

WHITNEY

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Press Release

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Still from Omer Fast, *The Casting*, 2007. Four-channel video installation, color, sound; 14 min.
Courtesy Postmasters Gallery, New York, gb agency, Paris, and Arratia, Beer, Berlin.

OMER FAST TO RECEIVE 2008 BUCKSBAUM AWARD

NEW YORK, April 18, 2008 – Adam D. Weinberg, Alice Pratt Brown Director of the Whitney Museum of American Art, and Whitney Trustee Melva Bucksbaum have announced that Omer Fast is the recipient of the 2008 Bucksbaum Award. Fast was selected from among the 81 artists participating in the 2008 Whitney Biennial, currently on view at the Museum through June 1. The award ceremony takes place at the Whitney on Tuesday evening, April 29.

This year's Bucksbaum jury included Whitney director Weinberg, along with Whitney Chief Curator and Associate Director for Programs Donna De Salvo, and the 2008 Biennial curators, Henriette Huldish and Shamim M. Momin, as well as three other jurors: Anne Ellegood, Curator, Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, DC; Lauri Firstenberg, Director/Curator, LAX Art, Los Angeles; and Franklin Sirmans, Curator, The Menil Collection, Houston.

Melva Bucksbaum, who established the Award in 2000, remarked, "My family and I are most pleased to add the name of Omer Fast to a distinguished list of artists which includes Paul Pfeiffer, Irit Batsry, Raymond Pettibon, and Mark Bradford."

Fast's *The Casting* (2007) is one of the most widely acclaimed works in the 2008 Biennial. Grappling with such themes as memory, history, storytelling, and the fragmentation of truth, *The Casting* is a 14-minute, four-channel video, projected on both sides of two suspended screens in a blackened gallery. Fast, appearing as himself, interviews a young American army sergeant who recounts two stories, which seem to be his own anguished memories, one story about dating a woman while stationed in Germany, and the other of accidentally killing a civilian in Iraq. These two disturbing narrative strands are blended as if they had become inextricable in the mind of the narrator. As Fast himself described it: "Over several days, the sergeant told me two different stories and I chopped them and braided them together into one. The first story takes place in Bavaria and involves a date with a German girl who's into speed and self-mutilation. The second story takes place outside Baghdad and involves a roadside bomb and a tragic mistake. These two stories were edited into a script, which was given to a group of actors to interpret in a series of silent tableaux. As an installation the work deals with its subject matter in terms of pairs: interviewee and interviewer, memory and the movies, love and death, routine and accident."

Writing in the exhibition catalog, Biennial co-curator Shamim Momin notes that "Fast's reconstructed narratives blur time and truth, and question the intelligibility of historical return, whether to a distant or a more recent past." In *The Washington Post*, Blake Gopnik singled out the work as one of the exhibition's best, writing, "It's no news to anyone that the stories that we tell about ourselves and our times are mostly built from fragments and imaginings. But I can't think of any artist who has managed to depict—you might say deconstruct—the realities of that construction as subtly, as convincingly or as engrossingly as Fast." And in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, Kenneth Baker comments, "Positive critical consensus formed quickly around Omer Fast's four-channel video *The Casting*, a very labor-intensive piece made to seem effortless by its taut intelligence and technical precision. Fast's video frames itself as an exercise in casting a dramatic film about the recollections of Iraq war veterans...Almost no one who entered the screening room during my visit left without seeing the piece through at least once. In masterly fashion it modulates its topical impact by a deft play with theatrical and cinematic conventions, provoking viewers to think for themselves about how stories - including facts - make their way into popular consciousness nowadays."

The Bucksbaum Award is given every two years in recognition of an artist, chosen from those included in the Biennial, whose work demonstrates a singular combination of talent and imagination. The selected artist is considered by the jurors to have the potential to make a lasting impact on the history of American art, based on the excellence of past work as well as present work in the Biennial. In addition to receiving a \$100,000 grant, each Bucksbaum laureate is invited to present an exhibition at the Whitney, sometime within the succeeding two years. The Whitney has commissioned Tiffany & Co. to create and produce the award.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Omer Fast was born in 1972 in Jerusalem; he lives and works in Berlin. Fast, who has recently had one-person exhibitions at the Museum of Modern Art, Vienna, and the Indianapolis Museum of Art, often works with film, video, and television footage, which he often uses to examine the ways in which individuals and histories interact with each other in narrative. His earlier works include *Spielberg's List* (2003), a 65-minute, two-channel color video installation in which the artist visited Krakow, the city in Poland that served as the setting for Steven Spielberg's *Schindler's List*, and interviewed Poles who worked as extras on the film. In *Godville* (2005), a 51-minute, two-channel color video, the artist interviews people involved in historical reenactment at the Colonial Williamsburg living-history museum in Virginia; they describe the lives of their 18th-century characters and their own personal lives in ways that seem interchangeable. Fast was included in the 2002 Whitney Biennial, and his work has entered the collections of many museums, including the Whitney, the Guggenheim, Berlin's Hamburger Bahnhof, the Hirshhorn, the Metropolitan Museum, the Jewish Museum, and the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art.

ABOUT THE BUCKSBAUM AWARD

Melva Bucksbaum, a Whitney trustee since 1996, launched The Bucksbaum Award in 2000. Ms. Bucksbaum and her family have long been devoted international patrons of art and culture. In addition to being a trustee of the Whitney, Ms. Bucksbaum serves on the boards of The American Friends of the Israel Museum and The Drawing Center, New York. She is also on the Collections Committee, Harvard University Art Museums, Harvard University. Since 1995, Ms. Bucksbaum has managed the Martin Bucksbaum Family Foundation. She is also a director of the Robert I. Goldman Foundation.

The previous recipients of The Bucksbaum Award are Paul Pfeiffer (2000), Irit Batsry (2002), Raymond Pettibon (2004), and Mark Bradford (2006).

ABOUT THE WHITNEY

The Whitney Museum of American Art is the leading advocate of 20th- and 21st-century American art. Founded in 1930, the Museum is regarded as the preeminent collection of American art and includes major works and materials from the estate of Edward Hopper, the largest public collection of works by Alexander Calder, Louise Nevelson, and Lucas Samaras, as well as significant works by Jasper Johns, Donald Judd, Agnes Martin, Bruce Nauman, Georgia O'Keeffe, Claes Oldenburg, Kiki Smith, and Andy Warhol, among other artists. With its history of exhibiting the most promising and influential American artists and provoking intense debate, the Whitney's signature show, the Biennial, has become the most important survey of the state of contemporary art in America today.

Current and Upcoming Exhibitions at the Whitney Museum of American Art:

Demuth's Late Paintings of Lancaster	Through April 27, 2008
2008 Whitney Biennial	Through June 1, 2008
Polaroids: Mapplethorpe	May 3-September 7, 2008
Buckminster Fuller: Starting with the Universe	June 26-September 21, 2008
Paul McCarthy: Three Installations, Two Films	June 26-October 12, 2008
Alexander Calder: The Paris Years	October 16, 2008-February 15, 2009
William Eggleston	November 7, 2008-January 25, 2009

The Whitney Museum is located at 945 Madison Avenue, New York City. Museum hours are: Wednesday, Thursday, Saturday, and Sunday from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m., Friday from 1 p.m. to 9 p.m., closed Monday and Tuesday. Admission is \$15 for adults; Members, children (ages 11 and under), and New York City public high school students are admitted free. Senior citizens (62 and over) and students with valid ID: \$10. There is a \$6 admission fee for a pass to the Kaufman Astoria Studios Film & Video Gallery only. Admission is pay-what-you-wish on Fridays, 6-9 pm. For information, please call 212-570-3600 or visit www.whitney.org.