X in 2015, the technology didn't exist to create what we imagined. So we created our own motion capture studio with motion trackers available with consumer VR gear, strapping them to our bodies. But this made our characters move like robots in dire need of some WD-40. Luckily, technology was developing rapidly and in 2017, mo-cap suits were released by the Copenhagen-based company Rokoko. Compared to what we started out with, this new suit allowed us to bring more movement, quirk and personality to the Prison X characters.



Recording motion capture in the studio. Images not for re-use.

The Sound

Sounds exist all around us, even if we're not aware of them. But how do you recreate that in a virtual world? For our sound artists Roly Elias and Citizen Kay, it was a process of trial and error to fill the Prison X world with all the everyday sounds that allow us to orient ourselves. After some experimentation, they began to compose directly inside their VR headsets, creating and directing a world of spatialized sound.



Recording the sound and motion capture.



Musician Israel Donaire



Recording with a spatial mic

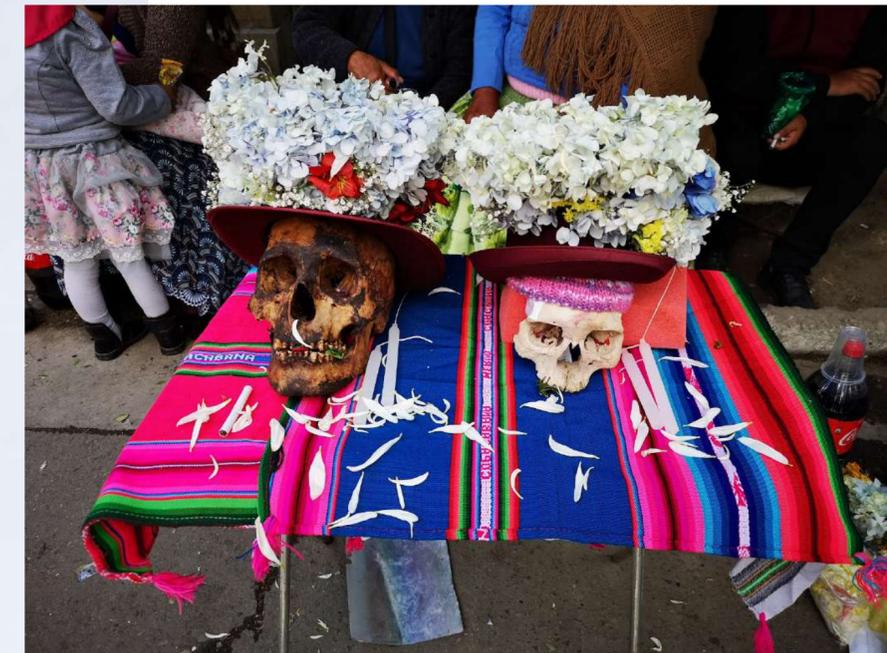
The characters

Our characters were inspired by the vision of a Neo-Andean world, a fusion of Inca and Aymara mythologies with the daily reality of the region.



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Omaira Tapia Limachi



Images not for re-use.

La Tía

also known as La Diabla



La Tía, or La Diabla, arrived with the Spaniards. Greedy for power, gold and money, her presence is everywhere, seeping through the underworld. Venerated by miners, petty criminals, and prostitutes, they bring her offerings such as cigarettes, coca leaves and alcohol, because if she's not drunk, she will take matters into her own hands. Unpredictable, uncontrollable and hungry, but her favorite thing to consume is fresh souls.

The Jaguaress



The Jaguaress greets you inside the theatre. An Indigenous female director, she has the power to tell her own stories, and invites you into this world so you can get a taste of colonization's destructive trail.

Inti

Inti is the ancient sun god. Caught on the border of Argentina smuggling cocaine and sentenced to eight years in prison, he yearns to be free.

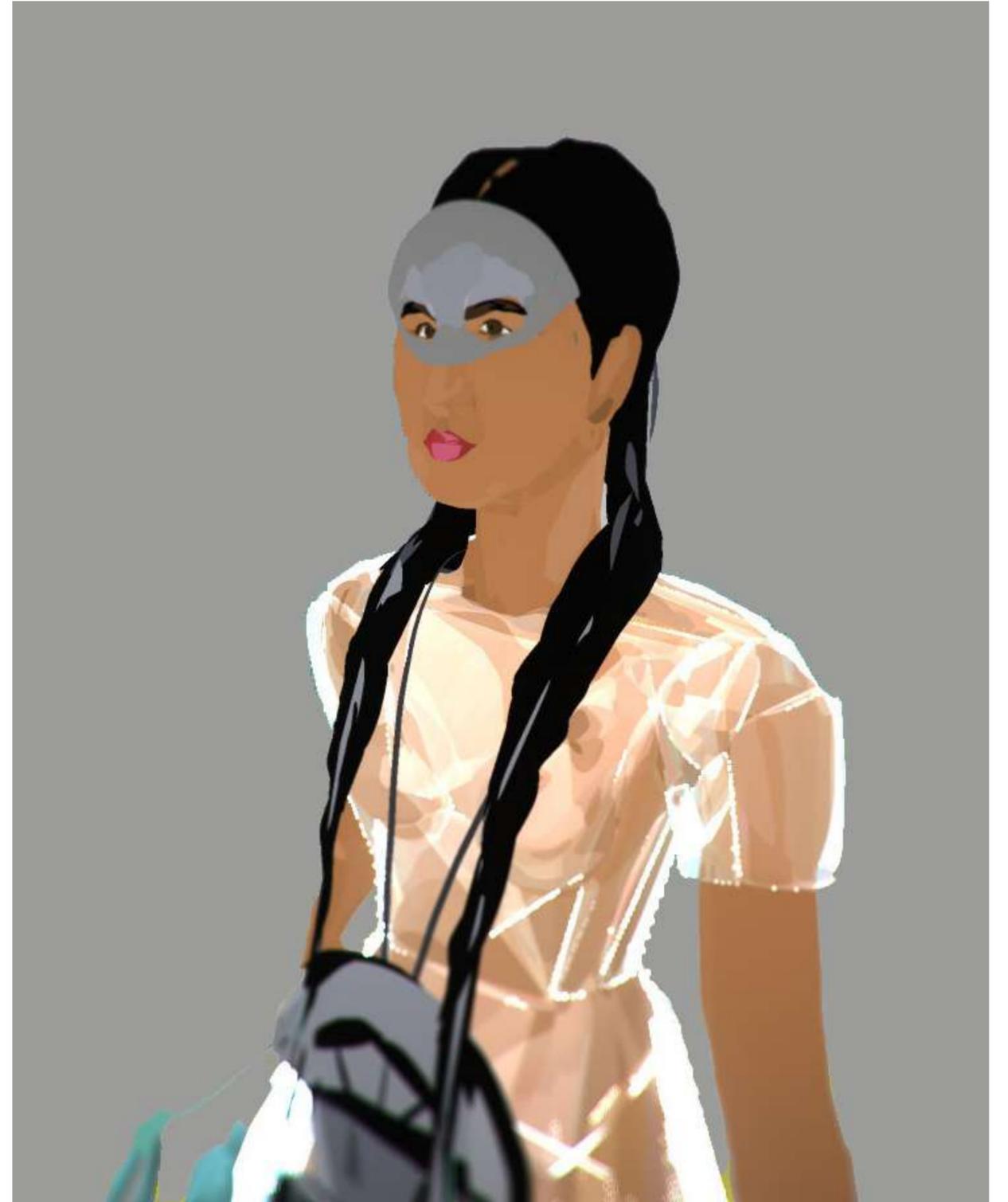
Arriving at Prison X, all the prisoners' faces remind him of the devils he saw at Carnaval when he was a child. Dressed in a black jumpsuit, sandals and a brass sun mask adorned with gold ornaments, he navigates the prison world.



Quilla

Quilla is the goddess of the moon, and Inti's younger sister. Like Inti, she grew up in El Chapare with her parents, who are coca farmers, and who sent Inti and Quilla to the city in the hope they would get a better education. She wears a dress made from glass, and part of her face is covered by a dark grey moon that shades her Aymara eyes.

When Inti is caught, Quilla is scared and confused, and her tears turn into silver moons. She resolves to do anything to get him out of prison.



Dan Magpie



Dan Magpie wears stereotypical Australian boots, a chuspa he bought in a souvenir market in L.A. and an overpriced poncho with the words “Better than yours” printed on it that he got from one of the trendiest stores in Melbourne.

He goes to Prison X to make a film to show the world how “these people” live; he thinks his film could change the lives of the people in prison, but also maybe he could win an Oscar for his talent and resilience. He genuinely believes his intentions are pure and is a neo-colonizer, even though he doesn’t realize it.

His hands are two tweezers which he uses to control his camera. Tall and skinny, his legs are thin and wiry—like those of a magpie.

Supay



Supay is the prison guard. Protected by her high rank within the Penitentiary Institution, she enjoys extracting bribes and making the prisoners suffer. Her hero is Klaus Barbie, a former SS officer who escaped to Bolivia and served as a military advisor through several dictatorships.

Juki

Careful and afraid, Juki cleans the prison, naively awaiting his trial to prove his innocence.

Juki was caught working in a cocaine factory and sent to prison without trial. He is the prison's cleaner and knows all its darkest secrets.

His mask is inspired by the bear costume worn at the Carnaval de Oruro.



Omaira Tapia Limachi





Nuna

Nuna is 157 but lies about her age, saying she's only 90.

She goes to the prison every morning with her cart loaded with her oranges and her juicer. She competes with the devil for attention.

The team

Violeta Ayala

Director/producer

Violeta Ayala is a filmmaker, writer, artist and technologist. Her credits include [Prison X](#) (2021), [Cocaine Prison](#) (2017), [The Fight](#) (2017), [The Bolivian Case](#) (2015) and [Stolen](#) (2009). Her films have premiered at A-List film festivals including Sundance and Toronto, distributed in cinemas (France, Colombia & Bolivia), broadcasters ([PBS](#), Channel 8, Señal Colombia, Ibermedia, etc) and online platforms (Amazon Prime and The Guardian). Violeta has won over 50 awards including a Walkley Award, and nominations for the IDA (Los Angeles), Rory Peck (London), Platino (Panama) and Fenix (Mexico). She is the first Quechua member of The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.



“From the moment I started working inside San Sebastian Prison while making Cocaine Prison, I always wanted to share the unspoken world I was experiencing. San Sebastian was three blocks from where I grew up. It’s my world, but it wasn’t a world you could capture with a camera. So I started Prison X because I was trying to create this world that cameras couldn’t capture.

From that, we created *Prison X* from zero. At the beginning the technology wasn’t even there to create the world I wanted to. But every person who came and joined the team and made it a little bit more of a possibility.

We started in 2017 when it was a concept, drawings and a model. Later, new technology meant we could draw it in virtual reality. From our 3D model, we started drawing and it started becoming real. The next year, we started programming, then we started incorporating sound, then movement through motion capture, and every time we hit a milestone, it was amazing for me. always focused on. We have the right to imagine our own stories, and we’re making it possible.

VR is an end, but it's also a tool for the democratisation of animation, and for people who otherwise wouldn't even think about other possibilities of storytelling. I had to create everything myself, which gave me the freedom to interpret the world as I see it, away from a colonised point of view, with the myths and traditions that are a part of my world.

And it gave me the chance to create a community of people working outside of what's expected in the film community, with my brother, with amazing artists like Maria, Rilda and Olivia (who worked on development); Alap and Alberto who made everything we're talking about reality; and now with XNY Wolf and the Ansah brothers.

Obviously when you create something, it's for everybody, but in this case I'm creating Prison X for the misfits. For my community of brown, black and Indigenous people. I'm also doing this for all Quechua children, all Indigenous children, and all children in general because I have a daughter who's 6-years-old and I want her to have a point of reference that's not the same narrative.”

Alap Parikh

Lead Developer

Alap Parikh is a leading artist, director, and developer based in India. His interest lies in the re-interpretation of narrative in participatory mediums of storytelling. Through his work and process, he strives to dissolve needlessly constructed boundaries between disciplines, titles and concepts.

Alap was the first recipient of the \Art Fellowship awarded by Cornell Tech. His work as a developer and technical director has been shown at museums such as the Orlando Museum of Art (Florida), the Johnson Museum of Art (New York) and Dr Bhau Daji Lad Museum (Mumbai). It has also been nominated for a Cannes Lion Innovation Award, a Webby Award, and the Future of Storytelling Award. He was invited to the inaugural global Alternate Territories program at Sheffield Docfest as one of three artists from Asia. He also participated in CPH:LAB, out of which sprung wonderful collaborations with artists around the world.

Alap has spoken about his work on multiple platforms, including EyeMyth Festival (Mumbai) and Parsons School of Design (New York). You can find out more about his work at alapparikh.com

What drew you to Prison X?

“I was curious about working on a project based in a culture and country I knew very little about. I thought that perhaps through this project I could learn more about Bolivia and the people that live there (in some capacity). I am always fascinated by drawing parallels between countries in the Global South. It was also so refreshing to see that almost the entire team came from Bolivia itself, as opposed to their stories being told by an outsider which is so often the case.”



Why do you like working on Prison X?

“I love the ambition! It's a huge technical challenge to create an interactive world that is entirely hand-drawn, and the technologist in me was very excited by this. The amount I have learned from working on this project is immeasurable – dealing with one unknown after another has given me the confidence to approach both the last stages of this project and any new project that comes along.

There is a constant tension between narrative and exploration in this project, and this is something I've been interested in exploring and pushing since I started working with/in immersive mediums.”

Roly Elias

Sound Design/Virtual Reality Mix

3D Illustrator

Roly Elias is a leading audio engineer, sound designer and 3D illustrator born in Bolivia. He created and mixed all the sound for Prison X. He specializes in the creative aspects of live music and immersive experiences. He established Radical Media in Sydney, Australia.



“I’ve been mixing bands for a while, on big stages and touring and I always felt there was a big disconnect between the artist and the crowd. I’d go and see these big concerts with big budgets, they had all this money and everything to make an amazing show, but I always felt that the sound technology stayed behind. Sound wasn’t a priority on the big stage. And I thought something was missing from the experience of a concert.

About four months before Covid-19, I started looking into surround sound. Violeta told me about Prison X, and I started looking into ambisonic sound, which felt like the opposite of the studio world, and realised a lot of what I wanted to do, like creating a world with people and making them feel part of something, was possible.

VR is a completely different way of thinking—it’s event-based, not time-based. I’m used to working with things that have beginning, middle and end. In VR, if you walk this way, there’s one thing. If you walk another way, there’s another.

I’ve really enjoyed looking into this new technology and how we can use it and how accessible it is. As long as you have the idea, you can do anything.”



Maria Corvera Vargas

Character Designer

Maria Corvera Vargas is a Bolivian fashion designer, she founded her independent label “C\V” in Berlin producing her collections with leftover fabrics or Fair Trade wool, becoming a pioneer on ethical fashion.

What was your favorite moment from working on Prison X?

“The first time I entered the world of VR was on a friend's console flying over Paris like an eagle which was more disorienting than impressive. My second experience, I found myself inside the bus from Prison X. This moment really struck me, it was amazing to see this mix of a bus from the '50s with the colourful cholos sitting there. As well, the moment I saw La Diabla for the first time having this piece of art in front of me, the smoke, everything in this moment was like in a dream.”

Why do you like working on Prison X?

“Violeta's vision and her deep conviction that we must tell our own stories inspires me, the way she lives her truth helped me to understand the priceless importance of it.

Coming from a culture that is underrepresented I didn't realize before now how incredible it can be to recognize the culture you grew up in represented in a virtual reality movie or any movie. Just seeing the blankets drawn by Rilda, blankets you see at the bus station or in every Bolivian household, made me smile in a part of my heart I didn't even know existed.”

Rilda Paco

3D Illustrator

Rilda Paco Alvarado is a Quechua and Aymara artist, designer and social communicator who hand-illustrated the characters in 3D using Tilt Brush. Born in the department of Oruro, she graduated from the Hernando Siles National Academy of Fine Arts. She works at the intersection of art and activism and has volunteered for many different organizations that work with women and children. In 2018, she was declared an “unwelcome person” in the department of Oruro and threatened with death for a work she made entitled “The Censored Virgin” that highlighted the issue of femicide and violence against women during Carnival, and caused a national scandal in Bolivia.



“One day, I got a call from Violeta, and she invited me to come to her house and draw. She didn’t tell me at first it would be in VR or 3D, so I said yes. So I went, and I was so surprised! But Dan showed me how to use Tilt Brush, and I liked it. I accepted Violeta’s invitation because I like learning, I like VR and there are very few people working in VR in Bolivia. So I took it as a challenge.

I’m excited for people to know and learn about our culture, our myths, our legends. That what we have used in Prison X is fantasy, but it’s based on reality. The devil is a mythological person they pray to in the mines, there is Quilla and Inti, everything is in accordance with Aymara and Quechua culture. Nuna is the Pachamama. The jail is reality—a small town where you have to survive, and deal with the economic conditions you have. Prison X is a unique project that shows the reality and culture of Bolivia.”

Alberto Santiago

3D Generalist

Alberto Santiago is a senior 3D artist and multi-talented developer who rigged and animated all the characters in Prison X. With a professional background in CG animation and visual effects, he has had solo exhibitions from Tokyo to Sydney and developed the award-winning game [Goat Punks](#).



“The use of VR technology to enable immersive storytelling is what drew me to this project.

The production of animated films has always been a lengthy process requiring a large team of highly specialised artists to come together to create each frame. With accessibility to VR, 3D engines and the latest motion capture suits, we have reached a technological milestone where we can have an idea and create it in a short timeframe with minimal complexity and a high degree of control.

I like working on Prison X because the technology-enabled speed lets us play with the creative process. We can try new things without the penalty of losing hundreds of hours of work that comes with managing a large team.

I hope people can enjoy Prison X as a way to gain perspective of the art and culture of Bolivian people through this visually immersive experience.”

A black and white portrait of a young man with short, dark hair, wearing a light-colored jacket with a dark hood. He is looking slightly to the left of the camera with a neutral expression. His right hand is resting on his neck.

Citizen Kay

Sound Artist

Kojo Owusu-Ansah (also known as Citizen Kay or Kay Ansah) is a Ghanaian-born recording artist, music producer and audio engineer who lives in Canberra, Australia. Long fascinated with how we interact with and create music, in recent years, this fascination has extended to sound in general and how our auditory senses perceive the world around us.

Since beginning his career in 2014, Kay has toured with the likes of Ice Cube, Public Enemy and many more, and has earned two ARIA nominations for 'Best Urban Album' in 2015 and 2016. In 2017, Kay expanded into sound engineering and music production, and he has collaborated with brands such as ESPN, E! Entertainment, and provided music for TV series such as 'On My Block' on Netflix.

What drew you to Prison X?

“Virtual reality was an unexplored world for me, so the opportunity to learn, experiment & experience, particularly within a project like Prison X, was an opportunity impossible to walk away from.”

Your favorite moment from working on Prison X:

“Watching the motion-capture and seeing the characters come to life.”

XNYWolf

Music Composer

Andres Alexander Patzi, known by his stage name 'XNYWOLF,' is a DJ/Producer coming out of Sydney with the sounds of versatile rap and trap blended with Brazilian baile funk to International Afro.

Growing up in Western Sydney with Bolivian & Chilean/Cuban Parents, he attached himself to the Latin music his parents raised him on. He has supported acts such as Murda Beatz, Xavier Wulf & Russ.

He creates a nostalgic, soulful and most definitely energetic experience, expressing creativity through his 'adventurous' song selections and smooth transitions speaks volumes. Along with Sauti Systems, he throws some of the best parties in Sydney. He composed the music for Prison X.



Dan Fallshaw

Producer

Daniel Fallshaw is a Walkley Award-winning Australian filmmaker and producer. Daniel studied visual communications at the University of Technology Sydney and St Martins College in London, graduating with a Bachelor of Design with Honors. Daniel first began working with interactive media in 2000 in London, for clients such as BBDO and Smash Hits Magazine, before returning to Australia to work at SBS television as an Art Director and designer. On leaving SBS, Daniel embarked on a filmmaking career that includes the award winning documentaries [Cocaine Prison](#) (2017), [The Fight](#) (2017), [The Bolivian Case](#) (2015) and [Stolen](#) (2009). In 2018 Fallshaw won a Walkley Award for *The Fight*. Dan is a founding member of United Notions Film.



Annette Lin

Journalist and production assistant

Annette Lin is coordinating and recording the production of Prison X. As a journalist, her work focuses on narrative and critical explorations of identity, immigration, diaspora and climate change, through the lens of design, culture and contemporary art. She has reported from Mexico, Honduras, Finland and Australia for publications such as Foreign Policy, Teen Vogue, the Sydney Morning Herald, The Nation, CityLab, and Hyperallergic, among others. She is currently based between Sydney and Mexico City.



Links

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