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Inside the Village By the Grange
Meg Remy

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[narrating] Come think of it, the whole place seemed to have been stricken with the kind of creeping paralysis... out of beat with the rest of the world... crumbling apart in slow motion. There was a tennis court... or rather the ghost of a tennis court... with faded markings and a sagging net... And of course she had a pool. Who didn't then? Mabel Norman and John Gilbert must swum in it ten thousand midnights ago... It was empty now. Or was it? [cut to close-up of rats]

-Joe Gillis; William Holden in Billy Wilder's film *Sunset Blvd.*

Meg Remy's 3-minute short film *Inside the Village by the Grange* play on visual tropes that are both familiar and strange. As in Billy Wilder's film *Sunset Blvd.* Remy's short invokes the dreamy fiction of old Hollywood, a parallel universe of opulence and glamour slowly aging in plain sight. Remy's work was shot on 8mm film, on location at the Village by the Grange, an adjacent food court connecting various facilities of OCAD U's campus. This setting is marked by various decorative and architectural curiosities.

The film begins with a cropped shot introducing two characters: Bobo the bird and the Hand, whose body is never introduced. The Hand gestures to Bobo, signaling the bird to a rustling dance to the accompanying musical score, an improvised synth-organ composition played by Remy. The twinkling organ wavers its tone, moving up and down in pitch and scale, setting a particularly creepy cinematic tone.

We then move to a wide shot of a white wrought iron staircase, a white painted wrought iron street lamp in the foreground to the right and palm leaved plants in the background left. This scene is theatrically opulent; its ornate detail dramatically out of context within what is otherwise a food court.

Remy takes the dramatic set props for what they are, spotlighting the top of the staircase, as the film's third and final character Lulu is introduced. Lulu is a lavishly dressed woman, clad in a fur stole, long swishy red dress and head tightly covered by panty hose. Lulu's glamorously made-up face, sparkling red lips and thick black lashes are twisted by the panty hose, physically obstructing our view of her face. A strange haze of light surrounds Lulu's head as the bright spotlight reflects off the shiny, taut panty hose. Lulu is a glamour girl of the old Hollywood sort, part starlet part femme fatale, akin to the troubled female lead Norma Desmond of *Sunset Blvd.* This darkness is audibly signaled

by Remy's creepy score, which introduces a darkly sinister bass-filled synth line. Lulu slowly descends the staircase, again recalling a scene in *Sunset Blvd.* of Norma Desmond's descent, eyes wide with implied madness.

For Remy, this sinister juxtaposition of glamour with madness is less the brutal reality check of Hollywood's dark side, and more an introduction to the parallel universe that film itself presents. This reminds me of David Lynch, an admirer of *Sunset Blvd.* whose films stretch expectation through surreal suspensions of reality. Lynch takes the tropes of Hollywood's dream mythologies throughout the 20th century and filters in a combination of absurdity and sincerity — flipping the familiar through unexpected juxtapositions of imagery, sound and contextual reference. Remy's *Inside the Village on the Grange* similarly uses methods of warped play on the tenuousness of a glamorous dream.

Lulu descends into the Village by the Grange, twitching and flinching as she briefly holds Bobo. Quick cuts of sparkle covered palm leaves and kaleidoscopic jewel-like close-ups of twinkling light dazzle and disorient the viewer, acclimatizing us to the strange pace that is the reality *Inside the Village by the Grange*. The same footage of Lulu descending the white staircase is replayed but sped up, furthering our dream-like disorientation. Throughout the film, a frame-burn is seen occasionally on the left of the screen. This is a reminder of the material of film itself, the beauty and the limits of the medium with which *Inside the Village by the Grange* comes to represent another reality.

-Cameron Lee