

Time Out

New York

FEBRUARY 4-10, 2010 ISSUE 749 \$3.99 TIMEOUTNEWYORK.COM

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Art

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Omer Fast, *Nostalgia*

★★★★★

Whitney Museum of American Art,
through Feb 14 (see Museums)

Israeli artist Omer Fast (who lives and works in Berlin) wowed the art world in the 2008 Whitney Biennial with *The Casting*, a double-sided video installation that deftly interwove a pair of narratives told by an American soldier. It deservedly earned Fast the \$100,000 Bucksbaum Award, as well as the present exhibition of his new work, *Nostalgia*. In it, we enter a series of progressively darker spaces illuminated by moving images, resulting in an increasingly labyrinthine conflation of truth and fiction.

From an interview the artist conducted with a former Nigerian child soldier seeking asylum in London, we proceed to a pair of flat-screens with actors portraying both men, and then to a cinematic projection of an alternate reality in which a grubby British trio is apprehended trying to escape via tunnel from a bourgeois, retrofuturistic African country. The only constant seems to be a number of scenes relating to the same curiously haunting story about how to catch a partridge using a trap made from sticks and twine—an ambiguous metaphor for the plight of refugees everywhere.

Details such as colonial-era pith helmets, vintage electronics and vomit that turns into fruit and flowers veneer the gorgeously filmed third part of the installation with Surrealism. Yet the themes of displaced people and cruelty, both casual and systemic, retain their visceral urgency, from documentary to faux vérité to fabricated narrative. Fast's complexly layered orchestration of gallery space and video operates like our minds, taking us deeper and deeper into the strange confusion between the stories we live and the stories we tell.—Joseph R. Wolin