

BOOK REVIEWS

Wilder Mann The Image of the Savage

Charles Fréger
Dewi Lewis
Hardcover, 272 pages
\$40.00

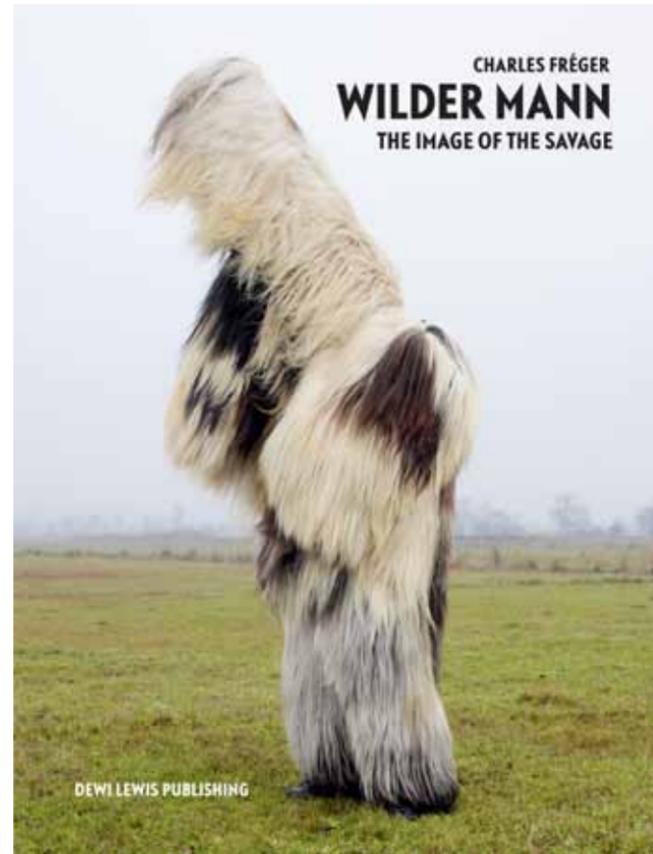
In Charles Fréger's gorgeous new book, *Wilder Mann: The Image of the Savage*, he explores the traditional masquerade costumes of rural Europe, traveling to eighteen countries and showing 164 plates of costumed wild men, bears and bear tamers, goats, demons, devils, deaths, bulls, stags, bell-ringers, boars, and assorted characters from folklore.

Fréger's taxonomic approach, with multiple variations of each costume shot against neutral skies and pasture, both emphasizes similarities in costume and takes the anthropological modernist impulse that is generally used on so-called primitive non-Western cultures and applies it to the hairy weirdos in our figurative backyard. It's a nice counterbalance, and it shifts some of the exotic objectification inherent in anthropological approaches to a subjective identification. The sheer number of plates means that where the "savages" initially start as weird, sinister aliens heavy with atavistic symbolism of the cruelty and fear of nature, they gradually dissolve into the context of young men having a lark — the evil becomes the goofy, and it's easy to see the fun of Halloween or Burning Man underlying the traditional dress. The obvious rural setting of the images means that these are likely farm kids getting drunk and whacking each other with sticks while dressed as Krampus. Why not? People get weird when there's no one else around.

Included at the end is an excellent short essay describing the roles and "r_ôles" of the masquerade characters, along with sharply designed silhouettes that give important context to the images and provide plenty of leads for the curious to investigate further. Also, the printing is both crisp in detail and deep in color range, despite using a muted palette. This is especially noticeable in the costumes made primarily of straw, where Fréger's images benefit from a richness that separates photographs taken as art from those taken as reportage.

The only flaw in the otherwise sumptuous publication is the rambling introduction from Robert McLiam Wilson, who tries to argue that these pictures represent the triumph of the savage over the internet, or something. It's a confused garble that includes phrases like, "neurotically wi-fied" and compares primitive ritual to laxatives clearing the bowels of *Call Of Duty 4* constipation. It's rather a shame that it's at the front of the book, as it tries to shoehorn Fréger's fantastic photos into a cod nostalgic context that both over-determines the images and manages to say very little except that Wilson is a proper sort of writer who romanticizes a past he's never seen and pines for a life when youth gave his views undue deference. Skip the intro and come back to it when you've experienced the language of the images on their own terms, because the rest of the book is fantastic.

- JOSH STEICHMANN



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Make Money With Your Digital Photography

Erin Manning
Wiley
Paperback, 288 pages
\$29.99

OK, confession time: when I was in school, I was not exactly what you would call a scholar. As my parents and teachers often reminded me, I could have done a lot better had I applied myself. Instead, I looked for quick fixes, which means that my best friend throughout high school was Cliff—highly compacted versions of every book you were required to read in high school, but didn't. Admittedly, reading Cliff's version of, say, *Romeo and Juliet* meant losing most of the nuance and beauty of Shakespeare's writing, but you got enough of the "meat" to pass your exam with a B, and that was just fine with me.

Which brings me to Erin Manning's *Make Money With Your Digital Photography*. Manning is a seasoned veteran of both assignment and stock photography, and with this book she seems to be looking to provide the Cliff's version of the professional photography business, which is not to say that the book is superficial, merely that it is an overview of five specific branches of photography (portrait, sports, wedding, food/product, and travel) as well as marketing, equipment, and digital workflow.

In the photography-specific chapters, Manning calls upon experts like Reid Sprenkel (who has built a successful business shooting kids' sports) and Serge Timacheff (author, Olympic shooter, and chief photographer for the International Fencing Federation) to discuss their real-world experiences. Timacheff points out that, "To cross the proverbial threshold, you really have to beat something to death—to the point where your camera ceases to be a mechanical/electronic device and becomes an instrument that you play while focusing on a subject." And past Travel Photographer of the Year award recipient Lorne Resnick says, "Once I started to *really* look at my own and other photographers' work with two words in mind, my work started to accelerate. Those two words are *why* and *where*. Why is that photo so good or impactful and where did that photo end up?" Encouraging words of wisdom.

In the book's opening chapter on "Personal Discovery," as well as later sections covering "Equipment Essentials," "Show Me The Money" (which covers how to sell to both consumers and businesses), "Marketing," and "Digital Darkroom," Manning relies almost exclusively upon her own extensive experience (though there is a useful interview with fine-art agent Angela Krass in "Show me The Money"). In keeping with the book's style, Manning offers just enough information on all of these subjects to engage the reader without resorting to information overload. Most of what's there will be old hat to established pros, but for those considering a career in photography there's just enough detail to help them decide whether or not to make the leap. It ain't Shakespeare, but I think my old buddy Cliff would approve!

- PAUL H. HENNING

