

GLADSTONE GALLERY

Park, Jina, "Cameron Jamie," Contemporary, 2006, no.83, p.64-67



CAMERON JAMIE

JINA PARK

DAVID Bowie said he decided to become a rock star in order to leave his native suburban neighbourhood. Matt Greening became a cartoon hero by turning his suburban experience into *The Simpsons*. Once standing for the utopia of a peaceful life, suburbia has become the site of a zombie apocalypse (witness the comedy *Shaun of the Dead*, 2004). Now Cameron Jamie's observations on suburban desperation also make for good theatre in contemporary art.

Since his international breakthrough in the exhibition 'Ardélaká du spectacle' [L'art's Entertain] at Centre Pompidou, Paris in 2000, an array of his works has been under review by some of the major art venues back in the US. The videos *Spook House* (1997-2000), *BB* (2000), *Kranky Klaus* (2002-3) and, more recently, *JO* (2004), featuring music by Japanese musician Keiji Haino, were on view at this year's version of the Whitney Biennial under the banner title 'Day for Night'. The Wrong Gallery – a prankish exhibition project launched by curators Maurizio Cattelan, Massimiliano Gioni and Ali Subotnick, who also organised the 2006 edition of the Berlin Biennale – includes Cameron Jamie in its talent roster. Now his most comprehensive solo show in America is to be mounted this summer at the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis.

Cameron Jamie was a suburban kid trapped in a sleepy working-class neighbourhood in southern California. He describes his childhood in his hometown, San Fernando Valley, as something like a mental confinement. Thanks to the Northridge earthquake, he was able to escape in 1994, eventually to Paris, the city of culture and sophistication, and surely a nice place to work on clearing his suburban childhood backlog. But then dreary suburbia is everywhere, even in Paris.

There are backyard wrestlers, Austrian mountainfolk in their traditional pre-Christmas 'Perchten' dance, and French Neo-Nazis as seen through the eyes of a home-video ethnographer in search of the odd. Primitive are the Others, we learn from Jamie, and they are now no longer in remote continents, as was the case

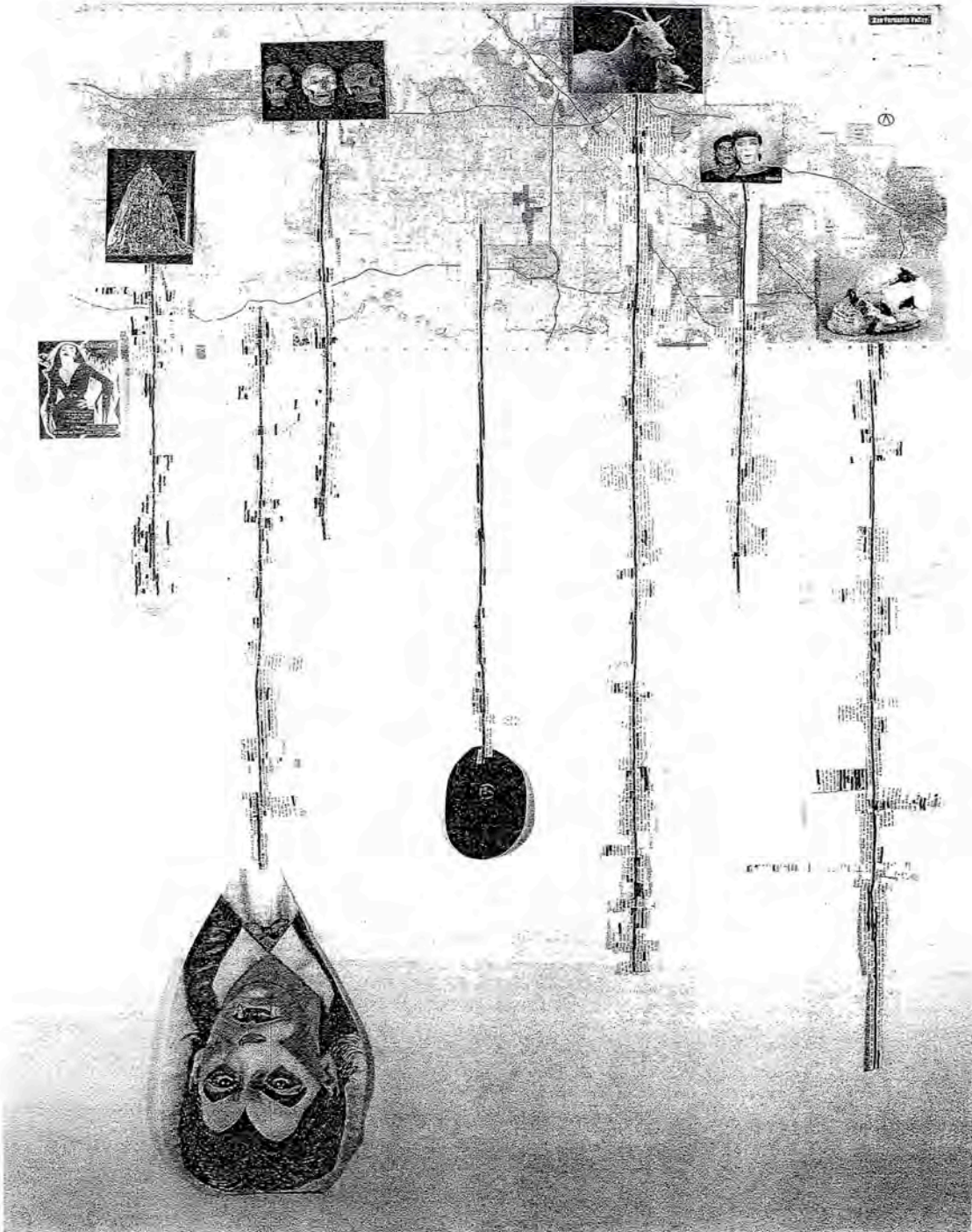
with 19th century colonialists, but in our own backyard. While the likes of Picasso found the 'primitive' an inspiration for artistic renewal, here we get to see oddities mainly for their oddity value, and one of them is Jamie himself: in his self-portrayal video *The New Life* (1996), the artist disguises himself as a wrestler dressed in long-johns and a self-made mask, engaging in some clumsy twosome action with a Michael Jackson look-alike.

Jamie's drawings are self-portraits of his statement that his 'inside had died and what had been buried came out as zombies'. He doesn't do all of his zombie drawings by himself, though. In the 'Maps and Composite Actions' series, produced in 2003, he collaborated with Dutch graphic artist Erik Wielaert, who illustrated scenes which had been vocally described by the artist. Dressed up as Dracula with a large comforter, he is depicted as a lonesome poseur in a large black cape and white socks in a bizarre LA taxi scene. In *Composite Action 2*, Dracula is roaming the suburban night street on a white horse, perhaps inspired by images of Rip Van Winkle in *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*. *Composite Action 3* depicts a scene in a 24-hour supermarket, where the artist enters as a limping hunchback Dracula and spooks late-evening shoppers.

Jamie's drawings are linked to his videos and performances. Inspired by images of goats, devil masks, and spilled guts, there are remote resemblances to the graffiti art of Jean-Michel Basquiat, the expressive scribbles of Art Brut master Jean Dubuffet, or occasionally Cy Twombly. Some more recent drawings from 2004-5 have taken on the manner of stream-of-consciousness sketches, consisting of thin continuous lines with no distinguishable beginning or end. Doodles used to be preparatory scribbles for the creative mind. But for Jamie, drawings are annotations to his videotapes, which reveal suburbs to indeed be odd, and folk rituals primitive.

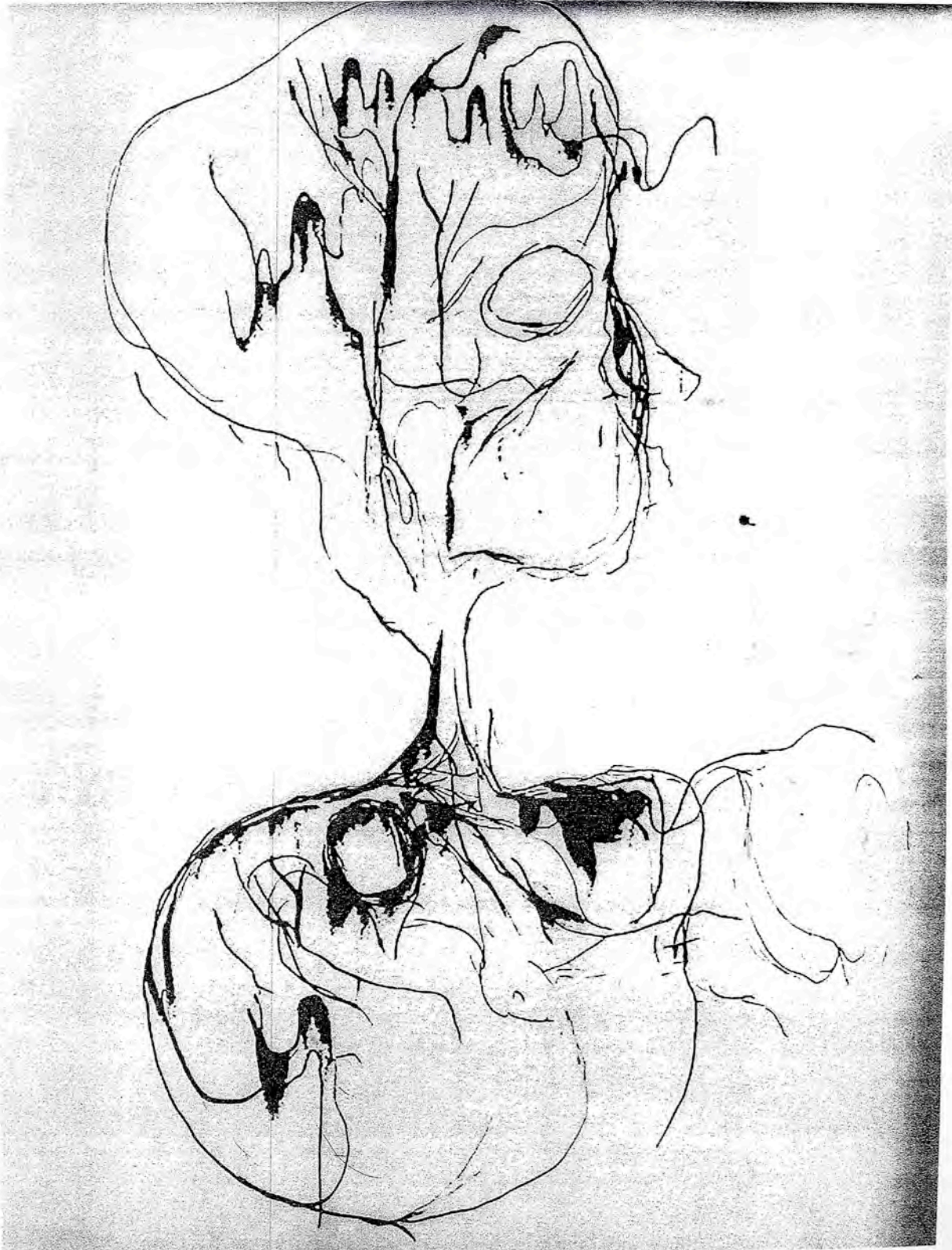
JINA PARK IS A WRITER BASED IN VIENNA

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Above: *The Black Web*, 2003. Courtesy: Christine König Galerie, Vienna. Opposite, from left: Cameron Jamie & Erik Wieloart, *Composite Action 2* (excerpt from testimonial transcript #13), 2003. *Composite Action 3* (excerpt from testimonial transcript #2), 2003. Both images courtesy: Galerie Nathalie Obadia, Paris and Barnes/Eliades Gallery, Athens. Following pages: *Purgation*, 2003. *Whispering Hawk*, 2003. Both images courtesy: Christine König Galerie, Vienna

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