

Karina Nimmerfall: Second Unit NYC

Southside on Lamar

Max Kazemzadeh

Paying more attention to the psychology of space than the litany of video projections packed into the last Venice Biennale—and carrying the same kind of subversive sarcasm and blaringly apparent, anti-cinematic disbelief as the work of Bruce Nauman—Austrian-born, Berlin-based artist Karina Nimmerfall reappropriates, edits and reanimates video stills in elegant installations that effortlessly walk the line between cinematic immersion and sobering fabrication. In *Second Unit: NYC*, the culmination of her three-month residency at Southside on Lamar, Nimmerfall investigates what she describes as the “phenomenon of fictional reality created and designed by the media industry.”

To do so, she mutates the cinematic map—a strategy often used in film and television production in which sets are constructed and stock footage is re-mapped in post production to depict locations around the world (and beyond) to enhance the illusion that action is taking place on location, say, in Florida, Zimbabwe or on the planet Vulcan. In a reversal of this practice, Nimmerfall rear-projects interiors—crime scenes grabbed from the hit television series *C.S.I.* (Crime Scene Investigation)—onto walls strategically positioned to herd viewers through a corridor, out the other end and around the back of the installation to view this precariously positioned, filmic and architectural spectacle from behind. With each step, a new discovery is made and a new fallacy revealed.



Karina Nimmerfall, *Palm Canyon*, 2002

98 7/16 x 137 3/4 x 90 1/2 inches

Wood, wall paint, DVD and player, transparent

screen, video projector, sand, mirror, light

Photo by Joshua White

Digital projectors are placed on the floor along the edge of the room. When viewers walk outside the corridor, their bodies become silhouettes viewable by those still inside the installation. The projections activate the video stills, employing



Karina Nimmerfall, *Second Unit: NYC*, 2006

295 3/4 x 196 3/8 x 88 1/2 inches

Wood, wall paint, transparent screens, DVDs and DVD players

Photo by Karina Nimmerfall

viewers' ghostly forms as replacement actors in an unseen narrative. In one still—a backlit room with a window—all characters and narrative elements have been digitally erased except for a fan. Nimmerfall reanimated the blades of the fan, which blows in the direction of a motionless curtain. Another still splits the screen, placing the viewer at the foot of a staircase in an apartment complex hallway; a neon light in front of an apartment door flickers. The ambient and reflected lighting conditions in the hallway and on the door, however, remain unchanged. Each scene calls attention to its own false stillness, humorously poking fun at the contrivance of narrative dramas.

Different from Pierre Huyghe or Paul Pfeiffer, who recreate and manipulate cinematic moments using erasure and animation, Nimmerfall's installations physically encompass the viewer and intentionally fail to immerse, using video content as a means of altering the viewer's sense of space, perception and time. Strategic placement of walls and screens in relation to the projectors create duality—a space with an inside and outside—a

front and back; one intended for people to pass through and the other an inappropriate, uninhabitable space where one's presence unravels the system by obliterating suspension of disbelief.

Nimmerfall's projections are strategic non-places that magnify the ambiguity surrounding the identity of the location. Her projected scenes are blank but stylized moments that challenge the avid film buff or television watcher's subconscious recall. While this exhibition doesn't challenge Lev Manovich's notion of video databases surrounding “Soft Cinema,” it does playfully reference the indexical archive in terms of how Nimmerfall collects, conceives, manipulates and intentionally re-choreographs crime scenes into engineered experiences. The work seems to relate more closely to Immanuel Kant's thoughts about space and time as forms of intuition or conditions of perception imposed by the minds of each viewer—a space that is really nothing in terms of object, since they exist, by their very nature, apart from us.