

ARTFORUM

David Kramer
LMAKGALLERY
298 Grand Street
October 21–December 16



Dave swims in and out of view over a rocking sea of yarn-festooned burlap. Dancing in the double vision of overlaid video, Dave's face becomes the center of an increasingly tight frame, zooming in on eyes that gaze bleakly below a sweaty forehead. It's time for *Hooking up with Dave*, 2016, artist David Kramer's attic installation.

On the gallery's rickety third floor, Kramer's tableau feels like a crawlspace/derelict boys' club, complete with a *Mad Men*-style liquor selection, sans the 1960s ritz. Hanging across from a miniature pool table, a hookrug tiger skin glows in neon green. And laid directly on the floorboards is a rather suspect bed, sporting an oversize pillow illustrated with the cartoonish faces of a couple necking with abandon.

On a screen to the right of the bed, the artist gives us hook-rugging pointers from a YouTube tutorial that shows him in slow progress on the aforementioned tiger skin and cushion. Innuendo meets hobby talk in Kramer's avid effusions: "Soon enough, you've got a whole project under your belt" or "I can spend hours just hooking up." Slowly, the infomercial quality fades as the video takes on a confessional atmosphere. With the unsettling fervor of a middle-aged man seeking escape in childlike petulance, Kramer's character describes the double demons of a shrewish wife and an estranged son. It remains uncertain, however, if they're the symptom or cause of his obsessive new hobby. This is an *American Beauty* sort of midlife crisis that finds illicit satisfaction in a ball of yarn, not seducing a child's pretty, precocious friend. Despite craft's wholesomeness, Kramer's creations are not for volunteer librarians or even the office Secret Santa pool. Rather, they bespeak a struggle for virility, doomed by an absurd, tragic dream that a better man can be conjured with hook and thread.

— Nicole Kaack