

(Preconceived) Judgments of Space – The work of Karina Nimmerfall

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„Everything real becomes phantom-like, everything notional becomes real“

(Günther Anders)

„The interaction of video with its self-construed, walkable spatial system should provide a simultaneous experience of real and virtual spatial reflections for the audience and generate a crossover between the notional image-space of a video and an actually walkable installation, which is used to shift spatial and medial perception levels.“ This is the way Karina Nimmerfall sums up the main characteristics of her own aesthetical work.

What sounds complex should now be illustrated with the help of one concrete example, the multipartite project *Second Unit*, which discusses spatial constructions we can detect over and over in Hollywood productions: precisely, the working group reflects the (visual) architecture by using the example of the US-American television series *C.S.I.* (Crime Scene Investigation) to make television productions of this kind appear real. For this purpose, standardized spatial situations are used which are easy to recognize on the one hand, since they seem to correspond with local stereotypes, thus reminders of the typical urbanity of Las Vegas, Miami or New York City. On the other hand, these artificially generated localities, the cinematic sets, are charged psychologically as cliché-like as necessary to be immediately understandable. Out of different camera angles and recordings Karina Nimmerfall generates substrates of these film aesthetics and projects them onto transparent screens, which, combined with a constructed spatial system, result in a „real“ space that is walkable and, if you want, in the literal sense of the word, „actually“ experiential. But that is not all: this ambience where the borders of (cinematic) simulation and (given) reality becomes indistinguishable, is additionally charged with digital animations like flickering neon light or cigarette smoke that seems to come out of nowhere, which then, after all, constitute the disruption that brings us back to earth, our perception recognizing the medial facts, meaning that disruption unmasks the conventional fictionality of the whole situation.

Nimmerfall also uses the rhetorical devices of supposed „documentation“ in the photo series *Substitute Locations* (2005 – 2006), which is linked to the project; localities from Los Angeles are introduced by means of images: these localities serve in the mentioned television series *C.S.I.* as so-called substitutes for localities in Miami, Las Vegas, or New York that are needed for the series. Here an already confusing game of „truth“ and „deception“ takes place: „real“ locations like residential houses, restaurants or beaches are photographically documented, which then become different locations within the shows, however, without changing their actual visuality. These photographs are thus not shown by themselves, but follow the best tradition of (US-American) Conceptual Art; they appear in combination with typescript letters, which are classified: „production“, „scene“, „shooting location“ and „transcript“. Again, pseudodocumentation in the form of „supposed“ objective quotations, blends into fiction, since what is quoted is nothing else than the modalities of the subsequent fiction.

Finally, this analysis of descriptions of location and space in Hollywood productions leads Karina Nimmerfall to her current project *Double Location (The Ambassador Hotel)*; this video refers to the legendary *Ambassador Hotel* in Los Angeles, where in the „roaring twenties“ the bold and beautiful were bustling about, which in the 1930s hosted the Oscar Nights six times, and where Robert Kennedy was assassinated in 1968. After the hotel was shut down in 1989 various film and television productions benefited from the historical architecture for shots. With over one hundred productions per year, it ranged among the most widely used movie sets in Los Angeles and appeared as a background in numerous films and television series. Finally, in 2006, the derelict building was pulled down. Nimmerfall reconstructs the hotel lobby that we know as a movie set, now as a virtual spatial model. This reconstruction does not merely follow documentary recordings, but foremost „data“ stemming collective memory and media templates. The virtual space in the video is generated from diverse information and plays with the phenomenon of a staged film set; this space, through its uncountable cinematic usage, reacts upon the perception of the „real space“ of the hotel, and thus on our perception of reality. The artist stages a slow tracking shot through this virtual space, which refers to a construed cinematic space regarding light condition and camera angle, thus contradicting a documentary procedure. According to the (visual) logic of the editing, a new spatial context evolves.