

## Jean Baudrillard

CHÂTEAU SHATTO  
406 W Pico Boulevard  
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What did Jean Baudrillard like looking at? Based on this exhibition of his own photography, to say nothing of his authoring an essay called “The Conspiracy of Art” (1996), it certainly wasn’t art. If anything, this group of fourteen giclée prints from the late 1980s to the early aughts, featuring quotidian scenes of urban graffiti, torn posters, wrinkled facades, drapery, broken statues, and humdrum oddities seems like an ironically artistic attempt at shoring up that treatise’s proposition that contemporary aesthetic activity “truly is null.” The images displayed here, taken throughout a good cross-section of Europe and North America, are of the same texture and tone any peripatetic and slightly bleary-eyed globetrotter sees while flâneuring around the less beaten paths of urban centers. Baudrillard seems to suggest that because of its merger with the aesthetics of reality, art impotently glides by us, just as our bodies do through public space, parallel in movement and passive disinterest.

He puts sentimentality in a chokehold for such pictures as *Rio*, 1995, a rippled, possibly wheat-pasted poster of a grand mansion thrown up behind the top of a green plant and a red traffic light; and *Saint Clément*, 1987, a rusting car submerged in an anonymous body of water, the top of its front passenger door raking the surface like a flag signaling “still here.” All these photos are grainy, pixelated, unnatural-looking, and thus become curiously romantic: a truly conspiratorial paradox that, despite Baudrillard’s bad faith, still speaks to how humor, the sublime, and the extraordinarily banal all become background noise in our illusionary lives.



Jean Baudrillard, *Rio*, 1995, giclée print, 24 x 35".

— Paige K. Bradley