

GLADSTONE GALLERY

Zack Hatfield, "Critics' Picks: Cameron Jamie," Artforum, May, 2017.

ARTFORUM

Cameron Jamie

Documentary footage of violence that is dramatized or frivolous risks feeling naive at best and at worst like an ominous rehearsal. Fortunately, these pitfalls are evaded in the current exhibition of three films by Cameron Jamie, portraying ceremonies within different masculine subcultures. Perhaps that is because the artist's interests tend toward the ethnographic. Each work captures rituals that privilege brutality over piety, though the difference is often hard to tell.

In *Kranky Klaus*, 2002–2003, male participants costumed as the furred, horned Krampus—the devilish cryptid of pagan lore—enact an annual parade of yuletide sadism, terrorizing their small Austrian village and policing the morality of its children.

In *BB*, 1998–2000, the bruising slapstick of teenage savagery, filmed in Super 8, appears nearly transcendent. A wrestling championship held in a backyard in Southern California is shot in black and white, all frantic pans and zooms, contenders often dissolving into blurs then snapped back into focus. Parts of the tournament play out in slow motion. Folding chairs and trash cans are hurled. Chests are beaten. From rooftops, boys splash into bodies panting on a makeshift wrestling ring. Who better to score this rite of suburban survivalism than the Melvins? Their murmuring guitars and hellish drums lend the footage a chthonic tinge.

Massage the History, 2007–2009, is essentially a Sonic Youth music video with an unlikely premise. A middle-class living room in Alabama transforms, to the sound of a haunted acoustic riff, into a site of intimate rediscovery as two men gyrate: on furniture, a Christmas tree, and the plush carpet. "Not everyone makes it out alive," Kim Gordon sings in a breezy half whisper. One man caresses a tassel hanging from a table, imbuing it with talismanic potential. To belong to these domestic arenas requires bodily transgression, and yet Jamie choreographs innocence as it usually is—neither lost nor found.



Cameron Jamie, *BB*, 1998–2000, Super 8 film transferred to 35 mm, black and white, sound, 18