



Berlin, Freimaurer Loge Dahlem, 22nd of April, 2012

Erwin Olaf

“Berlin”, a new series of narrative images by this popular Dutch photographer, imagines a city not just haunted by its past but condemned to relive it. Typically, Olaf’s pictures are so polished and artificial that the over-all effect is closer to advertising than it is to art. But his new series deals more frankly with decadence than usual, and its air of Weimar sleaze gives it a dark, nasty undercurrent. (Otto Dix, Christian Shad, and George Grosz are key sources.) The presence of a spangled clown, a saucy nymphet, and a black man in a runner’s singlet with medals (a nod to Jesse Owens) suggests a hallucinatory take on German history -- a Berlin that Fassbinder might have dreamed up.