

21 JUL 2005

## INSTALLATION

**STEFAN NIKOLAEV - COME TO WHERE THE FLAVOUR IS**

CCA, Glasgow, Sat 23 Jul-Sat 3 Sep

Paris-based Bulgarian artist Stefan Nikolaev's work explores the metaphors of time that we use to map our lives, memories and imaginings. In his first major show in Britain, the temporal folds that loop through his work will be made manifest in the art objects that take 'cool nostalgia' (non-artist's 'retro') sensibilities and iconography from 1970s and 80s Eastern Bloc, and meld them to cold war pseudo-Americana. Familiar to us through its pop imagery, yet removed due to its Slavic remoteness, his work is hip, yet not outdated, and stylish.

In the zone between timelines and borderlines, brands and logos, Nikolaev's imagery references the hyper-realist über-market of the duty free shop, the artist becoming a traveller with a suitcase full of booty. In the video installation 'The Screen Saver / The Hard Drive / The Disk', familiar pop classics from the 70s and 80s are sung in Bulgarian. We can hum along but something's not right. Without making the everyday nauseating, the everydayness of pop music is bent into something uncanny and we become strangers to ourselves.

A similar process takes place in 'Extra Light', a ready-made advertisement for cigarettes, where the puns implicit in the neon sign are both enlightening and circuitous - a simulacral sign with empty advertising speak saying everything and nothing. In 'PosterPosterity', specifics are erased from an advertising poster - all that remains is the memory of grimacing blonds on choppers. Good advertising, like good art, should be the same in any language. Warhol got it right with Coca-Cola: a Coke's a Coke in any language. (Alexander Kennedy)

