

Omer Fast

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY ART MUSEUM AND PACIFIC FILM ARCHIVE

2626 Bancroft Way

October 25–December 17

Omer Fast's *Nostalgia*, 2009, produced by the South London Gallery, the Berkeley Art Museum, and the Nationalgalerie at the Hamburger Bahnhof, is a video installation in three parts. The first depicts a man building a trap in the woods while in voice-over another man speaks to his life as a former child soldier, segueing into an incidental description of the trap's construction. In the next video, two actors take up the story in the form of an interview that loops through conversations about the trap, the man's quest for asylum, and fractured memory of his childhood, as well as the fact that the film itself will be based on the interview. The third video, transferred from 16-mm film, is a series of vignettes, set in a future seemingly projected from the past, in which interconnected characters—a refugee, his caseworker, her lover, his child—alternate between recipient and informant of how to engineer the trap. As the cycle progresses and the story repeats, authorship, and subsequently authority, become more elusive.

Fast not only disconnects the story of the trap—which never quite coheres into a clear image—from its original narrator, he strategically creates a distance between each segment of the installation and fractures the continuity between image and cinematic construction. The trap is both a metaphor and a framework for experiencing the piece. It is almost immediately evident that we will not arrive at conclusive positions around the larger political issues of race, nationality, or asylum unfolding in the work. Instead, the artist lures the viewer further and further into personal narratives, each time creating a more familiar but less certain understanding of the individual authors. Similarly, *Nostalgia* leads one away from authoritative knowledge toward individual testimony and unloosens these stories from documentary's voyeuristic demand to locate larger truths in personal reality.



Omer Fast, *Nostalgia*, 2009, four-channel color video. Production still.

— Patricia Maloney