



REVIEW

Stefan Nikolaev: Come
Where The Flavour Is ★★★★★

'Translated nostalgia' was a phrase that Douglas Coupland coined to describe people being 'forced to have memories they do not actually possess'. Stefan Nikolaev, who grew up in Communist Bulgaria and is now based in London, may have the same effect on his audience by basing his work on the iconography of cigarette advertising. In the Eastern Bloc chic, Nikolaev might evoke a frisson of nostalgia, but his art is all about making resonant connections. In *Come Where The Flavour Is* takes its inspiration from a US cigarette advert, but it reflects the political drift towards capitalism in Eastern Europe over the 1970s and 1980s.

The cigarette packs are fashioned as gravestones, a visual connection between smoking and death that lifts one of the central images of UK cigarette advertising from the 1970s, when adverts for Benson & Hedges would depict tilted gold cartons as though they were the pyramids in Egypt.

The most substantial element here is a lengthy trick film in which a man enters a room containing a chair. While the chair remains static, he walks around the walls and ceiling. The trick was previously used for a Fred Astaire dance routine in *Royal Wedding*, and appears to involve a movable set revolving around a fixed camera, but apart from the Soviet-era covers of easy-listening Western songs on the soundtrack, it's only superficially linked with the larger themes of the exhibition. There's a glib neatness