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A nearly static tableau displays a luxurious hillside residence. Its foreground presents the rippling surface of a private swimming pool. In the distance and out beyond the hillside residence are the twinkling lights of a major metropolitan area. And the point of view of this digital creation: is it the perspective of a secret onlooker, observing this digital house from the far side of the pool, halfway obscured in the night time hours by landscaped floral architecture? In the center of this computer generated view, trapped between the voyeur's vantage point and the twinkling lights of the city, sloping glass walls hold the furnishings of privilege. This is a lifestyle of minimal design and exquisite taste, a virtual establishing shot from somewhere that looks like Hollywood.

In a standard film or television production it would now be time to cut to the three-quarter shot—the *Le plan américain*, or “The American Shot”—for the initial presentation of a primary character. Or perhaps it would announce the brief arrival of a secondary and quickly expendable cast member: that temporary performer destined to die early; the tragic figure that always ends up in the wrong place at the wrong time, a figure having existed for decades in our collective memory as the necessary fuel for the ensuing plot. In Karina Nimmerfall's 21st century tableau these characters will never appear. Neither the primary lead, nor the tertiary extra: that background jogger on the way to nowhere.

This poolside image presents solely a vacant ground of visual recreation, an architectural forensic scene consisting of virtual cinematic memories and clichés. With this image, in addition to the disappearance of actors, one also finds that any human connection brought about by the use of celluloid film has vanished as well. The work is also however not created with any help from the glossy surface predominantly found in currently popular high definition modes of production. It even avoids the stilted

crisp focus of standard video broadcast systems, those formats normally used in network television. Here the viewer is presented instead with a computer generated panorama. It is an image produced not with traditional cinematic methods, a view never seen through the lens of any camera system. It is constructed of coded information and graphic data file systems. This is the technique most recognized from video gaming systems and 3D modeling programs.

In connection to the current techniques of 3D modeling, it can be hypothesized that perhaps Nimmerfall aims to vacate the image of as much human emotion as possible, solely to display and present with as little distraction as is necessary, the visual arrangement of cinematic compositions and their strategies. In the same way that architects now use 3D modeling to understand scale, site and geometry, here the modeling of filmic compositions lays bare the artifice of their creation and planning. This abyss of virtual space contains no direct human connection. It arrests solely the planning of space involved in cinematic set design.

The structure of Nimmerfall's empty digital residence in the virtual hills is manifest by a collage of clichéd cinematic tropes and architectural shapes used continually to promote vacant morality and bad character. In reality—as in the tenets of modernist and most contemporary architectural planning—these photogenic architectural locations, so often used in cinematic productions, should have been the spaces of light and air, of harmonious spiritual living. In cinema this belief system was somehow flipped on its head. Simple living became synonymous with immorality and sinfulness. Just choose any cinema thriller. Watch the film and see who resides where. Compare the spaces of good and evil. It's a funny game where honest people live cozy lifestyles and the minimalist villains own homes where stairways often have no handrails.

Patterned Recognition
On Karina Nimmerfall's *The Glass House*
(Representational)

Jeff Luckey



Figure (19) Karina Nimmerfall. *The Glass House*. (Video Still) Single Channel Video. 2010